

UP CLOSE

EVERY LITTER BIT

Port Phillip Bay is under threat from plastic pollution and we need your help to clean it up, **Jordy Atkinson** writes

Melbourne's much-loved coastline is under siege from a wave of plastic pollution.

More than 7890kg of litter has been collected along Port Phillip Bay beaches so far this year, according to BeachPatrol data.

Now, the *Leader* and Port Phillip Council have teamed up to launch the LoveOurBay campaign, which aims to tackle the rubbish scourge.

And we need your help.

You don't have to join a monthly clean-up crew to do your bit.

Every little thing helps, such



as taking your own cup when you grab a takeaway coffee, filling up a reusable water bottle, swapping plastic straws for paper ones, and binning street litter when you see it — don't just let it lie.

Port Phillip Mayor Bernadene Voss said litter was everyone's problem to fix so future generations could continue to enjoy our beaches.

"Our children deserve the

chance to swim in a pristine bay," she said.

"Every piece of rubbish left on the street will find its way to the bay during heavy rain, via the drainage system, or simply moved along by the wind.

"We can — and must — make a difference."

Among the staggering amount of rubbish picked up by dedicated BeachPatrol volunteers this year were 15,528 bottles and cans.

At last month's clean-up at Port Melbourne, more than 60 people collected about 35kg of trash, including 115 single-use plastic bottles.

And while volunteers at the Elwood clean-up on August 18 collected only about 9kg, the trash — mostly tiny fragments of easily ingestible plastic and polystyrene — had huge potential to harm marine life.

In March, the *Leader* revealed a whopping 186,800 pieces of plastic had washed up along just a 55m stretch of Port Melbourne beach in the previous 12 months.

Beach Patrol Australia vice president and Port Melbourne group leader Ross Headifen and his wife Ramona audited the plastic debris every morning for two years.

Tiny unidentifiable fragments made up the bulk of the litter found but zip-locks bags and food containers were also common.

And a shocking 33,282 food wrappers also washed up on the surveyed section of beach over a year.

There were also 980 balloons, 2505 bottle labels and 1064 bottle tops among the mess.

Mr Headifen said the findings were "incomprehensible".

"People need to think twice before using plastic," he said.

"They need to be aware that when they pick up a plastic bag to

Callum, 11, Matilda, 9, Tully, 10, Eliza, 10, and Port Phillip Mayor Bernadene Voss.
Picture: Josie Hayden



use for about 30 minutes, it will hang around (the environment) for about 500 years.”

And with warmer weather around the corner, the rubbish plague is only going to get worse as more people flock to our beaches and parks to soak up the sun.

But while a substantial amount of litter is left in the sand, most flows into the bay via the Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers — after being thoughtlessly dropped on the ground.

The Love Our Street group supports BeachPatrol by hosting monthly clean-ups of

neighbourhood streets to try to stop rubbish getting into the waterways.

So far this year, groups in Elwood, Caulfield, Ripponlea, Melbourne, Maribyrnong and Werribee have picked up a huge 1270kg of litter, including 4541 bottles and cans.

Make sure future generations aren't left buried in trash and pledge to join the LoveOurBay campaign.

We all need to be bitter about litter.

Find out more about monthly street and beach cleans at beachpatrol.com.au

Get involved

UPCOMING BEACH CLEANS

■ **St Kilda:** September 8

■ **Elwood:** September 15

■ **Port Melbourne:** October 6

■ **South Melbourne:** October 20

■ **Spring Clean the City:** Help tidy the streets on September 15 between 9am and 1pm.

Details: bit.ly/2Cc5UdZ

■ **Instagram:** Show us how you're tackling the litter scourge by tagging @portphillpleader and @cityofportphillip in your pics using #thatsrubbish and #LoveOurBay

Join waste war

MAYOR BERNADENE VOSS

As Mayor, I never fail to be amazed at the great work our community can achieve when we work together.

Now more than ever, our city needs your help. We are becoming inundated with litter. It's polluting our streets and ending up in our beautiful bay.

On a recent Saturday, I went out with over 150 volunteers to clean up Port Melbourne and South Melbourne. In three

hours we collected 119 bags of rubbish, including 46 used syringes. In one street alone, I gathered 96 bottles and cans alongside bags of litter. Much of this was single-use plastics or things that could have been easily recycled —

instead they were destined for the bay to become a threat to our vulnerable ecosystem.

I am calling on everyone in our community to pitch in.

The council has developed a new waste strategy — 'Don't Waste It!' — which will see us reducing household waste and redirecting food waste from landfill, but litter is everyone's problem.

I want you to join me in pledging to clean up our city.

I'd like to hear from readers: what's your pledge? Pick up the rubbish outside your house, in your street, in your park. Organise a clean-up event and invite your ward councillors.

We'll be measuring the amount of rubbish gathered — so make sure to tell us how much you've collected. Your pledge will make a big difference. Together we can #LoveOurBay

