

# Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) Rapid Response to Litter after rainfall Project Report 2025





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Julia Cirillo | Coordinator Citizen Science & Waterway Education

[juliacirillo@mcmc.org.au](mailto:juliacirillo@mcmc.org.au) / 0493-591-724

Tania Struzina | Waterwatch & Litter Education Officer

[taniastruzina@mcmc.org.au](mailto:taniastruzina@mcmc.org.au)

The MCMC *Rapid Response to Litter after Rainfall* program is proudly funded by the Cities of Darebin, Merri-bek, Whittlesea and Yarra. The program is supported by the Friends of Merri Creek, Friends of Merri Creek @ Bracken Creek, Friends of Merri Creek @ Malcolm Creek, Preston Rotary, Friends of Edwardes Lake, and the Chain of Ponds group.

Report published by Merri Creek Management Committee

Cover photo: MCMC & Friends of Malcolm Creek Litter Clean Up event, Malcolm Creek, Golden Sun Moth Park, Craigieburn March 2025.

## 1. Introduction

The Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC) [Rapid Response to Litter after Rainfall](#) (RRLC) program has been running for eight years since its inception in 2018 via a grant from the [Port Phillip Bay fund](#). The aim of the program is to support the local community to safely remove litter from the waterways of the Merri Creek catchment and to extend the existing litter clean-up program run successfully for over 23 years by [Friends of Merri Creek](#). As well as the tributaries and wetlands within the Merri Creek Catchment, in 2021 the program extended to the Plenty River and Moonee Ponds catchments.

The program was funded in 2025 by the Darebin City Council, Merri-Bek City Council, City of Yarra, and Whittlesea City Council. Funding has enabled MCMC to provide residents, educational institutions, and local community groups with advice, equipment, and support to organise their own creek litter clean-up events. Over the past eight years, MCMC has continually streamlined litter data collection, data submission procedures and community access to litter collection kits.

Ninety-five per cent of litter that washes up on Port Phillip Bay beaches begins its journey after being dropped on suburban streets. From cigarette butts to plastic bottles, most of the litter dropped on our streets is washed into the stormwater system by rainfall<sup>1</sup>. After heavy rainfall events, stormwater deposits a large amount of litter on the banks of the creeks. This litter combines with locally generated litter dropped along creek-side paths, picnic areas and nearby sports facilities. As a result, creek corridors will continue to be a focus location for litter collection.

Litter clearly has both amenity and ecological impacts. Over 2.5 billion pieces of litter and microplastics are estimated to flow into Port Phillip Bay each year from the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers<sup>2</sup>. In MCMC's experience, concern about levels of litter in Merri Creek is the most frequent 'negative' comment made about the condition of the creek by users of the Merri Creek parklands.

In 2025, MCMC supported a broad range of litter clean-up events conducted by residents and local conservation groups. Many of these surveys were uploaded onto the LitterWatch Victoria portal, which is where the data in this report came from. Table 1 depicts the amount of litter surveys completed and uploaded in each LGA within the Merri catchment. MCMC conducted litter events in partnership with the community in 2025. These are reported in Table 2. Other community groups and individuals were supported by MCMC, many of these groups conducted litter clean ups, but did not upload their data into the LitterWatch portal. The support given is outlined in Table 3.

Dog droppings are a litter type that has increased Australia wide. This is most likely due to a notable increase in dog ownership since the pandemic<sup>3</sup>, with some Melbourne Councils reporting a 50% increase in dog ownership in the last six years<sup>4</sup>. "Droppings contain harmful nutrients and bacteria, and some ends up in natural waterways and the ocean via the stormwater system. This can contribute to excessive E. coli readings on beaches after rainfall."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [2020 Litter tracking - Melbourne waterways | Healthy Waterways Strategy](#)

<sup>2</sup> Port Phillip EcoCentre. October 2020. [Clean Bay Blueprint- Microplastics in Melbourne](#)

