



No Butts about it ... It's Litter!

A number of Residents 3000 and EastEnders members have expressed their concern about the mounting pile of cigarette litter in and on CBD streets and footpaths.

Did you know that cigarette butts are made from cellulose acetate, a form of plastic? They are not made from cotton wool or paper. Butts are designed to capture vapors from a cigarette, and this contains more than 4000 chemicals, including 43 known carcinogens such as ammonia, nitrogen dioxide, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide and arsenic. These and other toxic chemicals leach into the environment when butts are littered. Evidently it takes just 4-5 days for cigarette butts to find their way to the Yarra river!

Not only individuals are responsible to dispose of butts in bins or dedicated receptacles, all the businesses in the city have a legal responsibility to manage litter generated in and around their location. This especially includes collecting, storing and disposing of cigarette butts that may be littered by staff, customers, clients and visitors – even if they are dropped outside the property boundary.

The fines for littering cigarette butts are considerable. \$317 for an extinguished cigarette butt to \$622 for dropping a lit cigarette. Surely these fines should be an effective deterrent to cigarette litter?

We residents believe that businesses who allow their staff and patrons to smoke outside without providing appropriate cigarette litter disposal nor see it as their responsibility to clean up cigarette litter generated on the pavement, need to be targeted under the City of Melbourne's Environment Local Law. This law requires all businesses to:

- store waste material, including cigarettes, in an approved container;
- maintain the cleanliness of the area around their premises.

Penalties of up to \$500 apply to businesses who fail to comply with these requirements.

The reality is most smokers don't even realise that by throwing their butt, anywhere but in a bin, constitutes littering!

It is certainly commendable that City of Melbourne has increased the number of 'Butt' bins but just putting the bins in place, does not mean the bins are used and the number of cigarette butts in and around footpaths and buildings reflects this. Unfortunately, it seems that this effort is not enough.

Maybe City of Melbourne needs to revitalise their education program for smokers to encourage disposal of butts responsibly. We have had such campaigns before and they were quite successful.

One of our members commented recently:

"In the month of September, City of Melbourne issued 275 Infringements but considering, every morning I pick up between 120 -200 butts alone in my small lane, the 'strike' rate is low.

The key is about alerting smokers to the fact that by disposing of their butts irresponsibly, they are littering. It isn't about 'Stop Smoking', that's a personal matter."



City of Melbourne have been alerted to resident's concerns about this problem. Let's hope that with a concerted effort by all parties, the situation can be improved.

