

NSW Litter Prevention Kit

Run an effective litter prevention project



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Published by:

Environment Protection Authority
59 Goulburn Street, Sydney NSW 2000
PO Box A290, Sydney South NSW 1232
Phone: (02) 9995 5000 (switchboard)
Phone: 131 555 (environment information and publications requests)
Fax: (02) 9995 5999
TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask for 131 555
Speak and listen users: phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 131 555
Email: litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au
or info@environment.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

Report pollution and environmental incidents
Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only) or info@environment.nsw.gov.au
See also www.epa.nsw.gov.au

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Run an effective litter prevention project

To effectively tackle littering you need to:

1. understand your litter problem before you act
2. use a mix of 5 approaches:
 - improved infrastructure
 - community awareness and education
 - engage council, other partners and the community
 - enforcement
 - clean-up and cleaning practices
3. know how you will measure your effectiveness
4. find partners to help
5. celebrate your achievements.

Understand your litter problem before you act

Introducing the Local Litter Check

The *Local Litter Check* has been developed to provide evidence about what contributes to people littering in an area. This will help to identify what is working locally to prevent litter, help you

build a competitive project to secure funding, and encourage participation and support from local organisations.

The *Local Litter Check* looks at the features of a local site that is relatively free of litter and is clean, and a second site where litter is a problem – a litter hot spot. Looking at the clean site helps to identify what is working locally and provides a contrast to problems in the hot spot. In both clean and hot spot locations, the same 3 steps are repeated to help you:

- increase your understanding of local problems and solutions
- provide evidence and data about the issues contributing to your litter hot spot and help you work out where to focus your efforts
- start building a case with evidence to show your project's likely value and return for effort/investment.

The full set of *Local Litter Check* guides and forms are available on the EPA website (epa.nsw.gov.au/litter).

The three *Local Litter Check* steps are summarised below. Each has a separate form to capture relevant information which is then summarised into a single Results Summary form.

It is important to read the *Introducing the Local Litter Check* guide and the *How to do your Local Litter Check* guide first. These guides will help you complete your *Local Litter Check* and the following steps and corresponding forms. Easy-to-follow videos are available for each step.



Five easy to follow how-to videos have been developed to help you with your local litter check:

1. Introducing the *Local Litter Check*
2. Preparation and Location Inspection
3. Litter Count
4. Location User Survey
5. Summary results

You can view these videos and download the *Local Litter Check* guide and forms at epa.nsw.gov.au/litter

Step 1: Location Inspection

This step involves inspecting the location using the *Location Inspection* form. You complete a checklist of questions assessing the key features of the location including cleaning, infrastructure (e.g. bins, signage), enforcement, community use and perceptions about the site. This step helps you to become familiar with the location as a whole, to understand what is happening and how the area is used.

Step 2: Litter Count

The *Litter Count* form collects detailed information on all litter found in a small, 48m² area of the location (the count area) that you have chosen as a broad representation of the whole location. This step helps you understand how much litter is at the location and the main types of litter. It can also help you to identify possible sources of litter.

You can also download the *Local Litter Check* guide and forms and view the how-to videos at epa.nsw.gov.au/litter

Step 3: Location User Survey

The *Location User Survey* form helps you to understand how other people see the location. Talking with the community helps to check some of your assumptions about the location and its litter issues. It gives you another perspective and can provide ideas on how the location might be improved to reduce littering.

Using the data to design your project

There are some simple sums and calculations to work out your results for each step that are then summarised into a *Results Summary* form. *How to do a Local Litter Check* provides guidance on how to do this.

The *Results Summary* form helps you to make sense of your findings, compare your locations and organise your results so you can persuade and involve others. For example, it will help you identify:

- aspects that are working and seem to be helping to prevent litter
- the total litter count and main litter items
- location features that may 'encourage' people to litter
- how people use the location
- what you learned from people using the location that might help with litter prevention.

Your results provide key data and information (evidence) that you can use to build a case to support the ideas and activities you have in mind for a litter prevention project. It will help with:

- what seems to be working locally to prevent litter and how those ideas might be used to help fix littered areas e.g. litter signs in your clean location may be undamaged with less graffiti than in your hot spot location, so you might suggest replacing damaged signs
- showing you the differences between your clean and hot spot location e.g. one may have well maintained features compared to the other where there is a clear need for attention, such as hidden or overgrown areas that trap litter



Your results provide key data and information (evidence) that you can use to build a case to support the ideas and activities you have in mind for a litter prevention project.

- identifying targets you might realistically set to reduce litter in your hot spot location e.g. if it was highly littered, a 15 per cent reduction in litter might be a reasonable target for a project
- identifying what could be done to improve the interaction between people using the location and the features of the place
- providing ideas on how you could make it easier for people to feel good about the location and encourage them to be involved in keeping the location litter free.

Choose actions that will succeed

Use a mix of 5 key approaches

The many reasons why people litter means there are also many possible ways to influence their behaviour.

Using a combination of approaches is more effective than relying on a single strategy. Knowing about local strengths and challenges will make litter prevention activities more effective.

