

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Plastics pollution highlighted through innovative art/science collaboration at IMAS gallery

Photographs of plastics from the guts of seabirds, beautiful brooches made from ocean debris, amazing watercolour underwater scenes sullied by a red plastic Samurai, fine furniture and sculptures made from timber and rope salvaged from the sea – they will make the public pause and absorb a story of devastating ecological and biological impact.

Vanishing Point, an arts/science collaboration which aims to raise awareness of issues surrounding plastics pollution in the ocean, opens TONIGHT, FRIDAY, MAY 1, in the University of Tasmania's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) Hobart exhibition space.

Initially the brainchild of wildlife artist Katherine Cooper, she has been joined by four other Tasmanian artists: Ron Moss (poetry), Toby Muir-Wilson (woodwork), Sophie Carnell (jewellery) and Peter Walsh (photographer and IMAS Data Manager) in collaboration with Dr Heidi Auman, Dr Patti Virtue and Dr Frederique Olivier, three IMAS scientists who research the impacts of ocean plastics, to create what is hoped will become an expanding and travelling exhibition.

All have a long association with the sea and a shared passion for the creatures that depend on it for their continued survival, and they are determined to raise awareness in the community about the impact of the daily use of plastics and where they end up in the environment.

It is estimated around eight million items of litter enter the marine environment every day. Available information indicates at least 77 species of marine wildlife found in Australian waters and at least 267 marine species worldwide are affected by entanglement in, or ingestion of, marine debris, including 86 per cent of all sea turtles species, 44 per cent of all seabird species and 43 per cent of all marine mammal species.

Each Saturday for the duration of the exhibition the University of Tasmania will also run its IMAS Saturday Public Lecture Series, beginning TOMORROW, May 2, at 11am at the IMAS waterfront building.

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