# Environmental harm from glitter trail at Lake Macquarie's Ken and Audrey Owens Walkway



A considerable environmental concern has emerged at Redhead's Ken and Audrey Owens Walkway in Lake Macquarie, where a careless act has left behind a 40-metre-long trail of glitter, glue, and small plastic decorations such as stars and animal shapes. While the trail appears bright and decorative, experts warn of the long-lasting ecological consequences tied to the release of millions of microplastic particles into this sensitive habitat.

Brendan Callander, Manager of Environmental Systems at Lake Macquarie City Council, highlighted the severity of the issue, explaining that glitter itself is a form of microplastic that does not degrade over time. In an interview with Mirage News, Mr Callander stated, "Glitter by its very nature is already a microplastic. It doesn't break down, it sticks readily to surfaces, gets into waterways and is ingested by fish and other animals. So while it might eventually disperse, it will remain in the environment for generations."

The physical location of the glitter trail raises particular concern. Situated at the western end of the walkway, the trail crosses over a bridge that spans a state-significant paperbark wetland—a delicate ecosystem that is vulnerable to pollution. Mr Callander noted, "It's not only right beside a State-significant paperbark wetland – it stretches over a bridge actually crossing it. So, every day the path is being used, foot traffic is loosening countless specks of plastic glitter, leaving them to be washed or blown into the water."

Council officials regard this incident as one of the worst of its kind to affect the area. It serves as a clear illustration of how improperly discarded plastics ultimately contaminate natural environments, with potential impacts on aquatic life that inhabit these waterways.

To address the problem, Lake Macquarie City Council has taken immediate steps by engaging specialist clean-up contractors. Their goal is to remove the glitter and glue with minimal further environmental disturbance, a challenging task given the microplastic nature of the debris. Mr Callander mentioned, "It's a very tricky task but the last thing we want to do is release more microplastics into the environment."

Legally, the event falls under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, under which individuals caught littering may face fines up to $5,000. To aid in preventing further environmental damage and to assist in identifying those responsible, the Council has called on the public to come forward with any information related to the vandalism. Authorities can be contacted on 4921 0333 for tips or reports.

This incident underscores ongoing concerns about microplastic pollution and the challenges in protecting ecologically sensitive locations from human-induced contamination. The Lake Macquarie Council's response continues as they seek to mitigate the damage and prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-54545669> - This article discusses how glitter, including biodegradable types, can harm rivers and lakes by releasing microplastics that persist in the environment and affect aquatic life.
* <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33254837/> - This study examines the ecological impacts of both conventional and biodegradable glitter on freshwater habitats, highlighting effects such as reduced growth in aquatic plants and increased abundance of invasive species.
* <https://www.sciencetimes.com/articles/49031/20240303/glitters-environmental-impact-microplastic-menace-metallic-threat-aquatic-plants.htm> - This article highlights research showing that glitter particles, due to their metallic coatings, can reduce sunlight penetration in water bodies, potentially harming aquatic plants.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9697108/> - This study assesses the toxicity of glitter leachates in aquatic ecosystems, revealing that glitter particles can leach harmful substances into water, affecting various aquatic organisms.
* <https://theubj.com/uae/science/34873/environmental-impact-of-glitter-more-harmful-than-expected-study-shows/> - This article reports on research indicating that glitter can impair photosynthesis in aquatic plants, leading to broader ecological consequences.
* <https://studyfinds.org/glitter-ruining-environment-rivers-lakes/> - This article discusses how both traditional and biodegradable glitters negatively impact freshwater ecosystems, including reducing the growth of aquatic plants and affecting water quality.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiggFBVV95cUxNR2puMmpiQl92MGlFMEtQcnp1TmYwLWRWelVmeEczaGRXZms5QTFyZ0R2Qkhud1pNQkNPWXJxYjJyT25EQWJibkZIcGg2Vkx5MkVSQUo0b0UzQ2NlOUdXNUk5U09Qei1yejZkYmNNQmhJZ2VjTy1VYzdZeWd6UVZGWl9B?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data