

# NATIONAL RUBBISH REPORT



The 2020 Rubbish Report is a snapshot of rubbish removed by Clean Up Australia volunteers across the nation, the Report is based on the count of 365,922 rubbish items from 1,274 surveyed locations (445,251 items from 1,002 locations in 2019).

ESTIMATED VOLUNTEERS:

**683,242**

745,823 in 2019



**17,086.6**

ESTIMATED UTE LOADS

17,313.2 in 2019

REMOVED



VOLUNTEER HOURS:

**1,366,484**

1,479,646 in 2019



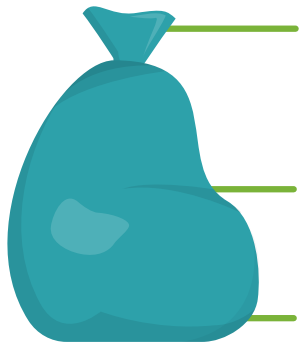
SITES REGISTERED:

**7,778**

7,798 in 2019



## NOTABLE CHANGES FROM 2019



Wood and rubber remained consistent as a percentage of counted rubbish

### % INCREASE

As a percentage of types of rubbish reported, **plastics** increased by **5%**, **glass** by **4%** and **paper** by **1%**

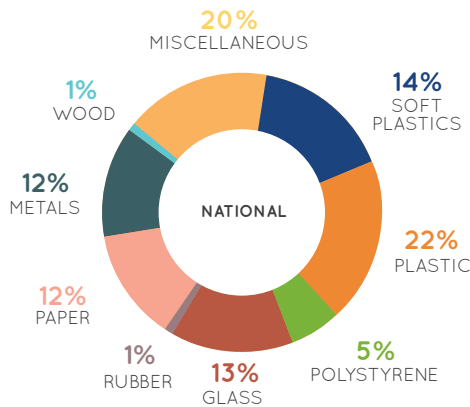
### 13.7%

**SOFT PLASTICS**  
Soft plastics reflected 13.7% of the plastics count

### % DECREASE

**Miscellaneous items** decreased by **5%**, **metals** by **4%** and **polystyrene** by **1%**

## MAJOR TYPES OF RUBBISH REPORTED



2020 participation reflects the impact of COVID-19 on volunteer capacity to join with their neighbours and friends to clean up their favourite locations.

Despite local lockdowns and restrictions, Australians continued to Step Up to Clean Up with only a 0.3% reduction in the number of registered activities across the nation.



This clearly demonstrates the importance volunteers place on our local parks, streets, beaches, waterways and bushland and we applaud the estimated 683,242 volunteers who donned a mask and gloves during 2020.

## TOP TEN RUBBISH ITEMS AS A % OF THE TOTAL RUBBISH SURVEYED

GROUP ITEMS	RANK #1	RANK #2	RANK #3	RANK #4	RANK #5	RANK #6	RANK #7	RANK #8	RANK #9	RANK #10
	Non-Food Packaging	Beverage Containers	Soft Plastics	Food Packaging	Beverage Rubbish	Household Items	Sanitary Items	Construction Materials	Toys, Sport goods Ropes, Straps	Clothing
	39.87%	15.46%	13.73%	9.92%	8.51%	4.52%	2.46%	2.11%	1.67%	1.29%

NOTABLE CHANGES
Packaging continues to dominate rubbish counts representing 49.8% of all reported rubbish during the year. This is on-par with 2019, during which packaging represented 50.3%
Beverage container counts continue to decline - reflective of the impact of well-established container refund schemes. In 2020 they reflected 15.5% of counted rubbish. In 2019 they accounted for 17.9%
Soft plastics have been separated into their own category for the first time in 2020. Counts include plastic food, retail and garbage bags, plastic confectionery wrappers, cling wrap and 'other' soft plastics. 2020 volunteers counted 33,562 of these items through their reporting, representing 13.7% of all surveyed rubbish and 40.4% of plastics.

