



NSW Environment Protection Authority

Own it and Act: strategic framework

Empowering new leaders in litter prevention in NSW



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Published by:

NSW Environment Protection Authority

4 Parramatta Square

12 Darcy Street, Parramatta NSW 2150

Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124

Phone: +61 2 9995 5000 (switchboard)

Phone: 131 555 (NSW only – environment information and publications requests)

Fax: +61 2 9995 5999

TTY users: phone 133 677, then ask

for 131 555

Speak and listen users:

phone 1300 555 727, then ask for 131 555

Email: info@epa.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

Report pollution and environmental incidents

Environment Line: 131 555 (NSW only) or info@epa.nsw.gov.au

See also www.epa.nsw.gov.au

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The Own it and Act framework recognises that litter prevention is not merely an individual's responsibility. Best practice requires organisations to embed litter prevention principles, policies and practices into business-as-usual operations.

It also requires networks and collaboration to build supportive conditions for litter prevention across sectors to ensure litter prevention and anti-litter behaviour is sustained for the long term.

Own it and Act – overview



1. Background

We want New South Wales to be a clean, safe and healthy environment that we can all share and enjoy.

To achieve this the NSW Government has invested \$50 million into litter prevention programs between 2012 to 2021 under the Waste Less Recycle More initiative. Under the initiative, the NSW EPA Litter Prevention Unit has been responsible for delivering the government's **Litter Prevention Program**.

Through an enormous collaborative effort, we have achieved our state target to reduce litter in NSW by 40% by 2020. This is thanks to a combination of education and awareness, infrastructure and clean up, regulation and enforcement and tremendous community involvement. The challenge now is to ensure we keep driving down litter for the long term.

2. The story until recently

The NSW Litter Prevention Grants program has used an evidence-based approach to strengthen local knowledge and empower organisations – including community members, local government staff and regional bodies – to establish a solid foundation for engaging in litter prevention across the state.

While the program has been highly successful in contributing to the 40% litter reduction target, we want to ensure the program does not inadvertently create dependence on future EPA funding to deliver litter prevention outcomes. Avoiding this dependence on grant funding will help ensure long-term, sustainable litter prevention outcomes for NSW.

Some stakeholders equate sustainable programs to finding ongoing funding sources. The chase for dollars to support programs can create a cycle of dependence that may undermine the establishment of independent action and organisational ownership of litter prevention as part of 'business as usual'.

The EPA has identified opportunities to extend the life cycle of litter prevention programs and organisational ability within key stakeholders, to build independence from EPA funding. These include establishing:

- a strategic vision for legacy outcomes across NSW
- a systemic approach and access to transparent litter data to set organisational targets for long-term litter prevention
- a capacity-building framework for embedding key litter prevention principles into organisations.
- To achieve this, the EPA has developed the Own it and Act Strategic Framework (the Framework), which forms the basis of future strategic litter grant programs.

3. Vision for litter prevention

With the introduction in 2021 of the **Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041** and **The NSW Plastics Action Plan**, the EPA aims to be bold and innovative as we enter a new phase of litter prevention. As part of our transition towards becoming a world class regulator, the EPA's Own it and Act Strategic Framework provides a foundation to improve two-way learning and shared litter prevention outcomes with key stakeholders across the state. The Framework also provides business management tools, access to leading EPA resources and strategic funding opportunities. These support organisations that want to take a holistic approach that increases their capacity to take ownership and action on litter prevention over the long term.

The NSW EPA's vision is that the Framework will help develop new leaders in Litter Prevention and help the EPA to establish genuine partnerships with key stakeholders, working on an equal footing to reduce litter for the long term.

As a requirement for future NSW EPA litter prevention partnerships, organisations must have an established Own it and Act Baseline and Litter Prevention Strategy, including a compelling business case for future action.

4. Why get involved in the Own it and Act Framework?

This framework will help you identify where litter prevention sits within your organisation. It will help build a clear idea about what you can do (capacity), and what is your value-add – where you envisage your involvement in litter prevention in the future. It will help identify how you can work as independently as possible in partnership with the NSW EPA to achieve your litter prevention goals and long-term state targets to protect our environment and communities from the harm caused by litter.