<sup>3</sup> Pets and the Pandemic [AMAU005-PATP-Report21\\_v1.4\\_WEB.pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> Pet lovers guide City of Melbourne [A pet lover's guide to living in the City of Melbourne | City of Melbourne](#)

<sup>5</sup> Litter Prevention Kit Dog Poo [Litter-Prevention-Kit DOG POO 2014.pdf](#)

2025 data included 63 bags of bagged droppings and at least 56 unbagged dog droppings. This is an extremely conservative estimate as droppings are often not collected or included in the final count. This is an increase from the 2024 figure of 48 bagged dropping and 40 unbagged droppings despite fewer recorded litter collection events in 2025 compared to 2024. The RRLC program can play an important role in recording the dog dropping data and confirming hot spot sites. Possible solutions could include increased education programs<sup>6</sup> and site based composting and localised septic systems<sup>7</sup>.

In 2025 Cigarette Butts were the third most common item collected with a total figure of 3,154 butts. Despite the reduced number of community collections uploaded into the data portal in 2025, the total number of butts collected were more than half the number in the 2024 collection. It is difficult to say what percentage of the butts were littered during the past 12 months and what percentage are legacy from earlier times. With the rise in use of electronic cigarettes the purchase of tobacco cigarettes is gradually declining<sup>8</sup> however it is “estimated 8.9 billion butts are littered in Australia each year”<sup>9</sup>, making them the “most littered item”<sup>10</sup> in Australia. Cigarette butts are non-biodegradable, over their long life they shed plastic microparticles and leach up to 100 chemicals that are toxic to aquatic species.<sup>11</sup> MCMC continues to educate and raise awareness on this issue to school groups and the wider community.

Another litter type steadily increasing Australia wide, is e-cigarettes / vapes. Rates of people vaping is increasing steadily in younger users<sup>12</sup> despite State and Federal government public education programs. 2025 litter data in the Merri catchment recorded 55 single use and rechargeable vapes. In 2024 the RRLC program recorded 93 disposable and rechargeable e-cigarettes. Vapes are a particularly concerning litter stream as “the heavy metals, including the lithium in vape batteries take hundreds of years to break down in the environment and the E-liquids leaking from vapes can harm aquatic life and contaminate water”.<sup>13</sup> MCMC data on this waste stream could represent valuable data to relevant government agencies.

A project that was initiated in 2025 was the Bracken Creek Source Reduction Plan (SRP). Bracken Creek is a tributary in the lower part of the Merri Creek catchment. This creek is a growing community concern due to the large amounts of litter that is deposited on its bed and banks. The Friends of Bracken Creek (part of the Friends of Merri Creek, FoMC@BC) has been engaging the wider community in litter monitoring and removal activities since 2023. Undertaking an SRP represented an opportunity for the group to increase the collection of baseline litter data and determine whether individual litter sources could be identified and stopped at origin. If sources of litter can be identified, appropriate prevention, education and enforcement strategies (or interventions) could be trialed.

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<sup>6</sup> Litter Prevention Kit Dog Poo [Litter-Prevention-Kit\\_DOG POO\\_2014.pdf](#)

<sup>7</sup> Doggy Dooley septic system <https://doggiedooley.com/how-it-works>

<sup>8</sup> What is Tobacco [Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia, Tobacco - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)

<sup>9</sup> Clean Up Australia 2025 Litter Report Pg 23 [Litter Report - Clean Up Australia](#)

<sup>10</sup> Clean Up Australia 2025 Litter Report Pg 20 [Litter Report - Clean Up Australia](#)

<sup>11</sup> The Issue with Cigarette Butts [Cigarette Butts - Clean Up Australia](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Over 3.5 million Australians aged 14 or over vape or smoke, new data has revealed - ABC News](#)

<sup>13</sup> E-cigarettes are a triple environmental threat <https://www.cleanup.org.au/e-cigarettes>

Additional objectives of the SRP are:

