

BOTTLES FROM THE BASIN COVER LETTER

Introduction

On 8 December 2009 the National Museum of Australia will launch a major international exhibition called *Water: H₂O = Life*. This exhibition, developed by the American Museum of Natural History in New York; USA, with contributions from the National Museum of Australia and others, explores the ways in which water has determined and shaped life on this planet. The exhibition also addresses the issues and challenges facing us when it comes to water management. Water management and the environment are perhaps the greatest single issues confronting nations and communities globally.

Bottles from the Basin: project overview

To coincide with *Water: H₂O = Life*, the National Museum of Australia is undertaking a number of public events and programs. One of these, in partnership with ACT Waterwatch, is an exciting outreach project that invites members of communities along the Murray Darling Basin (MDB) to contribute a water sample from their local river, lake, wetlands or other source together with a water analysis and accompanying words and images.

The information that participants contribute will be plotted on an online map which will show the people and places, the water quality and issues that communities along the MDB are dealing with. Over the course of the exhibition, this map will grow and develop and show visually the important connections from state to territory across Australia's largest water system. The objective is to help reveal the issues we are facing as a nation and recognise some of the people in our communities who are working to resolve them.

The Museum and ACT Waterwatch will coordinate *Bottles from the Basin* and together we will invite people to participate, send out information and instructions, collate all the information and upload the information that participants provide.

The Project: what we invite you to do

If you decide you want to be part of this project then you will receive a 100ml plastic bottle¹ with a unique serial number and a return stamped addressed envelope. We ask you to:

- 1 Take a water sample from your local water resource (eg river, creek, wetlands, lake)
- 2 Undertake an analysis of the water sample and document the results
- 3 Take a digital photo of the place where the sample was taken
- 4 Take a digital photo of the person who took the sample holding the bottle
- 5 Answer the questions on the attached questionnaire

¹ Please note: due to Australia Post regulations plastic bottles will be used for this project.

- 6 Return the bottle to us in the stamped/addressed envelope
- 7 Email the digital photos and the questionnaire to the email address on the questionnaire

The Bottles from the Basin website

We hope to receive replies from many people along the length of the MDB. The information we receive will be plotted on a map of the MDB on the Museum's website. This map will show comparisons of water quality across the MDB and the people and places who took part in the project. The aim of the map is to show that despite state borders, local government jurisdictions and local authorities, the MDB is a natural resource in crisis that needs to be treated as a whole water system.

We also aim to display the bottles themselves at the National Museum in the main Hall during the Summer school holidays so that children in particular who visit the Museum can see the results.

An invitation to you

We hope you find this project an exciting opportunity to be part of a larger community of people who are concerned about the MDB and are prepared to give some of your time and expertise to make it a reality. Please note that we cannot compensate people financially or otherwise to participate and that by participating you are agreeing to have the information you provide published on the National Museum of Australia's website.

We aim to send out information by 31 October 2009 and hope to receive information back from participants by the 30 November 2009.

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