Five key approaches to reduce littering are:

1. improving infrastructure
2. raising community awareness and educating about litter
3. engaging people in a sense of pride and ownership of a location through partnerships and local involvement
4. lifting your enforcement profile
5. cleaning up the location, keeping it cleaner and removing graffiti.



1. Improving infrastructure

One of the keys to long-term behaviour change and reducing litter is to make it easy for people to 'do the right thing' by establishing or improving physical infrastructure.

The improvements and infrastructure you need will depend on litter type, location and target audiences. Infrastructure includes bins (litter, butt and recycling) and signage.

It also includes repairing or improving the furniture, landscaping or other location amenities and adding or removing bins.

Signage on its own it won't reduce litter but it can be a good tool as part of a mix of approaches. Effective signage can:

- inform people that littering is not wanted or welcome, e.g. HEY TOSSER! Wollongong is yours to enjoy, put it in the bin.
- educate people about the impacts of litter e.g. Litter damages our waterways, bushland and wildlife. Don't be a tosser, take your rubbish with you.
- inform and educate people that fines apply and that that litterers are being watched e.g. Fines average \$200. Don't be a tosser, put it in the bin.
- be a call to action for witnesses to report litterers e.g. Fines average \$200. Report litterers: [phone number].
- encourage particular behaviour e.g. HEY TOSSER! You know it's wrong. Every time you litter it gets noticed. Don't be a tosser, put it in the bin.

Research indicates that when signs appear along roadsides in a series, they build the message as motorists pass by. A sign appearing once only on a stretch of road won't be effective.

Drivers also pay less attention to signs that are over used. Use fixed roadside signs sparingly to avoid a reduced effect. Don't combine messaging about acts of litter and illegal dumping because people see these as two different issues.

Ideas for action

- Help people feel positive about the location.
- Improve maintenance of infrastructure, e.g. fix broken, dangerous fixtures and furniture, improve landscaping and boundary markers.
- Improve presentation and visibility of bins.
- Move bins to better locations (observe how bins are used).
- Increase frequency of emptying bins.
- Improve bin configuration.
- Strategically install more bins where evidence shows there is a need (select type to match)
 - litter bin
 - butt bin
 - recycling bin
 - hazardous bin
 - dog bag bin.
- Remove unused bins.
- Consider new/additional gross pollutant traps to stop litter reaching waterways.
- Think about how signage could contribute to more positive behaviour.



2. Raising community awareness and educating about litter

Raising awareness and educating your community is a key part of your litter prevention project. This can influence peoples' motivations and support them to choose not to litter. Good education approaches encourage people to dispose of their litter appropriately and responsibly. These can include feedback, rewards, privileges and other incentives, information and ways to participate and get involved. Raising awareness and education can also build community engagement and support for litter prevention actions.

Before you start, you need to know exactly:

Who are you trying to reach?

Describe your target audience and list everything you know about them: their age, interests, clubs, language, locations they use, people they respect or that might influence them, how they get information, who they mix with.

This can help identify the best way to reach your target audience. For example:

- the local youth club or skate park
- fishing shop or car club
- cinema advertisements or local radio
- community gardens or clubs
- local takeaway stores and other traders
- messages at the location you are targeting
- tourist information centres or visitor areas
- mother's groups, child care centres.

Case studies might provide you with some other ideas. If your message doesn't get to the groups you are trying to influence (your target audience), you are wasting your effort.

Clearly define your one message and stick to it. Multiple messages confuse and dilute the effect of the program.

Case studies are available by emailing a request to: litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au

What do you want people to do?

Have a call to action. Do you want people to use the bins provided? Take their rubbish home? Report litterers? Participate in a cleanup? Adopt a site?

As part of this, also think about giving feedback to your target audience. How will your community know if things are getting better so they are encouraged to continue? (The section *Celebrating, providing feedback and sharing your results* on page 15 will help).

Ideas for action

- Publicise clean location results.
- Engage locals in acknowledging and praising local people that are doing their bit to prevent litter.
- After clean-ups, conduct promotional activities and events to build pride in target locations. This helps to focus on achievements and builds a sense of community.
- Consider localised neighbourhood precinct activity to involve the immediate community.



Raising awareness and education can also build community engagement and support for litter prevention actions.

