



WHERE CLEAN UP THE WORLD STARTED

Nineteen years ago a solo-yachtsman and builder had a simple idea to make a difference in his own backyard – Sydney Harbour.

In 1987, Ian Kiernan AO* competed in the BOC Challenge solo yacht race and as he sailed around-the-world he was shocked by the pollution he continually encountered in areas such as the Sargasso Sea in the Caribbean. Having waited years to see the Sargasso's legendary long golden weeds, Ian's anticipation turned to anger and disappointment when he found them polluted and tangled with rubbish.

Ian recalled. "I can't overstate the disappointment I felt when I found this sea of magic and myth littered with rubbish from discarded thongs, plastic buckets and disposable nappies, to toothpaste tubes and plastic bags."

Once back in Sydney, Ian enlisted the help of friends and held Clean Up Sydney Harbour Day (1989) which motivated 40,000 volunteers to remove rusted car bodies, plastics of all kinds, glass bottles and cigarette butts from the harbour.

Ian and his committee believed that if a city could be mobilised to take action, then so could the whole nation. Almost 300,000 volunteers turned out on the first Clean Up Australia Day in 1990 and that involvement has steadily increased over the last 19 years.

The next step for Ian was to take the concept of Clean Up Australia Day to the rest of the world. After gaining the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Clean Up the World was launched in 1993. The uptake of Clean Up the World globally (an estimated 35 million people in over 120 countries now participate each year) has demonstrated that this simple Australian idea has universal appeal and the health of the environment is of concern to people worldwide.

In 1998, Ian was awarded the prestigious United Nations Environment Programme Sasakawa Environment Prize. The honour was awarded for "mobilising tens of millions of people around the globe to take responsibility for their own environment."

Ian has also been named a Global 500 Laureate while Clean Up the World's ability to bring communities and individuals together has been honoured by a Building World Citizenship Award from the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.

* AO Order of Australia awarded for distinguished service of a high degree to Australia or to humanity at large.

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