



5th July 2023

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for Environment and Water

Dear Minister Plibersek,

This letter is to support the submission by No More Butts in response to the consultation paper on the exposure draft of the Bill and Regulations for Public Health (Tobacco and Other Products) 2023.

In our experience, including monthly citizen science clean ups of local beaches and waterways, the plastic fibre butts (discarded filters) are our top three items collected (the others being soft plastics and hard plastic pieces). For many of our clean ups, the soft plastic packaging “film” from cigarette packaging makes up a high fraction of the total soft plastics. At one regular site (200m section) we find hundreds, and to give you an idea from one specific clean up (Brighton le Sands, 300m² (60 m X 5 m) we found 3366 butts! Our data shows to us that “butts” are our most littered item that come from stormwater AND in situ litter source. Butts are ubiquitous litter – on days we find nothing else, there will be butts. Many users do not realise the butts are made from cellulose acetate, perhaps explaining why so many are littered with decades of thinking that butts were just “paper” – but in fact they are plastic fibres filled with toxins that leach into the environment. The soil, sand, and water these butts encounter become polluted with their chemicals (and the fibres). The following proposals will not only provide the public knowledge and awareness what these butts are made from and the environmental affects, but also aim to stop the source of them as a littered item and reduce the pollution consequences including removing the plastic as a component in the first place.

The environmental impacts caused by tobacco products are immense. The Commonwealth Government has an opportunity to take once-in-a-decade action on some of the biggest environmental impacts of tobacco products through the revisions in this Health legislation package. Independent research shows that filters do not make smoking healthier. The industry markets filters to make cigarettes seem safer, but they can increase the harms of smoking, including when smokers inhale and ingest the plastic fibres found in filters.

We support the following proposals made by No More Butts:

- Inclusion of environmental warnings on inserts and retail packaging of tobacco products
- Inclusion of environmental warnings on cigarette sticks (“DON’T LITTER”)
- Inclusion of environmental warnings on filter tip paper (“PLASTIC”)
- The use of recycled cardboard and inks that enable further recycling for retail packaging
- The removal of the plastic film and tear strip
- Investigating changing the colour of the filter tip from cork to a colour that is more noticeable when littered, such as bright pink
- The ban of plastic tobacco filters, or a provision to enable a future ban.

With cigarette butts being the most littered item in Australia, the plastic tobacco filters have a negative impact on both health and the environment, including the ocean. Cigarettes are known to contain 7,000 chemicals, most of which are trapped in the filter and pollute water and soil when they are littered into the environment. One cigarette butt can pollute up to 40 litres of water, killing marine life.

We note that the Belgian Superior Health Council recently joined the World Health Organization in calling for a ban on tobacco filters, noting that the filter provides no health benefit for smokers. A reduction in the amount of litter would have a positive impact on flora and fauna as well as soil quality. It would also have a positive impact on the financial burden currently worn by tax payers and volunteers for the clean up costs.

Yours sincerely,
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