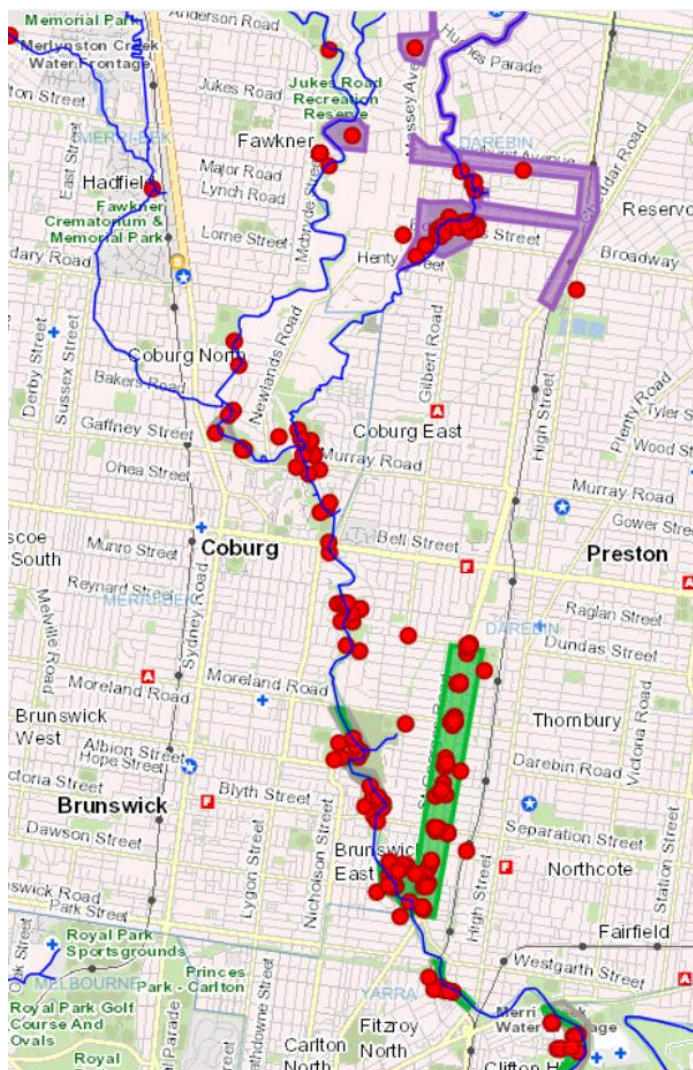
- to build the skills of FoMC@BC leaders and members in litter education, surveying, and evaluation of effectiveness
- increase community participation and appreciation of the Merri Creek Catchment,
- increase and make accessible to a broader and diverse community, the litter clean-up activities available.

As part of the data collection activities for the SRP, schools and community groups were trained in litter and data collection. The first part of the SRP has been completed, a working group comprised of council, Melbourne Water and community members has been established and interventions are due to be rolled out in 2026.

**Table 1. Number of litter surveys inputted into the LitterWatch Vic portal by the community in each LGA in the Merri Catchment, 2025\*. (source: [www.litterwatchvictoria.org.au](http://www.litterwatchvictoria.org.au))**

