

Perspectives.

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Plastic tobacco filters

A problematic and
unnecessary plastic
impacting the
environment, and
human health

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No More Butts

Executive Summary

Sometimes, little things can have a big impact. Cigarette butts are a perfect example.

Tobacco filters are an unnecessary, avoidable plastic product. With almost all cigarettes containing a filter made of plastic, cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world. It is estimated that 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are littered into the environment every year, with up to 40% ending up in our waterways.

Not only do cigarette butts pollute hundreds of trillions of tonnes of water each year, they can take up to 15 years to photodegrade, so the cumulative impact of plastic waste is also quite significant.

Cigarette butts contribute to the loss of biodiversity, by entering ecosystems and leaching toxic chemicals into soil, air and water. In addition, pollution is generated through the transportation of cigarettes, as well as the eventual plastic pollution issue which impacts the environment.

Along with the microplastics created during degradation, tobacco filters absorb many chemicals during smoking, which are then leached into the environment when littered. Many of these are currently being considered as Issues of Concern by the United Nations.

With a call from the World Health Organization in 2022 to ban tobacco filters being recently supported by research from the Belgian Superior Health Council, the Plastics Treaty negotiation is the perfect opportunity for member states to take action on this form of toxic plastic pollution.

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Cover Photo:
Cigarette butts are often littered in coastal areas © No More Butts



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Introduction

Cigarette butts are the most littered item globally.¹

Estimates suggest that up to 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are discarded into the environment every year.² They are easily carried in stormwater runoff through drainage systems and eventually to local streams, rivers, and waterways.³

A Local Environment Quality Survey of England 2017/18 showed that 52% of smokers who smoke every day thought putting a cigarette down the drain was acceptable, and 39% of smokers admitted to throwing a cigarette butt down a drain within the past month.⁴ Globally, it has been reported that 40% of discarded cigarette butts make it into our oceans and waterways.⁵

With a plastic filter made from cellulose acetate,⁶ cigarette butts are photodegradable,⁷ not biodegradable. Tobacco producer, Philip Morris International, notes that it can take up to 15 years for a cigarette butt to break down.⁸ During this process, thousands of plastic microfibers are created.⁹

Using the littering rates and the average weight of a cigarette butt,¹⁰ it can be estimated that at least 350 thousand tonnes of plastic tobacco filters end up in waterways globally each year. With 15 years of litter accumulating, up to 5.3 million tonnes of cigarette butts could currently be in our waterways. Cigarette butts could accidentally be ingested by some marine species (such as fish, birds, and whales) during feeding, according to Macedo et al., 2011 and Santos et al., 2005. There is also research to suggest they enter our food stream.¹¹

Additionally, a World Health Organization paper highlights research showing that harmful chemicals leached from discarded butts (which include nicotine, arsenic and heavy metals) can be acutely toxic to aquatic organisms.¹² With each cigarette containing over 7,000 chemicals¹³ and research showing that one butt can contaminate up to 40 liters of water,¹⁴ a study conducted by a San Diego State University suggested that the chemicals leached from one smoked cigarette

1 Neill P. An estimated 4.5 trillion cigarettes are thrown away each year [Internet]. EnvironmentJournal. 2019 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://environmentjournal.online/features/an-estimated-4-5-trillion-cigarettes-are-thrown-away-each-year/>

2 Ibid.

3 EPA N. NSW Environment Protection Authority. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Reducing cigarette butt litter. Available from: <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/litter/targeted-programs/reducing-cigarette-butt-litter>

4 Eisfeld-Pierantonio P. Whale & Dolphin Conservation Australia. 2019 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. How cigarette butts pollute the ocean and harm whales and dolphins. Available from: <https://au.whales.org/2019/05/31/how-cigarette-butts-pollute-the-ocean-and-harm-whales-and-dolphins/>

5 Cigarette butts: the main source of sea and ocean pollution [Internet]. [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://kwit.app/en/blog/posts/cigarette-butts-the-main-source-of-sea-and-ocean-pollution>

