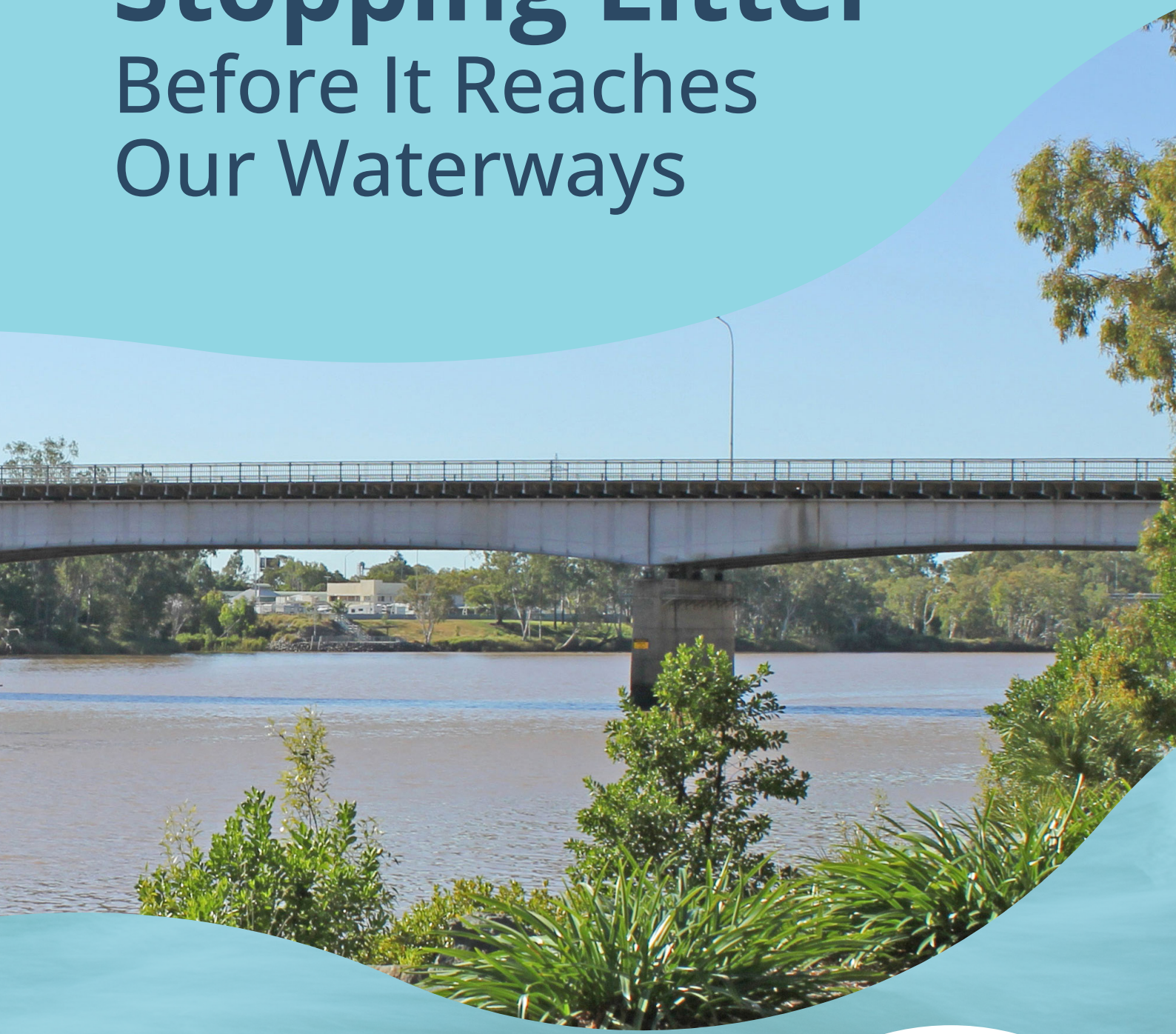
FACT SHEET

Stopping Litter
Before It Reaches Our Waterways



fitzroy partnership for river health

Stormwater Litter Trap Monitoring
In Rockhampton and Yeppoon

Stormwater drains transport litter directly to local creeks, estuaries and coastal waters. To help tackle this problem, the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health (FPRH) monitors 35 Drain Buddies installed at key locations within the central business districts of Rockhampton and Yeppoon. These devices capture litter before it enters local waterways, helping to improve waterway health.

Drain Buddies are heavy-duty baskets installed at litter hotspots. They allow water to pass through while capturing litter and organic debris. The Drain Buddies are emptied quarterly, with all litter sorted into seven categories and recorded in the FPRH litter database.

FPRH commenced litter monitoring in 2022, and the resulting data has provided valuable insight into what is being littered, where it originates, and which source reduction initiatives are likely to deliver the greatest environmental benefits.



Image (Bottom Left): Litter collected from Drain Buddies installed in Rockhampton and Yeppoon town centres.