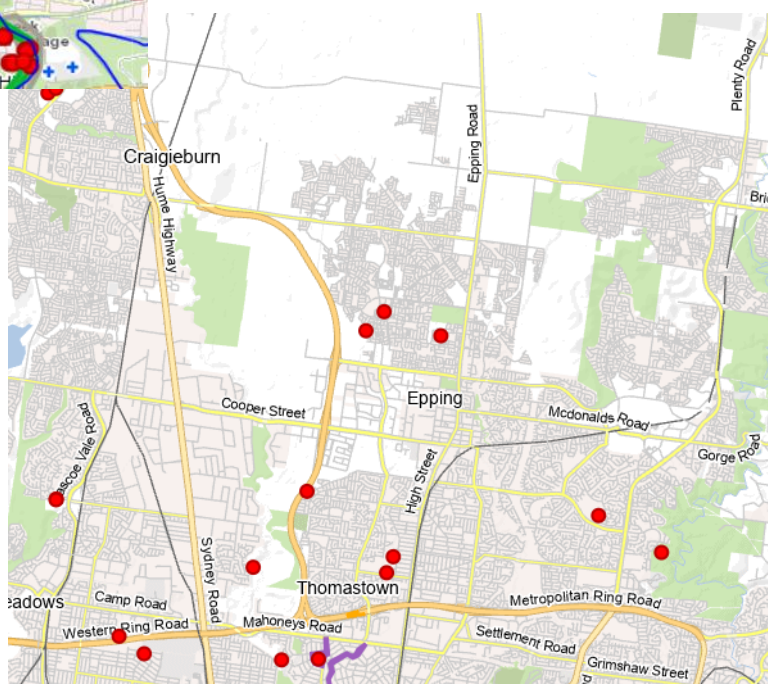
<b>Council</b>	<b>Number of surveys, 2025</b>	<b>Highest density of litter surveyed</b>
Yarra City Council	7	Polystyrene, close to 90%
Merri Bek City Council	10	Plastic and Polystyrene, close to 90%
Darebin City Council	24	Plastic including cigarette butts
Hume City Council	5	Plastic derived, 100%
Whittlesea City Council	1	Broken Glass and polystyrene, close to 90%
Mitchell Shire	No data	No data

## 2. Location of litter community clean-ups (maps: [www.litterwatchvictoria.org.au](http://www.litterwatchvictoria.org.au))



**Figure 1:** Litter Clean Ups within the Merri Creek catchment 2018-2025 (Cities of Darebin, Merri-bek & Yarra). Red dots and shaded coloured areas indicated clean up locations.

**Figure 2:** Litter clean-ups within the Merri and Plenty River catchments, 2021–2025 (City of Whittlesea & Hume). Red dots indicate clean-up locations.



**Table 2. MCMC delivered community clean up events, 2025. Volunteer hours :155. 7**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>#Participants</b>	<b>#Sessions</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Funder</b>
12/03/2025	Galada Kindergarten, Early Years	31	1	Edgars Creek, Epping (Lehmann's Farm)	City of Whittlesea
26/03/2025	ELK Clothing	19	1	Edgars Creek & Edwardes lake, Reservoir	Fee for Service (Corporate Group)
30/03/2025	Friends of Malcolm Creek	7	1	Malcolm Creek, Golden Sun Moth Park, Craigieburn	Melbourne Water
15/05/2025	Northcote High School- Year 9 Leaders	7	1	Bracken Creek	City of Darebin
24/05/2025	Friends of Bracken Creek	28	1	Bracken Creek	City of Darebin
04/06/2025	National Australia Bank	23	1	Merri Ck, DeChene Reserve, Coburg	Fee for Service (Corporate Group)
04/08/2025	Walker Street Kindergarten, Early Years	22	1	Merri Creek, Clifton Hill	City of Yarra
05/08/2025	Walker Street Kindergarten, Early Years	22	1	Merri Creek, Clifton Hill	City of Yarra
06/08/2025	Walker Street Kindergarten, Early Years	17	1	Merri Creek, Clifton Hill	City of Yarra
05/09/2025	Coburg High School	15	1	Merri Creek,,DeChene Reserve, Coburg	City of Merri-bek
14/09/2025	Community	8	1	Merri and Birrarung confluence, Dights Falls	City of Yarra
21/09/2025	Community & Friends of Bracken Creek	20	1	Bracken Creek, Thornbury	Melbourne Water
09/10/2025	Community & Bridge Road Brewers	14	1	Bracken Creek, Thornbury	City of Darebin & Melbourne Water
28/10/2025	Bell Primary School	67	3	AH Capp Reserve	City of Darebin
30/10/2025	Barry Becketts Kindergarten, Early Years	22	1	Merri Creek,,DeChene Reserve, Coburg	City of Merri-bek
05/11/2025	Barry Becketts Kindergarten, Early Years	22	1	Merri Creek, DeChene Reserve, Coburg	City of Merri-bek
21/11/2025	Barry Becketts Kindergarten, Early Years	24	1	Merri Creek, DeChene Reserve, Coburg	City of Merri-bek
28/11/2025	JS Grey Kinder, Early Years	25	1	Merri Creek, Tate Reserve, Coburg	City of Merri-bek
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>20</b>		

### 3. Community clean-ups with MCMC

The 2025 data MCMC submitted to the LitterWatch Vic data portal recorded that 406 people participated in 34 events.

