



FACT SHEET

Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland

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Around 7 Billion cigarette
butts are littered in
Australia every year.



- Approximately 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are littered worldwide every year.
- Almost 50% of all litter in urban areas is tobacco related products including butts, cellophane wrapping, foil inserts and packaging.
- Approximately 7.2 billion cigarettes are discarded in Australia each year. If placed end to end they would extend 144,000 kilometres and circle the planet 3.6 times.
- In most Western countries cigarette butt litter accounts for around 50% of all litter.
- Over 4,500 fires a year are caused by cigarettes and smokers' materials.
- Littered butts leach toxic emissions (such as cadmium, lead and arsenic and zinc) into water and soil as they decompose, contributing to soil and water pollution and impacting wildlife habitat.
- Litter is magnetic: the presence of littered butts tends to encourage others to litter their own.
- Butts are made of cellulose acetate, a synthetic fibre derived from wood pulp. They may look like cotton, but are actually made of plastic filaments.
- Estimates on the biodegradability of cigarette butts hugely varied. Some organisations state they take up to 15 years to break down, while research by the filter manufacturers themselves find that cigarette butts take the following length of time to biodegrade:
 - 1-2 months in aerobic (with air) conditions
 - 6-9 months in anaerobic (without air) conditions
 - 12 months in fresh water
 - 36 months or longer in sea-water.
- It is estimated that around one in ten cigarette butts ends up in rivers, bays and waterways.
- Cigarette filters have been found in the stomachs of fish, birds, sea turtles and other marine creatures.