

From: Terrie-Ann Johnson <web@greens.org.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 7 May 2019 12:28 PM
To: recyclinginquiry
Subject: Clean Up Australia volunteer experience

RE: INQUIRY INTO RECYCLING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

This submission is made by Clean Up Australia on behalf of the 110,151 Victorian volunteers who, during 2018, removed the equivalent of 3,216 ute loads of rubbish from 1,462 clean up sites that they registered across the state. Together they donated 220,302 hours of their time to caring for their local beaches, parks, bushland, streets and waterways.

153 volunteer site supervisors [representing 10.46% of registered sites] surveyed their rubbish, counting items, completing and lodging their End of Clean Up Report. They identified that 37% of the rubbish they are counting is plastic. This is just 2% less than the national average of 39%.

What is alarming is that the most common groups of rubbish that volunteers are reporting across Victoria deliver higher counts than the national average:

- single use packaging = 58.6% [national average is 55.7%;]
- beverage containers = 20.1% [national average is 18.3%; neighbouring NSW is 17.3% (reflective of first year focus on containers now they have a value). SA, which has led the nation on a container deposit/refund scheme, records counts that reflect 10.2% of surveyed rubbish]. 2018 counts of beverage containers across Victoria recorded a 2.6% increase over 2017.
- 2018 single use food packaging counts increased by 4.3% over 2017
- 31% of all food packaging reported was plastic.

These findings demonstrate that Victoria has a problem.

40% of the rubbish reported across your state in 2018 was surveyed in waterways and along beaches.

16% was from parks and 14% was along suburban roadways.

Last year beach and coastal area surveys reported that their average count of rubbish items per site increased by 443 over the previous year [2018 = 739 per location, 2017 = 296 per location]. This average count was 245 higher than the national average.

To give you a sense of the scale of item counts we received in 2018 from the 153 locations volunteers surveyed :

- 15,576 items were directly associated with food packaging
- 11,033 were beverage containers which would have been diverted through a container deposit/refund scheme. 4,497 of these containers were plastic.
- 2,410 were single use plastic bags
- 1,518 were take away cups of which 990 were hot beverage such as tea/coffee
- 1,271 were plastic take away food containers
- 1,259 were plastic straws.

Each of these items will have served their purpose for around 15-30 mins, after which they were carelessly discarded.

But this is about more than rubbish being an eyesore. It's about degradation of your beaches, waterways, and bushland - where rubbish is posing a direct and lasting danger for your wildlife.

Introduction of a container deposit/refund scheme would eliminate 20% of reported rubbish.

A ban on single use plastic items such as bags, cups, bottles and straws would take 10,955 reported items out of the equation.

Victorians are ready to join their neighbouring states where beverage containers are no longer kicked along a street - they are redeemed.

Packaging manufacturers claim they have innovative technology which can replace single use plastics - but until we have the political will to force change, they have little incentive to invest in its development and uptake.

A number of retailers and hospitality outlets are taking up the challenge to replace single use plastics at their checkouts and counters. Customers have [acknowledging some initial hysteria when bags were replaced] accepted the changes - either gearing up with their own reusable items, or taking advantage of offerings available on site.

Responsible waste management providers are investing in state-of-the-art collection, sorting, recycling and remanufacturing technology to cater with the increased amounts of rubbish we are individually creating per annum - which we note has increased 4 fold in the last 20 years.

Clean Up Australia believes there should be no such thing as an item of rubbish - advocating that every single use item discarded is a lost resource.

The convenience of the single use item will continue to be marketed to the advantage of suppliers unless action is taken to curb their use, capture, extract and reprocess the elements in their current construct.

It is incumbent on government to support the constituents it represents - the businesses prepared to invest, individuals and communities which are calling for change.

Terrie-Ann Johnson
Managing Director and CEO
Clean Up Australia

-- Terrie-Ann Johnson



I'm happy for my submission and details to be made public.