

LITTERING COSTS!

EACH YEAR OUR GOVERNMENT SPENDS OVER \$200 MILLION ON PICKING UP RUBBISH¹

The good thing is that this investment is making a difference. The “Do the Right Thing” advertising campaign of the 1980s was a fundamental turning point in changing our cultural views on littering. Subsequent advertising campaigns, installations of recycling bins in parks, school education campaigns, funding programs and new legislation have continued to drive cultural behaviours towards being more responsible with our waste.

Unfortunately there’s still a long way to go. Research shows that that 75% of people agree littering is ‘bad’² but still continue to dump their rubbish. And there are no significant gender, age or class distinctions between those who litter and those who don’t – everyone litters, it’s just a matter of where and how much!

And the solution to reducing littering is not as simple as putting out more bins – in fact, most littering occurs within five metres of a bin. The answer instead lies in a broad approach that involves actions across education, enforcement, prevention, and collection, and ultimately needs the combined contributions of our councils and businesses to be truly successful.

Fortunately there are many companies like RUD which produce recycle bins and collection trolleys that encourage efficient waste collection and help prevent cross-contamination of recyclable materials. And there are more actions that we can all take to reduce littering, but let’s be honest... first we need to understand why we would bother with the effort!

Why is littering ‘bad’?

Whilst it can be argued that \$200 million a year is enough proof that littering is bad, the real question is how bad does it have to be for our Government to justify this expense! Fortunately we don’t have to look far for reasons why recycling and cleaning up rubbish is high on the agenda.

Littering is dangerous. Broken glass, bits of metal and slippery surfaces caused by dropped liquids or discarded paper and plastic can cause serious injuries. In fact, shopping centres schedule cleaning cycles of 15 to 20 minutes to prevent such injuries and avoiding expensive compensation claims. On an environmental level, rubbish encourages pest animals, germs and disease, and kills animals that ingest it.

Littering impacts on our economy. Where it dirties up our tourist destinations, our tourism industry suffers. Where it poisons our marine life, our fishery industries suffer. On our farms, livestock can die from ingesting metal and other substances such as ground up glass, and repairs to crop machinery jammed by rubbish means downtime which ultimately makes our food more expensive. Litter also reduces real estate values – research shows that good stores and important businesses will not locate in communities with littering problems, and neither will home owners and property investors.

Littering affects our environment. Rotting litter pollutes water making it undrinkable, and generates methane gas which contributes to the greenhouse effect. Some plants take up toxic chemicals from soil contamination and either die or become toxic when eaten. Rubbish that doesn’t break down can clog and degenerate the quality of our waterways, and kill wildlife when it is ingested.



How can we reduce littering?

Here are a few proven strategies you can easily implement into your business:

Place bins in obvious places. Interestingly whilst placing more bins in an area does not in itself decrease the occurrence of littering, statistics show that more conveniently placed bins do get used more. Obvious options include food courts, eating areas and kitchens, and for offices next to photocopiers and printers, in meeting rooms and in foyers.

Provide recycling bin options and sign them obviously. People will take the time to separate their rubbish into recycle and waste bins if they are clearly signed and easy to understand.

Agencies have been established in each state to institute litter and recycling signage standards that work, and help businesses and communities effectively sign their bins.

Post polite anti-littering signs and clean up regularly. What works best though, is cleaning up regularly. People don’t like to drop their rubbish in a litter-free area – after all, who wants to be the person that dirties up a clean area!?

Councils and businesses across the UK are combating this ‘litter begets litter’ issue through the combined use of mechanical sweepers and RUD’s large capacity cleaning barrow the Space-Liner. Mechanical sweepers clean up the larger open areas, and the Space-Liner, now available in Australia, helps hand-sweepers pick up litter that gathers in awkward places the mechanical sweepers can’t reach. The unique design of the Space-Liner enables hand-sweepers to easily navigate gutters and uneven ground, and the multiple storage compartments allow for the easy separation of recyclables and general waste.

In conclusion...

Every year in Australia, about seven billion cigarette butts, 80 million plastic bags, and countless other pieces of litter are thoughtlessly thrown on the ground³. Littering costs ... let’s work together to stop it!

To enquire about the RUD Space-Liner and recycling systems, call Mark Williams on (07) 3712 8000.

¹ SOURCE: Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment website
² SOURCE: Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water website
³ SOURCE: Department of Environment and Conservation