

Litter Prevention Toolkit Discussion Guide - Construction Sites

A Guide for Engaging Construction Sites in Litter Prevention

Construction sites play a crucial role in keeping Melbourne clean and reducing the environmental impact of litter. However, construction sites generate a lot of litter, which does end up polluting Melbourne's waterways.

Engaging with site workers and managers effectively is key to fostering a culture of responsibility and care, with the ultimate aim to stop littering at these sites. This guide provides practical prompts and strategies to help you connect with construction teams in a safe, structured, and respectful way.

While not exhaustive, these insights aim to start conversations, inspire action, and support Melbourne's commitment to protecting its waterways and communities through the "Bin It or Bring It Home" campaign. Together, we can make a meaningful difference.



Why Construction Sites Matter

Context

- Construction sites generate materials like plastics, cigarette butts, and packaging that can easily become litter if not managed properly.
- When litter enters Melbourne's waterways, it pollutes the environment, harms wildlife, and contributes to the \$1.6 million Melbourne Water spends annually on clean-up.
- Clean sites are safer, more efficient, and demonstrate professionalism, which positively reflects on everyone working there.



What's in It for Construction Workers?

Why Should They Care?

- **Professionalism:** A clean site improves reputation and attracts more business.
- **Safety:** Litter-free environments reduce trip hazards and create a safer workplace.
- **Pride:** Workers can feel good knowing they're contributing to a cleaner, healthier Melbourne.
- **Ease:** Following simple waste management practices reduces the stress of clean-ups and avoids potential fines.



The Bigger Picture: Benefits of Litter Prevention

- **Protect Melbourne's Waterways:** Prevent billions of pieces of litter from polluting rivers and bays.
- **Community Impact:** Cleaner streets and sites create a better environment for everyone.
- **Long-Term Savings:** Effective waste management reduces clean-up costs and avoids penalties for non-compliance.



How to Engage with Construction Workers

Approaching Safely and Effectively

- Start by introducing yourself to the site manager or foreman.
- Look to highlight any areas of litter concern you might have noticed.
- Highlight your role and explain how practice of good litter prevention and clean up can benefit their site.
- Be respectful of their time and provide concise, easy-to-digest information.



Quick Wins for Litter Prevention on Sites

- 1 Secure bins and skips:** Prevent wind-blown debris.
 - 2 Recycle onsite:** Use clearly labeled bins to separate recyclable waste.
 - 3 Contain lightweight materials:** Install barriers or netting for plastics and packaging.
 - 4 Follow the 'Bin It or Bring It Home' principle:** Keep waste with you until you can dispose of it properly.
 - 5 Don't Litter:** Make the act of not littering part of site briefing for staff.
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Key Messages to Share

Clean Sites Are Safer Sites

"Litter isn't just unsightly - it's a hazard. Debris like plastic wrap, packaging, and cigarette butts can create trip risks and fire hazards. Keeping the site clean helps protect everyone working here."

Litter Prevention Saves Time and Money

"Taking small steps to manage waste properly reduces the time and cost of post-project clean-ups. It also helps avoid costly fines for non-compliance with waste regulations."

Professionalism Starts with Cleanliness

"A well-maintained site sends a strong message to clients, the community, and inspectors - it shows pride in your work and a commitment to high standards."

Every Piece of Litter Makes a Difference

"Even something as small as a cigarette butt can harm waterways and wildlife. By keeping litter on-site and properly disposing of it, you're helping to prevent billions of pieces of waste from entering Melbourne's rivers and bays each year."

Litter Prevention Protects Melbourne's Waterways

"Over 95% of litter that ends up on Port Phillip Bay beaches starts in suburban streets and sites. Every effort to stop litter from escaping construction sites is a step towards cleaner rivers, safer habitats, and healthier communities."

Small Actions Add Up to Big Results

"Securing bins, using netting to contain lightweight materials, and following the 'Bin It or Bring It Home' approach may seem like small steps, but they create a huge impact for the site, the community, and the environment."

Good Waste Practices Improve Morale

"Working in a clean, organised environment isn't just safer - it's also more motivating. Workers feel more valued and take greater pride in their efforts when the site is well-maintained."

You're Leading the Way

"By adopting litter prevention strategies, your site becomes an example for the industry, showcasing how simple, effective measures can improve the environment and the workplace."



Overcoming Objections Using the RICH Model – Recognise, Intention, Challenge, Hope

Objection: "We're too busy to think about litter."

- **Recognise:** "I completely understand - you're managing tight deadlines, safety protocols, and keeping the project moving. Addressing litter may feel like just another task to juggle."
- **Intention:** "The aim isn't to add extra work but to demonstrate how small actions - like securing bins or following the 'Bin It or Bring It Home' approach - can actually save you time and reduce hassle in the long run."
- **Challenge:** "Think about this: A clean site isn't just about appearances - it helps prevent costly clean-ups, reduces safety risks, and promotes smoother operations for the entire team."
- **Hope:** "By taking these simple steps, you're not only making your job easier but also helping to create a cleaner, safer city for everyone. That's something to feel good about."

Objection: "Litter isn't a priority right now."

- **Recognise:** "I understand. With so much going on, litter management might not seem as urgent compared to everything else you need to handle."
- **Intention:** "The goal is to make litter prevention effortless - something that becomes a natural part of your routine and doesn't compete with your other priorities."
- **Challenge:** "The thing is, litter left unchecked can turn into a bigger issue - affecting site safety, leading to unexpected costs, and potentially damaging your reputation in the community."
- **Hope:** "The good news? Small changes now - like educating the team or improving bin placement - can create a ripple effect. You'll meet compliance standards while showcasing professionalism and care."

Objection: "It's not my responsibility."

- **Recognise:** "I hear you. It can feel like litter management falls outside your role, especially when you've got so much else on your plate."
- **Intention:** "This isn't about placing the burden on any one individual - it's about building shared responsibility so everyone contributes a little to the bigger picture."
- **Challenge:** "Imagine if everyone on-site had the same perspective - it could quickly snowball into a significant problem, with litter not only impacting the environment but also creating an unsafe, cluttered workspace."
- **Hope:** "By setting an example and encouraging these small actions, you're helping to foster a cleaner, more professional site that benefits everyone involved."



Objection: "It's just litter - how much harm can it really do?"

- **Recognise:** "I understand why it might feel like a minor issue. A single piece of plastic or a cigarette butt doesn't seem like it would make much of a difference."
 - **Intention:** "The reality is, those small pieces add up. For instance, billions of pieces of litter end up in Melbourne's waterways every year - most starting from suburban streets or sites like this."
 - **Challenge:** "One cigarette butt might not seem like much, but collectively they pollute rivers, harm wildlife, and can even create hazards on-site. Tackling it early helps prevent bigger problems."
 - **Hope:** "By stopping even one piece of litter from leaving your site, you're contributing to reducing that enormous number - and proving that small efforts can make a big impact."
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Next Steps

Join the Movement

- Visit www.epa.vic.gov.au for more tips and resources.
- Encourage reporting of litter offenders at **1300 EPA VIC (1300 372 842)**.
- Visit <https://www.melbournewater.com.au/litter-toolkit> to showcase how local communities can support our campaign.

Thank You

Your commitment to "**Bin It or Bring It Home**" makes a real difference in keeping Melbourne clean and thriving. Together, we can protect our city, waterways, and communities.