
MEDIA RELEASE

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HEY VICTORIA – CHEW THIS OVER

You probably walk past those black spots on the footpath every day and never really notice them – until the day comes when you step on a fresh one and spend the rest of the day trying to get it off your shoe!

That black spot is chewing gum, and it is the most littered item on the ground in Victoria!

Right now it's Sustainability Victoria's Litter Free Month and communities around the state are in clean-up mode, doing their bit to tidy up in the lead up to the Commonwealth Games.

Geoff Mabbett, CEO of Sustainability Victoria, said that organised community clean up days are making head way when it comes to stamping out unsightly rubbish such as cigarette butts, fast food packaging and drink containers but chewing gum continues to stick around!

"Because of its persistent nature, it is hard to tell when and how often it is littered, but social researchers estimate that it makes up 40 per cent of all dropped litter. That's a whole lot of chewy!" said Mr Mabbett.

Unfortunately, research shows that people worry less about dropping chewing gum as there is a belief that it will biodegrade. But, it's not biodegradable. Instead, it hardens over time, making it near impossible to remove and leading to a build up of chewing gum litter over the weeks, months and years.

If councils didn't spend large amounts of money and time cleaning their footpaths, those chewing gum black spots could take over!

So, while the humble piece of chewy might be a friend of dieters, dentists and those trying to kick the smoking habit, remember its dark side and do your litter bit - chew, then wrap it and then bin it.

Dropping chewy is a crime and could cost you \$105 – report offenders through the EPA's Victoria Litter Report Line: 1800 35 25 55.

Sustainability Victoria is the state's action agency for sustainability services, encompassing materials, water and energy. To find out more about Litter Free Month and the 'Let's Start Training for the Games' campaign, visit www.sustainability.vic.gov.au.

Stick to the facts:

- Chewing gum makes up approximately 40 per cent of Victoria's litter problem.
 - Chewing gum is a very persistent form of litter as it sticks to the footpath (and anywhere else it is stuck) and is very hard to remove.
 - Steam cleaning is one of the only effective methods to clean chewing gum from streets, which is expensive and time-consuming (in Britain, costs have been estimated at 10 pence per piece of gum).
 - Chewing gum is made from synthetic rubber to which softeners, sweeteners and flavourings are added.
 - It shares properties with other rubber-based products such as car tyres, shock absorbers and glue.
 - Synthetic rubbers are stretchy, retain their properties indefinitely under all conditions and are resistant to aggressive chemicals, as well as having strong adhesive properties.
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**For further information, or to arrange an interview, please contact:
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