6 Kassam A. Cigarette butts: how the no 1 most littered objects are choking our coasts. The Guardian [Internet]. 2022 Aug 18 [cited 2024 Jan 6]; Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/18/cigarette-butts-how-the-no-1-most-littered-objects-are-choking-our-coasts>

7 Novotny TE, Lum K, Smith E, Wang V, Barnes R. Cigarettes Butts and the Case for an Environmental Policy on Hazardous Cigarette Waste. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2009 May;6(5):1691–705

8 World No Ashtray [Internet]. [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Be Aware. Available from: <https://www.worldnoashtray.com/en/be-aware.html>

9 Shen M, Li Y, Song B, Zhou C, Gong J, Zeng G. Smoked cigarette butts: Unignorable source for environmental microplastic fibers. Sci Total Environ. 2021 Oct 15;791:148384.

10 World No Ashtray [Internet]. [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Cigarette Butt Littering Information. Available from: <https://www.worldnoashtray.com/en/cigarette-butt-littering-information.html>

11 BMJ. ScienceDaily. [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Metals from cigarette butts may pose potential threat to marine environment. Available from: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/07/160707083024.htm>

12 Ibid.

13 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Smoking Overview. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/behaviours-risk-factors/smoking/overview>

14 Eisfeld-Pierantonio P. Whale & Dolphin Conservation Australia. 2019 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. How cigarette butts pollute the ocean and harm whales and dolphins. Available from: <https://au.whales.org/2019/05/31/how-cigarette-butts-pollute-the-ocean-and-harm-whales-and-dolphins/>

butt were capable of killing half of the fish present in a one-liter bucket of water.¹⁵

The impacts to our waterways and ocean are greater than just plastic pollution. Based on the amount expected to end up in our waterways, it is estimated that nearly 72 quadrillion liters of water are polluted annually by toxic cigarette butts.



40% of discarded cigarette butts make their way into our oceans and waterways

Photo: © No More Butts

15 NewsCenter | SDSU | Cigarette Butts Toxic to Marine Life [Internet]. [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: https://newscenter.sdsu.edu/sdsu_newscenter/news_story.aspx?sid=71209

The Triple Planetary Crisis:

From deforestation through to the impacts of littered cigarette butts on ecosystems, including ingestion by land and marine species, cigarettes adversely contribute to all three elements of the Triple Planetary Crisis.¹⁶

Pollution

According to the World Health Organization, every year the tobacco industry clears 200,000 hectares of land, cuts down 600 million trees, uses 22 billion tonnes of water, and emits 84 million tonnes of CO₂.¹⁷

Whether it's the farming of tobacco or the consumption of a cigarette stick, cigarettes also create air pollution. Additionally, emissions from transportation and the littering of plastic cigarette butts and packaging contribute further to the impacts of pollution.

The transportation of a finished pack of cigarettes to its point of sale often involves extensive transport costs, usually through diesel-driven trucks.¹⁸ The WHO lists air pollution from transport in trucks as one of the primary causes of disease-related air pollution.¹⁹ As the most littered item on the planet,²⁰ cigarette butts contribute to 350,000 tonnes of plastic pollution each year.

Climate Change

The WHO notes that climate change is impacted by contributions from CO₂ emissions, with tobacco farming accounting for about 5% of total deforestation.²¹

Along with methane, nitrous oxide and other air pollutants, approximately 14g of CO₂ is emitted per cigarette over its entire life cycle.²²

Filter-less cigarettes would reduce the amount of CO₂ generated through a reduction in waste generated through production, as well as less weight during transportation.

Loss of Biodiversity

There is a significant impact on biodiversity throughout

the production and littering of cigarette butts.

