

# EPA Litter Prevention Kit Part 2

Delivering effective local litter prevention projects



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Cover: Group cleaning up an outdoor space. Photo: Anthony Harris

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# EPA Litter Prevention Kit Part 2

The EPA Litter Prevention Kit helps you tackle local litter problems and keep your environment the way it was meant to be – litter-free.

There are four parts to the EPA Litter Prevention Kit.

## Part 1



**Things you should know about litter and litterers**

## Part 2



**Delivering effective local litter prevention projects**

## Part 3



**Local Litter Check Guidelines**

## Part 4



**Butt Litter Check Guidelines**

You are here



You can download the Litter Prevention Kit documents from the EPA website:

[www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/litter-and-illegal-dumping/epa-work-prevent-litter/run-litter-prevention-project/local-litter-check](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/litter-and-illegal-dumping/epa-work-prevent-litter/run-litter-prevention-project/local-litter-check)



# Run an effective litter prevention project

Your community group or local council might want to jump in and fix a litter problem as soon as they see it. But your enthusiasm to fix things might not solve the problem, and it could be costly (e.g. continuous clean ups, enforcement). To ensure your hard work is effective, it's essential you understand and address why the littering occurs.

To tackle litter effectively, you need to think through some steps:



**STEP 1:**  
Gather evidence  
about the  
problem and  
possible solutions



**STEP 2:**  
Choose actions  
that will succeed  
Use the **five key factors** that we know  
drive litter behaviour:

- Cleanliness
- Infrastructure
- Education and awareness
- Enforcement
- Involvement



**STEP 3:**  
Know how you  
will measure your  
effectiveness



**STEP 4:**  
Involve the  
people who will  
be affected



**STEP 5:**  
Celebrate  
success, provide  
feedback, and  
share results

# Step 1: Gather evidence about the problem and possible solutions

## Use the *Local Litter Check*

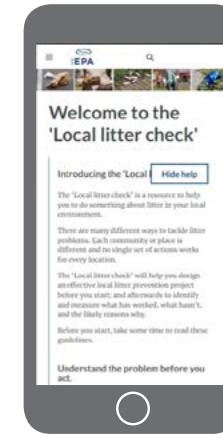
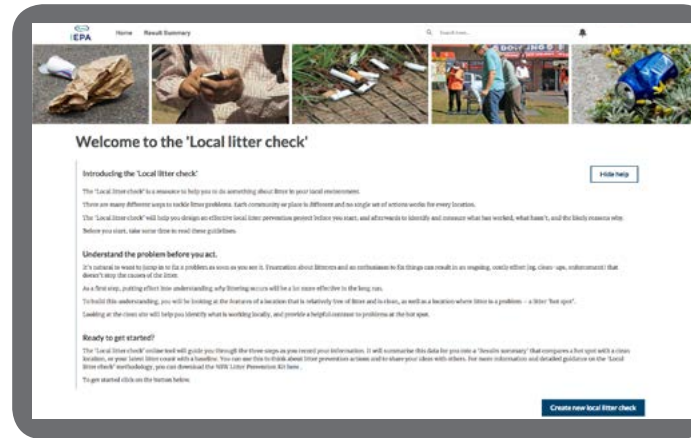
The EPA's easy-to-use *Local Litter Check* is a free online tool to help you tackle litter. Hundreds of Local Litter Checks have been done since it was created in 2013. It's easy to use – and it works!

The *Local Litter Check* has been developed to provide evidence about the factors that contribute to people littering in an area (see the **infographic on page 4**). This evidence will help you identify what is working locally to prevent litter, to build a competitive project to secure funding, and to encourage participation and support from local organisations.

The *Local Litter Check* looks at the features of a local site that is 'clean' and relatively free of litter, and a second site where litter is a problem – a litter 'hotspot'. Looking at the clean site helps you identify what is working locally, and provides a contrast to problems in the hotspot. In both locations, the same three steps are repeated to help you:

- increase your understanding of local problems and solutions
- provide evidence and data about the issues contributing to your litter hotspot, and help you work out where to focus your efforts
- start building a case with evidence to show your project's likely value and return for effort/investment.

The *Local Litter Check*, along with guidelines and other parts of the EPA Litter Prevention Kit, are available on the EPA website: [epa.nsw.gov.au/litter](http://epa.nsw.gov.au/litter).