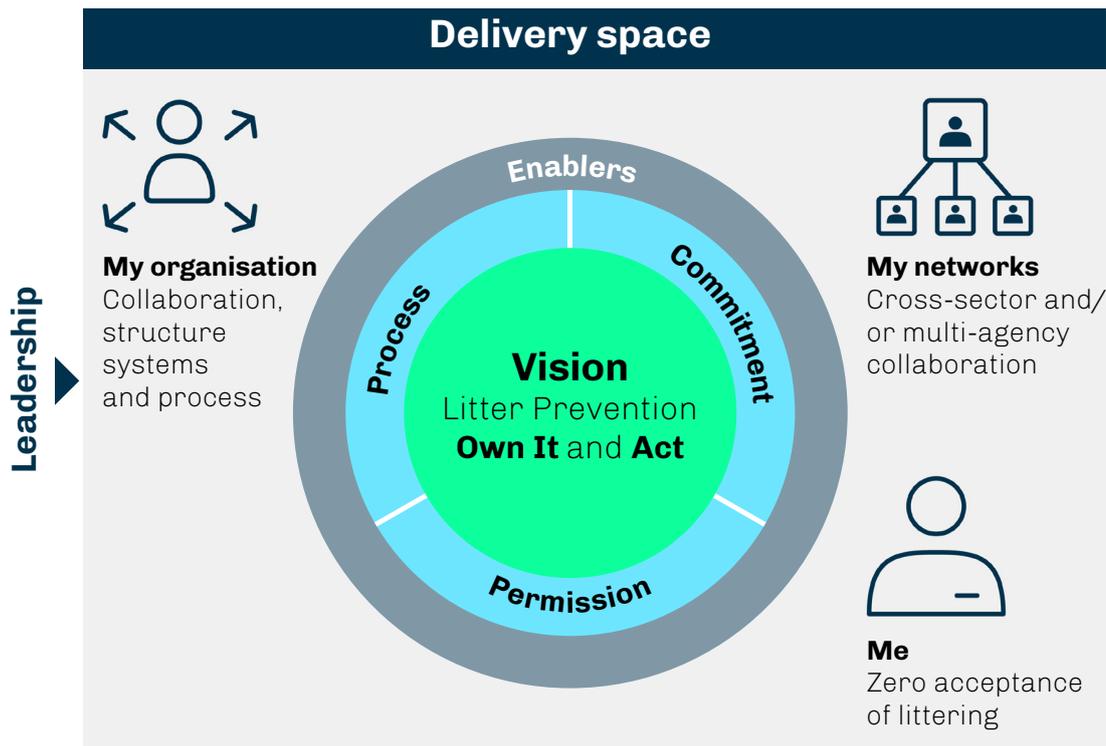
5. Own it and Act Framework objectives

- Provide a vision for stakeholders to create a legacy of litter prevention outcomes across NSW under the **Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041** specifically:
 - 60% reduction in litter items by 2030
 - 30% reduction in plastic litter items by 2025.
- Provide a capacity-building framework for organisations to embed key litter prevention principles in their organisation using the four key enablers (leadership, commitment, permission, processes)
- Provide tools to establish, monitor and evaluate organisational capacity in managing litter prevention
- Assist organisations to set litter prevention targets using the new Key Littered Items Study (KLIS) interactive dashboard
- Assist organisations to track litter prevention efforts, including training and development in the Local Litter Check, Butt Litter Check and Australian Litter Measure (ALM) methodologies
- Consolidate achievements across the state, build on existing stakeholder organisation capacities and expand networks to encourage cross-sector collaboration to achieve new litter prevention targets.

We believe the Own it and Act Framework provides the best foundation for councils, regional bodies and well-established community-based organisations to establish long-term regional and state-wide ownership and action on litter prevention.

With litter prevention firmly on the agenda and targets set until 2030, the Litter Prevention Unit invites you and your organisation to engage in the Own it and Act Framework.

6. Own it and Act – delivery space



Litter Prevention Grants 2021/22

For all Strategic Litter Prevention Grants under the Community Litter Grants Program (Streams 2 and 3), as well as the council and LRIP Litter Grants, applicants must familiarise themselves with the Own it and Act framework and complete a **Preliminary Own it and Act Status Check as part of the application process.**

Applicants engaging in strategic projects should also familiarise themselves with the following Own it and Act tools and resources and contact litter grant managers regarding which tools are appropriate for your project.

Own it and Act – legacy framework

The proposed legacy framework has three delivery champions



Me

Each individual is responsible for litter prevention – at home, at work, at play. At the individual level, we must ensure that we practise zero tolerance towards littering and champion litter prevention.



My organisation

Organisations must have systems in place to embed litter prevention as 'business as usual'. We must collaborate with our colleagues and leaders to ensure litter prevention is a focus across internal departments and jurisdictions.



My network

We must work across sectors to create shared visions and goals to prevent litter and realise a clean, safe and healthy environment.

The key enablers for long-term involvement in litter prevention

Leadership

Leaders are supported to understand the issues of litter in the environment and the importance of their organisation's role in preventing litter. Once understood, leaders have a clear vision for including litter prevention in activities. Leaders then communicate that vision internally in order to design processes, allocate resources and provide permission for staff and the organisation as a whole to take action on long-term litter prevention.