- Improve signs (presentation, translations and position).
- Promote the findings of your own *Local Litter Check* to get people thinking.
- Support and encourage local groups to do a *Local Litter Check* and adopt their own areas.
- Publicise the number of fines issued locally (also see *Lifting your enforcement profile* on page 11).
- Use council and other local communication channels including businesses and community organisations.
- Put links on websites to available resources, information and project stories.
- Consider partnerships with organisations and schools based on their immediate local surroundings.
- Use low cost promotion and advertising – i.e. local radio and newspapers, community service announcements.
- Look at successes and ideas from other people's litter projects (across NSW or elsewhere). Learn from and adapt approaches to suit your local community.
- Incorporate litter awareness into community and environmental events and educational activities.
- Increase awareness of the impact of litter among businesses, e.g. in laneways or in specific precincts.
- Consider competitions e.g. a school competition to produce artwork or a digital commercial that promotes anti-litter messages to a youth audience through media, such as YouTube, Facebook and Battle of the Bands.
- Understand and incorporate cultural issues relating to litter and littering as part of educational outreach activities. Use bilingual education and promotion resources where appropriate.
- Display the volume of litter collected over a period of time at your site, to make it visible and tangible for the community.
- Take advantage of captive audiences. For example, screen a video or use audio announcements to convey your message to public transport passengers (ferries, buses etc.).
- Distribute scripts for and encourage announcements of anti litter messages at the beach, clubs and special events or local attractions. Where appropriate, this could be done in multiple languages.
- Get businesses, community and other stakeholders together to celebrate project milestones. Promote the benefits of these achievements through good news stories.
- Use incentives to get people involved (e.g. certificates of participation, movie passes etc.). Think about what is important to people and what makes their participation worth while.
- Use existing networks to promote your work – local newsletters, chambers of commerce etc.
- Build a good relationship with local journalists/media to help promote your project successes and milestones. Link with well-known local identities to capture media interest.
- Use the *Hey Tosser!* creative materials and link your project with the state-wide message. This helps with greater exposure and recall of a common message that people will become familiar with.



Increase awareness of the impact of litter among businesses, e.g. in laneways or in specific precincts.

3. Engaging people in a sense of pride and ownership of a place through partnerships and local involvement

Different groups working together to prevent littering can send a powerful message that your local area is important and valued. This can help influence people's decision not to litter. The message can be reinforced in many places and through many channels for example, in local shops, sporting and special interest clubs, recreation areas, signage and events and through council. If a key part of the community is most affected by or responsible for the litter problem, they are an essential target.

Creating a sense of pride and ownership can mean that people may litter an area less. Changes in infrastructure can help this such as new bins, how they are maintained and their placement. How can you make your problem area a nicer place to be in?

Ideas for action

- Get different business units in council and different community organisations together.
- Find out which areas your community thinks are the worst littered areas e.g. major events, night life areas, back streets, alleyways or recreation spots. Sponsor some local litter checks to allow groups to test their perceptions.
- Get residents and council people together to explore and discuss the problem and develop complementary approaches to tackle hot spots. Give the community something it wants e.g. new bins.

- Identify and support existing community pride programs that relate to litter prevention and management such as Tidy Towns, Clean Beaches and plastic bag reduction initiatives.
- Promote and support involvement of local groups in litter prevention grants programs for local government and non-government organisations.
- Encourage and support community groups and schools to work with local businesses to be involved in and sponsor activities.
- Involve schools by encouraging them to participate in the project. Involve them in all aspects, starting with design, implementation and evaluation.
- If you are working with a small population, use community surveys as a way to get the whole community involved to understand what their issues are.
- Involve fast food outlets and use messaging/promotional opportunities in drive-throughs etc.
- When approaching corporates (e.g. fast food/retail) to participate, engage with decision makers at the corporate/management/franchise level. Use your *Local Litter Check* results to show them why they should be involved.
- Hold competitions to name improved sections of your target location eg refurbished picnic facilities. Hold a morning tea at the location to celebrate.



Creating a sense of pride and ownership can mean that people may litter an area less.

4. Lifting your enforcement profile

Litter prevention is most successful when the educational and infrastructure components of a program are backed up by enforcement.

Litter prevention programs can include consequences e.g. building the thought 'I will be caught' and that penalties and prosecution can result. But enforcement is not just about catching and prosecuting people. Enforcement needs to be visible to the local neighbourhood. Public awareness that littering laws are being enforced and are resulting in fines and the likelihood of being named and shamed publicly also makes this component work.

You can also use enforcement and fines in interesting and positive ways. These can be just as effective.

Ideas for action

- Involve enforcement officers early and throughout the process.
- Promote the existence of litter fines via amnesties, mock fines and litter reporting rewards.
- Consider an amnesty approach and only fine people who are caught by enforcement officers and who don't clean up after being caught.
- Encourage enforcement officers to initially provide information on fines instead of fining people (for a period of time).
- Increase the amount of time council officers dedicate to enforcing littering laws in hot spot areas.
- Allow/encourage your community to do in a litterer, maybe through a local web site. Send warning letters to offenders.
- Promote action taken by council against litterers and littering.
- Engage local magistrates in your program. Develop a community clean-up program for offenders. Talk to magistrates about awarding clean-up time for offenders instead of fines.
- Support enforcement within council. Run staff information sessions to help promote littering awareness and behaviour change.
- Promote good practice actions such as tying down loads and improved collection or contractor practices.
- Do walk-throughs (out of uniform).
- Think about programs such as 'ranger for a day' – people in council get to be a ranger for a day and experience enforcement first-hand.
- Run training or refresher programs for compliance officers/ rangers to bring them on-board.
- Consider combining vehicle and litter enforcement and target meeting places such as takeaway areas.
- Use signage to deter or to identify and warn offenders.

Litter prevention is most successful when the educational and infrastructure components of a program are backed up by enforcement.

