

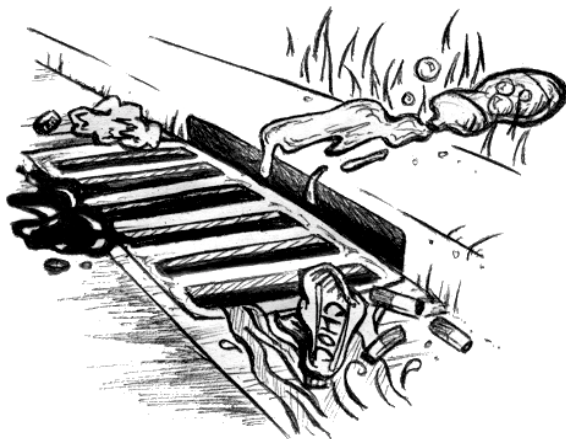
Why do our oceans and beaches end up like dumps?



- Australians, per capita, are the second highest producers of waste behind the USA.
- Litter dumped in the street is washed down the stormwater drains, which take it to creeks, lakes and the ocean. Very little of the litter and pollution on our

beaches comes from people dropping things on the beach or in the sea. Most of the problems originate many kilometres inland and are flushed out to sea through drains, rivers and creeks. It is worse after heavy rains, when the downpour flushes everything on the roads, gutters and footpaths into the drains.

- Plastic is a major source of rubbish. For the past 5 years it has accounted for 38% of all the rubbish surveyed in Clean Up Australia's surveys. Plastic does not degrade easily, and can float great distances. It is the most common human-made item sighted at sea.
- Australians use six billion plastic bags each year. Less than 3% of these are recycled whilst more than two and a half billion go to landfill. The rest end up as pollution, often blowing into the ocean.
- Of the 800,000 or so items of rubbish collected on Clean Up Australia Day in 1999, cigarette butts were the most common item counted. A 1997 national littering behaviour survey found that people are three times as likely to litter a cigarette as they are to put it in the bin. More than four out of five people observed littering cigarettes said they did not consider butts to be litter.
- Wherever there are large quantities of litter on the beach, there are also likely to be other hidden and more difficult to detect pollutants in the water. These include oil, grease, heavy metals, fertilisers, insect and weed poisons and *E. coli* bacteria.
- Another major source of pollution is from domesticated animals. Each day many tons of dissolved dog droppings will end up in the sea.



What can I do to help?

- Always place waste in the most appropriate place. If there are no rubbish bins on the beach, take it home with you. Don't bury it in the sand, as it will soon be uncovered by the tide, animals, or peoples' feet. It is best to reuse and recycle, never litter.
- Never sweep grass, leaves or any other waste into gutters as they degrade to form a rich nutrient source for algal blooms. Never hose paths as it will only wash your waste into the drainage system.
- Wash cars on the grass, never on the road or hard paths where it will wash detergents into the drainage system.
- Always dispose of unwanted chemicals responsibly, never pour them into gutters or drains. Petrol, paints, thinners, pharmaceutical drugs, and garden pesticides and herbicides are poisonous to wildlife. Your local council can advise you of the best way to dispose of these.
- Prevent oil from leaking from your car as it could end up in the sea.
- Use a calico or jute bag when you are shopping, or choose cardboard boxes instead of plastic bags whenever possible. Reuse plastic bags by taking them back to the store, where they will be recycled into items such as flower pots.
- Use washing detergents which contain no phosphates, to prevent excessive amounts of these entering the drainage system. Also avoid excessive use of chemical fertilisers as runoff from these into the waterways cause algal blooms.
- Never pour waste fats and oils down the sink, but rather throw them out with other household garbage.
- Always take a poop-bag when walking your dog. Don't leave its droppings in the gutter or on the footpath as they will wash into the drainage system and contaminate the water.
- If you find an injured or dead animal on the beach, call your local wildlife rescue organisation or National Parks and Wildlife Service in your state.



What is Coastcare?

Coastcare is a national environment program that supports volunteer involvement in the management and protection of Australia's coasts and oceans. There are over 60,000 people involved in Coastcare projects and environmental education activities around Australia. Examples of Coastcare projects include: dune rehabilitation, fencing, weed eradication, coastal planning and marine monitoring.

If you would like more information on the issues in this brochure, or you would like to initiate a Coastcare project in your local area, please contact Coastcare in your State or visit www.environment.gov.au/marine/coastcare.

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