



Media Release – (embargoed until) 22 August 2011 *please*

Litter...Dropped on Land, Kills at Sea

Keep Australia Beautiful Week kicks off today with a stark reminder of the catastrophic consequences that litter can have on Australia's waterways and wildlife.

According to figures released today in the annual Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index, the total amount of litter by item and volume recorded a reduction overall nationally and in some states or territories.

In the Northern Territory the National Litter Index figures showed that we had less ground litter (less by item numbers and by volume amount) than any other State or Territory in 2010 / 2011. The litter data also shows that the comparison trends are in the desired direction of gradual reduction for Northern Territory. Of the total sites surveyed within the Northern Territory the largest number of items counted were found around retail sites while beaches contributed to the greatest volume of litter surveyed. Cigarette butts are still the most frequently counted item over all sites in the Northern Territory and plastic items (uncategorized plastic objects) contributed to the greater volume of litter counted in NT.

However, Keep Australia Beautiful warns that the reduction in some litter items may in fact be attributed to the exceptional wet conditions experienced in many areas of the Territory this year, simply washing away the lighter litter items from the parks and streets, into nearby storm water drains and through to our inland and coastal waterways, where they can't be recorded.

This not only moves the problem elsewhere, says Keep Australia Beautiful, but also poses a greater environmental risk in terms of marine and waterway pollution and maiming or killing marine mammals and other waterway wildlife.

According to Keep Australia Beautiful CEO Heimo Schober, "Each year, millions of items such as cigarette butts, plastic materials, papers, glass, food packaging and fishing gear make their way into our oceans and rivers through storm water drains, or by being left on beaches, river banks and river beds."

"This pollutes local waterways and can also injure or kill wildlife and marine mammals that ingest or are entangled in this litter. At least 77 species of marine wildlife found in Australian waters are affected, with sea turtles, seabirds, dolphins, sea lions and dugongs being particularly vulnerable."

"This is such an avoidable problem; we can all play a part in addressing this by simply taking responsibility for where our rubbish ends up."

During Keep Australia Beautiful Week a number of awareness raising and educational activities will take place around the country to highlight and remind people of the harmful impact that just one piece of litter can have on the environment and wildlife. In the Northern Territory there is a 'call

to action' with a Darwin region Casuarina Beach Clean-up on Thursday (removal of sand dune litter before turtle egg laying season commences), 'Marine Litter Art' competition for schools to participate in plus a free screening at NT Museum Theatrette on what happens to our NT kerbside recyclables one collected.

The Hungry Jack's 'Bag it and Bin it' program is Principal Sponsor of Keep Australia Beautiful Week, with our local restaurants featuring marine themed tray liners to remind their customers of the need to dispose of their packaging waste responsibly.

For further information and tips on how you can help keep our waterways litter free visit the KAB Week pages at www.kab.org.au

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Editor's Notes: National Litter Index Comparisons (below)

	Items per 1,000m ²						Volume (litres) per 1,000m ²					
	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
NATIONAL	70	74	68	63	66	61	8.86	9.68	8.59	7.73	7.55	6.49
ACT	-	68	56	56	51	45	-	7.04	6.06	4.77	3.31	3.73
NSW	80	71	77	65	75	69	14.95	14.69	11.90	12.13	13.43	10.72
NT	-	64	60	84	70	34	-	5.32	7.24	6.00	5.09	3.16
QLD	89	86	76	59	76	78	7.66	7.59	7.44	5.60	5.65	5.94
SA	60	61	68	57	54	55	7.23	11.08	9.55	8.02	7.13	5.36
TAS	59	70	61	64	86	85	5.15	6.68	5.90	9.20	9.04	8.23
VIC	71	80	48	43	50	39	7.87	7.74	4.19	2.87	4.91	3.99
WA	60	83	85	87	71	75	8.57	12.19	13.06	11.93	9.44	9.03

Northern Territory's Dirty Dozen - Items per 1000 Square Metres (10/11)

CIGARETTE BUTTS

PLASTIC - Other

PLASTIC - Food container or utensil

PAPER/PAPERBOARD- Other

METAL - Other

GLASS - Other

MISCELLANEOUS - Total

PAPER/ PAPERBOARD - Food container or utensil

METAL - beverage container

GLASS - beverage container

PLASTIC - Non-alcoholic beverage container

PAPER/PAPERBOARD - Publication

And refer to <http://www.kab.org.au/litter-research/what-we-do/national-litter-index/>

Key marine debris statistics

- Marine litter poses a vast and growing threat to the marine and coastal environment. Around 8 million items of litter enter the marine environment every day. ¹
- An estimated 70 per cent of marine litter ends up on the sea bed, 15 per cent on beaches and the remaining floats to the surface. ¹
- An estimated 80% of marine debris is from land based sources 20% sea based. These sources fall into four major groups: ¹
 - Tourism related - food/beverage packaging etc
 - Waste/stormwater - ex stormwater drains, sewer overflows etc
 - Fishing related - lines, nets etc
 - Ship/boat related - waste/garbage deliberately or accidentally dumped overboard
- It is estimated three times as much rubbish is dumped into the world's oceans annually as the weight of fish caught. ⁵
- Plastic bags on the ocean floor take 10-20 years to decompose. Plastic bottles take much longer. Because of this, one piece can kill more than one animal. An animal killed by swallowing plastic will decompose long before the plastic does, leaving the plastic free to kill again. ¹
- A survey by Ocean Watch Australia on Australian beach debris attributed 14% of debris to commercial fishing and 8% to recreational fishing activities. ⁶
- Available information indicates at least 77 species of marine wildlife found in Australian waters and at least 267 marine species worldwide, are affected by entanglement in or ingestion of marine debris, including 86% of all sea turtles species, 44% of all seabird species and 43% of all marine mammal species. ⁷

Further statistics available from the KAB Week web pages at www.kab.org.au

*Sources: 1: Marine Litter - An Analytical Overview – UNEP 2005; 5: Faris, J& K. Hart (1995) Seas of Debris: A summary of the Third International Conference on Marine Debris, Alaska Fisheries Science Centre, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
6: Queensland Department of Environment & Resource Management 7: GhostNets Australia*

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