

Case study
November
2016 -
March 2017



Street theatre performers cleaning up littered butts

People now have a better understanding of where bins are and what happens to littered butts. More smokers were willing to use the bins provided.

Bin your butts

Cumberland Council used chalk art and interactive street theatre to raise awareness of how bad cigarette butt litter is for the environment, and reduce this type of litter by 33% at three key sites.

What was the problem?

- In January and February 2016, Cumberland Council (formerly Holroyd City Council) undertook local litter audits to determine litter hotspots and common litter items, and assess whether bins were being used.
- The litter audits determined cigarette butts were the most common litter item (77% of recorded items), particularly in city centres where people gather.

Cost

Grant:
\$50,454

In-kind:
\$29,265

Total cost:
\$79,719

What did we do:

The project aimed to decrease cigarette butt litter by 20% at three sites with high volumes of this litter:

- Pendle Hill city business district and car park
- Guildford shopping village
- Wentworthville shopping village.

Cumberland Council:

- conducted Local Litter Checks before, during and after the project
- ran a fun and engaging education campaign focusing on cigarette butt litter, using street theatre performances and chalk art (an estimated 8% of the local population engaged with the theatre performances)
- installed new butt bins at key locations on the three high-volume sites
- installed signage on butt bins and in bus bays
- engaged with local businesses to encourage them to keep the area litter-free and inform them about penalties
- provided local businesses with dust pans and brushes to clean up shop-front areas, and encouraged them to think about other ways they could help reduce litter in the area.

View our video of street theatre performers cleaning up littered butts on YouTube.



'Bin your butts' chalk art near Wentworthville town centre



New cigarette bin in Pendle Hill town centre

What did we achieve?

- Litter was reduced overall at the three high-volume sites by 33%, exceeding our target by 13%. There was a sharp reduction in littered butts in locations where butt bins were installed. Noticeable decreases in butts were found at Pendle Hill outside Woolworths, where many people sat and smoked, and near Guildford West station and bus stop.

Observing smokers before installing bins provided better understanding of where people smoke, so butt bins could be installed in the best places.

- People now have a better understanding of where bins are and what happens to littered butts. More smokers were willing to use bins provided.
- Generally, people were happy to see something being done to reduce litter, and to participate in the theatre performance. Observation of these sites after performances indicated the community had started using the bins and this behaviour has become a habit at some locations, particularly in front of the station at Guildford West and near the Woolworths at Pendle Hill.
- Overall, businesses used the dustpans and brushes, and shop fronts were cleaner. One grocery store at Guildford was given a litter picker, which has enabled the operator to keep the area clear of rubbish.
- One tattoo shop in Guildford was given a butt bin, as workers and clients sat outside and smoked. They agreed that, if provided a bin, they would encourage others to use it.

How we evaluated our program

- We conducted Local Litter Checks to assess the number and volume of items littered in the car park.
- We measured bin usage.
- We used site user surveys to evaluate changes in attitudes to litter and fines for littering.

What did we learn?

- Observing smokers before installing bins provided better understanding of where people smoke, so butt bins could be installed in the best places.
- Theatre and other interactive education is a good way to engage residents, who are often more willing to engage with performers than council workers.
- This project could have been more successful if litter enforcement had been an everyday activity for Environment Protection Officers. Officers' presence during events would have helped people understand they could be fined if caught littering.
- Install bins before doing any chalk art and include some creative promotion. Also, pick good locations for the artwork, such as smooth clear surfaces, preferably protected from rain. Chalk art did not work very well on pavers.

Legacy

This project gave residents a better understanding of cigarette butt litter's impact on the local environment.

The butt bins are being used and will continue to stay in place, reducing the amount of butt litter at all three targeted locations.

Local businesses now can keep areas outside their shops clean and are more willing to encourage residents to use the bins.

Photos: Cumberland Council

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