



## RESEARCH PRESENTATION

### **Whaddya mean we eat a credit card a week of plastic? Understanding microplastic loads through a robust citizen science approach**

Michelle Blewitt, AUSMAP

#### **Abstract**

Plastics are a major pollutant of our waterways causing significant harm to wildlife as well as causing social and economic impacts. Microplastics, including fragments, fibres, pellets or beads that are less than 5mm in size, are a significant component of these, however there is limited information on their sources and sinks in Australia. It is therefore imperative to identify how much is out there and where the hotspots are, so targeted abatement strategies can be implemented.

In Australia, however, the extent of knowledge on microplastic loads is very limited. The Australian Microplastic Assessment Project (AUSMAP) is seeking to address this through the creation of a national citizen science program for documenting types and amounts of microplastics on freshwater and marine shores. Launched in mid-2018, AUSMAP is designed to collect scientifically valid data on the prevalence of microplastics in the Australian environment through a practical citizen science methodology that utilises Environmental Education Centres and Marine Discovery Centres, as Regional Hubs for school and community-based activities. Through standardised collection and analysis techniques with rigorous quality control procedures and senior school curriculum material, ideal for middle and senior school students, this world leading program is raising school and community awareness on the issue, while assisting in management.

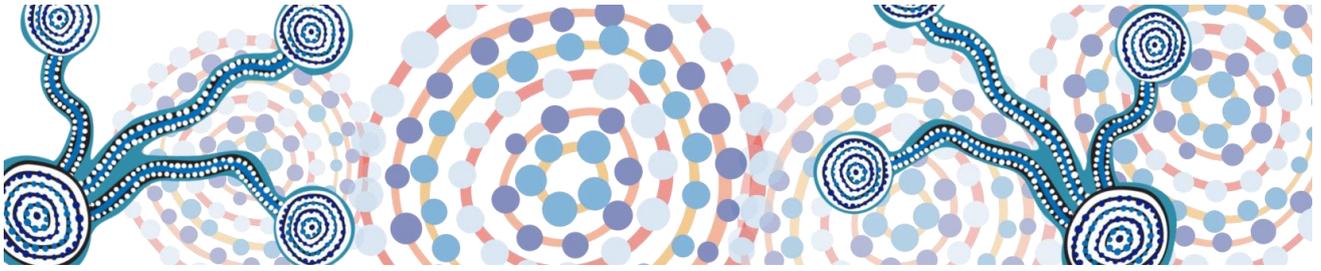
This presentation will provide an update on what monitoring groups have discovered, and how this information is helping to prevent microplastics entering waterways. Discover how you can be involved and the resources available to support educators with hands on learning to monitor and help create a healthier environment.

#### **Speaker Profile**

Michelle, Program Director of AUSMAP - Australian Microplastic Assessment Project, is a Marine Scientist, Adjunct Lecturer in the College of Science and Engineering at Flinders University of South Australia and a Research Associate in the Marine Studies Institute at The University of Sydney, where she continues her research on marine mammals. She is passionate about raising awareness and empowering communities about the issue of marine debris and determined to find innovative ways to research, educate and communicate the impact of debris in the aquatic environment, and designing effective solutions.

#### **Website links**

→ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/michelle-blewitt-711b1137/>



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