

NEWS

Alarming upward trend in highway littering

Tassie's clean green image being trashed

By CHRIS PIPPOS
REGIONAL Tasmania is at risk of earning a reputation as one of the filthiest places in Australia in terms of roadside litter, following damning results of a national litter survey. Results for 2009-2010, showing the volume of litter found alongside Tasmania's regional highways was more than double the national average, suggest the dob in a litterbug hotline has failed to protect the state's clean green image. It was the first time litter data for regional highways has been included in the Keep Australia Beautiful National Litter Index, which routinely surveys litter at 1059 sites across Australia. During the past two years the litter count in Tasmania has increased "considerably" in relation to the national average.

The poor result also applied to retail and industrial areas, parks and beaches. Joel French, 16, was so disgusted with rubbish dumped and buried at Somerset Beach recently that he took photos of the mess. He said the litter problem was not getting any better at the location. "Every time I walk down there and go for a swim I find handfuls of rubbish to take to the bins," Joel said. "It's been a constant problem for years and it's not getting better that's for sure— it's horrible." Environment Minister David O'Byrne described the index result as "disheartening" and "disappointing" to see Tasmania slip behind the nation average, adding he had "referred this matter to the Waste Advisory Committee for urgent advice".

Mr O'Byrne also urged the public to do in litter bugs. Between January 2008 and August 2010, 2067 litter reports have been made by complainants, resulting in 949 infringement notices and 105 written warnings being issued. Keep Australia Beautiful Tasmania chairman Ken Stewart said he was dismayed at the amount of rubbish on our highways. "There seems to have been a gradual cultural shift that the strong message of Do the Right Thing with litter is not getting through," Mr Stewart said. Cigarette butts were the most common litter item. Plastics, paper, cardboard and metal also increased. The public can report littering by calling 1300 135 513.
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GARBAGE: Joel French, of Somerset, with rubbish thrown in the undergrowth at Somerset beach. Tasmania's roadsides are becoming the filthiest in Australia.