### What is the Local Litter Check and how do I do it?

Select a clean site and a litter hotspot.

Complete the three steps of the Local Litter Check at both your selected clean site and litter hotspot.

Use the Results Summary to plan, monitor or evaluate a Litter Prevention Project.

'Clean' site

Litter 'hotspot'

**STEP 1**  
Location inspection

**STEP 2**  
Litter count

**STEP 3**  
User survey

**Results Summary**  
(Automatically generated)



## Step 2: Choose actions that will succeed

### Five key factors for litter prevention

Because people litter for many reasons, there are many ways to influence their behaviour.

A combination of approaches is more effective than a single strategy. For this reason, if you know about local strengths and challenges, your litter prevention activities are likely to be more effective.

Your approach should be based on the five key factors that we know influence littering behaviour:





## Cleanliness

Cleaning up a location and keeping it clean can communicate to users what behaviours are expected there. Similarly, unclean sites – with litter, dumped rubbish or graffiti – can encourage anti-social behaviour. To help establish or build community pride in an area, you may need to clean it up and remove graffiti.

But before you go and clean up a site yourself, it is a good idea to talk to the people normally responsible for cleaning and maintaining the site (see the **infographic** on page 16). If it's the local council, try talking to the cleaning staff about their schedule for that site. If local residents or businesses regularly clean the area around their properties (e.g. front footpath), they will also be key allies in keeping the area clean.

**NOTE:** Cleaning up, by itself, is not a litter prevention strategy. You must combine it with other approaches to reduce littering. Continuous cleaning up can tire those doing the work, and might not change the behaviour or attitudes of the litterers.



### Ideas for action

- Increased frequency or better timing of regular cleaning services.
- Review graffiti-removal programs and ensure rapid response once an area is tagged.
- Engage council, local volunteers, businesses and community groups in initial clean ups and planning of clean-up activities.
- Target specific types of problem litter for clean up, e.g. chewing gum and dog poo.
- Engage with existing programs, e.g. *Keep Australia Beautiful NSW*, *Clean Up Australia Day*, or organise your own one-day/multi-day blitzes or clean ups.
- Find ways to stop litter blowing from bins or other sources.
- Find external services that could help, e.g. correctional services might be able to support clean up activities.



Potential problems to look for:

- **Cleaning is reactive only.** If a site is cleaned only after it has been heavily littered, or only when people complain to council, then it misses the chance to use clean-up as prevention. For instance, if a site is heavily used on the weekend, consider cleaning the site on Friday, before the peak period, rather than focusing only on Monday.
- **The litter comes from somewhere else.** If litter is deposited by wind or rain run-off (stormwater), you need to focus on the source, rather than cleaning up at the location only.

## Infrastructure

One of the keys to long-term behaviour change and reducing litter is to make it easy for people to do the right thing by establishing or improving physical infrastructure.

The improvements and infrastructure you need will depend on litter type, location and target audiences. Infrastructure includes bins (litter, butt or recycling) and signage.

It also includes repairing or improving the furniture, landscaping or other location amenities, and adding or removing bins.

NOTE: Infrastructure is a significant cost, and is not just the cost of buying new bins or new signs. Maintaining infrastructure can represent most of the cost over the lifetime of the item, e.g. regular emptying of bins or cleaning of signs. So consult closely with whoever will be responsible for its upkeep, e.g. local council, before you decide to commit funds for installing new infrastructure.

It may help to know if the local council is planning streetscape or landscape improvement works soon. That would be the ideal time to add litter prevention messages on signs and improved infrastructure, such as bins.

## Bins

### Ideas for action

- Improve presentation and visibility of bins – keep them clean.
- Move bins to better locations (after observing how bins are used).
- Empty bins more often.
- Improve bin orientation, e.g. how they are placed in relation to the users.
- Strategically install more bins where evidence shows there is a need (select type to match)
  - litter bin
  - butt bin
  - recycling bin
  - hazardous bin
  - dog bag bin.
- Remove unused bins.
- Use sensor technology. Remote sensors can detect when bins are almost full and ready to be emptied. This can help with timing of service, including emptying of heavily used bins, as well as reducing any unnecessary emptying of bins that are used infrequently.