5. Cleaning up the location and keeping it clean

To help establish or build community pride in an area, you may choose to clean it up and remove graffiti. However this is not a silver bullet. You need to combine it with the other approaches above to reduce littering. Cleaning up is not a litter prevention strategy and 'Clean Up' is not a litter prevention message. Continuous cleaning up can cause fatigue amongst those doing the work and doesn't effect or change the behaviour or attitudes of those doing the littering.

Ideas for action

- Increase frequency/better targeting/timing of regular cleaning services.
- Review graffiti removal programs and ensure rapid response once an area is cleaned.
- Engage council, local volunteers, businesses and community groups in initial clean-ups and mapping of clean-up activities.
- Target specific problem litter types for clean-up e.g. chewing gum and dog poo.
- Engage with existing programs for example Keep Australia Beautiful NSW, Clean Up Australia day or organise your own one day/multiple day blitzes or clean-ups.
- Minimise blown litter from bins or other sources.
- Link with external services that could help out, for example correctional services may be able to support clean-up activities.

Case studies – examples of what worked and what didn't

The case studies provide stories and examples to show how various combinations of approaches have been used and what they achieved. Not all of the approaches worked as well as people hoped they would but you can learn just as much from these as from highly effective interventions. Once you have done your project, write your own story so others can learn from you. The template is provided as a Word document. For a copy of the template and case study examples, you can send an email request to: litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au



To help establish or build community pride in an area, you may choose to clean it and remove graffiti.

Finding partners, funders and supporters

Who can you involve in preventing litter in your local area?

There are many people and groups you might be able to involve in your litter project. Just find out how you can link it to something they care about or that is part of their own work or focus. They may also align well with a target market that you have identified (the users of the area).

Litter may not be a concern to them per se but it could still be affecting them. For example by:

- making their job harder to do e.g. roadside or park maintenance
- diverting money to clean-up that could be used for more important things
- affecting potential customers, clients and local reputation
- affecting tourism and visitors to the area
- deterring new club members or participants in events
- affecting health and well being of people that live in or use an area.

Think about how your potential partner or supporter might see a reduction in litter as helping them. When you approach them, you will be able to talk to them about things that matter to them.

You can use the *Results Summary* form from your *Local Litter Check* to talk to your potential partners and supporters. This one page

summary provides data and a clear snapshot to demonstrate why you think your proposed litter prevention project will work. The *Results Summary* form can also be used as part of any funding application you prepare.

In particular, involving local businesses in a litter prevention program is in most cases essential. They interact with the public, run premises where people gather, and they can be outlets for program materials, advocates and litter reporters. Traders can promote your litter prevention project and messages to their customers and clients. They can be your eyes and ears. They may even be the focus of your behaviour change efforts.

Look for ways to involve all your supporters, funders and partners in promotion and publicity so they all receive recognition.

If you want to involve local schools, talk to the local environment centre or someone at the school to understand how best to link in and what the current school priorities are. Schools have many pressures and responsibilities so it may not be the right time for them. Think about whether a good way to connect is through the local Parents and Citizens committee.

Getting funding to support your project

Sponsorships and funding take time to organise so engagement with organisations or individuals needs to start very early. Think about what's important to your potential funder and what information they need to know.

Costs and benefits of any investment are always important to a potential funder. Think about ways that you can demonstrate the benefit that the funder will get from supporting the project.



There are many people and groups you might be able to involve in your litter project.

Good communication all the way

Good working relations within your organisation and with external organisations and the community is one of the keys to a successful litter prevention program.

If you work within a council, remember that different business groups within council can all benefit from reduced litter in their community. This includes areas such as enforcement, cleaning, parks and gardens, communications, engineering, environmental health, urban planning and community health and well being.

As the program owner, you need to raise and maintain awareness. Circulate background information, organise meetings, have casual chats with knowledgeable or influential people, and at all times aim to secure the support of executive managers and councillors.

If you don't work in council, make sure you talk to key people in council as well as exploring other networks and talking to or seeking the support of influential people within key local groups and organisations.

Measuring success

Collecting before and after data

In order to measure how effective your project actions are, you need to collect before-and-after measure(s) so you can quantify or clearly describe what has happened as a result of your efforts.

Your *Local Litter Check* provides a good start. The 3 steps in the *Local Litter Check* can be repeated to assess your progress and the success of your program or activity. You can see if the litter count numbers and types have changed. You can also use your location inspection and user surveys to see if the use of and perceptions of the site have changed as a result of your work.

This will provide hard evidence to your community, supporters and funders to identify what has worked as a result of your efforts, what hasn't, and the likely reasons why. Any achievements can then be confidently repeated in other places and future problems minimised.

Some other ideas for gathering tangible data are listed below. The ones you choose would depend on whether the measure is relevant to your actual project.

- Number of litter hotspots, or their changing locations.
- Number of reports made to the council regarding litter.
- Type and number of warnings and infringement notices issued.
- Quantity and type of litter collected by contractors and council crews.
- Number of people participating in Clean Up Australia Day or other litter related community events.



The 3 steps in the Local Litter Check can be repeated to assess your progress and the success of your program or activity.