The full list of events added to the data portal can be accessed in **Appendix A**

Table 2 lists the groups to which MCMC staff delivered education and litter clean up sessions' creek-side in 2025. Photos of some groups are below:

*Photos below-Community Clean Up Days in the catchment from left:* MCMC & Friends of Bracken Creek and local residents ran a number of clean up events on the Bracken Creek, a tributary of the Merri Creek, in Northcote; Staff from ELK clothing had their 4th annual litter clean up with MCMC, and made a little litter reel to promote their great work: <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1196646648482502>



#### CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA 2025



- 1218 pieces of rubbish collected (Plastic 952, Other = 115, Metal= 84, Glass = 43, Polystyrene = 24) [around 20 piles of unbagged dog poop]
- A whopping 57 kilos (including office chair, metal safe, balloon gas cannisters, cushion, doona cover) and 7 bags of combined waste

*Photos below-Community Clean Up Days in the catchment from left: Northcote High School Year 9 leaders completed a clean up at Bracken Creek, Thornbury; National Australia Bank employees on their litter clean up on the Meri Creek Coburg; Galada Kindergarten in Epping on their Clean Up event on the Edgars Creek.*



Table 3 lists the community groups MCMC staff supported to run their own litter clean up events. Where possible, community groups conducted litter audits, and this data was also submitted to the LitterWatch Vic data portal. This is listed in Appendix A.

**Table 3. Litter Creek Clean up support to the community by MCMC 2025.**

Person / Group	Nos.	Date	Type of MCMC Support	Pick up Location (if avail)	Kilo's litter collected or # bags (if avail)
Wild Daisy Nature Play group- Deena Jones*	13	27&28/2/25	Preparation of Litter kit, Training, Email and communications	Merri Creek, near Joes garden, Edna Grove, Coburg	8.5kg
Tricia Caswell, local Brunswick resident	NA	22/2/25	Query on Litter kits, Training, Email and communications	Barkly Square shopping Centre	NA, query only, no follow up after my email
Charlotte Chomppf, Church of Jessus Christ of Latter Day Saints	1	April 2025	Query on Litter kits, Training, Email and communications for 150 participants	A site on the Merri Creek	No data, query only, no follow up after my phone call and emails
Olivia Dye, Leader, Pascoe Vale Girl Guides.	20	03/03/25	Communications regarding council picking up litter after the group ran a clean up	Coburg Lake Reserve	No data
Martin Reeves & Jacqueline DiBlasi *	11	02/03/25	Preparing litter kit / Communications regarding loan and pick up of litter kit	Jewel train station	21 kg, 7 large bags
Merri Platypus Paddle*	30	02/03/25	Preparing litter kit / Communications regarding loan and pick up of litter kit	Merri Creek, De Chene Reserve and surrounds, Coburg	No data
Mike Torres- High School Basketball network	1	09/06/25	Query for litter clean up, email conversations continue	Merri Creek, De Chene Reserve and surrounds, Coburg	NA
Monica Alfaro, MPavillion & Naomi Milgrom Foundation, Cremorne	1	05/05/2025	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	One of the Merri Creek SSAs sites, was still deciding. Event did not go ahead in 2025	No data
Ellie Cox	1	27/05/2025	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	One of the Merri Creek SSAs sites, was still deciding.	No data