You can download Information sheets on bins from the Litter Library: [litterlibrary.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://litterlibrary.epa.nsw.gov.au)

## Signage

Signage on its own won't reduce litter but it can be a good tool as part of a mix of approaches:

- Tell people that littering is not welcome.
- Educate people about the impacts of litter, e.g. Litter damages our waterways, bushland and wildlife.
- Tell people that fines apply and that litterers are being watched.
- Be a call to action for witnesses to report litterers.
- Provide prompts for particular behaviours, e.g. Don't be a Tosser! Put it in the bin.

Research indicates that along roadsides a series of signs will build a message as motorists pass by. Conversely, a single sign on a stretch of road won't be effective.

Drivers also pay less attention to signs that are overused, so use fixed roadside signs sparingly. Don't combine messaging about littering and illegal dumping because people see them as two different issues.

### Ideas for action

- Help people feel positive about the location.
- Improve maintenance of infrastructure, e.g. repair broken, dangerous fixtures and furniture, and improve landscaping and boundary markers.
- Consider new/additional gross pollutant traps to stop litter reaching waterways.
- Think about how signage could contribute to better behaviour.

Educating your community and raising awareness is a key part of your litter prevention project. This can influence peoples' motivations and prompt them to put rubbish in the bin or take it with them.

Good litter education encourages people to dispose of their rubbish appropriately and responsibly. This can include feedback, rewards, privileges and other incentives, information, and ways to participate and get involved. Education and raising awareness can also build community engagement and support for litter prevention actions.

## Who are you trying to reach?

Describe your target audience and list everything you know about them: age, interests, clubs, language, locations they use, people they respect or who might influence them, how they get information, and who they mix with.

This information can help you identify the best way to reach your target audience, e.g.:

- the local youth club or skate park
- fishing shop or car club
- community gardens or clubs
- local takeaway stores and other traders
- tourist information centres or visitor areas
- mothers groups, child care centres.

Case studies might give you some other ideas.

**NOTE:** If your message doesn't get to the groups you are trying to influence (your target audience), you are wasting your effort.

Clearly define your one message and stick to it. Multiple messages confuse and dilute the effect of the program.

## What do you want people to do?

If you want people to do something specific, you must have a positive call to action. Do you want them to use the bins provided? Take their rubbish home? Report litterers? Participate in a clean-up? Adopt a site?

Avoid vague or complicated messaging. For instance, a sign saying 'Thank you for not littering' could be confusing because it seems to be talking to people who are somehow already aware that they have not littered – this is not your target audience. Keep it simple and direct, e.g. 'Please put your rubbish in the bin.'

Think also about giving feedback to your target audience. A better way to thank people for not littering is to show them how things are improving so that they are encouraged to continue. For instance, provide statistics on litter reduction. (Refer to **Step 5: Celebrate success, provide feedback, and share your results**)

## Ideas for action

- Reach out to locals.
- Incorporate litter awareness into community and environmental events and educational activities.



- Consider a localised neighbourhood or precinct activity to involve the immediate community.
- Engage locals in acknowledging and praising local people doing their bit to prevent litter.
- Understand and incorporate cultural issues relating to litter and littering as part of educational outreach activities. Use bilingual education and promotion resources where appropriate.

For copies of case studies, email a request to:  
[litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au)



## Share information

- Promote the findings of your own *Local Litter Check* to get people thinking.
- Support and encourage local groups to do a *Local Litter Check* and adopt their own areas.
- Publicise the number of fines issued locally. (Refer to the section **Enforcement**.)
- Increase awareness of the impact of litter among businesses, e.g. in laneways or in specific precincts.
- Display the volume of litter collected over a period of time at your site. This will make it visible and tangible for the community. **Because this idea works best at the start of a project, it is important to show how litter is decreasing as a result of your project.**
- Publicise results from other clean locations.
- Take advantage of captive audiences, e.g. screen a video or use audio announcements to convey your message to public transport passengers (ferries, buses).