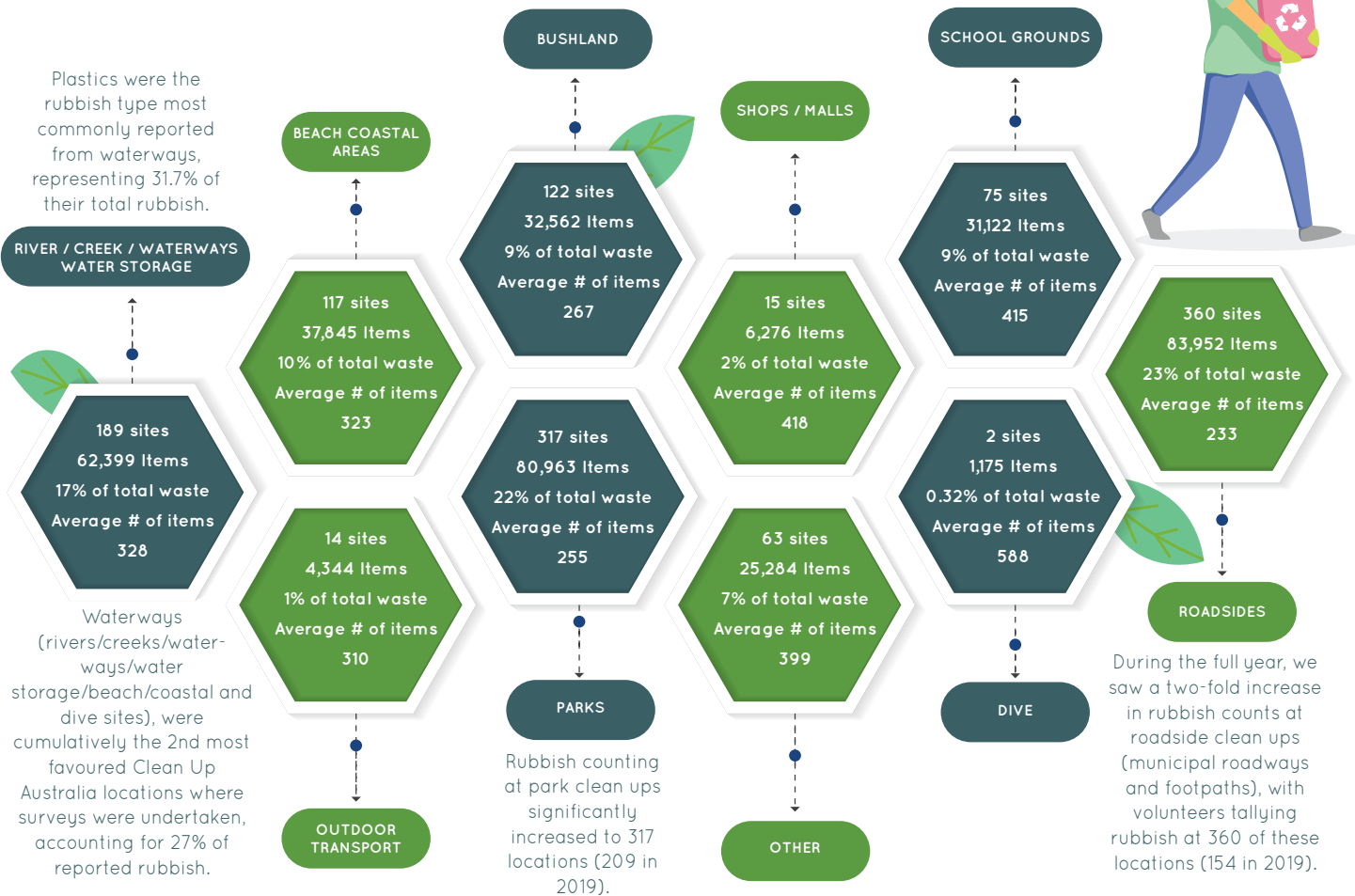
\*Grouped Data made up 99.5% (98.7% in 2019) of surveyed rubbish

SINGLE ITEMS	RANK #1	RANK #2	RANK #3	RANK #4	RANK #5	RANK #6	RANK #7	RANK #8	RANK #9	RANK #10
	Cigarette Butts	Plastic Chip Confect. Wrappers	Glass Pieces	Glass Other	Plastic Lids & Bottle Caps	Alcoholic Beverage Bottles	Other Soft Plastics	Plastic Packaging	PET Drink Containers	Soft Drink Cans
	16.20%	5.65%	4.13%	4.00%	3.99%	3.88%	3.30%	3.07%	2.93%	2.71%

