



The Butt Stops Here

City of Greater Dandenong; Hobsons Bay City Council; Friends of Kororoit Creek

Stamping out cigarette butt litter

Why?

They're small but damaging: the seven billion cigarette butts littered in Australia each year contain harmful chemicals and when swept into waterways, they threaten marine habitats and water quality. They take many years to break down and negatively affect amenity, making cigarette butts the nation's most littered item¹.

Efforts to mitigate cigarette butt litter are vital. Three Melbourne councils recently received Victorian Government MWRRG-administered Litter Hotspots Program funding to fight butt litter in their municipalities, either as the focus or a component of waste mitigation projects.

The City of Greater Dandenong, along with Hobsons Bay and the Friends of Kororoit Creek, delivered projects that aimed to stem the tide of cigarette butt litter via creative marketing campaigns, infrastructure development, education and strong community engagement.

How?

'Ms NoButts', a specially created video character, was central to the City of Greater Dandenong's project. Ms NoButts, a woman clothed in a large cigarette butt costume, became recognised locally, nationally and internationally. Her social media hashtag featured on a range of giveaway tote bags and project-branded stickers and posters were placed in Greater Dandenong's CBD. Portable butt bins were installed, branded with the project's logo, and Butt Free Australia provided the municipality with 1,600 personal butt bins.

The Friends of Kororoit Creek's 'Beautiful Brimbank' project had a cigarette butt litter component. The council created Barry the ButtlBinIt mascot, a character similar to Ms NoButts. The popular character featured at events around the municipality, encouraging smokers to bin their butts. The project's logo, 'Love Where You Live', was also used on personal ashtrays that child volunteers gave away at events, an approach that had smokers taking stock of their actions.

Hobsons Bay City Council focused on cigarette butt litter hotspots throughout the municipality. The project involved new bin infrastructure being built and drew on strong engagement with traders associations and volunteer environmental groups to find solutions for the cigarette butt issue. Decals were created that featured underwater photography focusing on butt litter's effect on marine life. A cigarette butt mascot also roamed key hot spot areas distributing personal ashtrays and spreading the butt it bin it message across the local community.



¹ http://www.litter.vic.gov.au/-/media/sv-vlaa/downloads/litter_statistics_fact_sheet_-_2014.pdf?la=en



What was the result?

The City of Greater Dandenong collected more than 10,000 cigarette butts and in just over a year saw large percentage decreases in butt litter at three hotspot locations: two 80 per cent decreases and one 42 per cent decrease. Ms NoButts' videos received 21,600 views, and council's raingarden anti-littering messaging and branding is available for any Australian council to use.

Hobson's Bay City Council's project is still up and running and results will be available at the end of the 2017. However, beyond the clear success of having new bin infrastructure available, council is pleased that its project has built strong connections and working relationships with traders and other groups at each litter hotspot location. Support for the anti-cigarette butt litter message is strong. Groups and individuals provided valuable feedback and assistance for the project.

The Friends of Kororoit Creek likewise found that building relationships with traders, partners and sponsors was vital for a successful campaign. The project led to a reduction in butt litter in two hotspot zones and council is hopeful targeted anti-cigarette butt messaging in hotspots and continued education will improve the situation further in future.

Cigarette butt litter is a difficult matter for councils to raise with their constituents; non-smokers think it doesn't affect them and smokers don't want to be made to feel guilty. All three councils, however, showed that working with local traders, strong messaging – including clever mascots – and education can help mitigate the scourge of cigarette butt litter.

June 2017