## Promote and cross-promote

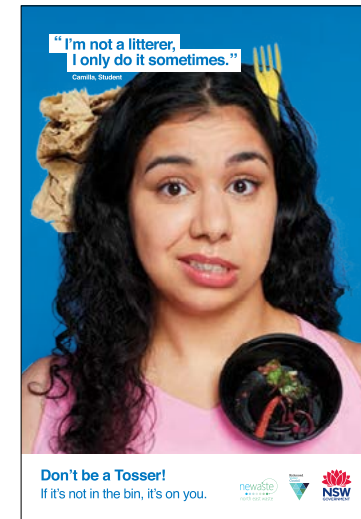
- Use the Tossler! creative materials and link your project with the statewide message. This helps with greater exposure and recall of a common message that people will become familiar with.
- Use low cost promotion and advertising, e.g. social media, local radio and newspapers, cinema advertising and community service announcements.
- Use council and other local communication channels, including businesses and community organisations.
- Use existing networks to promote your work, e.g. social media, local newsletters, Rotary, and chambers of commerce.

- Put links on websites and social media to available resources, information and project stories.
- Distribute scripts for and encourage announcements of anti-litter messages at the beach, clubs, and special events or local attractions. Where appropriate, this could be done in multiple languages.
- Build a good relationship with local journalists/media to help promote your project successes and milestones. Link with well-known local people to capture media interest for your 'good news' stories.

## Collaborate

Consider forming partnerships with organisations and schools based on their immediate surroundings.

Look at successes and ideas from other litter projects (across NSW or elsewhere). Learn from them and adapt their approaches to suit your local community.



THIS SEABIN IS PROUDLY SPONSORED BY

HEWLETT PACKARD AUSTRALIA

**DON'T BE A TOSSER!** Please don't throw any litter into the water. *Take your rubbish with you.*

**SEABINS FOR SYDNEY HARBOUR**  
www.seabinsproject.com

Seabins for Sydney Harbour is a local community initiative dedicated to cleaning up our waterways and keeping them floating debris and litter free.

**WHAT IS A SEABIN?**  
A Seabin is a floating rubbish bin that is located in the water at marinas, docks, yacht clubs and commercial ports. It moves up and down with the tide collecting floating rubbish.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?**  
Water is sucked in from the surface and passes through a catch bag inside the Seabin. The water is then pumped back out, leaving litter and debris trapped in the catch bag to be disposed of properly. The Seabin also has the potential to collect some oils and pollutants floating on the water surface.



## Enforcement

Litter prevention is most successful when the educational and infrastructure components of a program are backed up by enforcement.

Litter prevention programs can include consequences, e.g. building the thought 'I will be caught', and that penalties and prosecution can result. But enforcement is not just about catching and prosecuting people; it must be visible to the local neighbourhood. Public awareness that littering laws are enforced and result in fines, and the likelihood of being named and shamed publicly also makes this component work.

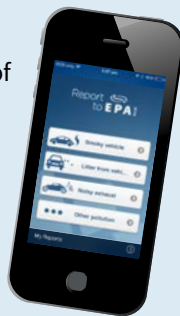
Sometimes councils and communities are wary of using enforcement because it can seem to be negative. However, it is important to remember that enforcement may be the only way you can reach some people with the litter prevention message, especially if they are habitual litterers.

Councils and communities can work together to use enforcement and fines in interesting, positive and effective ways.

### Report to EPA

*Report to EPA* can be used as part of an enforcement campaign to make litterers aware they can be seen and fined for littering.

[www.epa.nsw.gov.au/reporttoepa](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/reporttoepa)



### Ideas for action

- Involve enforcement officers early and throughout the process.
- Promote the existence of litter fines via amnesties, mock fines and litter-reporting rewards.
- Consider an amnesty approach: fine only those people who are caught by enforcement officers and who don't clean up after being caught.
- Encourage enforcement officers to initially provide information on fines instead of fining people (for a limited time).
- Increase the amount of time council officers dedicate to enforcing littering laws in hotspot areas.
- Allow/encourage your community to do in a litterer, perhaps through a local website. Send warning letters to offenders.
- Support enforcement within council. Run staff information sessions to promote littering awareness and behaviour change.
- Engage local magistrates in your program. Develop a community clean-up program for offenders. Talk to magistrates about ordering offenders to do clean-up time instead of paying fines.
- Promote good practices, such as tying down loads in utes and trailers, and better collection or contractor practices.
- Promote action taken by council against litterers and littering.

- Do walk-throughs (out of uniform).
- Think about programs such as 'ranger for a day' so that council staff get to be a ranger for a day and experience enforcement firsthand.
- Run training or refresher programs for compliance officers/rangers to bring them onboard.
- Consider combining vehicle and litter enforcement; then target meeting places, such as takeaway areas.
- Use signage to deter or to identify and warn offenders.



