

LITTER REPORT FY24 NSW

During the financial year of 2024, Clean Up Australia volunteers continued to unite against litter by taking to their streets, beaches, parks, bushland and waterways to Clean Up.

While over a million joined us last year across 16,320 sites, the Litter Report FY24 is a snapshot of litter removed by Clean Up Australia volunteers across a portion of these sites during Clean Up Australia Day and Every Day Clean Ups. Across NSW, the Report is based on the count of 151,406 litter items from 450 surveyed locations (179,066 items from 470 locations in FY23).

NSW SITES REGISTERED:
5,596 (5,704 in FY23)

NSW ESTIMATED VOLUNTEERS:
423,115 (355,156 in FY23)

NSW ESTIMATED VOLUNTEER HOURS:
846,230 (710,312 in FY23)

MAJOR TYPES OF LITTER REPORTED

	FY24 Count	%	Difference
Soft Plastic	42,847	28.3%	-2.7%
All Other Plastic	41,947	27.7%	9.7%
Hard Plastic	40,872	27.0%	-5.0%
Metal	10,747	7.1%	-0.4%
Glass	6,199	4.1%	0.0%
Paper/Cardboard	3,644	2.4%	-2.6%
Miscellaneous	1,752	1.2%	0.5%
E-Waste	1,667	1.1%	0.5%
Rubber	1,177	0.8%	0.2%
Wood	555	0.4%	-0.1%

NOTABLE % CHANGES FROM FY23

↑ Increases:	↓ Decreases:	Unchanged:
All Other Plastic 9.7%	Hard Plastic 5.0%	Metal
	Soft Plastic 2.7%	Glass
	Paper/Cardboard 2.6%	Miscellaneous
		E-Waste
		Rubber
		Wood

TOP 10 GROUPED ITEMS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL LITTER SURVEYED

Grouped Items	FY24 Count	%	Difference
Non-Food Packaging	50,285	33.2%	5.8%
Soft Plastics	42,847	28.3%	-2.7%
Beverage Containers	22,834	15.1%	-0.8%
Food Packaging	21,084	13.9%	0.1%
Household Items	5,119	3.4%	0.9%
Beverage Litter	4,505	3.0%	-2.1%
E-Waste	1,667	1.1%	0.5%
Sanitary Items	1,060	0.7%	-0.7%
Construction Materials	933	0.6%	-0.3%
Clothing	584	0.4%	-0.1%

NOTABLE CHANGES

While most items reported remain consistent from FY23, non-food packaging counts increased by 5.8%, overtaking soft plastics as the most reported item in FY24. Non-food packaging counts include cigarette butts, plastic fragments, bags and boxes. NSW, WA and Tasmania are the only states reporting higher levels of non-food packaging than soft plastics.

E-waste counts increased by 0.5%. While this increase is not significant, it could be attributed to the number of vapes (e-cigarettes) reported nearly doubling from FY23 to FY24. In September 2024, NSW EPA introduced a trial of 21 council-operated Community Recycling Centres which accept embedded battery products, including vapes. This may reduce vapes litter counts in future.

Soft plastics reduced by 2.7% with beverage containers and beverage related litter also decreasing overall by 2.9%. This could be attributed to increased collector efforts for the NSW Container Deposit Scheme (CDS). In NSW, prior to the commencement of the CDS in 2017, beverage container litter levels reflected 28.7% of all litter reported. In FY24, this has reduced to 15.1%.

Sanitary items continued to decrease as the number of facemasks reported decreased.

All other items show minimal percentage changes over FY23.

TOP 10 INDIVIDUAL ITEMS AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL LITTER SURVEYED

Individual Items	FY24 Count	%	Difference
Cigarette Butts	33,243	22.0%	6.9%
Soft Plastics – packets, wrappers	27,425	18.1%	-11.9%
Plastic Bags – food, retail, garbage	10,112	6.7%	5.5%
Plastic Food Containers & Utensils	9,982	6.6%	0.8%
Plastic Fragments > 5mm	9,312	6.2%	0.3%
Aluminium Beverage Cans	8,688	5.7%	0.8%
Plastic Beverage Bottles	8,134	5.4%	-3.3%
Glass Beverage Bottles	4,744	3.1%	1.2%
Takeaway Coffee Cups	4,424	2.9%	-0.1%

NOTABLE CHANGES

There are some changes in the order of the top 10 individual items counts compared to FY23. Cigarette butts have moved into the top position with an increase of 6.9%. Cigarette butts in NSW were higher proportionally by 1.9% compared to the national average. NSW, ACT and Tasmania are the only states reporting higher levels of cigarette butts than soft plastic wrappers.

Soft plastics moved into second place, however showing a reduction of 8.7%. Plastic bags have moved into the top 10 with a significant increase of 5.5%. Thick plastic bags are currently under review in NSW for phasing out, while lightweight plastic bags were phased out in NSW in 2022. NSW was the last state to implement this ban.

Glass beverage bottles also moved from twelfth position in FY23 to eighth position with an increase of 1.2% in FY24. These bottles are recyclable through the NSW CDS and kerbside collections.

Plastic beverage bottles moved from third position in FY23 to seventh position in FY24 with a decrease of 3.3%.

All other items show minimal percentage changes over FY23.

LITTER DISTRIBUTION BY SITE TYPE

NSW	Number of sites	% of total litter count
Beach/Coastal Area	77	26.6%
Park	116	22.4%
Roadside	65	15.0%
River/Creek	55	13.7%
Footpath	53	9.9%
Public Bushland	45	6.6%
School Grounds/Campus	23	2.3%
Shops/Malls	4	1.6%
Outdoor Public Transport	1	0.7%
National Park	5	0.6%
Other	6	0.6%