



## **Media Release**

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### **Litter...Dropped on Land, Kills at Sea**

#### **Queensland – worst “killer” while boasting “best beach”**

Queensland is reportedly the worst sea-life “killer community” of all mainland Australian states when it comes to “marine debris”.

Keep Australia Beautiful Week starts today, with dramatic and disappointing figures showing Queensland is the only mainland state going backwards in the fight against litter and “marine debris” – litter that ends up in our oceans and kills our sea and birdlife.

Eighty percent of marine debris comes from the land in Australia, with an estimated 8 million items a day entering the marine environment.

The 2011 National Litter Index, compiled by Keep Australia Beautiful, shows that across 983 sites nationally, Queensland is the most littered mainland State – again!

“It’s a disgrace that Queensland is the only State NOT improving in litter behavior,” KAB Queensland CEO, Rick Burnett said.

“Nationally, the total amount of litter, counted by item and volume, recorded a drop overall, but in Queensland both volume and number of items of litter were up on last year.”

“Queensland is the only place this has happened - we are up 3 percent in item numbers and 5 percent in volume. By comparison Victoria was down 20 percent in both items and volume.”

Long-time chairman of KABQ, Professor Tor Hundloe, said he was “disgusted” by the evidence he regularly sees around the state and on freeways and highways.

“It is very disappointing for Queensland to be failing in this green age, and the government has been slow to act, as this backward trend in Queensland has been reported for two years running,” Prof Hundloe said. “It is about educating people of all ages that littering is an irresponsible behavior.”

Burnett said the only good news for Queensland is that action is expected soon, with the State Government promising KABQ it would be involved in new awareness campaigns.

“KABQ will play a part in the government’s new Waste Reduction and Recycling legislation and strategy due to take effect in December,” Burnett said.

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“The sad thing is the lack of messages over the past 10 to 20 years. A generation has missed out on ‘doing the right thing’.”

Cigarette butts were the most littered item again this year, with Queensland again topping the mainland states. An estimated 7-Billion butts are littered in Australia each year, with one-in-10 of those – 700 million – ending up in the ocean.

“It’s encouraging that our beachside communities are getting the message,” Burnett said.

“Litter on our beaches is down in number and volume according to the Litter Index this year. And by happy coincidence, Queensland saw a reward for this earlier this year, winning the national KAB Clean Beach competition, with Tallebudgera leading the country and showing our beach communities are doing the right thing.”

The biggest increases in Queensland litter, were recorded at shopping centres and carparks (both up in volume and number), highways (up in number, down in volume) and recreation parks (down in number up in volume). Marginal increases were noted at residential and industrial sites (both down in numbers but up in volume).

Keep Australia Beautiful warned that widespread flooding and wet conditions may have also reduced the actual litter figures, by washing away litter items from streets, into storm water drains and waterways, further compounding the marine debris problem.

This not only moved the litter items from the NLI count, but made it a worse year in terms of marine pollution and maiming or killing marine mammals and other wildlife.

According to Burnett, each year millions of cigarette butts, plastic and glass containers, food packaging and fishing gear make their way into our oceans and rivers through storm water drains, or by being left on beaches and river banks.

“Litter is costly and ugly on land, but it is also deadly when it reaches our waterways, so Keep Australia Beautiful Week this year is focused on ‘where our litter ends up’.”

And as much of this marine debris comes from inland gutters, drains and waterways leading from the land to the sea, this has prompted the KAB Week motto this year: ‘Litter on the land, kills at sea’.

“This pollution can be deadly to marine mammals and birds that ingest or get entangled in this litter. At least 77 species of wildlife found in Australian waters are affected, with sea turtles, seabirds, dolphins and sea lions being particularly vulnerable,” Burnett said.

**“This is such an avoidable problem that we can all reduce, 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.

The Hungry Jack’s ‘Bag it and Bin it’ program is Principal Sponsor of Keep Australia Beautiful Week, with 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](http://www.kab.org.au)

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<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. <sup>1</sup>
- 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. <sup>1</sup>
- An estimated 80% of marine debris is from land based sources 20% sea based. These sources fall into four major groups: <sup>1</sup>
  - 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. <sup>5</sup>
- 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. <sup>1</sup>
- A survey by Ocean Watch Australia on Australian beach debris attributed 14% of debris to commercial fishing and 8% to recreational fishing activities. <sup>6</sup>
- 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. <sup>7</sup>

**Further statistics available from the KAB Week web pages at**

[www.kab.org.au](http://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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