

# Fact Sheet

## Litter

*Litter is 'rubbish on the run' - items disposed of irresponsibly and deposited where they are not meant to be.*

Litter can be rubbish that escapes from overfilled bins or those without lids; rubbish found in gutters or on the ground in public spaces, such as parks and playgrounds; or materials found floating in waterways.

Common types of litter include cigarette butts, plastic straws, chip packets, bottle caps, fast-food packaging, pieces of broken glass and plastic, sandwich wrap and larger objects like appliances, scrap steel, tyres and car bodies. New sources of litter are becoming increasingly evident as changes in our lifestyles occur. Increased consumption of take-away food, more unsolicited advertising materials and the introduction of automatic teller machines are examples of lifestyle and technology changes that produce more litter.

### How litter impacts our environment

Litter is an issue that faces every town and city throughout Australia. Litter not only impacts the immediate environment, but potentially impacts wider surrounding catchments and environments, including the flora and fauna within these environments.

The most common item of litter in Australia is the cigarette butt, which leaches toxins into our waterways and soil, taking up to 15 years to breakdown. More than seven million butts enter our environment every year.

### Litter Prevention and YOU

There are many things YOU CAN DO to assist in litter prevention, including:

- Never litter and always use a bin to dispose of rubbish
- Make sure your friends and family pick up their litter
- Pick up the litter of others – someone has to do it
- Contact your council and find out the latest litter projects - run a local anti-litter campaign using posters, stickers etc.
- Find out about the community groups concerned about litter in your area
- Organise your own litter project by contacting Keep Australia Beautiful or Clean Up Australia

### Eliminating litter has become an environmental priority because litter:

- Can choke and strangle wildlife such as birds and animals
- Impacts on the quality of our water
- Pollutes our open spaces, making streets, parks and waterways look dirty/untidy
- Blocks drains and waterways
- Costs the community time and money to clean up every year
- Can be dangerous to people, particularly when it involves items such as broken glass, needles and syringes
- May be a fire hazard (lit cigarettes being thrown from vehicles)
- Is a waste of valuable and recoverable resources and materials
- Can be highly toxic to plants, animals and humans

### Groups/associations you can contact:

Cigarette Butt Litter Organisation  
[cigarettelitter.org](http://cigarettelitter.org)

Clean Up Australia  
[cleanup.com.au](http://cleanup.com.au)

Global Marine Litter Information Gateway  
[unep.org/regionalseas/marinelitter/](http://unep.org/regionalseas/marinelitter/)

Keep Australia Beautiful  
[keepaustraliabeautiful.org.au](http://keepaustraliabeautiful.org.au)

Planet Ark  
[planetark.org](http://planetark.org)

