

# MARINE DEBRIS REPORT CARD

POSITIVE CHANGE  
FOR MARINE LIFE



TALLEBUDGERA CREEK, GOLD COAST, QLD

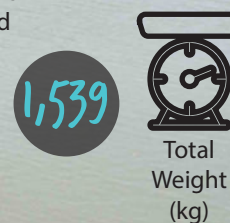
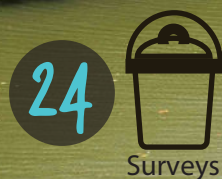
2019

## INTRODUCTION

Plastic pollution and other forms of marine debris have been gaining increasing attention in Australia. A 2016 United Nations study found that more than 800 animal species were negatively affected by litter in our seas, representing a 23 per cent increase in the total number of species affected since 2012. In Australia, marine debris is recognised as a *Key Threatening Process* by the Australian Commonwealth Government under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. With SE Queensland experiencing one of the fastest urban growth rates in Australia, action needs to be taken now to mitigate the impacts that growth is having on our waterways and their unique variety of habitats and wildlife, which offer a vast array of recreational, cultural and economic opportunities to coastal regions.

Our *River Warriors* initiative aims to address the impacts of marine debris and pollution through ongoing kayak-based surveys collecting, recording and disposing of marine debris in waterways across NSW and QLD. Phase I of our inaugural Tallebudgera Creek River Warriors project consisted of 24 weekly surveys covering the accessible length of the creek 6 times over a 7-month period. We collected baseline data on type, quantity and source and presence of marine debris, with 22,925 pieces of debris collected in total. This Report Card gives a snapshot of our findings and (alongside our *State of Debris Report*) aims to serve as a model for determining waterway health based on key variables; giving communities, businesses and governments a framework to improve marine-debris related threats and ensure cleaner, healthier and safer waterways across Queensland and beyond.

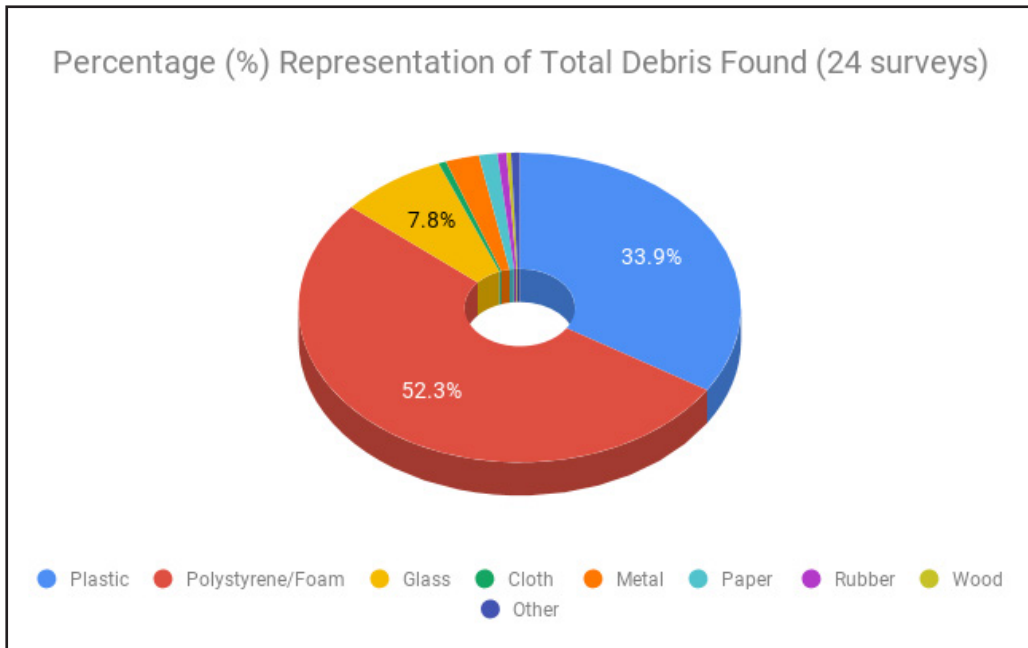
## RIVER WARRIORS, TALLEBUDGERA CREEK: A SNAPSHOT



Marine Debris Report Card - Tallebudgera Creek  
© Positive Change for Marine Life 2019

# FINDINGS

In addition to the Snapshot on page 1, our data reflected that two categories - plastic and polystyrene, made up 86.2% of our findings (60.6% polystyrene and 25.6% plastic). From these two categories, the most found individual items were polystyrene balls (89.13% of total polystyrene), with plastic bits and pieces



with plastic bits and pieces (not film), lightweight plastic bags (including biodegradable bags), cigarette butts and packaging and plastic film accounting for 70.83% of total plastics found (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Total debris found - represented as a percentage.

## REPORT CARD RANKING

Our Report Card ranking takes into account 3 key variables to determine a grade between A (best) and F (worst). It aims to mitigate problem items through community outreach, education and training and supporting infrastructure (examined during Phase II of the program).

### Key Report Card Variables

Source of debris	Quantity of debris	Type of debris
No major source	<20 pieces per km	<10% plastic/foam found
1-2 unmitigated sources	20 - 100 pieces per km	<25% plastic/foam found
3-4 unmitigated sources	100 - 300 pieces per km	<50% plastic/foam found
4-5 unmitigated sources	300 - 600 pieces per km	<75% plastic/foam found
6+ unmitigated sources	>600 pieces per km	>75% plastic/foam found

## REPORT CARD SCORE

**F+**

While an F+ may seem like a horrible result, work in the marine debris space is still in its infancy. Phase II of this project will engage stakeholders across the region to mitigate debris at its source and ensure that Tallebudgera Creek can move towards an A rating!

Contact: [info@pcfml.org.au](mailto:info@pcfml.org.au)  
Web: [pcfml.org.au](http://pcfml.org.au)

10685

Polystyrene Balls

6061

Plastic Bits & Pieces

1336

Lightweight Plastic Bags

RIVER WARRIORS

1186

Cig Butts & Packaging

1080

Plastic Film Remnants

TOP 5 ITEMS FOUND



Supported by the QLD Government's Community Sustainability Action Grants Program