

Littering

What is litter?

Litter is an amount of domestic or commercial waste less than 200 litres (the approximate volume of a wheelie bin) that is disposed of incorrectly.

Common types of waste include:

- cigarette butts
- drink bottles
- fast food wrappers
- material from a trailer that is poorly secured
- grass clippings swept into the gutter
- fishing tackle.

Littered waste does not include any gas, dust, smoke or material emitted or produced during, or because of, the normal operations of a building, manufacturing, mining or primary industry.

Most people 'do the right thing', but littering is a serious problem throughout Queensland. Litter builds up next to roads, can block gutters and finds its way into creeks, rivers and onto beaches. Littering costs Queenslanders a substantial amount time and money to clean up.

According to the 2011 National Litter Index compiled by Keep Australia Beautiful, Queensland is the most littered mainland Australian state.

Littering harms and kills wildlife. Plastic waste can choke and suffocate birds and marine life. For more information see the Impacts of Litter fact sheet.

Soil and garden waste spreads pests and weeds, including fire ants and lantana. For more information, visit the Biosecurity Queensland website <www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au>.

Organic waste, such as food scraps, contributes to algae blooms in waterways.

Cigarette butts

Cigarette butts comprise more than 90 per cent of the waste littered from a motor vehicle. This is not just a littering issue. Plastic cigarette filters end up in waterways and can be swallowed by marine animals. These animals then slowly choke to death. Cigarette butts littered from motor vehicles can also start bush fires—costing lives and damaging property.



Every year enormous amounts of money, volunteer hours and energy is spent on cleaning up littered waste.

If every person in Queensland picked up just one piece of litter per year it would be 4.5 million less pieces of litter.

No bin—what can be done?

Everyone should take responsibility for their waste. For example, when eating lunch in a park, if there is no bin close by, take the waste with you and dispose of it when you find a bin.

If access to sufficient waste management infrastructure is an issue in your local area, take your litter home and raise the issue with the relevant council or state government authority.

Is it OK to litter when someone is paid to clean a place up?

It is never OK to litter. People must take responsibility for their own waste and not expect others to clean up after them. There are environmental and health and safety risks associated with littering—between the time the waste is dropped and the clean up crew arrives.

Litter can also blow or wash into drains and waterways—plus it looks ugly and attracts more litter. Public money should be spent on improving public spaces—not on cleaning up waste.

How are littering offences enforced?

The *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011* offers several ways to enforce a littering offence:

- an authorised officer can issue a penalty infringement notice to someone they observe littering
- an authorised officer can issue an infringement notice to the registered owner of a vehicle observed littering
- anyone can report littering they witness from a vehicle to the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM). This report will be considered by DERM, and a penalty infringement notice may be issued if sufficient evidence is provided.



Who are the authorised officers?

Authorised officers are officers from DERM and local governments who are authorised, under the Act, to enforce the litter laws.

Local governments and DERM have shared responsibility for litter enforcement. Local governments can appoint staff as authorised officers for the purpose of littering enforcement.

Further information

Phone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
Website: <www.derm.qld.gov.au/waste>
Mail: DERM
Penalty Infringement Notices
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