You can also download the *Local Litter Check* guide and forms and view the how-to videos at epa.nsw.gov.au/litter

- The number of organisations committed to preventing litter – e.g. via pledges or a form of public commitment
- The extent to which individuals and organisations maintain clean properties and surrounds.

Other ways to measure achievements

No matter who is part of your project, you can evaluate the success of your relationships, your partnerships and the way the program has been run. Areas to consider are listed below. In each case gather information or data to illustrate and support your answer:

Appropriateness – Did the program stay focussed on its intended outcomes and objectives? Did everyone understand/ have the same outcomes? What would you do differently?

Effectiveness – How well did the processes and partnerships used for the program work? What would you do differently?

Efficiency – Could resources have been used in better ways? Was it good value for effort and \$'s invested? What would you do differently?

Management – Was the program well managed? Think about coordination, decision making, support for partnerships and collaboration between different groups? What would you do differently?

Celebrating, providing feedback and sharing results

No matter what you are trying to learn or do in life, if you don't get any feedback on how you are doing, it is hard to keep motivated. Every one needs feedback.

Provide information back to your community about the progress and successes in reducing litter, particularly to groups you are trying to influence. Don't forget to say thank you, recognise achievements and describe or show the changes that are happening.

Think about what your community, supporters and target audience needs to know to keep them motivated and what are the best ways to get the message to them (see raising awareness ideas above).

Ideas for action

Set some key milestones or targets so you can celebrate meeting these and share what is happening with others in your community. This could include:

- reaching a certain number of participants
- reaching a particular target for reducing a particular litter type e.g. cigarette butts
- gaining funding support or new partners
- installing or improving infrastructure
- getting positive feedback from location users
- publicising the winner of a competition
- recognising and sharing the efforts of particular individuals or groups who are helping solve the litter problem.



Case study template

When you finish your project, share your experience and achievements with others. A case study template and case study examples are available by sending an email request to:

litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au

Education and community engagement

Research to inform the new messages

Before developing messages and resources for this Litter Prevention Kit, the Office of Environment and Heritage NSW, on behalf of EPA, commissioned a research company to do 10 focus groups across the state.

The groups were structured according to basic attitudes and behaviours around littering, as per the qualitative research conducted for the *Don't be a tosser* campaign. This involved screening people based on perceptions of the importance of litter as an issue and reported littering behaviour.

Focus groups were conducted with people who view litter as a very important issue and reportedly never litter ('non-litterers'); people who view litter as a fairly important issue and reportedly litter occasionally ('occasional litterers'), and people who view litter as an unimportant issue and who admit to sometimes or frequently littering ('heavier litterers'). Across the ten groups, 81 participants were included in the research. Each focus group had participants from only one of the 'litterer' categories to maximise the chances of honest, open discussion.

The research sought to:

- provide insights into awareness, knowledge and understanding of litter-based issues, including rules, regulations and fines

- get a better understanding of current attitudes towards litter, including perceptions of what constitutes litter
- explore current reactions to the anti-littering messaging
- compare the relevance and effectiveness of a range of different, recent education and awareness campaigns:
 - Don't be a tosser
 - Don't Waste Australia
 - Do The Right Thing, Use the Right Bin
 - Too Lovely to Litter
 - Healthy Waterways
- assess whether messaging around other waste disposal and recycling activities should be incorporated in anti-littering campaigns
- identify how messaging and delivery could be tailored to most effectively engage different audience groups.

The following sections provide an overview of what we learned. The full report¹ is available by request at litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au.



¹ Littering Strategy 2011–2016 Research, Prepared for Office of Environment and Heritage by IPSOS, Final Report, May 2012.

Attitudes to litter

- Litter is important but not a real priority relative to other issues:

'Personally I don't think it's a priority, but I think it's important. I do teach my children about littering so I think it's important but I wouldn't join a march and demonstration on it.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'I don't think littering itself is the big issue. I think the people who think it's a problem have higher expectations of what society should be like. So is it important? I think it is because I think that the attitude that comes behind littering and if you don't give a damn about it means you really don't give a damn about a lot of things. So I think it's a high priority.'

Occasional litterer, 16-29 years old, Grafton

'It's an afterthought, really. When you consider all the things you have to think about in a day.'

Heavier litterer, 30-plus years old, Sydney

'If it's connected to you, yes, you get upset.'

Heavier litterer, 30-plus years old, Sydney

'Depends on the situation. If the littering is happening outside your door step, it will become your priority to make sure it doesn't happen again. If it's happening 2km away from you in a park, you're not going to care.'

Arabic/Farsi speaker, Parramatta

What is litter and which litter is worst?

- Litter is viewed as anything big enough to be seen; some included illegal dumped material. Dumping of bigger material is much worse because you need to be premeditated (plan) to dump big items; it's not spontaneous or opportunistic
- Biodegradable not viewed as a problem:

'Yeah, I don't have as big a guilt leaving an apple core as a drink can. An apple gets rid of itself.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

Worst litter – butts, bottles, food packaging, plastic bags, plastic.

