



THE GREAT NORTHERN CLEAN UP

NO BUTTS ABOUT IT – CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA NEEDS YOU!

Clean Up Australia is calling on Aussies living in the north to help butt out Australia's litter problem by joining the Great Northern Clean Up.

Clean Up Australia Chair, Pip Kiernan said cigarette butts are consistently the most-littered item in the country, with up to 8.9 billion butts dropped each year¹. "When we think of plastic pollution we usually think of chip packets, drink bottles or straws, but cigarette butts are the most abundant plastic litter item in the world".

Ms Kiernan said the filters in most cigarettes are made of cellulose acetate, a type of plastic. "Cigarette butts are toxic plastic pollution. When littered, we're dumping not only that plastic, but also nicotine, heavy metals and other chemicals into the environment.

"By participating in the Great Northern Clean Up, we can get these butts and other litter out of the environment, before the wet season washes it into our waterways and out to sea."

Ms Kiernan said she is hopeful that the Great Northern Clean Up will help address the environmental impact of this litter issue but also offer Australians an important opportunity to reconnect with their communities.

"Clean Up Australia has always been more than just volunteers picking up rubbish. We're a community – and our community needs to connect and do something positive - for themselves and the environment".

Great Northern Clean Up is the northern sibling of Australia's largest environmental day of action, Clean Up Australia Day, and has been an annual event since 2009, giving northern communities the flexibility to participate in Clean Up events in the cooler months, after the peak tourist period and prior to the cyclone season.

Registration is free and participants are provided with gloves, bags and other resources, and covered by Clean Up Australia's public liability insurance.

Ms Kiernan said butts have consistently been the single most reported litter item by Clean Up Australia's volunteers, but noted that e-cigarettes or vapes are an emerging menace, creating a whole new stream of plastic and electronic waste. "E-cigarettes are an environmental triple threat – creating plastic waste, electronic waste and hazardous waste" she said.

If you can't join the Great Northern Clean Up, Ms Kiernan urges you make a donation to Clean Up Australia. 100% of donated funds go directly to empowering Australians to take

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action for the environment, with clean up materials and educational resources provided free of charge to community, school and youth groups across the nation all year round.

WHAT: Great Northern Clean Up
WHEN: late August - October 2022
WHERE: Your local park, waterway, bus area, bushland, beach or street
WHO: Everyone is welcome – friends, family, kids, community groups, work colleagues
HOW: Register (or donate) at cleanup.org.au

-ENDS-

Note to editors:

Pip Kiernan is available to interview.

For further information, please contact:

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[IMAGES AND MEDIA RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE HERE](#)

ABOUT CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA

Founded by Ian Kiernan AO, Clean Up Australia is one of the country's most recognised and trusted environmental organisations, inspiring and empowering communities to clean up, fix up and conserve our environment. Over the past three decades, Clean Up Australia has evolved into an organisation that works with community, government and businesses to provide practical solutions to help us all live more sustainably every day of the year.

ABOUT CIGARETTE BUTT LITTER

Littered butts pose a range of hazards and problems in natural environments. Cigarette filters are made from non-biodegradable plastic. Once littered, butts accumulate in the marine environment and leach toxic materials.² They break up slowly, shedding microfibres and taking up to 15 years to decompose.³ Around one-third of nearly 100 chemicals that leach from cigarette butts are acutely or chronically toxic to aquatic species.⁴ Cigarette butts have been found in the stomachs of birds, turtles, whales and fish, where they affect digestion and potentially lead to poisoning or starvation.⁵

¹ World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia "Ending Cigarette Butt Pollution" October 2021

² Slaughter, E., Gersberg, R.M., Watanabe, K., Rudolph, J., Stransky, C. and T.E. Novotny. 2011. Toxicity of cigarette butts, and their chemical components, to marine and freshwater fish. *Tobacco Control* 20:i25-i29.

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- ³ Joly, F.-X. and Coulis, M. 2018. Comparison of cellulose vs plastic cigarette filter decomposition under distinct disposal environments. *Waste Management* Vol 72; Belzagui, F., Buscio, V., Gutiérrez-Bouzán, C. and M. Vilaseca. 2021. Cigarette butts as a microfibers source with a microplastic level of concern. *Science of The Total Environment* Volume 762.
- ⁴ Venugopal, P. *et al.* 2021. No Butts on the Beach: Aquatic Toxicity of Cigarette Butt Leachate Chemicals. *Tobacco Regulatory Science* 7(1): 17-30.
- ⁵ Kadir, A. and Sarani, N. 2015. Cigarette butts pollution and environmental impact – A review. *Applied Mechanics and Materials* 773-74:1106-1110, Trans Tech Publications; Torkashvand, J., Farzadkia, M., Sobhi, H.R. and A. Esrafil. 2019. Littered cigarette butt as a well-known hazardous waste: A comprehensive systematic review. *Journal of Hazardous Materials* 383:121242; Dobaradaran, S., Soleimani, F., Akhbarizadeh, R., Schmidt, T.C., Marzban, M. *et al.* 2021. Environmental fate of cigarette butts and their toxicity in aquatic organisms: A comprehensive systematic review. *Environmental Research* 110881; Green, D.S. *et al.* 2020. Smoked cigarette butt leachate impacts survival and behaviour of freshwater invertebrates. *Environmental Pollution* 266:115286.

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