## Involvement

Different groups working together to prevent littering can send a powerful message that your local area is important and valued. This can help influence people's decision not to litter. The message can be reinforced in many places and through many channels, e.g. social media, in local shops, sporting and special interest clubs, recreation areas, signage and events and through council. If a key part of the community is most affected by or responsible for the litter problem, it is an essential target. People may litter an area less when they have a sense of pride and ownership in it. Changes in infrastructure can help, such as new bins, their maintenance and placement. How can you make your problem litter area a nicer place to be in?

### Ideas for action

- Bring different council business units and different community organisations together to understand the issues and to share ideas.
- Find out which areas your community thinks are the worst littered, e.g. major events, nightlife areas, back streets, alleyways, or recreation spots. Sponsor some local litter checks to allow groups to test their perceptions.
- Bring residents and council staff together to explore and discuss the problem, and to develop complementary approaches for tackling hotspots. Give the community something it wants, e.g. new bins.
- Identify and support existing community pride programs that relate to litter prevention and management, such as Tidy Towns, Clean Beaches and plastic bag reduction initiatives.

- Promote and support involvement of local groups in litter prevention grants programs for local government and non-government organisations.
- Encourage and support community groups and schools to work with local businesses to be involved in and to sponsor activities.
- Involve schools by encouraging them to participate in the project. Involve them in all aspects, e.g. design, implementation, and evaluation.
- If you are working with a small population, use community surveys to get the whole community involved to understand their issues.
- Involve fast food outlets and use messaging/promotional opportunities in drive-throughs etc.
- When approaching corporates (e.g. fast food/retail) to participate, engage with decision makers at the corporate/management/franchise level. Use your *Local Litter Check* results to show them the benefits of being involved.
- Hold competitions to name improved sections of your target location, e.g. refurbished picnic facilities. Host a morning tea at the location to celebrate.

### Case studies – examples of what worked and what didn't

Litter prevention case studies provide stories and examples to show how various combinations of approaches have been used and what they achieved. Not all approaches worked as well as people had hoped they would, but you can learn just as much from them as from highly effective interventions. Once you have done your project, write your own story so that others can learn from you. We provide a story template as a Word document. For a copy of the template and case study examples, email a request to: [litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au](mailto:litter.prevention@epa.nsw.gov.au)



## Step 3: Know how you will measure your effectiveness

### Collecting before and after data

To measure the effectiveness of your project actions, you need to collect before and after measures so that you can quantify or clearly describe the results of your efforts.

Your *Local Litter Check* provides a good start. Repeat the three steps in the *Local Litter Check* to assess the progress and success of your program or activity. You can see if the litter count numbers and types have changed. You can also use your location inspection and user surveys to see if the use of and perceptions of the site have changed as a result of your work.

This data will provide hard evidence to your community, supporters and funders to identify approaches that worked as a result of your efforts, what didn't work, and the likely reasons. Any achievements can then be more confidently repeated in other places.

Here are some other ideas for gathering tangible data. The ones you choose will depend on whether the measure is relevant to your project.

- Number of litter hotspots, or their changing locations.
- Number of reports and complaints made to the council about litter.
- Type and number of warnings and infringement notices issued.
- Quantity and type of litter collected by contractors and council crews.
- Number of people participating in *Clean Up Australia Day* or other litter-related community events.

- Number of organisations committed to preventing litter, e.g. via pledges or a form of public commitment.
- The extent to which individuals and organisations maintain clean properties and surrounds.

### Other ways to measure achievements

No matter who is part of your project, you can evaluate the success of your relationships, your partnerships and the way the program has been run. Areas to consider are listed below. In each case, gather information or data to illustrate and support your answer:

- **Appropriateness** – Did the program stay focused on its intended outcomes and objectives? Did everyone understand/ have the same outcomes? What would you do differently?
- **Effectiveness** – How well did the processes and partnerships used for the program work? What would you do differently?
- **Efficiency** – Could resources have been used in better ways? Was it good value for effort and dollars invested? What would you do differently?
- **Management** – Was the program well managed? Think about coordination, decision making, support for partnerships and collaboration between different groups. What would you do differently?