Commitment

Organisations identify what value they get from being involved in litter prevention. Understanding the benefits and reasons behind involvement in litter prevention ensures transparency for the organisation and its networks. Clarity about the organisation's intent, along with making formal and public commitments, establishes the foundation for long-term involvement in litter prevention.

Permission

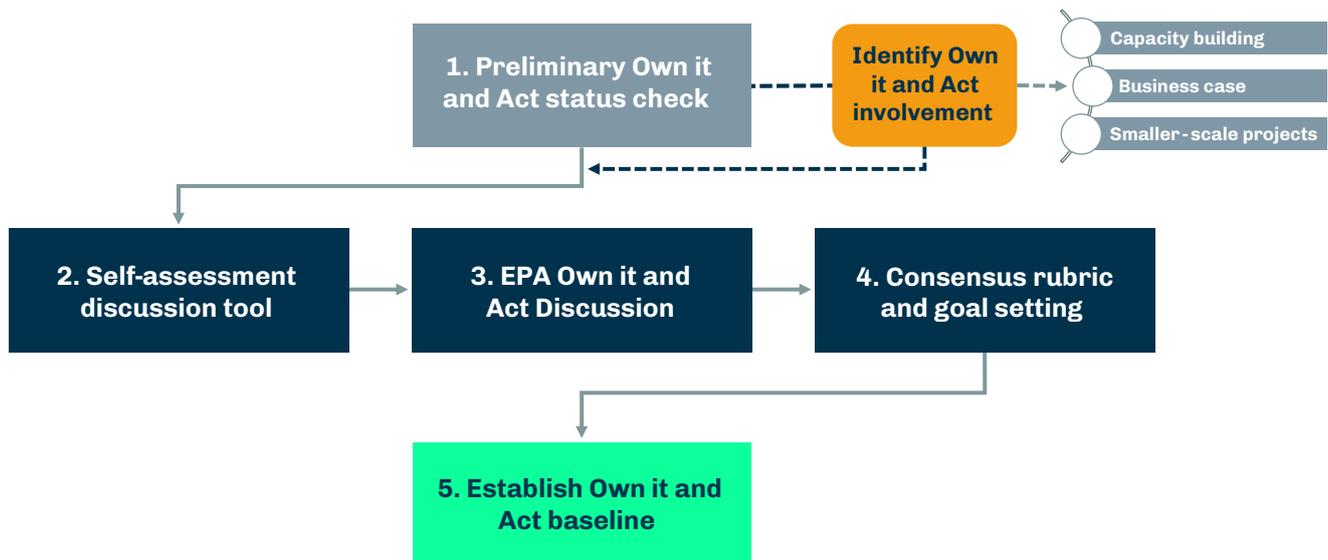
Organisations include the scope for litter prevention in policies and plans so that staff have permission (i.e. time, resources and support) to make decisions and engage in litter prevention initiatives as part of their duties and responsibilities.

Process

Organisations understand and use the key strategies for preventing litter – clean-up, infrastructure, education and awareness, enforcement and regulation, rewarding responsible behaviour – and are aware of the need for evidence-based, integrated approaches. Organisations then integrate monitoring and evaluation as part of their growth and development in tracking litter prevention efforts.

Own It and Act – establishing a baseline

Own it and Act baseline journey map



1. Preliminary Status Check

The purpose of the Preliminary Status Check is to introduce organisations to the Own it and Act Legacy framework. It provides a tool for managers to complete a preliminary snapshot of organisational capacity to engage in litter prevention. The 'true/false' Preliminary Status Check should be used to reflect on high-level organisational strengths and capacity-building opportunities which, in turn, should inform organisational needs and decisions.

1.1 Identify Own it and Act involvement

Once you have completed a Preliminary Own it and Act Status Check, you should have a more clear-eyed view of the enablers required for long-term involvement in litter prevention and where litter prevention currently sits within your organisation. The next step is to consider what level of involvement in the Own it and Act framework aligns best with your organisation's current capacity and needs.

This may be to set an ambitious litter prevention scope or perhaps a modest but well-targeted one; indeed, it may lead to the decision to not proceed with strategic action on litter prevention at all. However, if litter prevention becomes a long-term commitment, then the Own it and Act framework can guide a staged and sustainable approach to your organisation's or network's growth in the field.

1.2 Options for organisations may include:

- committing to establishing an Own it and Act baseline and strategic development using the Own it and Act tools and resources to build the foundational elements for long-term involvement in litter prevention.
- identifying whether you are better placed to focus on building organisational capacity in key areas first, including developing a business case, research or expanding your network.

- identifying that you do not have the current capacity to engage in long-term strategic development, and instead focus on smaller-scale projects.

1.3 Applying for Litter Grants

The Preliminary Own it and Act Status Check is mandatory for all organisations applying for NSW EPA Strategic Litter Grants, including Stream 2 and Stream 3 **Community Litter Grants** and all **Council and Regional Litter Grants**.