Tobacco farming leads to soil degradation, which hinders the maintenance of biodiversity. According to the World Health Organization, to make 300 cigarettes roughly one tree is required.²³

In 2017, the WHO identified thirteen countries where tobacco-driven habitat fragmentation and deforestation have led to significant loss of biodiversity.²⁴

Cigarettes also remain a cause of accidental and deliberate fires and wildfires. Discarded lit cigarettes are responsible for thousands of fires globally²⁵ each year



Cigarette butts leach toxic chemicals into soil and water
Photo: © No More Butts

16 What is the Triple Planetary Crisis? | UNFCCC [Internet]. [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://unfccc.int/news/what-is-the-triple-planetary-crisis>

17 WHO. WHO raises alarm on tobacco industry environmental impact [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/31-05-2022-who-raises-alarm-on-tobacco-industry-environmental-impact>

18 Sogi GM. World No Tobacco Day 2022; Tobacco: Threat to our Environment – One More Reason to Quit. *Contemp Clin Dent.* 2022;13(2):99–100.

19 Ibid.

20 Neill P. An estimated 4.5 trillion cigarettes are thrown away each year [Internet]. *EnvironmentJournal.* 2019 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://environmentjournal.online/features/an-estimated-4-5-trillion-cigarettes-are-thrown-away-each-year/>

21 WHO. World No Tobacco Day 2023 – Grow food, not tobacco [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/world-no-tobacco-day-2023—grow-food—not-tobacco>

22 Sogi GM. World No Tobacco Day 2022; Tobacco: Threat to our Environment – One More Reason to Quit. *Contemp Clin Dent.* 2022;13(2):99–100.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

and have been responsible for the significant loss of flora and fauna.²⁶

Removal of cigarette filters would ensure less plastic pollution impacts our fragile ecosystems and enters our food chains.

Chemicals of Concern

With cigarettes known to contain 7,000 chemicals²⁷, cigarette filters trap many of these, as well as heavy metals from the tobacco through the process of smoking.

Initially promoted by the tobacco industry as making cigarettes safer, recent research has shown that filtered cigarettes have caused an increase in lung adenocarcinomas among smokers²⁸ and there are also suggestions that these plastic fibers can be ingested by smokers.²⁹

The University of California, Berkeley reports that toxic compounds in cigarette butts can include formaldehyde, nicotine, arsenic, lead, copper, chromium, cadmium, and a variety of polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).³⁰

The United Nations Environment Programme recently held a consultation on Chemicals and Waste Issues of Concern, noting 19 issues. Of those listed, it is worth noting that at least six of these substances are found in tobacco filters, including microplastics.

In addition to being a problematic and avoidable plastic in their own right, cigarette filters after consumption contain several chemicals of concern. Therefore, they should be a global concern, given they are the most littered item on the planet.

Secondary Releases of Microplastics

Comprised of a highly twisted network of thousands of cellulose acetate strands, tobacco filters could be



Cigarette butts leach toxic chemicals, many of which are Issues of Concern
Photo: © No More Butts

determined as a microplastic fiber (or a plastic microfiber).³¹

After being littered, these strands can break apart during photodegradation, causing the creation of thousands of microfibers.

These microfibers still contain several toxic chemicals which not only leach into the environment, but can be ingested by aquatic organisms³².

National Actions

Plastic Bans

Following the May 2022 call from the World Health Organization for the ban of plastic cigarette filters³³, at the request of the Belgian Environment Minister, in April of 2023, the Belgian Superior Health Council tabled a report that concluded cigarette filters do not reduce the harmful effects of smoking, yet do pollute the environment³⁴.

In March 2021, The Australian National Plastics Plan listed an action to address the plastics in cigarette

26 Ibid.

27 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Smoking Overview. Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/behaviours-risk-factors/smoking/overview>

28 Ong MA, Benowitz NL, Berman M, Brasky TM, Cummings KM, Hatsukami DK, et al. Cigarette Filter Ventilation and its Relationship to Increasing Rates of Lung Adenocarcinoma. *JNCI J Natl Cancer Inst.* 2017 May 22;109(12):dix075.

29 Novotny TE, Hamzai L. Cellulose acetate cigarette filter is hazardous to human health. *Tob Control* [Internet]. 2023 Apr 18 [cited 2024 Jan 6]; Available from: <https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/early/2023/10/11/tc-2023-057925>

30 Did you know? | University Health Services [Internet]. [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/tobaccofacts>

31 Liu J, Liu Q, An L, Wang M, Yang Q, Zhu B, et al. Microfiber Pollution in the Earth System. *Rev Environ Contam Toxicol.* 2022;260(1):13.