DRAIN BUDDIES 2022-2026

43,000 Litter Items
PREVENTED FROM REACHING LOCAL WATERWAYS

18,500 Cigarette
BUTTS REMOVED

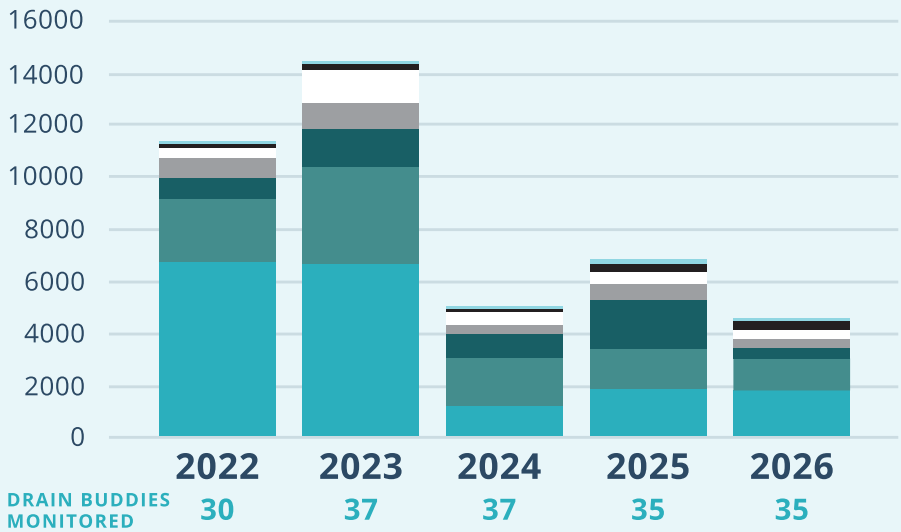
16,600 Plastic Items
INTERCEPTED

Is Litter Improving?

A Positive Trend for Local Waterways

- Cigarette Butts
- Soft Plastic
- Hard Plastic
- Metals
- Paper & Cardboard
- Other Materials
- Glass & Ceramic

TOTAL LITTER COLLECTED **2022 TO APRIL 2026**



Between 2022 and April 2026, the Drain Buddies captured:

18,540 CIGARETTE BUTTS

11,061 SOFT PLASTICS

5,587 HARD PLASTIC ITEMS

3,101 METAL ITEMS (e.g Cans)

2,926 PAPER & CARDBOARD ITEMS

1,280 OTHER ITEMS

602 GLASS & CERAMIC ITEMS



Analysis of the data indicated that neither stormwater catchment size nor rainfall prior to collection significantly influenced the number of litter items captured in each drain. This suggests that litter loads are driven primarily by human behaviour.

Cigarette butts were the most common litter item, accounting for 43% of all litter collected. Following the strengthening of Queensland's smoke-free public places laws in September 2023, cigarette butt counts declined by approximately 80% between 2023 and 2024, suggesting that legislative changes may have contributed to a substantial reduction in cigarette litter entering stormwater systems.

While reductions were also observed in some plastic items following Queensland's single-use plastic reforms, plastic materials and cigarette butts continue to make up a significant proportion of litter entering stormwater drains.

Key Findings

- Total litter declined substantially between 2023 and 2024.
- Cigarette butt litter declined by approximately 80% between 2023 and 2024.
- Hard and soft plastics accounted for 39% of all litter collected.
- Areas with high pedestrian activity, commercial land uses and public gathering spaces contributed disproportionately to stormwater litter loads.

Our monitoring shows that cigarette butts and plastic items are the most common forms of litter entering local waterways. Every cigarette butt placed in a bin and every piece of plastic kept out of the environment helps protect our rivers, estuaries and the Great Barrier Reef.

Litter Hot Spots

A relatively small number of high-use locations generated a disproportionate amount of stormwater litter, highlighting opportunities for targeted education, improved infrastructure and litter prevention initiatives. Our monitoring showed that the five drains with the highest litter loads over the monitoring period were all located in areas with high pedestrian activity, including commercial precincts, bus stops and near licensed venues.



Litter: Not So Fun Facts

Cigarette butts are one of the most littered items worldwide.

Plastic litter can remain in the environment for hundreds of years.

Hard and soft plastics accounted for 39% of all litter collected.

Areas with high pedestrian activity, commercial land uses and public gathering spaces contributed disproportionately to stormwater litter loads.

Top 5 Ways

To Stop Litter Reaching Our Waterways

1 **Put litter in the bin**
Even small items can wash into stormwater drains and end up in local creeks, rivers and eventually the ocean.

2 **Never throw cigarette butts on the ground**
Cigarette butts contain plastic fibres and can release harmful chemicals into the environment.

3 **Reduce single-use plastics**
Choose reusable shopping bags, drink bottles, coffee cups and food containers whenever possible.

4 **Secure your rubbish**
Make sure wheelie bin lids are closed and tie rubbish bags securely, especially on windy days.

5 **Dispose of fishing line and bait packaging responsibly**
Fishing line, hooks and plastic bait bags can entangle wildlife and persist in the environment for many years.



Acknowledgement

The Drain Buddies project is proudly supported by the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health, and through BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) Social Investment Funding which helps drive collaborative environmental and community outcomes across the region. This project builds on the work of the Drain Buddies project initiated by FBA in 2021 with the support of the Rockhampton Regional Council and the Livingstone Shire Council.

BMA
BHP Mitsubishi Alliance

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