



Media Release

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There's No More Butts! Australian charity calls on Commonwealth Government to address our most littered item by committing to product stewardship schemes

6 billion cigarette butts could be utilised in recycled content programs each year with the right level of funding and stewardship, according to No More Butts.

In November 2021, the Minister for the Environment, Hon Sussan Ley MP, announced that the Commonwealth government had opened nominations for products to be considered for inclusion in the 2022-23 Priority List for product stewardship. This new process enables individuals and organisations to have their say in which products and materials are in most need of a product stewardship approach. According to the Government's website, product stewardship schemes support the environmentally sound management of products and materials over their life, including the end of their useful life. These arrangements may be voluntary, mandatory, or shared with industry.

Continually the most littered item in the country, up to 50% of all cigarettes consumed in Australia are discarded into the environment every year. A new report commissioned by WWF and released in December 2021 suggests that up to 8.9 billion cigarettes are littered annually in Australia. This information is consistent with research conducted by No More Butts.

A cigarette butt can take up to 15 years to break down and, whether in the natural environment or in landfill, cause significant damage to our planet. They leach toxic chemicals, such as arsenic and lead, and are known to pollute our water and impact soil quality. If 15 years' worth of littered cigarette butts were accumulated, it would result in more than 26,000 tonnes of toxic plastic waste. Waste that is currently corrupting our environment.

No More Butts believes that the inclusion of cigarette butt litter on the list of actions in the National Plastics Plan in March was a big step forward. Calling out cigarette butts formalised a long overdue recognition that cigarette butt filters are indeed a waste plastic. However, nine months later, the Government's commitment to initiate an industry-led cross-sectoral stewardship taskforce to reduce cigarette butt litter in Australia and consider potential stewardship schemes has not eventuated.

Shannon Mead (he/him/his) is the founder and CEO of Australian charity, No More Butts, "Our vision is for a butt free environment. We are open to discuss with all stakeholders the alternatives to deliver this vision. This may include the removal of filters from cigarettes, substitution of alternative materials, or simply a national program for data, awareness and infrastructure, along with collection and recycling programs".

Shannon highlights, "The Philip Morris International website lists reducing the amount of plastic litter by 50% (vs. 2021) as a measure in their 2025 Roadmap. This timeline and reduction target is in line with Commonwealth targets and is achievable with the right level of support."

The cost of delivering programs with such aggressive KPIs may be up to 150 million dollars annually. Whilst this funding should ultimately fall to the producers, Shannon believes there is already a source of finance which would enable an immediate start. "Less than 1% of the annual revenue generated from the sale of Tobacco products would be required to address the issue in the first year. This would result in approximately 150 million dollars being directed from consolidated revenue into environmental initiatives, saving millions from local council budgets."

No More Butts is calling on passionate individuals and organisations to add their support to the growing level of those demanding action be taken on cigarette butts. They have created a 'how to nominate' guide, which is now publicly available on their website, or via a direct download [here](#).

"Whilst we applaud the Government opening for nominations, we wanted to facilitate the ability for a wider group of people to contribute. No More Butts recognises that not everyone has the resources or time to research and provide the comprehensive responses required, which led us to creating a simple guide on how to consider responding."

- ENDS -

Further notes and comments

Made from a fibrous plastic (known as cellulose acetate), cigarette butts can be recycled, with successful programs already operating overseas under voluntary and regulated product stewardship schemes. Shannon notes, "Given that cigarette butts are a plastic, now is the time for Australia to scale up facilities so that we can leverage this litter and start investigating ways we can use it in recycled content programs."

No More Butts is participating in a trial with City of Wollongong and a mycologist, to collect, store, transport and remediate collected cigarette butts. By fusing the mycelium (the root network of the mushroom) with the filters and other composite materials, products such as insulation bricks can be produced. Shannon notes, "In addition to helping meet the ambitious Commonwealth targets of landfill diversion and reduction in unnecessary plastics, establishing a robust supply chain for butts under a product stewardship approach will lead to the creation of new revenue streams and employment opportunities."

NSW recently stopped short of including cigarette butts in their Plastics Reduction and Circular Economy Bill, but are reportedly investigating the Product Stewardship framework that the Bill enables to see how they can tackle problematic products, such as cigarette butts. In early December, the Queensland and South Australian governments called for communities to provide feedback on additional products to be included on their Single Use Plastic Item bans, which are rolling out across Australia. Shannon notes, "We are encouraged that more governments are willing to consult the public for what they see as problematic items. As a product containing plastic that is only single-use, we hope there will be consideration for cigarette butts to make their way onto these lists".

About No More Butts

No More Butts is taking action on the single biggest contributor to litter in Australia and around the world - cigarette butts. Made from cellulose acetate, cigarette butts are not biodegradable and leach harsh chemicals into the natural environment. It has been reported to take 15 years for a cigarette butt to break down in seawater, not only causing damage to marine life but also having the ability to enter the food chain as a microplastic. Cigarettes are also considered to be a major contributor towards fires.

Based in Queensland, Australia, No More Butts is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for Profits Commission. It holds a Deductible Gift Recipient status, having been entered onto the Register of Environmental Organisations in 2020.

For further information please contact No More Butt's media team: media@nomorebutts.org

<https://nomorebutts.org.au>