

Case Study: Plastics in our water ways

Activity Sheet 13. "Over to you"

Introduction

This activity sheet encourages the class to undertake a community based project that aims to reduce the amount of plastic waste. To us this is by far the most important activity.

Sometimes people can feel disempowered about such devastating and monumental issues such as plastics in our waterways because they are such big issues and are occurring on such a large scale worldwide. With these thoughts in mind we feel that it is important to show students that there are groups at international, national and local levels who are doing wonderful work in the fight against plastics. Often the general public, including young adults, are simply not aware of who and what they do. By undertaking a project students will see that it is possible to make change and that the fight against plastics is doable.

Whilst this may sound daunting it is important to realise that the project can be as simple as getting rid of plastic straws at the school canteen. The important thing is that change occurs and that the students are the drivers of this change.

The content of this activity sheet relates to the following Geographical Concepts and Skills and Geographical Knowledge

Geographical Concepts and Skills

Place, Space and interconnection

- Identify, analyse and explain interconnections within places and between places and identify and explain changes resulting from these interconnections

Geographical knowledge

- Causes of an atmospheric or hydrological hazard and its impacts on places, and human responses to it to minimise harmful effects on places in the future.

The list below provides you with some examples of projects at a local or community level that aim to reduce plastic waste.

- [Tangaroa Blue Foundation](#) contains a wide range of valuable resources. More specifically look at:
 - [Waste free fact sheets](#)
 - [Combating Marine Debris](#)
 - [Our Solutions](#)
 - [Get Involved](#)
 - [Australian Marine Debris Initiative How To](#)
 - Video Clip [The Last Straw](#)
 - [Source Reduction Plans](#)
- [B-Alternative](#) contains a range of items that can be used as plastic alternatives.
- [Waste Free School Programs](#)
- By simply researching “The Last Straw” you will find several examples of this program in action and advice on how to implement these programs
- Projects to encourage re-usable coffee cups such as:
 - [East Gippsland coffee cup project](#)
 - [Ditching disposable coffee cups](#)
- [Boomerang Bags](#)
- Research biodegradable plastics
- Clean Up campaigns. Look up groups such as [Tangaroa Blue](#), [Baykeeper](#) and [Clean Up Australia](#)
- [City of Melbourne grants for businesses hoping to reduce single use plastics](#) (now closed)
- [Plastic free July](#)
- [Plastic Bag free Victoria](#)
- [Plastic Free Alliance](#)

Suggested Steps

1. Allow students time to research community programs that have been implemented to reduce plastic waste. The above list of ideas and websites is a good starting point.
2. Brainstorm all of the possibilities of ways to reduce plastic waste. At this stage do not eliminate any ideas.
3. Introduce students to the parameters that you have, such as the amount of class time, access to support within the school and wider community, level of expertise, the scale of the project and location etc.
You may also want to introduce the students to the [SMART](#) principle (any goal or project they undertake should be: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound).

With these parameters in mind eliminate the ideas that appear in the brainstorm that are simply not doable. Remember that the important thing is not how large the project is but simply that *something* is being done. It is better to do something small, but nevertheless important, successfully.

4. Hopefully you have narrowed your ideas down to 2-3 possibilities. Allow some class time to research these ideas more, for you to find out what support is available and for the students to discuss this at home. Contact local clubs such as Rotary or the Lions Club as they may have contacts or be aware of projects (You just never know who is out there to help) and invite them to speak to your class. After this time get the class to agree on which action they would like to undertake.

5. List the steps that will need to be taken and develop a timeline. Allocate jobs and tasks to class members and to other members of the community.

6. Begin your project!

7. Remember to check in regularly to see how it is travelling and to maintain accountability.

Remember that you are not in this alone. As mentioned above there are organisations out there who can help you.