



Photo, RAIN Pty Ltd 2016.

Pormpuraaw waste separation

IMPACT STORY 2018

Remote recycling & marine debris management needs strong helping hands

Marine debris and municipal waste reduction remain very high priorities for remote communities on Cape York Peninsula to reduce adverse impacts on the natural environment and human health and well-being. Significant investment into waste infrastructure and human capacity are required at the local level to maximise new recycling initiatives emerging for the region, and to support viable reuse enterprises.

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Photo, Tangaroa Blue Foundation/Australian Marine Debris Initiative.

Marine debris can be problematic on Cape York coastlines.

Why was the research needed?

Litter, rubbish and waste generated by human consumption is as big a problem for the natural environment and human health in remote Australia as it is in the country's major metropolitan regions. High debris or local municipal waste loads in remote areas create serious pollution impacts. There are also serious constraints on effective waste management and recycling in remote areas because of large distances and high costs.

How is the research being used?

Remote Aboriginal local governments in Queensland's Cape York Peninsula have used the research to seek additional infrastructure funds, increased resources and capacity for recycling/waste management. The not-for-profit organisation Tangaroa Blue – which focuses on marine debris – also actively uses and promotes the research outputs.

“Our community continues to actively remove marine debris and supports a culture of local recycling and waste reduction initiatives, while aiming to do more” (Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council, 2019)

“Leading waste and debris management practices continue, however an effective remote container deposit scheme is a real challenge to implement locally given capacity constraints” (Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council, 2019)

“Research work has assisted but useful helping hands are in short supply” (Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council, 2019)

“Tangaroa Blue use both the Factsheet and the Final Report as supporting material directly or in citation for our marine debris funding submissions” (Tangaroa Blue, 2019)

Remote research work undertaken in collaboration with Cape York Peninsula marine debris removers and municipal waste managers has led to increased shared learnings and higher awareness in remote local government about leading practice waste and debris management, which in turn has highlighted an ongoing need for strategic, coordinated investment to effectively implement and subsequently scale-up realistic or viable remote recycling options.

Marine debris on Cape York Peninsula.



Photo, Tangaroa Blue Foundation/Australian Marine Debris Initiative.

Baled aluminium cans, Cape York Peninsula.



Photo, RAIN Pty Ltd 2016.

What are the research outcomes?

The impact of the original research, conducted in 2016 with three remote Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders on Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, has been positive but has also varied depending on each community's unique circumstance. Where extreme remoteness is mitigated by proximity to a town (e.g. Mapoon), local involvement in emerging recycling initiatives like the Queensland Containers for Change is easier to coordinate logistically. In highly remote communities (e.g. Lockhart River, Pormpuraaw) these arrangements appear to be significantly more challenging to readily establish. Sustained, targeted investment into local remote capacity and infrastructure to maximise removal of marine debris and recycling of separated municipal waste remains virtually non-existent. Real on-ground investments in both remote local waste infrastructure and developing human capacity is required to maximise new recycling initiatives emerging on Cape York Peninsula and to support reuse enterprises.

Research outputs

Factsheets

- [Remote recycling, rubbish and marine debris management in north Australia needs strong helping hands: summary of Cape York Peninsula community case studies. \(Aug 2018\)](#)

Reports

- [Remote recycling, rubbish and marine debris management in north Australia needs strong helping hands: summary of Cape York Peninsula community case studies.](#)

Project webpage

- [Waste and marine debris in remote northern Australian communities](#)



Ghost nets turned into artwork in Mapoon.



Photo, RAIN Pty Ltd 2016.

Attributions

- Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council
- Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council and Mapoon Land & Sea Rangers
- Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council, Pormpuraaw Land & Sea Management and Pormpuraaw Arts & Culture Centre Inc
- Chullangan Aboriginal Corporation and Yintjingga Aboriginal Corporation
- Alan Wilson, Cook Shire Council
- Heidi Taylor, Tangaroa Blue
- Cape York NRM
- Regional Advisory and Innovation Network (RAIN) Pty Ltd
- North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)