Referring to completed **Preliminary Status Checks**, organisations should engage with grant managers to discuss the Own it and Act options under the current grant funding rounds. For those who wish to establish an Own it and Act baseline, the remaining steps in the journey map apply.

2. Self-Assessment Discussion Tool

The Self-Assessment Discussion Tool is the first step for organisations who wish to use the Own it and Act framework and establish an Own it and Act baseline. The Discussion Tool is designed to facilitate an in-depth and transparent assessment of an organisation's capacity for long-term litter prevention. The tool uses a 'true/false' checklist along with a comments column to provide context for discussion with the NSW EPA Litter Prevention Unit.

3. EPA Own it and Act discussion

The Own it and Act discussion is the second step in establishing an Own it and Act baseline, where organisations and the NSW Litter Prevention Unit (LPU) discuss the submitted Self-Assessments in an open and transparent manner. The purpose is to discuss perceptions about an organisation, and to come to a shared understanding of organisational capacity and willingness to engage in litter prevention.

4. Consensus rubric and goal setting

The consensus rubric is a tool that is tailored to establish an organisational baseline for litter prevention capacity. Organisations are guided on how to use the consensus rubric and are empowered to complete it in good faith, reflecting on shared understandings from the discussion. Organisations are also encouraged to establish Own it and Act goals that leverage organisational strengths and build capacity in areas identified as capacity-building opportunities.

	Leadership on litter prevention	True or False	Comments
1	My organisation's leaders emphasise a long-term vision for litter prevention.		e.g. They emphasise litter prevention in a mission or vision statement
2	My organisation's leaders publicly promote litter prevention.		e.g. They provide public commentary on litter prevention. e.g. website, newspaper stories, media, radio
3	My organisation's leaders actively support progressive litter prevention policies.		e.g. They push for policy change to change the status quo (legislation, better program packaging design etc) and involved in innovative research and technology.
4	My organisation's leaders formally discuss litter prevention agenda's within the organisation.		e.g. They discuss litter prevention in team meetings, planning, & workshops
5	My organisation's leaders demonstrate how to implement litter prevention activities.		e.g. They explain the steps to implement litter prevention strategically in our working activities, timelines, and plans.
6	My organisation's leaders allocate resources towards litter prevention.		e.g. They allocate time, staff, funding to engage in litter prevention
7	My organisation's leaders have litter prevention as a key organisational outcome .		e.g. They ensure litter prevention is included in core activity targets.

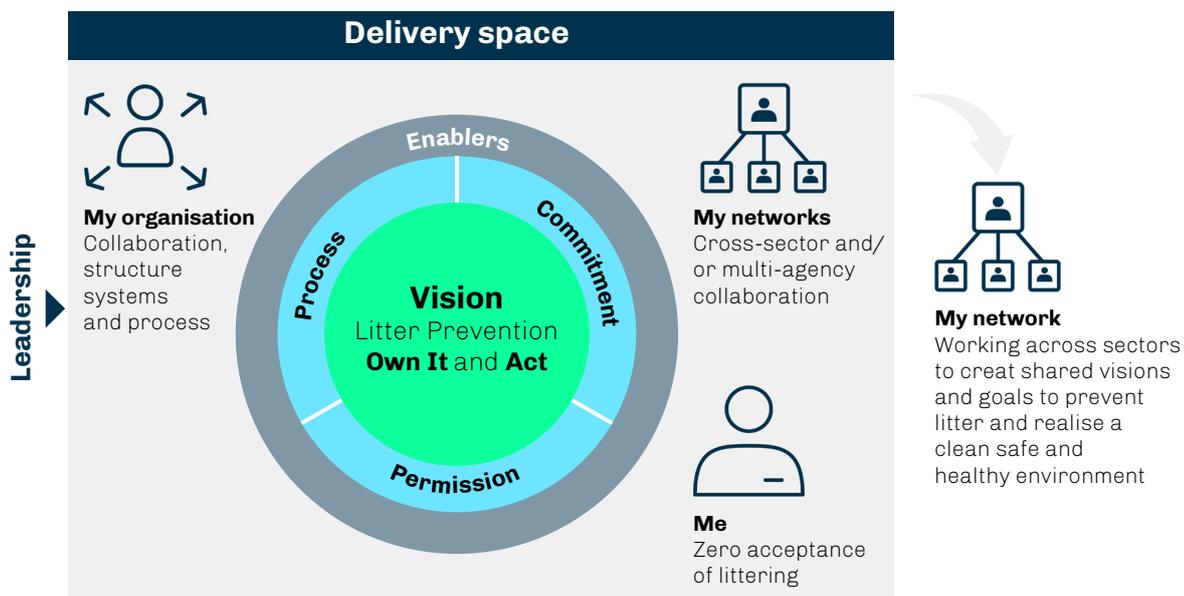
Figure 1 - Self-Assessment example only template