## Step 4: Involve the people who will be affected

### Who can you involve in preventing litter in your local area?

There are many people and groups you might be able to involve in your litter project. Find out how you can link your project with something they care about or is part of their work or focus. They might also align well with a target market you have identified (the users of the area). See the **infographic** on **page 16**.

Although these people might not think they are directly concerned by litter, it could affect them in some way. For example, by:

- making their job harder to do, e.g. roadside or park maintenance
- diverting money to a clean-up that could be used for more important things
- affecting potential customers, clients and local reputation
- affecting tourism and visitors to the area
- deterring new club members or participants in events
- affecting health and wellbeing of people who live in or use an area.

Think about how your potential partners or supporters would benefit from a reduction in litter. Use these ideas when you talk to them about getting involved.

Use the Results Summary form in your *Local Litter Check* when you talk to potential partners and supporters. This one-page summary provides data and a clear snapshot to demonstrate why you think your proposed litter prevention project will work. You can also use the Results Summary form as part of any funding application you prepare.

In most cases, involving local businesses in a litter prevention program is essential. They interact with the public, run premises where people gather, and they can be outlets for program materials, advocates and litter reporters. Traders can promote your litter prevention project and messages to their customers and clients. They can also be your eyes and ears. They may even be the focus of your efforts to change behaviour.

Look for ways to involve all your supporters, funders and partners in promotion and publicity so that they all receive recognition.

If you want to involve local schools, talk to the local environment centre or school representative to understand how best to link with current school priorities. Because schools have many pressures and responsibilities, it may not be the right time for them. Consider connecting through the Parents and Citizens committee.





## Getting funding to support your project

Sponsorships and funding take time to organise, so start to engage with organisations or individuals very early. Think of things that are important to your potential funder and the information they need.

Costs and benefits of any investment are always important to a potential funder. Think about ways you can demonstrate the benefits the funder will get from supporting the project.

## Good communication all the way

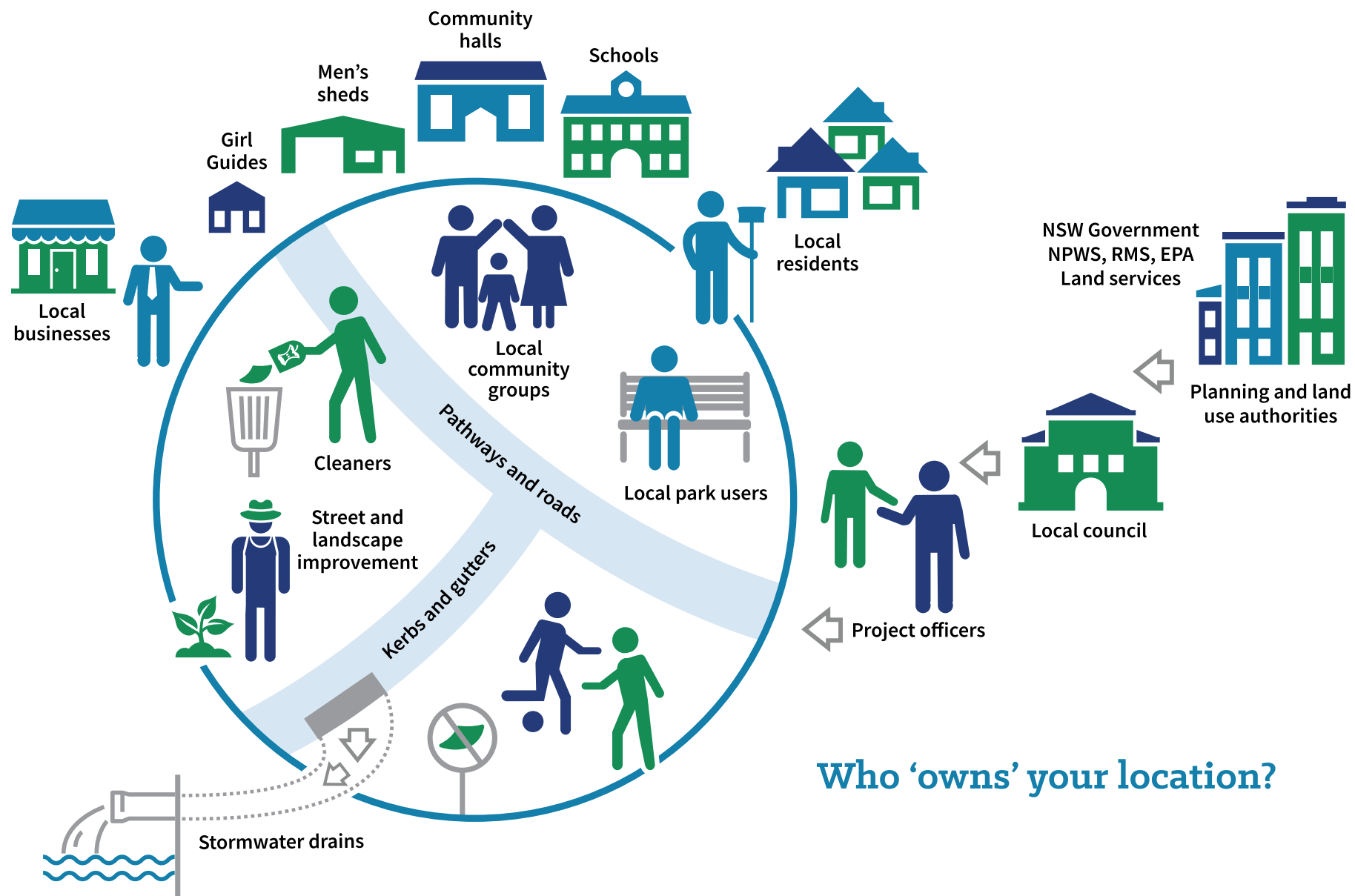
Maintaining good working relations within your organisation and with other organisations and the community is one of the keys to a successful litter prevention program.

