

**UN Millennium Development Goal No 7
ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY**

Target: To integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

The Ocean

Context

Our oceans cover almost three quarters of the planet and embrace most of the earth's biosphere, the region where life occurs. Our ocean's living resources are a treasure. Many marine species are still unknown and whole new ecosystems are still being discovered.

The ocean provides the beginning of the food chain for all land-based species, including ourselves. The ocean's ecosystems are very sensitive to human activity, both from ocean and land activities. Scientists have found that rising levels of human-made pollution have affected worldwide ocean circulation and may even affect rainfall in southern Australia.

Story

According to scientists and researchers, a massive area of debris is located in the Pacific Ocean where few people travel. Known as the "great Pacific garbage patch" or "the Pacific trash vortex", this "patch" is largely comprised of plastic materials and has gradually expanded with the assistance of ocean currents and winds. Some estimate the "patch" to be the size of Texas while others say it is twice as large as the USA.

One source of the debris is the shipping industry, but disturbingly, land-based sources of rubbish are the major culprits.

For the past ten years, a marine research organisation in California founded by Charles Moore – the Algalita Marine Research Foundation www.algalita.org – has monitored the "patch" and believes it has grown significantly over this time.

Speaking recently to *The Courier Mail* (February 3, 2008), Moore said that about 100 million tonnes of plastic are circulating in the northern Pacific - or about 2.5 per cent of all plastic items made since 1950. While historically most debris is biodegradable, plastics are "photodegrading" all the time. It is what I call a kaleidoscope or an alphabet soup. You won't see it from a satellite shot of the ocean. You only see it from the bows of ships."

If the waste is to be controlled people must stop using unnecessary disposable plastics, otherwise it is set to double in size during the next 10 years, Moore warned.

Also speaking to *The Courier Mail* (February 3, 2008), Dr Marcus Eriksen, research director of the Algalita Marine Research Foundation, said small plastic particles acted like a sponge to trap many dangerous man-made chemicals that found their way into the ocean, like hydrocarbons and DDT.

"What goes into the ocean goes into these animals and onto your dinner plate. It is that simple," Dr Eriksen said. Larger pieces of plastic are also a threat to birds, which mistake them for food. Dr Eriksen said he has found syringes, cigarette lighters and tooth brushes from the patch inside sea bird carcasses.

Our Federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, is working with state governments to develop a strategy to phase out the use of plastic bags by the end of 2008. Australians use about four billion plastic bags a year which are having a serious impact on our coastal and marine environments. Many of these bags end up in the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch'.

Story source: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,23157068-952,00.html>

**Let's join the move to phase out
the use of plastic bags in Australia
by the end of 2008.**

Reflection

*"Calling me to Consciousness...
walking reverently on Earth"*



From stardust I am made and unto stardust I will return...

Sit in a quiet space and breathe fresh air into your lungs – several deep breaths and as you breathe out – imagine yourself standing in water knee deep – your body is standing on Earth, in water and your body is filled with water as well as being in water – your body's calcium is evolved from the 'big bang' – you are made of stardust – in this moment you are connected to all that is – "as it was in the beginning, is now and forever shall be".

Now from wherever it is that you are sitting stand up and take a step on Earth and another and another until you have taken seven steps.

Pause. Now add these words to your seven steps "Tender God of Compassion"

Pause: and take another seven steps adding these words "Calling me to Consciousness"

Pause: and take another seven steps adding these words "You are walking with me now"

Pause and take another seven steps adding these words "Walking Reverently on Earth"

Pause and take another seven steps adding these words "Water nourishing me NOW!"

Reflection

Scripture Reflection: Genesis 1:21-23

Then God said, "Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky." And so it happened: God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of swimming creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw how good it was, and God blessed them, saying, "Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth." Evening came, and morning followed - the fifth day.

(New American Bible, 1970).



Action

We are what we do. Let us help each other to free ourselves and our environment from dependency on plastic bags. Perhaps we could make a feature of material shopping bags e.g. advertising "No Plastic Bags" in craft materials – paints, cottons etc. – moving away from the green shopping bags which are plastic derivatives.

Suggested websites:

Clean Up Australia www.cleanup.com.au
Help reduce plastic bag use...

We Are What We Do
www.wearewhatwedo.org.au
Inspires everyday actions to change the world...

Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts: Plastic Retail Carry Bag Use 2002-2005 Consumption
www.deh.gov.au/settlements/publications/waste/plastic-bags/report-2005.html

Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts: Waste and Recycling
www.deh.gov.au/industry/waste/plastic-bags/bags-analysis.html
Action to reduce waste is a critical element of sustainable development...

Clean Ocean Foundation
www.cleanocean.org
Running a number of major campaigns to...



UN Millennium Development Goal No 7 ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

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Specific Issues Committee, Eco-Justice

Margie Abbott RSM brings energy, passion, rituals and years of eco-justice experience to the committee. This year Margie is facilitating retreats and workshops to deepen relationship with Earth.

Mary Dennett RSM is from the Melbourne Congregation and has a background in teaching senior secondary Science and Religious Education. She has recently completed a Master of Arts in Culture and Spirituality that focused on the Creation Story and its importance in our understanding of our place in Creation and the importance of establishing "mutually enhancing relationships with all beings".

Kate McGrath RSM grew up on a sheep and cattle property in south-west Victoria. Kate has worked in primary education for 35 years in the Ballarat Diocese and in Darwin. "Water has always been a critical issue for me and drought an ever present reality. I gained a different perspective on water during the 'wet' and 'dry' seasons in the Territory. At present Ballarat has 8.7% of water in storage. Our decision to highlight various aspects of water through the eco-justice committee this year is for me a timely reminder of the dependence on water of all life on our planet."

Patricia Powell RSM is currently co-ordinating the Mercy Ecological Learning Community - "Rahamim" - sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy Bathurst. She has experience in education, faith formation and spirituality, cross-cultural community development, administration and congregational leadership.

The Committee warmly invites your response to the article or the issue.

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