				Event did not go ahead in 2025	
Keana Loschiavo	1	28/06/2025	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	Ended up collecting litter on Moonee Ponds Creek and	No data
Students from Northcote High School	7	25/06/25	Student from Northcote HS picking up litter kit	Borrowed litter kit to work with local Primary school to remove litter	No data
Laura Aldama	1	16/07/25	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	No responses to my follow up emails	No data
Lindy Orthia	1	20/07/2025	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	Query on litter trolleys and how to get one	No data
Shea Magendns, AGL	1	21/07/25	Query for litter clean up, email conversations and phone call	Gave advice on joining FoMC clean ups etc	No data
Lily Nash & Matt Shepard, NGH Consulting	2	16/07-13/08/2025	Many emails and phone calls to set up a clean up on Merri Creek in Fitzroy Nth that ended up getting cancelled		No data
Myles Siegersma, Melbourne Zen group	1	04/10/2025	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	Deciding on a date later in 2025 for a clean up, attended training session	No data
Katrina Bogut	1	11/09/2025	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	Didn't respond to my follow up emails	No data
Sam Kilpatrick, State Gov of Vic	1	02/09/2025	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	Provided advice, they ran their own clean up	No data
Amira Nor Azhar	1	28/10/2025	Query for litter clean up, email conversations	Provided advice, they ran their own clean up	No data
Marg McPhee	1	24/11/2025	Query for litter clean up starting a litter clean up group on Central Creek, email and	Advice given	No data (yet)

			phone conversations		
Malcolm Wrest, Lalor Landcare	1	18/12/2025	Query for litter clean ups, starting a litter clean up group on Merri Creek Lalor, email and phone conversations	Advice given	No data
Kathleen Rowbottom	1	18/11/2025	Query for litter clean ups, on Merri Creek and starting own litter clean up group	Advice given	No data
<b>Totals</b>	<b>98</b>				<b>29.5kg</b>

\*These individuals are residents that regularly run litter clean ups in hot spots around Merri-bek LGA.

#### 4. The data: what litter is being found and removed?

MCMC uploads the litter data collected from clean-ups to the [LitterWatch Victoria data portal](#). This publicly accessible system allows users to manage and view different datasets from all over Victoria. The mapping features of the portal provide centralised access to litter records and provides tools to compare litter from different areas and time periods.

The **2025 data** MCMC, FoMC and FoEL submitted to the LitterWatch Victoria data portal showed **406 participants** helped at 34 events. In total, **34 litter surveys** were logged, and **26,957 pieces of litter** were collected. This amounted to **522kg of litter**.

The **2024 data** MCMC, FoMC, FoEL and Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek submitted to the LitterWatch Victoria data portal showed **990 participants** helped at **75 events**. In total, **75 litter surveys** were logged, and **78,815 pieces of litter** were collected.

The **2023 data** MCMC, FoMC, Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek and Friends of Edwardes Lake submitted to the LitterWatch Victoria data portal showed that **849 participants** helped out at **78 events**. In total, **75 litter surveys** were logged, and **110,392 pieces of litter** were collected.

The **2022 data** MCMC submitted to the LitterWatch Vic data portal recorded **747 participants** helped at **71 events**. In total, **71 litter surveys** were logged and collected **94,418 pieces of litter**.

The three most common litter items collected at all sites in 2025 were, in order:

- Unidentifiable plastic fragments and remnants (macro-plastics i.e., above 5mm)
- Single-use food packaging / packets (chip, snack, and lolly packets)
- Cigarette butts

By far the largest portion of all the litter collected at both sites was single-use plastic bags and plastic food packaging. These items enter the stormwater system intact and break into smaller pieces, or remnants, known as secondary macro-plastics.

