

Case Study: Plastics in our waterways

Activity Sheet 8. “Over to you”

Whilst we acknowledge the time constraints associated with VCE studies please consider if it is possible to undertake a community-based project that aims to reduce the amount of plastic waste. This may be organised in class or done in a volunteer capacity out of class. Talk to existing environmental groups within your school about the possibilities. Alternatively, organise a local community group engaged in reducing the impacts of plastics to speak to your class.

To us this is by far the most important activity. From our experience children and young adults are constantly submitted to “bad news stories”, whether that be from watching world events, the media, or what is covered in the school environment, such as some of the content from the previous activity sheets. With this constant barrage young people can “zone out” and tend to disengage. It may be that they simply feel that the problem is just too big for them to do anything about. Obviously such statements are a generalisation as many young people are doing and believe they have the ability to do wonderful things.

With these thoughts in mind we feel that it is important to show students that there are groups at an international, national and local level 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.

Contact organisations such as those below who will provide you guidance or visit your school to assist you setting up this project.

The list below provides you with some examples of projects that aim to reduce plastic waste.

- [Tangaroa Blue Foundation's](#) website contains a wide range of valuable resources.

More specifically look at:

- [Waste free fact sheets](#)
- [Lesson 9 “Combating Marine Debris”](#)
- [“Our Solutions”](#) and [“Get Involved”](#)
- [How To Videos and Manual](#)
- Clip [“The Last Straw”](#)

- [Source reduction plans](#)
- [B-Alternative website](#) : contains a range of items that can be used as plastic alternatives.
- By simply researching “The Last Straw” you will find several examples of this program in action and advice on how to implement these programs.
- Waste Free School Programs such as those at [The Shire of Campaspe](#)
- Projects to encourage re-useable coffee cups such as [this article from The Age](#)
- [Boomerang Bags](#).
- Research biodegradable plastics
- Clean Up campaigns. Look up groups such as Tangaroa Blue (mentioned above) and [Baykeeper](#)
- [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.
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. Allow some time to research these ideas more, for you to find out what support is available and for the students to discuss this at home. (You just never know who is out there to help!). 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/tasks to class members and other members of the community.

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