



# **Let's SAVE THE WORLD**

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## **GLOBAL WARNING**

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Six months into our Global Warning campaign, *Rotary Down Under* continues its commitment to put environmental issues firmly in the spotlight.



**A**fter past RI president Ian Riseley encouraged Rotarians around the world to plant a tree, thousands took up the challenge – often planting many more than just one – and Rotarians are continuing to plant trees even after Ian’s term has ended. But Rotarians are also doing an amazing range of other environmental projects: saving wildlife, repairing damaged ecosystems and taking measures to reduce waste.

Rotary’s six Areas of Focus are intrinsically linked to a healthy planet; obvious when it comes to providing clean water, sanitation, hygiene and

fighting disease. But it’s also highly relevant to goals such as growing local economies and promoting peace.

Devastation of the natural environment impacts upon agriculture long-term, leading to food insecurity and poor economic opportunities. This isn’t a far-off problem – in some regions of Australia, ill-thought-out clearing has turned once fertile land into barren landscapes, wiped clean thanks to rising salinity.

It’s clear that environmentalism is as much about taking care of humanity as it is nature for its own sake. That is not to say we shouldn’t think hard about protecting and preserving the wonderful species we share this planet with.

The reality is, we live in a time where koalas are on the way to being classified as endangered. The unique and once common numbat is now extinct in most of Australia. In fact, its now rarer than the Giant Panda. Both declines can be squarely attributed to human activity and our introduction of feral pests.

It’s not hopeless, though. Through 25 years of concerted efforts by the New Zealand Government and conservationists – and a number of Rotary club projects like the Rotary Club of Whakatane West’s Stoat Trap Project and the Wildbase Recovery bird education and treatment facility supported by clubs in and around Palmerston – the status of the North

Around 90 per cent of ocean plastic pollution arrives via 10 great rivers.





**FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:**  
The koala population has been devastated over the past 100 years and is currently under great threat due to urbanisation and massive, uncontrolled habitat destruction; Past Rotary International president Ian Riseley and wife Juliet plant a tree in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, as part of Ian's 1.2 million new trees goal – one new tree per Rotarian; Indonesia's Citarum River is considered the world's most polluted river. Heavy pollution of river water by household and industrial waste in the Indonesian province of West Java is threatening the health of at least five million people living on the riverbanks.



Island brown kiwi and Rowi kiwi have been upgraded from 'endangered' to 'vulnerable' due to a steady increase in population.

Pollution is another enormous global issue. Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific aren't the worst offenders by any means – but we aren't innocent either. Each year Clean Up Australia creates a Rubbish Report based on a survey of the rubbish collected by volunteers. In 2017, approximately 15,552 Ute loads of rubbish was collected from 7066 sites around the nation. Plastics constituted 33 per cent of this, with the top items collected being food packaging, beverage rubbish and plastic bags.

Plastic, to use as an example of just one kind of waste affecting our environment, isn't necessarily a bad thing in itself. But we need to look at input versus output when it comes to anything we use. The amount of energy and environmental cost it takes to create a single-use piece of packaging or plastic bag is not matched by the amount time it is utilised. A plastic eco-bag, or other items such as a computer, used hundreds of times, is justifiable – though should also be recycled at the end of its life.

If we all take steps to reduce what we use and dispose of it responsibly, it translates to significant difference. We can't expect others to change – such as nations with the largest pollution output, if we ourselves do not.

Remember, we're all part of a network of 1.2 million Rotarians. If every one of us takes a few concerted measures to reduce our ecological footprint and make a positive impact on our environment, that will add up to one huge difference.

It is for all the above reasons and more that *Rotary Down Under* has taken the initiative to include this important topic every month. We look forward to showcasing club projects, so others can learn from and even duplicate ideas and we welcome your submissions to [editorial@rotarydownunder.com.au](mailto:editorial@rotarydownunder.com.au). Let's together be an inspiration and protect and preserve our world.

