

Be proud of Ballina, help clean up our beaches

By David Lowe | March 4, 2021 | 0



Cathy Byrne from Ballina Coastcare getting ready for Clean Up Day at Lighthouse Beach. Photo David Lowe.

This Sunday, 7 March, [Ballina Coastcare](#) is inviting everyone who cares about Ballina's environment to Step Up To Clean Up, and join a special event for Clean Up Australia Day.

Ballina Coastcare's Cathy Byrne remembers being part of the very first Clean Up Day when she was working with Brisbane City Council in 1990. She's been involved ever since.

'Clean Up Australia Day's important to me personally, but it was wonderful back then that council got involved in such a massive community activity,' said Ms Byrne.

'These days it's much more community driven, but council can still do a lot to support environmental action. It was disappointing that [Ballina Council] didn't fully support the divestment from fossil fuels the other day, because everything makes a difference.'

What's happening on Sunday?

Cathy Byrne says everyone will be meeting at 8am on the corner behind the North Wall Marine Tower carpark (corner of Lighthouse Parade and Fenwick Drive, East Ballina).

'We're providing bags and gloves, and there'll be a COVID-safe registration sign-on,' she said. 'We'll have groups going along the beach trails, along the beaches, and depending on how many, also along Shaws Bay. Then people will re-group at 10.30 for morning tea, provided by Coastcare.'



Cathy Byrne from Ballina Coastcare with one of the special biodegradable, compostable bags made for Clean Up Australia Day. Photo David Lowe.

There's no need to pre-register, people are invited to 'rock up and register in the morning at 8am. It should be a fun day'.

Special compostable rubbish bags will be provided, but volunteers are asked to bring a water bottle and wear sturdy shoes and hat.

Plastic a growing problem

Ms Byrne said, 'I'm hoping that there's not much rubbish, but there's a lot of plastic on the beach when we've had big tides, so we might get some across the beaches.'

'Plastic rubbish on the beach isn't just an eyesore, it endangers threatened species and can end up in the food chain,' she said. 'We will end up eating our own junk.'

Ms Byrne regularly collects plastic and other rubbish off local beaches, and also liaises with Ballina Seabird Rescue, assisting injured seabirds and turtles.

'Watching the release of rescued and rehabilitated turtles is a wonderful reminder that humans can make a positive impact on the environment,' she said.

'It's sad that so many people still leave rubbish on the beach or in the rivers and waterways. These large pieces of plastic can harm coastal species and will break down into tiny microplastics which are consumed by fish and even some birds.'

Ms Byrne said there would be quite a few smaller groups around Ballina doing clean ups on the day, but she expected Ballina Coastcare's contribution would be significant, with vehicles available to transport volunteers to Black Head and other more distant areas if there were sufficient numbers.

Cathy Byrne will be the safety site supervisor on the day, so if people want more information they can ring her directly on 0408 668 287 or [visit the Ballina Coastcare website](#).

You can also [pre-register or support Clean Up Australia day at this site](#).

For those who prefer a hot breakfast, the Marine Rescue Tower will be cooking until 11am.