32 Belzagui F, Buscio V, Gutiérrez-Bouzán C, Vilaseca M. Cigarette butts as a microfiber source with a microplastic level of concern. *Sci Total Environ.* 2021 Mar 25;762:144165.

33 Ibid.

34 Superior Health Council. THE IMPACT OF CIGARETTE FILTERS ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE BELGIAN ENVIRONMENT [Internet]. THE IMPACT OF CIGARETTE FILTERS ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE BELGIAN ENVIRONMENT. Available from: https://www.health.belgium.be/sites/default/files/uploads/fields/fpshealth_theme_file/20230511_shc_9726_cigarette_filters_vweb.pdf

filters³⁵. While not making any formal progress (despite being the most nominated item to be dealt with through the Minister's Priority List)³⁶, the Environment Minister declared that the "Government stands prepared to regulate if industry is unable to..."³⁷.

In October 2023, the New South Wales (Australia) Environment Protection Agency initiated their own consultation on cigarette butts, seeking to address the problem of littered cigarette butts through introducing design standards to enforce producers to design out plastic tobacco filters.³⁸

The UK DEFRA held their own public consultation in early 2022 around the inclusion of tobacco filters in cigarettes.³⁹ The outcome of this consultation showed that 94% of survey respondents believe that the government should take regulatory action regarding tobacco filters.⁴⁰

Awareness

The EU has implemented a "filter contains plastic" label on sales of all cigarette packets, helping to increase awareness of the potential impact of the smokers' decision to litter their butt after finishing their cigarette.

Extended Producer Responsibility

Other actions have focused on Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes, looking at the Polluter Pays Principle.

San Francisco collects litter taxes from retailers, along with charging tobacco companies for the cost of cleaning up. They are also charging retailers 1.25 USD per packet of cigarettes sold, which is ultimately passed on to the consumer and reported quarterly.⁴¹ This was actioned after a court ruling that tobacco companies were responsible for funding clean up costs.

In January 2023, Spain⁴² and Ireland⁴³ announced that they were going to charge tobacco companies for the cost of clean up activities. A South Australian MP has proposed a similar approach in that State through the introduction of a Bill⁴⁴.

Actions such as Smoke Free Generations that have just been announced in UK,⁴⁵ but also recently repealed



This label is expected to be applied to all cigarette packets sold in the EU to highlight the dangers of littering plastic filters

35 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. National Plastics Plan 2021 - DCCEEW [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/publications/national-plastics-plan>

36 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Minister's product stewardship priority list - DCCEEW [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/waste/product-stewardship/ministers-priority-list>

37 Belot H. 'War on cigarette butts': Coalition plan to reduce pollution 'never existed', Tanya Plibersek says | Australia news | The Guardian [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/feb/08/war-on-cigarette-butts-coalition-plan-to-reduce-pollution-never-existed-tanya-plibersek-says>

38 NSW Environment Protection Authority [Internet]. [cited 2024 Jan 6]. NSW Plastics: Next Steps. Available from: <https://yoursay.epa.nsw.gov.au/plastics-paper>

39 Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs. Call for evidence on commonly littered and problematic plastic items - Defra - Citizen Space [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/environmental-quality/call-for-evidence-on-commonly-littered-and-problem/>

40 Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs. GOV.UK. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Summary of responses and government response. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/calls-for-evidence/commonly-littered-single-use-plastic-items-call-for-evidence/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-government-response>

41 Treasurer & Tax Collector [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Cigarette Litter Abatement Fee (CIG). Available from: <https://sftreasurer.org/business/taxes-fees/cigarette-litter-abatement-fee-cig>

42 Badcock J. Spain makes big tobacco companies pay for cigarette butt cleaning [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://amp.theage.com.au/world/europe/spain-to-make-big-tobacco-pay-for-cigarette-butt-cleaning-20230104-p5ca9x.html>

