



Wetlands not Wastelands: Coca-Cola and Earthwatch announce a \$600k partnership to tackle marine pollution in remote Australia

Friday 5 June 2020: The Coca-Cola Australia Foundation (CCAF) and Earthwatch Australia have announced a \$600,000 partnership to deliver a first-of-its-kind marine pollution and wetland management program in the Lower Gulf of Carpentaria.

Together with Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CLCAC) and recycling experts Plastic Collective, Earthwatch will train 20 CLCAC Indigenous Land and Environment Rangers and 30 community volunteers to help deliver the 'Wetlands not Wastelands' program over the next three years.

Malcolm Hudson, Chair of the CCAF, said the program was a stand-out in the Foundation's competitive grant process to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 'Life Below Water'.

"Driven by science and delivered by the local community, this program will trial a sustainable, community-based solution to managing and recycling marine pollution in remote regions. Once this model is proven, it could potentially be replicated in many other regional and remote locations in Australia and around the world."

Pollution is a key threat to the vast wetland system of the Lower Gulf of Carpentaria, which has little to no recycling infrastructure and has been hotspot for seasonal tourism. The area is also home to thousands of unique species including dugongs, sea turtles, migratory shorebirds and important mangrove and salt marsh wetlands that play a significant role in sequestering carbon.

Cassandra Nichols, CEO of Earthwatch Australia, said the community-led program will help reduce marine pollution risks, as well as recover and upcycle plastic waste into valuable products, creating an economic opportunity for the community.

"Thanks to this generous grant from the Coca-Cola Australia Foundation, 'Wetlands not Wastelands' will come to life and allow us to work directly with the CLCAC Rangers to develop a marine pollution management plan and a report card for future action to conserve this region's precious habitat.

"We will also be able to introduce two Plastic Collective Shruders, or plastic recycling machines, into the communities of Burketown and Normanton. The Rangers will be trained in how to use the Shruders as well as how to turn plastic waste into valuable commercial products, creating a social enterprise that further supports the local community."

The program will span hundreds of kilometres of the expansive Gulf region, from the Northern Territory border in the west, to the Staaten River on Cape York in the east. The program will also enlist the support of 30 local volunteers who will be virtually trained in citizen science methods to increase the scale of the program.

Murrandoo Yanner, CLCAC Director and Traditional Owner, said the project presents an exciting opportunity for the local community.



“From time immemorial, the Indigenous People of the Lower Gulf of Carpentaria have managed and cared for the pristine environment of the land, sea, waterways and wetlands in our region. Thanks to this exciting new partnership with Earthwatch and Plastic Collective and the generous support from Coca-Cola Australia Foundation, we can continue to do so in an even more efficient way.”

This new grant is part of the CCAF’s flagship round of funding, bringing the total number of funds donated via its charity grant programs to over \$15 million since 2002.

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About the Coca-Cola Australia Foundation

The Coca-Cola Australia Foundation (CCAF) is at the heart of Coca-Cola’s national community strategy in Australia. The fund is a joint initiative between Coca-Cola Amatil and Coca-Cola Australia, created to do social good. Since its establishment in 2002, the CCAF has provided more than \$15 million to hundreds of organisations, with many young Australians positively impacted. The CCAF mission is to create possibilities for a brighter, more sustainable future for Australians today and tomorrow. The CCAF supports programs that align with this mission through its Flagship and Employee Connected grants programs.

Coca-Cola’s World Without Waste vision

As part of its World Without Waste vision, Coca-Cola aims to collect and recycle the equivalent of every bottle or can the company sells globally by 2030; ensuring they do not end up in waterways or landfill. This is supported by the company’s commitment to sustainable packaging, where in Australia, all Coca-Cola soft drink, water, juice, dairy and sports brands (750ml and below) are now being made in 100% recycled plastic.