**Table 4: 2025 Litter data in categories**

<b>Merri Creek Management Committee (MCMC)</b>	
Total of <b>13,073 pieces of litter</b> collected	
Total of <b>513 kilograms of litter</b> collected	
Total of <b>354 participants</b>	
Total of <b>20 sets of litter data</b> entered in the LitterWatch portal	
<b>Top 5 litter items collected</b>	
Unidentifiable soft plastic remnants / fragments	5,073
Food wrappers (soft includes metallic type) chips, confectionary	1,234
Cigarette Butts	1,051
Polystyrene fragments	1,005

Hard Plastic fragments	644

<b>Friends of Edwardes Lake (FoEL)</b>	
Total of <b>8626 pieces of litter collected</b>	
Total of <b>9 kilograms of litter collected</b>	
Total of <b>13 participants</b>	
Total of <b>1 sets of litter data</b> entered in the LitterWatch portal	
<b>Top 5 items</b>	
Unidentifiable soft plastic remnants / fragments	4,000
Napkins	1,500
Paper Food wrappers	1,500
Cigarette butts	750
Plastic Bottles	161

<b>Friends of Merri Creek (FoMC)</b>	
Total of <b>5,258 pieces of litter collected</b>	
Total <b>Kilograms – not available</b>	
Total of <b>39 participants</b> (regular volunteers participated on multiple events)	
Total of <b>13 sets of litter data</b> entered in the LitterWatch portal	
<b>Top 5 items</b>	
Food wrappers (includes metallic type) chips, confectionary etc	1,523
Cigarette butts	1,353
Paper sheets/ remnants / brochures	1,071
Unidentifiable soft plastic remnants / fragments	1,005
Unidentifiable hard plastic remnants/ fragments	437

The full list of litter clean-up events (or surveys) can be accessed in Appendix A.

*Thank you to the Cities of Darebin, Merri-bek, Whittlesea, and Yarra and the Friends of Merri Creek for their funding and continued support of this program.*

## Contact Details

**Julia Cirillo** WaterWatch & Rapid Response to Litter Coordinator, Merri Creek Management Committee  
2 Lee St, Brunswick East, VIC 3057, p (03) 9380 8199, [JuliaCirillo@mcmc.org.au](mailto:JuliaCirillo@mcmc.org.au), [www.mcmc.org.au](http://www.mcmc.org.au)

## Appendix A: Community Litter events within the Merri Creek catchment in 2025 [Grouped by organising body then dates]

Date	Group Name	Litter Collection Location	Participants
27/02/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, Bowden Reserve, Coburg	6
28/02/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, Bowden Reserve, Coburg	7
12/03/2025	MCMC	Edgars Creek, Lehmann's Farm, Epping	31
26/03/2025	MCMC	Edwardes Lake Park, Reservoir	19
30/03/2025	MCMC	Malcom Creek, Golden Sun Moth Park, Craigieburn	7
15/05/2025	MCMC	Bracken Creek & Mayer Park Surrounds, Thornbury	8
24/05/2025	MCMC	Bracken Creek & Mayer Park Surrounds, Thornbury	28
04/06/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, DeChene Reserve, Coburg	23
05/08/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill	18
06/08/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, Hall Reserve, Clifton Hill	18
07/08/2025	MCMC	Edgars Creek, Coburg	20
22/08/2025	MCMC	Bracken Creek & Mayer Park Surrounds, Thornbury	3
05/09/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, DeChene Reserve, Coburg	15
21/09/2025	MCMC	Bracken Creek & Mayer Park Surrounds, Thornbury	20
09/10/2025	MCMC	Bracken Creek & Mayer Park Surrounds, Thornbury	14
28/10/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, AH Capp Reserve, West Preston	67
30/10/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, DeChene Reserve, Coburg	20
05/11/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, DeChene Reserve, Coburg	22
19/11/2025	MCMC	Bracken Creek & Mayer Park Surrounds, Thornbury	4
28/11/2025	MCMC	Merri Ck, AH Capp Reserve, West Preston	24
19/02/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
27/02/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
06/03/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
13/03/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
27/03/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
28/03/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
05/06/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
12/06/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	4
19/06/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
03/07/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
17/07/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3

30/10/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	3
06/11/2025	FoMC	St Georges Rd bike path- Northcote / Thornbury	2
26/01/2025	Friends of Edwardes Lake	Edwardes Lake, Reservoir	13

Figure1. St Georges Road Litter Data, 2025.(source www.litterwatchvictoria.org.au )

