

Case study: Butt-free Byron Shire



Community Engagement with NPWS, Police, Byron SLSC and Byron Shire

Byron Shire Council focused on reducing smoking-related litter by promoting educational messages on the effect micro litter has on Cape Byron Marine Park.



Enviropole installed in Mullumbimby

Byron Shire kicks butts

Social media blitzes, community engagement and installing butt bins helped Byron Shire reduce the number of smoking litter items by over 50%.

What was the problem?

- After undertaking weekly Local Litter Checks, Byron Shire noted hotspots and clean spots in its area.
- Hotspots recorded 545 smoking-related litter items, compared to only 69 in clean spots.
- Byron Shire wanted to reduce the amount of micro litter by 40%.

What did we do?

To tackle the problem, Byron Shire Council

- raised community awareness of the impact of littering on Cape Byron Marine Park by forming partnerships with community groups
- improved and expanded cigarette butt bin infrastructure across Byron Shire through the installation of 128 Enviropoles
- introduced a smoking ban on beaches in Byron Bay
- increased litter blitzes along the Byron Bay foreshore area
- promoted the EPA's *Don't be a Tosser!* messaging.

Local Litter Check

The EPA's easy-to-use Local Litter Check is a free online tool to help understand your local litter problem. Details can be found on the EPA website.



Signs posted on the beach in Byron Shire

What did we achieve?

- A successful anti-litter program that incorporated community partnerships, educational events including beach cleans and film screenings, improved butt bin infrastructure, improved litter enforcement and the implementation of a beach smoking ban.
- Stronger relationships and partnerships between Council and community groups, expansion of our cigarette butt bin infrastructure from 27 to 128 Enviropoles, expansion of our education and enforcement signage, improved enforcement with six litter blitzes and the successful amendment of Council's Smoke Free Outdoor policy to include beaches.

How was the project evaluated?

- Hotspots were identified during initial Local Litter Checks. They were then left for two months before baseline data was collected, to get an accurate idea of the litter problem.
- Monthly Local Litter Checks were conducted at 26 locations throughout the Shire. The number of littered items was our main measure due to the small volume of cigarette butts.
- Local Litter Checks were conducted by Council or by Positive Change for Marine Life with the assistance of grant funding.

What did we learn?

- Byron Bay is internationally recognised, with over 2 million visitors annually. Due to this constant turnover and change in audience, it is challenging to run an educational campaign to reach visitors as well as local residents. A separate program dedicated to litter and tourism is in development to address this challenge.
- Getting people to produce identification when issuing smoking infringements on the beach can be challenging. Beach goers may not have identification on them and it can be hard to be discreet when issuing infringements on the beach. During our litter blitzes/enforcing the smoking ban our rangers found no need to issue infringements but are wary of it in the future.
- Some businesses (even if they have a ground litter issue) do not want butt bins near or close to their shops as they believe this will attract smokers.

What is the project's legacy?

- Byron Shire Council remains committed to protecting the Cape Byron Marine Park from micro litter that is shown to have detrimental effect on marine life, and to improving amenity for local residents, businesses and visitors alike.
- Our improved infrastructure, community partnerships and increased enforcement will continue to benefit the community and achieve these outcomes and the insight into littering behaviour will be adapted into our future litter programs.

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