5. Establish an Own it and Act baseline for your organisation

Once the consensus rubric and Own it and Act goals have been completed, organisations will have established their baseline of capacity to engage in long-term litter prevention. The purpose and benefits of establishing a baseline are as follows:

- to formalise where litter prevention sits internally within an organisation at a certain point in time, and to better inform what benefits a commitment to litter prevention means for your organisation
- to refine the Preliminary Own it and Act Status Check, to better understand the scope, needs and organisational fit of engaging in strategic litter prevention projects for your organisation (including refining funded litter prevention strategies)
- to incorporate formal Own it and Act goals into project deliverables and timeframes to increase organisational capacity.
- to establish a litter prevention foundation and reference point to monitor and evaluate ongoing capacity-building efforts to engage in long-term litter prevention.

6. Establishing Own it and Act baselines across a network



For regional bodies which have a defined network (e.g. a set number of councils or community-based organisations that are members of your organisation) you may wish to conduct an Own it and Act baseline for your entire network.

The purpose of this network approach is to understand what capacity and willingness exists across a region to engage in litter prevention, and to inform regional litter prevention strategies or capacity building opportunities. Key benefits of adopting a network approach include:

- identifying key strengths and resources within an existing network
- communicating existing capacities in the network to ensure each individual organisation is aware of regional litter prevention activities

- identifying common gaps across your network to better understand and prioritise litter prevention capacity-building opportunities
- leveraging the different capabilities of network member organisations to allow them to 'play to their strength' in support of the overall effort in litter prevention
- setting and aligning Own it and Act goals across the network to provide guidance and a clear vision for progressing coordinated long-term litter prevention outcomes
- establishing the foundations for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of litter prevention organisational capacity building efforts.

Own It and Act – resources

1. Developing a Litter Prevention strategy

Once organisations have established an Own it and Act baseline, either for their individual organisation or network, action should be taken to progress the Own it and Act goals in a strategic way.

Organisations may be at different stages in their respective litter prevention journeys and may not consider themselves ready to develop an entire litter prevention strategy. As a reference, however, the EPA has developed the following structure as an example to show the elements that could be included in developing an entire strategy that aims to engage in long-term litter prevention.

