



**PRESS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Australian Embassy  
Bangkok

## **Australian Embassy and friends help clean up the world**

The Australian Embassy recently teamed up with the Plant-A-Tree-Today Foundation to mark Clean Up the World Day 2009 by planting 200 mangrove saplings in the ecologically sensitive area of Bangpu Recreation Centre, Samut Prakarn. Also joining the action were children from the Klong Toey slum community, along with Sister Joan Evans, an Australian religious Sister who has been working tirelessly over a decade for the better of people's life there.

Over sixty Embassy staff and family members, together with Sister Joan and the Klong Toey kids started the day with a nature walk through a mangrove forest, collecting rubbish along the way. While impressed with the beauty of the mangrove ecosystem which plays an important role in acting as spawning and nursery areas for many marine species, participants quickly realised the large volume of rubbish in the area.

This recalls the reaction of Ian Kiernan, founder of Clean Up the World, who devised the environmental campaign after a yacht race in an ocean choked by rubbish. (See more details in 'About Clean Up the World')

"I hope the activity will raise awareness of environmental issues among us all, particularly younger generations like the Klong Toey kids" said Glen Connell, First Secretary of the Embassy's Political and Economic section who also brought his two-year old daughter to join the activity.

Like the temperature, the enthusiasm of participants only rose as the morning progressed. After a lesson on how to plant mangrove saplings, participants got down and dirty, planting trees in the mud.

"The children had been totally involved from the moment they stepped off the bus - they had walked and worked with enjoyment; slipped and skidded in the mud and then the clean-up! Made so easy and yet very serious business too!" said Sister Joan.

### **Why planting mangroves**

Mangroves are one of the world's most threatened habitats, more than half the world's mangrove forests have already been destroyed and less than 1% of the remaining mangrove forests have any form of protection. Despite their smelly reputation, they absorb more carbon dioxide per unit area than ocean phytoplankton, a critical factor in global climate stability.

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**About Clean Up the World**

In 1987, an Australian solo-yachtsman and builder Ian Kiernan AO had a simple idea to make a difference in his own backyard – Sydney Harbour.

Ian 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 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 100 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 2009, Clean Up the World is encouraging and supporting members to take action at a local level to help address climate change under the theme "**Communities uniting to combat climate change**"

Energy conservation education programs, planting trees, walk to work days and waste reduction projects are just a few of the possible options that members can choose from. Get inspired and find out more about activities such as clean ups, tree plantings and other awareness raising events being held by visiting <http://activities.cleanuptheworld.org>. Register your own community group and unite with communities worldwide to help combat climate change.

**Find Clean Up the World via:**

Website: <http://www.cleanuptheworld.org>  
Website: <http://activities.cleanuptheworld.org/>  
Email: [info@cleanuptheworld.org](mailto:info@cleanuptheworld.org)  
Facebook: Clean Up the World Official  
Twitter: CleanUpTheWorld  
Blog: [cleanuptheworld](http://cleanuptheworld.org)  
YouTube: [cleanuptheworld](http://cleanuptheworld.org)



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## **Australian Government's latest initiatives to combat climate change**

### **Australian National University to receive AUD1 million in Green Precincts funding**

The Australian National University (ANU) will receive AUD1 million in the government funding to transform its iconic Canberra campus into a sustainable green hub. Environment Minister Peter Garrett said the funding would help the University implement its Education Precincts for the Future project. The Education Precincts for the Future project is one of 13 projects supported by the Australian government's Green Precincts Fund, an initiative to prepare Australia for a future with less water and to encourage local communities to better manage their water and energy use.

### **New South Wales Embargo on Water Trades Lifted**

The Australian and New South Wales governments recently announced a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) allowing New South Wales farmers to sell their water entitlements to the Federal Government to return to the Murray-Darling Basin's stressed rivers and wetlands. New South Wales has agreed to lift its embargo on water trades associated with purchases of water for the environment. As a result of the purchase of Toorale station by the New South Wales Government, some 8.7 gigitalitres of water have been delivered to environmental sites in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.

### **Proposals invited for AUD300 million on-farm irrigation program**

The Australian government is calling for proposals for a new AUD300 million on-farm irrigation efficiency grants program to help deliver a long-term sustainable future for Murray-Darling Basin irrigation communities. Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, said the funding would help irrigation communities adjust to a future with less water by supporting farmers investing in water-saving irrigation practices and technology.

### **Call for water savings proposals for Australian towns and small cities**

The Australian Government is seeking proposals to develop and implement practical projects to help secure urban water supplies in Australian towns and cities with fewer than 50,000 people. 'The government is committed to helping Australian communities secure their water supplies for a future with less water due to climate change,' Senator Wong said. Funding under this program will support cities and towns with fewer than 50,000 people to improve the reliability, efficiency and sustainability of their urban water resources while reducing demand on potable supplies.



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