



Seabins Launch Speech by Stewart Godden

8th February 2019

Good morning everyone. I will start with an Acknowledgement of Country: we would like to acknowledge that we're meeting today on the traditional land of the Bindjareb people, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and region.

Thank you all for attending the official launch of the first two Seabins to be installed in Mandurah. My name is Stewart Godden and I am the Seabins project leader for Peel Preservation Group (PPG). I will be the first of three speakers this morning and I will talk for about 5 minutes. Our honourable guest, the MLA for Mandurah David Templeman will speak next, followed by Tarnee Rutherford from City of Mandurah Environmental Services.

PPG gratefully acknowledges the funding for this project which came from David Templeman and The McGowan Government. We also truly appreciate the generous support of the City of Mandurah and thank Seabins supplier Shorewater Marine for their assistance.

PPG is a not-for-profit community group that has been protecting the Peel environment since 1976, when Mandurah had a population of ~6,000 people. When property development began occurring concerned residents founded the group to help preserve the local landscape and wildlife. PPG has since represented the community whenever new developments are proposed. There are several large conservation reserves in Mandurah that would not exist without the combined efforts of PPG and other community groups.

Now that Mandurah is almost fully developed, PPG's main focus is reducing the environmental impacts of our growing population. In particular we are educating people about the amount of plastic we are finding in our precious waterways. Seabins are effective litter collection devices however their main benefit is as an educational tool. PPG will use Seabins to increase public awareness of the need for waste reduction and for good waste management.

Seabins are floating trash collectors designed to collect plastic, oil and rubbish. They are powered by a 240V outlet and work like a swimming pool skimmer box, pumping 25,000L of water per hour through a mesh bag. The bag needs to be emptied daily. Attached to a floating dock in a marina, they move up and down with the tide collecting plastic particles down to 2mm in size. Each Seabin can catch half a tonne of waste annually, which is equal to 90,000 plastic bags; 35,700 disposable coffee cups or 16,500 plastic bottles.

Seabins are an Australian designed product that was partly developed in WA. The inventors Andrew Turton and Pete Ceglinski are two boat builders who realised that human over-consumption and poor waste management was killing the oceans. In 2013 they decided to pursue the idea that we had rubbish bins on land, so why not in the ocean? Since then the technology has been developed overseas and has been placed in 23 countries all over the world. PPG is proud to be part of bringing Seabins back to their home country.

Our oceans cover nearly two-thirds of the Earth's surface and hold 97% of the planet's water. We need to respect and take care of the oceans as if our lives depend on it – because they do. The oceans produce more than half of the oxygen in the atmosphere and absorb the majority of our carbon emissions. They house over 230,000 known species and are a major source of food for humanity.

Currently 10–20 million tons of plastic ends up in the oceans each year. A recent study conservatively estimated that 5.25 trillion plastic particles are currently floating in the world's oceans. Put another way, right now in the ocean there is one particle of plastic for every two particles of plankton. These particles are also a human health issue because the ingestion of litter by marine organisms can escalate through the food chain, onto our plates and become part of the human diet. Micro-plastics have now been found in people, with unknown consequences. Plastic debris is also an economic issue costing an estimated \$13 billion a year. Beaches have to be cleaned plus the damage to marine ecosystems results in losses to fisheries and tourism.

All species of wildlife can be harmed by the ingestion of marine litter. It can cause starvation, suffocation, internal injuries, and infections. Animals such as seabirds, whales and dolphins can become entangled in plastic matter. Marine litter is a global issue but it is normally out of sight and out of mind. Seabins are a great way to demonstrate the scale of the problem and start community discussions about how to fix it. PPG hopes to engage local schools in an education program. Having students analyse the trash collected by the Seabins will highlight the impact of single-use plastics on marine life and on us. As Benjamin Franklin said *"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."*

Marine litter enters the ocean through human action or inaction. It can only be truly managed by changing the behaviour that causes it to enter the environment. Waste management is everyone's responsibility. Just cleaning the oceans is a poor solution. Our aim is to change society's behaviour towards litter production and find ways to reduce plastic litter. This can be as simple as the public asking businesses to switch to using different materials (e.g. paper straws).

While the problem is widespread we should not be downhearted. It is one where individual citizens – including students and children - can become an immediate part of the solution. As American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead said: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*