43 Burnhill E. Tobacco firms to partly pay for clean-up of butts. 2023 Jan 2 [cited 2024 Jan 6]; Available from: <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2023/0102/1344525-cigarette-butts/>

44 Theocharous M. Tobacco companies could be accountable for cigarette litter [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <https://www.9news.com.au/national/proposed-legislation-to-hold-tobacco-companies-accountable-for-cigarette-waste/580002c5-bd00-49d3-8d1f-1059b45b19a0>

45 King's Speech: LGA statement on Tobacco and Vapes Bill | Local Government Association [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2024 Jan 6]. Available from: <http://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/kings-speech-lga-statement-tobacco-and-vapes-bill>

in New Zealand,⁴⁶ whilst targeting primarily health concerns, would also provide significant relief for the environment and could be considered as a solution, even though it would be outside the scope of the Plastics Treaty.

The Plastics Treaty

Mandated by the United Nations Environmental Agency 5/14 resolution, an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was convened to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including



During INC-2, on World No Tobacco Day 2022, Shannon Mead collected butts from Paris streets to raise the profile of littered cigarette butts

Photo: © No More Butts

in the marine environment. For simplicity, it is often referred to as the Plastics Treaty.

The INC has met previously in Uruguay, France and Kenya, and will convene twice more in 2024, with a mandate to complete negotiations by the end of this year.

In preparation for the most recent meeting (INC-3), a Zero Draft⁴⁷ was prepared as a basis for discussions. The Zero Draft was accompanied by a Synthesis Report⁴⁸. Parties were welcomed to provide inputs into these documents, as well as topics that were not covered at INC-2.

In addition to No More Butts,⁴⁹ INC-3 submissions by Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives⁵⁰ and the Microplastics Working Group⁵¹ also highlighted the need to take action on tobacco filters through the Treaty process.

At the third INC in Nairobi in November of 2023, across nine days of discussions, member states and observers were able to give their verbal and written feedback on these documents, as well as other topics of substance.

Palau was the first member state to make an intervention on tobacco filters, highlighting that they “would like to call for the inclusion of cigarette filters on this list, as they are the most littered items in the world, harm land and marine eco-systems, are very difficult to collect, and disintegrate into toxic micro-plastics.”⁵²

Panama then echoed Palau’s position in their own verbal intervention. The World Health Organization also made an intervention,⁵³ to support their pre-session submission⁵⁴ calling for a ban on tobacco filters as an outcome of the Plastics Treaty.

46 Dyer O. New Zealand’s new government says it will repeal groundbreaking anti-smoking law. BMJ. 2023 Nov 28;383:p2814.

47 United Nations Environment Programme. Zero draft text of the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. 2023.

48 United Nations Environment Programme. Synthesis report on the submissions received on elements not discussed at the second session, such as principles and scope of the instrument. 2023.

49 No More Butts. Potential areas for Intersessional Work Out of the INC-2 Contact Groups [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/nomorebutts_13982023_b.pdf

50 Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives. Input on the potential areas of intersessional work to inform the INC-3: Further information [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/gaia_15082023_b.pdf

51 UNEP. Proposed response template on written submissions prior to INC-3 (part b) Potential Areas Identified by the Contact Groups [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/flora_and_fauna_international_15082023_b.pdf

52 Part II Item 3a - Problematic and avoidable plastic products, including short-lived and single-use plastic products and intentionally added microplastics [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/palau_problematicandavoidableplasticproducts.pdf

53 WHO. Agenda Item 4 of the Third Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC3) [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/who_4.pdf#overlay-context=node/380/revisions/13537/view%3Fq%3Dnode/380/revisions/13537/view

54 WHO. Input on the potential areas of intersessional work to inform the work of INC-3 (following the lists compiled by the co-facilitators of the two contact groups) [Internet]. 2023. Available from: https://resolutions.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/who_partb_28082023_1.pdf



Palau would also like to call for the inclusion of cigarette filters on this list, as they are the most littered items in the world, harm land and marine ecosystems, are very difficult to collect and disintegrate into toxic microplastics.

