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Queensland "Disgrace" in National Litter Index

Queensland is the most littered mainland state, according to the latest Keep Australia Beautiful figures.

The Sunshine State is 15 percent higher than the national average, with Tasmania the only worse performer.

Commenting on the figures today, the CEO of Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland, Mr Rick Burnett, said it was time for a new awareness campaign to change the culture of Queenslanders who litter.

"It is a lazy and thoughtless habit, that has far-reaching consequences for the environment," Burnett said.

He said Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland had already been talking with State Minister of Environment and Sustainability, Hon. Kate Jones, about a new publicity and media campaign to change the behaviour of serial litterers.

The poor Queensland performance is highlighted in the release of the Keep Australia Beautiful "National Litter Index", compiled annually by McGregor Tan Research, which audits litter twice yearly at 1059 sites across Australia.

Site categories include beaches, carparks, highways, industrial, parks, residential, retail and shopping centres. Litter items are counted and volumes are recorded in sample areas of 1000 square metres.

Queensland and Australia's worst litter item remains cigarette butts. Other

problem items include plastic bags and bottles, paper, cardboard, metals and glass.

“Cigarette butts are Queensland’s disgrace,” Burnett said.

“We are nearly 20 percent above the national average for butts being dropped on the ground.

“It’s estimated Australians smoke 20 billion cigarettes a year and it’s estimated 7 billion are littered.

“One in 10 butts on the ground, are washed into drains and into our waterways and oceans – that’s 700 million butts threatening sea-life and birdlife that mistake butts as food.

“Queensland has the best beaches and coastlines and we should be the best performer not the worst.”

The figures showed general litter on Queensland beaches was up in volume by 100 percent on last year. (3.80 litres/1000 sm up from 1.84 litres in 2008/09)

Burnett said Keep Australia Beautiful would soon be starting new campaigns to combat litter and “butt litter” in particular.

He praised a reduction in litter in residential areas, saying recycling and neighbourhood pride had been helping keep our suburban streets cleaner.

“But on the open roads and in industrial and shopping precincts there was still a lot of work to be done,” Burnett said.

“Food and drink packaging remain the most discarded larger items – people have to learn to carry these items until they see a bin.

“It’s common sense, and a courtesy to everyone else to keep public places clean.

“It also saves rates and taxes on collection and fuel costs, and it reduces the

carbon footprint and protects the greater environment.

"We all need reminding to "Do the right thing",” Burnett said.

The results showed Victoria (50 items per 1000 sm) was the best performer, followed by ACT (51), SA (54), National Average (66), NT (70), WA (71), NSW (75), Qld (76) and Tasmania (86).

The National Litter Index is sponsored by Federal and State governments and the National Packaging Covenant Industry Association. The full results of the index are available on the Keep Australia Beautiful website www.kab.org.au .

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