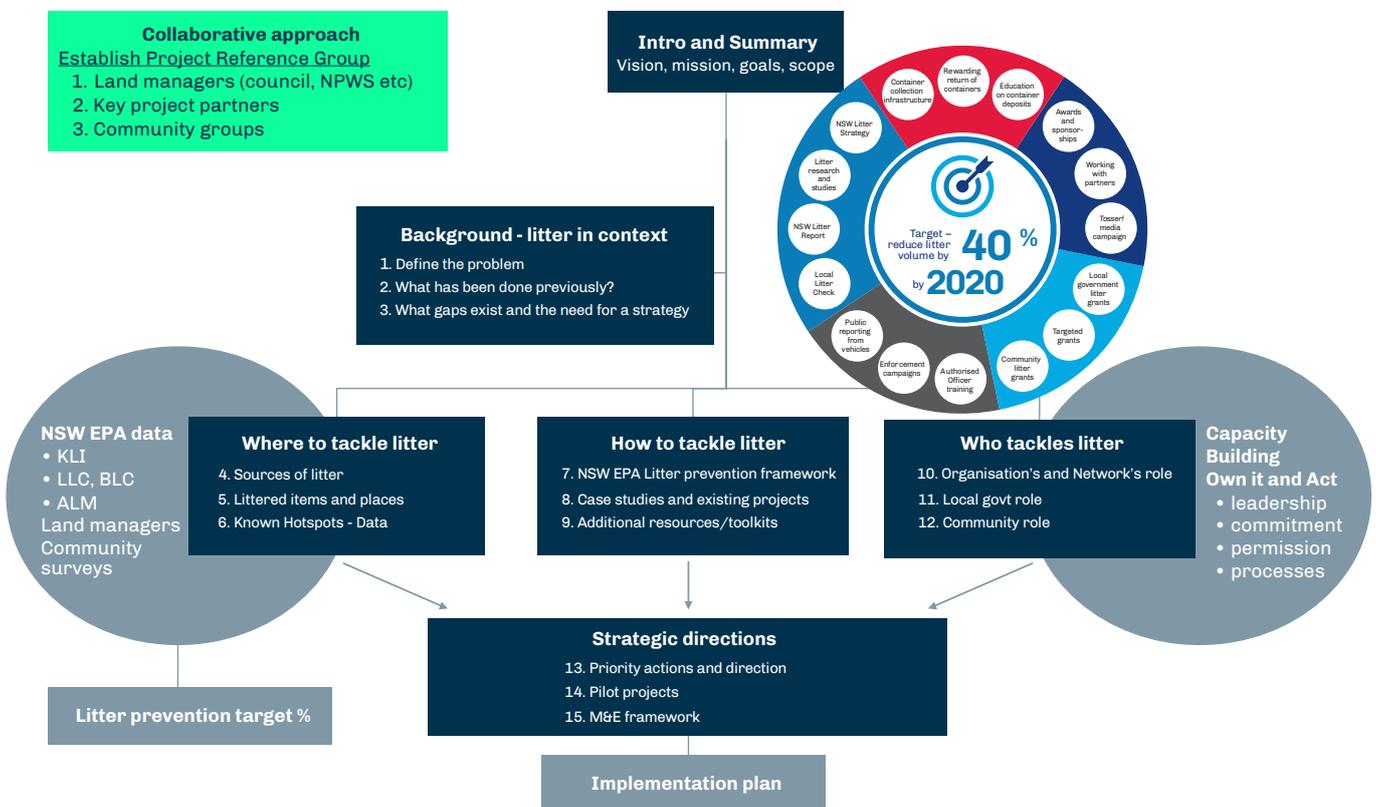


Figure 2 - Example litter prevention strategy structure

While it is important not to be too prescriptive about what a strategy should contain, this is a good example of how to develop a regional litter prevention strategy, which has been modelled on the strategy developed by the River Canoe Club of NSW and Cooks River Alliance under the NSW EPA Community Litter Grants Round 6, Stream 2.

Every strategy will be different depending on the operating context, the intended audience, and what change the strategy aims to introduce to the situation. Other examples of strategies that should be considered for their ideas, themes and structures are the **NSW Litter Prevention Strategy** and the **NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy** – both these strategies should be referenced in any litter prevention strategy in NSW.

For organisations who wish to develop a litter prevention strategy, Strategic Litter Grant funding is available under Round 7, Stream 2 of the Community Litter Grants Program. Strategic Funding is also available for councils and Regional Waste Groups.

2. Using EPA Data

As part of the Own it and Act resources, the NSW EPA can assist organisations who have successfully applied for strategic funding, to understand litter using data from the Litter data framework. This framework covers the use of data according to where you want to measure litter, what kind of litter you are interested in, and what scale you are considering – local, regional or state-wide.

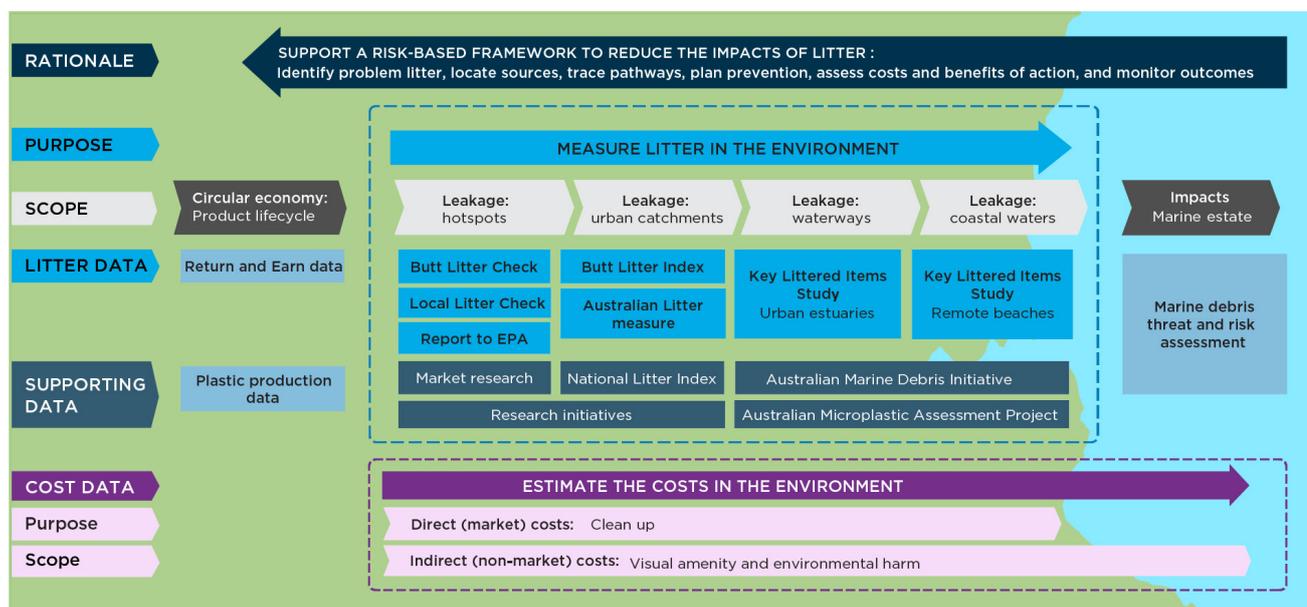


Figure 3 - The Litter data framework

The Litter data framework draws on different databases, including the following:

- **The Local Litter Check** for investigating local litter hotspots
- **The Butt Litter Check** for investigating cigarette butt litter hotspots
- The National Litter Index for investigating historical state-wide litter trends
- The Key Littered Items Study for investigating litter in urban estuaries.