- Cigarette butts were most reviled for being unhygienic, difficult to clean up, a fire hazard, and for taking a long time to decompose.
- Plastic bottles were seen as one of the most common types of litter and one of the worst due to not biodegrading, being so visible, and being perceived by some as ending up in the waterways.
- Urban litter seems less noticeable than in natural environments.
- Participants noticed litter, particularly on or near public transport, in parks and when driving. Sports stadiums, shopping centres and food halls were also raised as examples of heavily littered areas:

'When I'm relaxing and going out, I'll notice litter whether I'm in a café, at the beach or going for a walk, I will notice it.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'I think it's more noticeable in a natural environment... It feels unnatural for it to be there but it fits into the city setting.'

Heavier litterer, 16-29 years old, Parramatta

Why litter?

- People litter because of:
 - lack of ownership or concern for others or for the environment
 - lack of repercussions or incentives
 - lack of awareness of impacts; main impacts of littering were thought to be aesthetic (visually untidy and dirty) and environmental (harming animals and wildlife).
- Other reasons given included: laziness, habit, can't be bothered to find a bin; not important, everyone does it, someone else will pick it up/creates employment; no-one will see; bins full or no bins so not my fault (i.e. forced to litter); ok because area already dirty, no-one cares so ok to add more; venues ok because it won't end up in environment; lack of consequences:

'My mum went off at me once and all I had done was thrown a pack of cigarettes out of the car. I said, "Mum, we pay taxes for people to... We pay taxes to the coppers and council and there's cleaners out there so technically we're getting our money's worth."

Heavier litterer, 16-29 years old, Parramatta

'I couldn't find a bin anywhere so how was I supposed to do the right thing?'

Non-litterer, 30-plus years old, Grafton

'If there's already litter there and there's piles of it. If you drop something on it, it doesn't feel so bad. Litter follows litter.'

Chinese/Vietnamese speaker, Parramatta

'I think with cigarettes, it's a habit. People finish and flick it or drop it. It's habitual.'

Non-litterers, 16-29 years old, Sydney

- Some frequent litterers said that they thought littering was the wrong thing to do, but continued to do it anyway, and attempted to justify their behaviour by blaming a lack of bins:

'When I can't find a bin and I'm not walking a mile to find a bin. It should be provided.'

Heavier litterer, 30-plus years old, Sydney

- Those who admitted to being 'frequent litterers' viewed litter as an unimportant issue. They were less concerned about admitting to littering various items and in various situations, and were less likely to attempt to justify it.
- This was also true of the Chinese/Vietnamese group, who were very open about their littering behaviour and did not make as many attempts to excuse it.
- Littering from the car was the most commonly given example of littering behaviour. This included littering food wrappers and drink bottles, cigarette butts and chewing gum, often in order to keep their car free from litter:

'Laziness. I suppose just wanting to keep the car clean. If somebody is getting into the car, I feel a bit embarrassed having it dirty. Laziness is a big part.'

Heavier litterer, 16-29 years old, Parramatta.

- Most people are prepared to litter if not seen. Littering on the sly is OK in groups so you're not obvious (covert is OK)
- Most say they would never litter in front of the kids – don't teach bad habits.
- People are concerned about judgement of others; so the social norm is about others disapproving; not that littering itself is the wrong thing to do:

'You do the sneaky little drop.'

Occasional litterer,
16-29 years old,
Grafton

'Drop it. Just keep walking.'

Occasional litterer, 16-29
years old, Grafton

'Probably in a group, I'd say I'm more likely. If there is no bin and someone else leaves their thing on a bench, then I probably would.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'You can hide behind anonymity in a group.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old,
Sydney

Reactions to litterers – bad but it's not us

- Litterers were viewed with disapproval by the vast majority of participants in the research, including those who dropped litter themselves.
 - Litterers were viewed as disrespectful, 'tossers' and 'pigs' BUT
 - Most people don't define themselves as 'litterers' because they claim to be forced into it by lack of/overcrowded bins etc
 - Litterers were generally viewed with disapproval, even among those who confessed to littering themselves (but they do not see themselves as a 'litterer'):
- More likely to say stuff to friends or indirectly (and loudly) to express disapproval
 - Many were annoyed if they see others litter but less so if they thought a person had tried to find a bin. Some feel it makes the littering ok and wouldn't confront for fear of reprisal:

'I find it disrespectful and arrogant that you would leave it.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'I'm not as bad as the people dumping. It's doing damage, like everything contributes but it's not as bad. It's small scale so it doesn't count.'

Heavier litterer, 16-29 years old, Parramatta.

'I'm not careless with my rubbish. I'm guilty of littering when I smoke. But I always do think afterwards, "Shit, I shouldn't have done that".'

Occasional litterer, 30-plus years old, Orange

'You know those TV ads where they're throwing stuff out the window and the girls are like, "Tosser." That's what they are.'