If you work within a council, remember that different council business groups can all benefit from reduced litter in their community. These include areas such as enforcement, cleaning, parks and gardens, communications, engineering, environmental health, business development, urban planning, and community health and wellbeing.

As the program owner, you need to raise and maintain awareness. Circulate background information, organise meetings, have casual chats with knowledgeable or influential people, and always aim to secure the support of executive managers and councillors.

If you're from a community group and don't work in council, make sure you talk to key people in council and other networks. Also seek the support of influential people in key local groups and organisations.





## Step 5: Celebrate success, provide feedback and share results

No matter what you are trying to learn or do in life, if you don't get any feedback on how you are doing, it is hard to keep motivated. Everyone needs feedback.

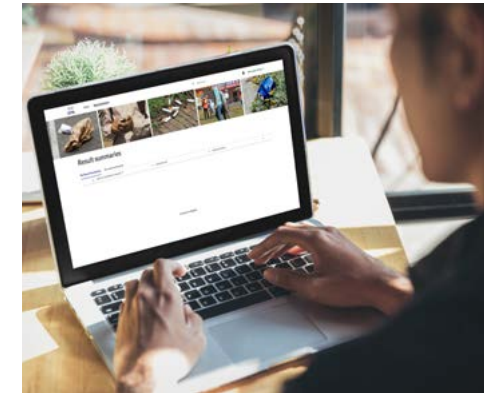
Tell your community about the progress and successes in reducing litter, particularly groups you are trying to influence. Thank them, recognise their achievements, and show the changes that are happening.

Think about what your community, supporters and target audience need to know to keep them motivated. Also think about the best ways to get the message to them (see **Education and awareness ideas**, on page 9).

### Ideas for action

Set some key milestones or targets so you can celebrate when you meet them, and share what is happening with others in your community. This could include:

- reaching a certain number of participants
- reaching a set target for reducing a particular litter type, e.g. cigarette butts
- gaining funding support or new partners
- installing or improving infrastructure
- getting positive feedback from location users
- recognising and sharing the efforts of individuals or groups who are helping solve the litter problem.



# Resources

## Litter prevention

The NSW EPA has developed a range of resources to help you plan and deliver litter prevention projects.

The resources can be downloaded from the EPA website: [www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/litter-and-illegal-dumping/epa-work-prevent-litter/run-litter-prevention-project/local-litter-check](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/litter-and-illegal-dumping/epa-work-prevent-litter/run-litter-prevention-project/local-litter-check)

## Other EPA resources

The EPA provides a range of grants and resources across many sectors to help care for and protect our environment.

The full range of EPA grant programs is available from the EPA website: [www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/grants](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/grants)