2.1 Local Litter Check (LLC)

The LLC is an online database, with open access free of charge for any registered user. Users can enter their data in the system and use it to conduct investigations of litter hotspots, including litter counts, surveys or location users. The system provides a URL for every completed investigation, which can be shared and viewed by any other registered user.

2.2 Butt Litter Check (BLC)

1. The BLC is a paper-based database, with open access to the methodology and forms available on the EPA website. This uses a similar approach to the Local Litter Check, with elements that help to focus on butt littering behaviour and proven strategies for reducing littering behaviour and increasing binning rates. Groups that are interested in focusing on cigarette butt litter should consider applying for a **Cigarette Butt Litter Prevention Grant**.

2.3 Key Littered Items Study (KLIS) and National Litter Index (NLI)

Are both data sets that are collected and developed by organisations outside of the NSW EPA. The NSW EPA has developed dashboards for both the KLIS and NLI that can be made available to its partners on request.

Since 2017, the **KLIS** has been delivered by the Department of Planning Industry and Environment (DPIE) Coasts and Marine unit within its Science section. Their data is entered in a dashboard that is networked using Power BI. It allows users to investigate marine litter trends and the composition of different litter types and materials. The KLIS data can be analysed at the state, regional and local scales. The data relates to coastal zones, so organisations in inland areas will find it less useful.

The **NLI** is developed by Keep Australia Beautiful, which has provided all its data to the EPA and this has been put in an Excel-based dashboard. It is available on request and covers litter on the land and looks at litter volume and litter counts in different land uses, including industrial, residential, retail, beaches and roadsides. The data finishes in 2020, nevertheless provides long-range trends back to 2007.

2.4 Australian Litter Measure (ALM)

Please note that the NSW Government, along with other States and Territories, has developed a new litter measure – the Australian Litter Measure (ALM) – which will be piloted starting in November 2021. Like the NLI, the ALM will measure litter in different land uses. Over time, once trends can be considered, this data will provide critical insights about litter issues and will be able to inform planning, monitoring and setting of litter targets. In coastal zones, the ALM can be used alongside the KLIS to help understand how litter is moving from land to sea.