Occasional litterer, 16-29 years old, Grafton

'But if there is no bin around anywhere near them, it doesn't really bother me that much.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

Words used to describe litterers:

Arrogant Dirty
Irresponsible
Selfish
Lazy teenagers
Disrespectful
Inconsiderate
Tossers Ignorant
Feral Messy
Uneducated

Perceived gap between their own vs majority behaviour

In a written exercise, the 81 focus group participants were asked about their own behaviour in situations compared with what a typical NSW person would do:

- 1/5 (21 per cent) said they'd leave litter on seat or floor but said that 61 per cent of 'typical NSW residents' would do this. On public transport, 72 per cent said they'd carry their litter with them but that only 42 per cent of typical residents would
- 66 per cent said I usually carry till I find a bin but said that only 34 per cent of 'typical NSW residents' would do this
- 10 per cent said they'd throw from car window; but 28 per cent of 'typical NSW residents' would do this.

Knowledge and awareness of enforcement and fines

- Very little awareness of fines; big scepticism about actually being fined.
- There was a general lack of understanding about how to report littering, who to report it to, and what would happen if it was reported:

'They've got more things to worry about than rubbish.'

Heavier litterer, 30-plus years old, Sydney

'I don't understand how you could report it? Like on the spot, if someone was there to report it, fine. But it's not like you've got some sort of licence plate on a person. If there was a way, maybe.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'I'm originally from the country and if I was driving over the Blue Mountains and saw some idiot throw a cigarette out, I would find a way to dob them in because of the terrible bushfires through there and any country area. But elsewhere, I know it's wrong but I know it's not going to cause so much damage.'

Occasional litterer, 30-plus years old, Parramatta

'If I saw someone put their cup on the ground, I wouldn't call the police or anything. Who would you report it to?'

Heavier litterer, 30-plus years old, Sydney

Perceived Impacts of litter

- Most perceived a significant impact of littering to be its visual impact and the way it degrades an area. Aesthetic impacts of littering were the primary concern for many older participants (aged 30-plus), who spoke about how it looked unpleasant and untidy:

'It ruins the area where it is.'
Heavier litterer, 30-plus years old, Sydney

You've got to think of the impact if every person in the world dropped one piece of rubbish every day. It would be a pig sty.'
Occasional litterer, 30-plus years old, Parramatta

- For many, the environmental impacts of litter were associated with animals eating or being maimed by plastic bags or packaging:

Well, the turtles and all the animals and stuff in the sea.'
Occasional litterer, 30-plus years old, Orange

'Someone is going to burn it in a massive incinerator and more gases go into the atmosphere.'
Heavier litterer, 16-29 years old, Parramatta

'I think people need to know the consequences of their action to our lives. If we put a plastic bag down the gutter, it could kill a turtle or landfill will affect where we live. I think that's more effective than saying you'll be fined \$100. They know that 99 times out of 100, they're not going to get caught.'
Occasional litterer, 30-plus years old, Orange

'Also the effect on wildlife is what I find is the main one. The number of birds with the rings around their necks and turtles dying from plastic bags.'
Non-litterer, 30-plus years old, Grafton

Who should be educating about litter?

After some discussion, most groups said state government should oversight anti littering to promote consistent messages.

Reactions to creatives and messaging

The following images and messages were tested. The discussion of the creatives was always in the second half of the focus group following general discussion about litter. The creatives and messaging were all restricted to print executions typical of the campaign to ensure the ability to compare responses:

Don't Waste,
Product Stewardship Forum, Australia-wide 2002



Do the Right Thing,
Queensland Government
2011

Don't be a tosser,
NSW Government, 2005



Too Lovely to Litter,
Victorian Coastal Councils, 2010-11



Healthy Waterways,
Queensland
2010-2012



Findings

The delivery channels will require considerable thought. Litter is not resonating much as an issue. It is not a subject that anyone really wants to know about and is not high on anyone's environmental priority. Print media and outdoor will need to be supplemented with other ways to engage and awareness must be part of an integrated program.

- *Tosser* still has good recall and seen as effective but not the current (print) renditions which are seen as boring and unengaging. People want to see people; they like the humour and not the authoritarian approach; high recall. Reaction to the TV commercial was unanimously positive.
- Needs to have recognisable bins in the pictures (eg wheelie bins).
- Litter message and recycling don't mix; need to pick the key message, don't deliver both.
- If there's a particular iconic or beautiful areas in region, could use a "too lovely to litter" message but it doesn't work for most places; would also need to be local.
- People need to see litter [in the creatives], not clean spaces.
- Litter in waterways and the pathway of litter to rivers/ lakes/ocean is still powerful if the link is made with people swimming/being in those areas.
- Only low amounts of text are effective; people wont read much before losing interest.

Best channels for delivery of education and awareness

Most stressed the need for education and awareness to be part of an integrated strategy including enforcement and infrastructure (bins).

- People said they didn't want Facebook or emails or websites. Even signage had mixed responses.
- It was widely acknowledged that young people and adults still went on to litter despite being taught not to at school. It was therefore deemed as essential that any infrastructure measures were coupled with information campaigns, to provide constant reminders about not littering and to educate about the reasons for not doing so:

'I really like that 'Don't be a tosser' ad campaign. That's always stuck with me.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'The generation with the 'Do The Right Thing', we've got that going and there has been no full on campaign like that since.'

Non-litterer, 30-plus years old, Grafton

'I think it's a lifetime reminder because even us that are conscious of it, we still do it. So it would be a lifetime of reminding.'

