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Community Bulletin

Marine debris project in the Indian Ocean Territories

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A citizen science venture funded by the Australian Government is gathering critical data from marine debris washing up on Australia's Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI) and Christmas Island (CI) with a view to stemming the tide of plastics arriving from offshore sources.

The IOT Marine Debris Project (IOTMDP) began in 2017 and is fully-funded by the Australian Government, through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development, bringing together teams of local people, self-funded off-island volunteers, and partners to collect and audit marine debris at beach sites on the islands, and submit data to the Australian Marine Debris Initiative database <http://amdi.tangaroablue.org/>.

The Department provides funding to the Western Australian Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), and Keep Australia Beautiful Council, who work in partnership with the Tangaroa Blue Foundation, the Shires of CKI and CI, local people and schools to collect data on the amount, type and origin of marine debris that washes up on IOT beaches with a view to stopping it at its source.

Another annual marine debris collection and data analysis began on CKI on 14 June until 21 June, and will occur on CI 21 – 28 June. For more information on the IOTMDP, or to be kept informed on future volunteering opportunities, please email kabc@kabc.wa.gov.au.

I am very proud of our IOT communities for taking part in this important initiative to contribute to the global campaign to save our oceans by stopping the flow of marine debris. This initiative is in line with the CI and CKI Strategic Plans in ensuring a prosperous, resilient and sustainable IOT, aiming to be plastic-free, and leading the way in waste management for remote communities, by 2030.

DWER is also looking at further approaches to reduce single-use plastics across the WA community and has requested IOT communities provide input. Please visit <https://dwer.wa.gov.au/single-use-plastic-issues-paper>.

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