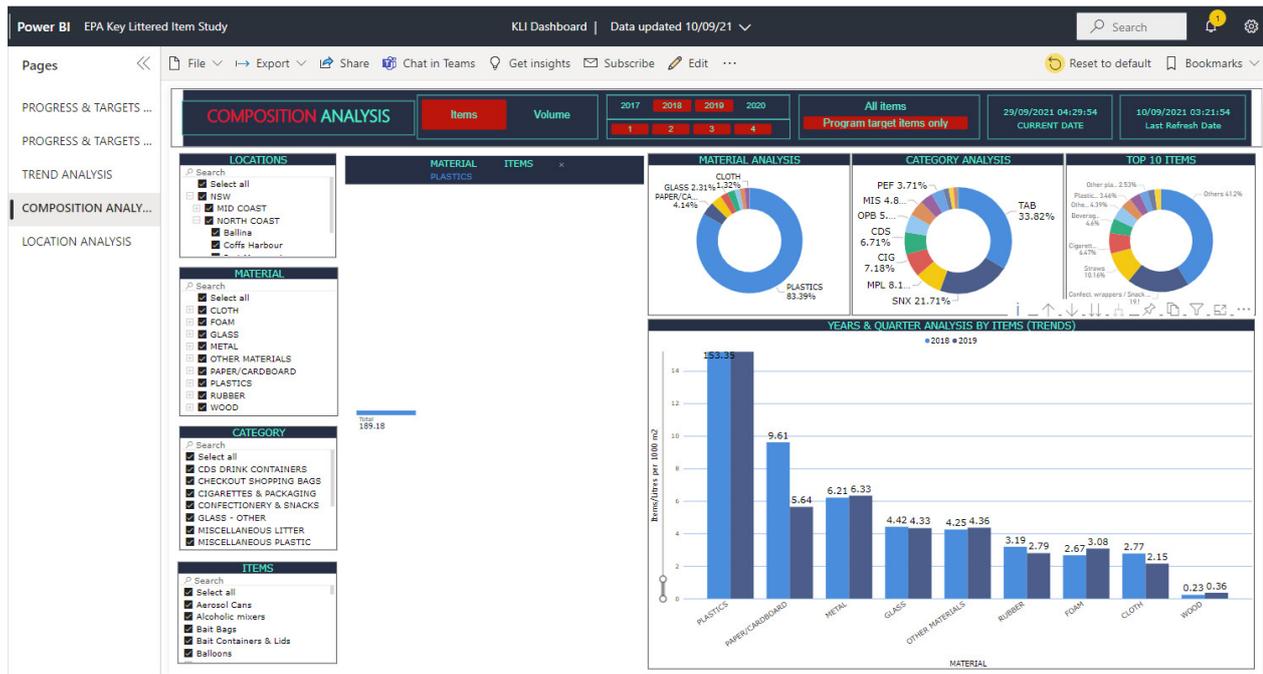


Figure 4 - KLIS dashboard

3. Using EPA data to set litter targets

The main benefit of the Litter Data framework will be to monitor trends, identify litter to prioritise and, potentially, establish baselines for local or regional litter reduction targets.

Setting a litter prevention target for a single location is relatively simple with the Butt Litter Check or Local Litter Check, as these cover litter in small areas where trends can become quickly established. Past grant projects have commonly achieved litter reductions by volume of 50% to 60% or more using the Butt and Local Litter Checks, meaning that it pays to be ambitious with local litter targets.

Setting targets for larger areas is less simple. The NSW EPA has used the KLIS and the NLI to set the NSW litter prevention targets of 30% reduction in plastic litter items by 2025 and 60% reduction of all litter items by 2030. This process took several months of statistical and scientific analysis and required multi-year litter trends being available to develop the final numbers.

Grantees who wish to set their own local or regional targets should understand that it may be unfeasible to do this in the first year of development of a strategy. The EPA recommends using the already existing 30% and 60% state targets, at the same time using Local Litter Check, Butt Litter Check, KLIS and other data to monitor local or regional trends over time. Individual targets can be set once these long-term trends are understood. This approach can be written into a strategy as an ongoing action, at the same time starting on the research and development of individual targets.

4. Ongoing Litter prevention implementation and Own it and Act status

For organisations that have developed a litter prevention strategy or other strategic litter prevention business case, it is time for implementation.

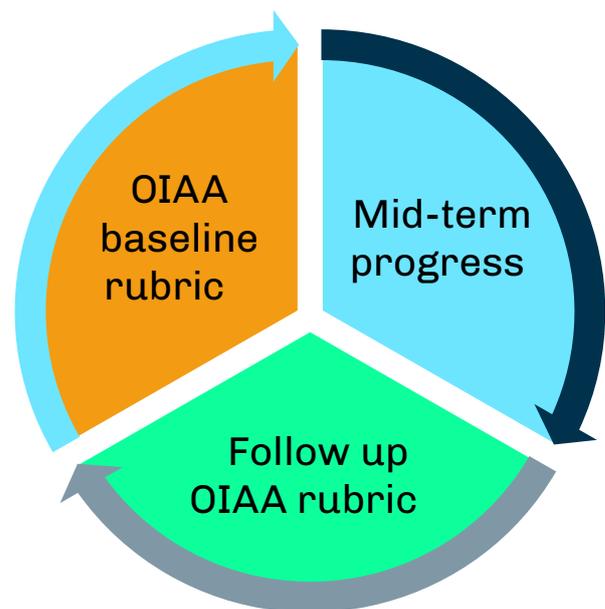
To monitor and evaluate increases in organisational capacity through the implementation of litter prevention strategies, organisations should refer to their Own it and Act baseline. If organisational capacity has increased, organisations should reflect this by engaging in subsequent Self-Assessments and establishing an updated Own it and Act Status.

Round 7, Stream 3 – Community Litter grants

Funding is available under Round 7, Stream 3 of the NSW EPA Community Litter grant program for organisations ready to implement existing litter prevention strategies.

Organisations will be required to update their Own it and Act Status at the beginning of the grant period and at the conclusion, in order to evaluate increases in organisational capacity to engage in long-term litter prevention.

Organisations engaging in this stream should think strategically about how they might incorporate existing Own it and Act goals into the implementation plans of Round 7 projects and should engage with the NSW EPA Litter Prevention Unit to discuss before submitting an application.



5. Networking and collaboration

Finally, the last element under the Own it and Act strategic framework is to expand networks to encourage cross-sector collaboration to achieve new litter prevention targets.

The NSW EPA will be engaging with key stakeholders to identify how best to facilitate increased collaboration and networking opportunities to ensure there are improved platforms for knowledge sharing for:

- case studies and more information for litter prevention updates
- Don't be a Tosser
- NSW EPA Enforcement Data and New Marine Litter campaign are more opportunities for stakeholders to network
- virtual chats and modern online platforms.