**Rotary Down Under  
Editorial team**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: The numbat once populated much of southern semi-arid and arid Australia. By the 1970s, numbats had disappeared from most of their range (99%), surviving only in small areas of southwest Australia and are now considered endangered. It's estimated that there are less than 1000 mature individuals left. (Photo: WWF); The North Island brown kiwi and the rare rowi kiwi are being touted as global success stories after being upgraded from an endangered classification to vulnerable; From humble beginnings in the 1980s, Clean Up Australia Day is now the nation's largest community-based environmental event. Today, the focus is as much on preventing rubbish entering our environment as it is on removing what has already accumulated (Photo: Cedar Woods Property/Eamonn Lourey); Worldwide, ocean debris kills at least one million seabirds and 100,000 mammals every year. (Photo: Troy Mayne/WWF).



# Top honour for ocean's friend

**IN 2006**, a tourist dropped his keys in Toulon's harbour, a port city on southern France's Mediterranean coast. Teenage scuba diver Ludovic Grosjean fished them out.

Word spread about Ludovic's bottom-of-the-harbour talent; so much so that he was able to finance his engineering studies by rescuing lost winches and phones and performing underwater jobs on racing yachts.

Now based in Melbourne, Vic, Ludovic recalls, "The harbour water was dirty and toxic. I hated to see birds poisoned by plastics. Ever since, I've been using artificial intelligence and drone technology against river and ocean pollution."

Ludovic, 29, is one of only six young innovators worldwide to win Rotary's 2018 People of Action award, which recognises humanitarian work involving cutting-edge technology and community collaboration.

Rotary International president Barry Rassin picked the winners personally. Ludovic will receive the honour at the United Nation's Rotary Day in Nairobi, Kenya, on November 9.

Ludovic came to Australia in 2013 and tested his anti-pollution know-how against our huge variety of coastlines. His expertise includes amphibious drones that cope with winds, waves and corrosion.

Four years ago, his friend Mikael Lombard in Monaco urged him to join Rotaract. Ludovic became president of Melbourne City Rotaract last year, while Mikael became president of Rotaract Nice Baie des Anges. Ever competitive, the two vied to do the best projects.



Rotaractor Ludovic Grosjean prepares for an underwater inspection.

Ludovic's club (15 members and 100 volunteers) launched the Yarra clean-up project, involving a dozen Rotary clubs, environment groups and authorities.

"My team could fish out three dumped O-Bikes a day, but there's hundreds left," Ludovic said.

The young humanitarian has also founded engineering consultancy OceanX Group, with eight people in Washington DC, France and Australia. The work involves combining artificial intelligence with sensors and drones. A local example involved designing electronics for the Yarra's 30-year-old litter traps and bins, so pollution can be identified and arrested in real time.

"Plastics in waterways is a massive global threat," Ludovic said. "We have to stop it at the source for the sake of humanity itself."

The ocean crisis includes:

- "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch" – a raft of junk the size of Texas;
- On present trends, by 2050 there will be more ocean plastic than fish;





- Nine million tonnes of new plastic waste enters the ocean per year, threatening marine life and putting micro-plastic beads into our own meals and even table salt.

Technology won't be a cure without whole populations being educated towards cleaner water.

"About 90 per cent of ocean plastic pollution arrives via 10 great rivers," Ludovic says. "But it's not just developing countries' pollution; we set up the export industries there and we should now take responsibility.

"Our designers should understand the entire sourcing and lifecycle of the products. We ourselves need to urge for less packaging and more local consumption. It's real social change that aligns with all our Rotary values.

"When my engineer grandfather, Maurice, was nearing his time, he asked me, 'What will you do to make this world a better place?' So I am using amazing technology to save our oceans and communicating to everyone why it matters." •

BELOW: Ludovic, second from right, and his team celebrate their "catch" from the Yarra River – a drowned O-Bike.



Ludovic points out pollution in the Yarra River to District 9800 governor Bronwyn Stephens.