Occasional litterer, 16-29 years old, Grafton

- In terms of the delivery of an anti-litter advertising campaign, reactions towards the idea of providing it online, including using Facebook, were almost entirely negative:

'You have to see it [when you are out and about] doing something else. It's not going to be something you hold out for.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'How many teenagers actually read a sign?'

Occasional litterer, 30-plus years old, Orange

'Not many people take notice of those kind of things. I think TV ads would be better because you're forced to sit there and watch it, whereas I can choose to look away from the signs.'

Heavier litterer, 16-29 years old, Parramatta

'I used to do that [drop litter from car] until my friend got a \$300 fine and got his driver's licence cut or something by policemen. That's really bad.'

Chinese/Vietnamese speaker, Parramatta

'Signage would only initially make a difference and then after a while, people just don't see it.'

Non-litterer, 30-plus years old, Grafton

Specific responses to Tossler

- Don't be a tosser* has the most potential to be revised into new materials. The print executions tested in the group discussions were unappealing, and would fail to catch their attention in outdoor environments or on print material. The responses point to what needs to be changed in the new *Hey Tossler!* materials:

'Well, I really like the slogan. 'Don't be a tosser' works for all of them.'

Occasional litterer, 30-plus years old, Orange

'I don't think it has any human emotion to it. It is a message that is direct and straight to the point but there is no emotion connected to it.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'I notice on the green one that it states clearly that there is a \$200 fine. I'm wondering whether younger ones do realise that fines are involved because it never happens and you never hear of it.'

Non-litterer, 30-plus years old, Grafton

'I like the line but the pictures don't make you go, "Oh, my God. That's terrible." The anti-smoking ones are "ouch"'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'I didn't mind the use of the word tosser. If people use it a lot and get it in their head, then it could be effective.'

Heavier litterer, 30-plus years old, Parramatta

'They weren't really eye catching.'

Heavier litterer, 16-29 years old, Orange

'No, not offensive. But I think it's trying to say you're being a wanker by being a tosser.'

Occasional litterer, 30-plus years old, Parramatta

- Participants from the selected culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) reacted positively to the slogan, although a small number failed to understand the double meaning
- A few participants stated the belief that the slogan wouldn't have any actual effect on littering behaviour, and was just a 'throw away' line without much actual impact. Some young participants reported that they would call a friend a tosser if they dropped something, but would not force them to pick the item up. Indeed some reported that this had been the case during previous *Don't be a tosser* campaigns:

'That's what I'm saying about the cool thing. You just want to say it but you don't want to stop doing it. You're just waiting for the moment to just throw the line out. It doesn't make you aware that it's terrible.'

Non-litterer, 16-29 years old, Sydney

'It's too light-hearted, yeah. When that ad was out, I was in high school and everyone just called each other tosser.'

Chinese/Vietnamese speaker,
Parramatta

Tosser TVC

Groups were shown one of the original *Don't be a tosser* TV commercials (TVC) at the end. Initial reactions to the TVC were almost unanimously positive. The humour involved in the ad was almost always the first aspect mentioned by participants when asked what they thought of it, although some other aspects were mentioned spontaneously. The ad was said by some to be more 'real' or more 'human' than the print executions:

'Puts more of a funny side of it. Print ads are more serious.'

Heavier litterer, 16-29 years old, Parramatta

Overall conclusions and recommendations from the research

Littering was viewed negatively, and no one wanted to be seen dropping litter. The perceived social norm among the participants in this research is to only litter covertly. There was a perception among many litterers that the responsibility lies with others, to provide bins and clear up litter, rather than with themselves. This was more prevalent among the Chinese/Vietnamese participants than others.

Suggestions for what should be done were focused around the provision of infrastructure rather than around individual responsibility, which appears to align with the sentiment prior to the *Hey Tosser!* campaign, which sought to move people on from rationalisation of personal littering behaviour to acceptance of personal responsibility not to litter.

Littering was viewed by many as indicative of wider social ills and as representing general disrespect and lack of ownership. There was strong support for an anti-littering education and awareness campaign, and this was viewed as an effective way to reduce littering behaviour, particularly if implemented alongside infrastructure provision and enforcement. Including information about fines was seen as critical in any litter reduction campaign.

None of the print campaign materials tested are likely to be effective in reducing littering. The *Hey Tosser!* concept has the potential to be effective in changing behaviour, if the execution is improved. Several of the ads tested were not deemed to be clear enough in their messaging, which could be improved through the use of appropriate images and by minimising the use of text.

Information about recycling alongside the anti-littering message is detrimental to message comprehension and so should not be included in anti-littering ads. Ads should incorporate a human element in order to engage viewers and aid identification with the message, and should include information about fines in order to enhance the perceived seriousness of littering as an issue.

The current social norm, of littering discreetly, has the potential to be strengthened and reinforced in the absence of a recent large scale anti-littering campaign. The *Hey Tosser!* concept still has value and given its strong recognition and fond recall, provides a solid basis for any new campaign, which is particularly valuable in the absence of a TV commercial.



The *Hey Tosser!* Creative material and style guidelines are available on request at:
litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au