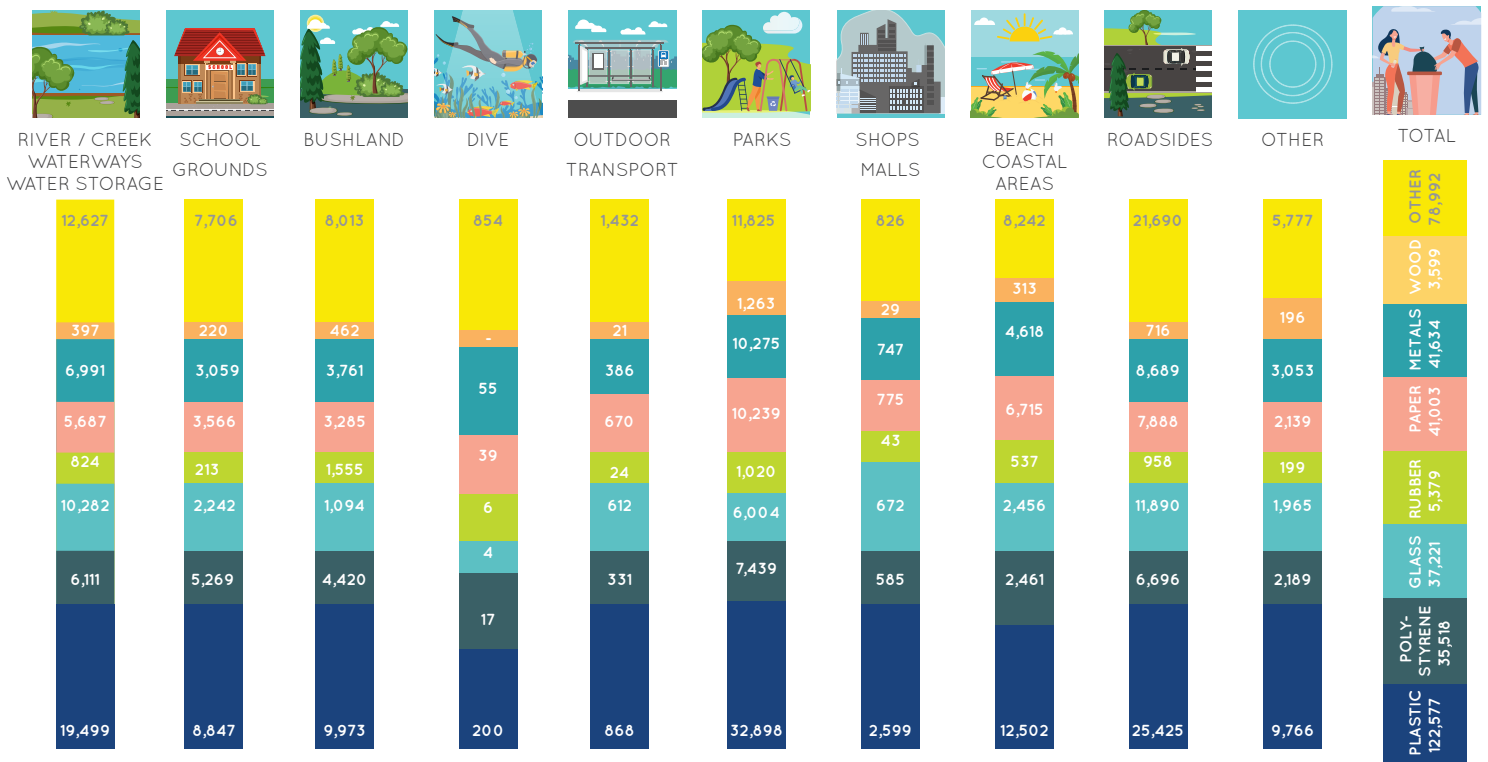
NOTABLE CHANGES
While decreasing their % representations, cigarette butts remains the #1 item reported by volunteers. In 2020 they represented 16.2% of all reported rubbish which is a welcome decrease of 5.8% over 2019. While small, the environmental impact of a cigarette butt cannot be underestimated. Leaching toxins and leaving small pieces of plastic in their wake - every littered butt provides immediate, short and long-term danger for our precious flora and fauna
Half of the single items reported in 2020 are either or contain plastic. Its persistence is the challenge - hard plastics will outlive us all, and they and their soft plastic cousins rip with the danger of entering the food-chain
Beverage container counts have stabilised. We are still seeing evidence of 'container hunting' in states where the redemption scheme is new, but established states are reporting decreased counts as more containers are intercepted for redemption before they become litter
It is also clear that small stuff is an issue. Butts, wrappers, lids and pieces of glass dominate the Top 10 list, accounting for 30% of Top 10 reported rubbish

\*Individual Item Count Top 10 data = 49.9% (53.2% in 2019)

## FAVOURITE CLEAN UP SITES



While parks are always a popular clean up location, volunteers reported that these and their local streets were more easily accessible during COVID-19 lockdowns, when activity was restricted to short periods of socially distanced outdoor exercise. Plastic items were the dominant rubbish type reported at these locations – representing 40.6% of rubbish reported in parks and 30.3% of that counted along roadsides.



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