

Friday 17 May 2019

Australian islands home to 414 million pieces of plastic pollution

A survey of plastic pollution on Australia's Cocos (Keeling) Islands has revealed the territory's beaches are littered with an estimated 414 million pieces of plastic debris.

The study led by IMAS researcher Dr Jennifer Lavers and [published in the journal *Scientific Reports*](#) estimated beaches on the Indian Ocean islands are littered with 238 tonnes of plastic, including 977 000 shoes and 373 000 toothbrushes.

Dr Lavers' research made headlines around the world when in May 2017 she revealed that beaches on remote Henderson Island in the South Pacific had the highest density of plastic debris reported anywhere on Earth.

While the density of plastic debris on Cocos (Keeling) Islands beaches is lower than on Henderson Island, the total volume dwarfs the 38 million pieces weighing 17 tonnes found on the Pacific island.

Dr Lavers said remote islands which don't have large human populations depositing rubbish nearby are an indicator of the amount of plastic debris circulating in the world's oceans.

"Islands such as these are like canaries in a coal mine and it's increasingly urgent that we act on the warnings they are giving us," Dr Lavers said.

"Plastic pollution is a global issue, and it's a problem that we need to address."