Statement by Palau at INC-3

Informing INC-4

It is important for the INC to consider alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring health-focused outcomes are considered, in addition to environmental outcomes.

As a State-led negotiation process, it is important that member states consider taking action by listing tobacco filters in any listing of problematic and avoidable products, as well as plastics of concern.

Not only do cigarettes contain an avoidable and problematic plastic but, when consumed and littered, they pose issues related to Issues of Concern, including chemicals and microplastics.

Under one of the working definitions of Plastic products, cigarette butts are highlighted as an example. We seek support from member states for Option 1 in Table 1 for the proposed Definition of Plastic product(s): "All kinds of products which contain or are partly or entirely made of any form of plastic materials (polymers) e.g. single-use products such as cigarette butts..."

For the proposed Annex B (a), we would be seeking the inclusion of cigarette filters to be included in Part II of Option 1 in Annex B (a) ie. be phased out with a time frame.

As part of the Options paper and Zero Draft, there is also an opportunity to take action on legacy pollution. With the accumulation of cigarette butts in the terrestrial and marine environments for up to 15 years, polluters must be held accountable for the waste that has been generated.

PLASTIC PRODUCT(S)

All kinds of products which contain or are partly or entirely made of any form of plastic materials (polymers) e.g. single-use products such as cigarette butts, packaging, consumer goods, building materials, materials and chemicals used in offshore industries, recreational boats, paints, tyres, textiles, fishing gear and items used in aquaculture or agriculture, or products with components where an essential function is determined /achieved by plastics.

Modified from UNEP/PP/INC.1/7, Plastics science (UNEP, 2022)

The Synthesis Report offers a Definition for Plastic product(s), with Option 1 indicating the cigarette butts are included in this definition.

Conclusion

With a growing list of member states and accredited observers calling for a ban on tobacco filters, the time is upon us for action.

With their direct impacts on biodiversity loss and pollution, tobacco filters should be highlighted as a problematic and avoidable product in the Plastics Treaty.

In advance of INC-4 in Canada in April 2024, member states and observers should endorse the proposed definition of plastic products. They should also consider the role of tobacco filters when discussing secondary releases of microplastics and also the chemicals of concern leached from filters.

There is no necessary, or viable alternative to the current plastic filters

Implementing a ban on cigarette filters as part of the Treaty is a clear and logical step to protect both human health and environmental health.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Article 5.3 of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control notes that there is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between public health interests and tobacco industry interests.

At No More Butts, we believe that this conflict also extends to the impact on the environment.

As such, all volunteers and future employees of No More Butts will be asked to complete a Conflict of Interest Declaration and will be excluded from engaging with the charity if they are found to have current or recent engagements with tobacco-related entities.



Cigarette butts that are littered get washed into waterways and pose an issue for marine species and water quality. © No More Butts

Author's Bio



Shannon Mead

With an early career in hospitality and entertainment, Shannon then spent 20 years in leadership roles across Asia Pacific countries for Nokia and Microsoft.

After witnessing the devastating impact of discarded cigarette butts on beautiful locations around the world during his travels, Shannon was inspired to resign his corporate role and dedicate himself to No More Butts.

Along with a team of 12 others, Shannon volunteers his time for the organization, working as the full-time Executive Director. He has volunteered over 6,000 hours to the cause since inception.

Shannon was presented with the Cairns Regional Council 2022 Australia Day Awards "Volunteer of the Year" for his efforts with No More Butts.

About the organisation



No More Butts was formed to tackle the most littered item in the world: cigarette butts. Our vision is for a 'butt free environment'.

No More Butts is a member of Break Free From Plastic and is a contributor to the Microplastics Working Group. We are a Civil Society Organization (NGO), based out of Australia.

Performing multiple functions from research, consulting to government and peak bodies, in addition to performing pro bono work with councils and other environmental organizations, No More Butts is a subject matter expert on tobacco related waste.