

A Cleaner World, thanks to Ian

**Terence Jeyaretnam**

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Over sixty countries have put their hands up to clean up their local environments as part of Clean Up the World week on September 17th to 19th this year. It is an inspirational story. It all began in 1989, after a remarkable, but simple property developer and yachtsman (as he refers to himself) sailed around the world in his yacht, and became concerned about the state of our coastlines. Soon after, he decided to do something about it. Ian Kiernan AO (see inset), or Mr. Clean Up, was shocked and disgusted by the pollution and rubbish that he continually encountered in areas such as the Sargasso Sea in the Caribbean. "Throughout the race, rubbish continually popped up on either side of the bow," Ian recalls.

With help from some of his friends, Ian started Clean Up Sydney Harbour Day in 1989 and received an enormous public response with more than 40,000 locals donating their time and energy to clean up the harbour. Rusted car bodies, plastics of all kinds, glass bottles and cigarette butts were removed by the tonne. The next year Clean Up Australia Day was born. "When 40,000 people answered our first call in 1989.....that response just blew me away", says Ian. Ian and his committee believed that if a capital city could be mobilised into 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 ever since. 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 1992. In its inaugural year, Clean Up the World involved approx. 30 million people in 80 countries. Ten years on, Clean Up the World campaigns are involving millions each year in countries throughout all continents. "Initiatives have included expanding the timeframes for Clean Up the World to encourage communities to adopt projects that require more than a weekend of action", says Ian. And it's producing the results. Just like the Spring clean up at home, we are dusting up the world once a year.

I recently had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Kiernan, and he was eager to spread the message of cleaning up through Engineers Australia. "Work with us on increasing rates of recycling through the use of new and innovative technology, focus on turning what is now considered waste into a resource, and utilise current technology that turns waste into resource", says Ian. If solitary person is able to move mountains (of rubbish), imagine what we can all do for the environment. Clean up, reuse, recycle and reduce waste. And help kerb litter so that Ian can sleep in peace.

[Please include photo of **Mr. Ian Kiernan, AO, Chairman, Clean Up Australia Ltd**]