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MEDIA RELEASE

326 million people make a difference

A record breaking 326 million people worldwide are estimated to have participated in 2020's Plastic Free July challenge, with over 300,000 people who took part in the global challenge to reduce single-use plastic participating from their homes in Western Australia.

Founded by Perth local, Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, and now in its 10th year, the Plastic Free July challenge seeks to address the most critical solution to the plastic pollution problem - avoidance, given reducing plastic consumption is significantly more efficient than trying to remove plastic waste from the environment.

Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, who is also one of the world's leading plastic waste experts, says the monumental figures reflect the global population's desire to be part of the solution and avoid landfill waste and lower the risk of plastic polluting the environment.

"Given the use of some single-use plastic for many takeaway items and for health care has increased this year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were concerned that fewer people would register for this year's challenge," says Ms Prince Ruiz.

"But from families in Perth to a plastic-free picnic in Scotland, dive clean-ups in Sydney harbour and an elephant park in Laos, from community groups in Hungary to Campus Action Camps in the USA, people around the world have shown they want to make a difference by participating in Plastic Free July.

"This collective effort has involved global citizens remembering to use reusables, finding alternatives to single-use plastic, learning new skills, having conversations and sharing the challenge in their community

"It's fitting that, in this, our 10th year of the campaign, more people than ever before have chosen to be part of the plastic solution by signing up, getting involved and ultimately contributing to creating cleaner streets, oceans, and a cleaner, healthier planet."

As part of its 10-year anniversary, the Plastic Free July challenge had a goal to exceed last year's record and avoid over a billion kilos of plastic waste worldwide reaching landfill.

"Research shows us that the majority of challenge participants start by choosing to refuse at least one single-use plastic, but nine out of 10 participants end up creating long-term habits that last far beyond the challenge itself," adds Ms Prince Ruiz.

"Plastic Free July isn't about drastic lifestyle change, it's about being more conscious of the single-use plastics that are used day-to-day, and swapping them for better choices, such as switching to bar soap, or avoiding plastic packaging when purchasing vegetables."

During July and in fact throughout the year, Plastic Free July provides resources to schools, community groups and local organisations to empower change locally. The campaign also supports businesses to move away from the concept of 'take, make and throw away', towards a circular economy that promotes recycling and the re-use of materials.

The campaign was a finalist in the Banksia Sustainability Awards, and recognised for its contribution to the United Nations' global sustainability goals to protect the planet.

More can be learnt about the Plastic Free July movement here: www.plasticfreejuly.org.

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Media contact: For media enquiries please email media@plasticfreejuly.org with your country in the subject line.

Additional information

About Plastic Free July challenge

Plastic Free July is designed to help people refuse single-use plastic and improve recycling practices. The challenge continues to drive positive change through simple solutions that help communities live more sustainably for example using reusable cups, water bottles and plastic bags, and refusing to buy produce wrapped in plastic.

From humble beginnings in 2011, the award-winning Plastic Free July campaign is the result of years of hard work. Started by Rebecca Prince-Ruiz and a small team in local government in Western Australia, and is now one of the most influential environmental campaigns in the world. Millions of people across the globe take part every year, with many committing to plastic reduction far beyond the month of July.

On a larger scale, Plastic Free July challenge aims to kick-start long-lasting solutions and influence business and governments to take action to:

- **Improve recycling:** Follow local recycling guides and put items in the right bin. Petition governments to require businesses to use recycled plastic in their products and packaging.
- **Embrace a circular economy:** Encourage businesses and organisations to move away from the concept of 'take, make and throw away', towards a circular economy that promotes recycling and the reuse of materials.
- **Extended producer responsibility (EPR):** Push businesses to own the product management lifecycle. This involves producers considering the end-of-life of the products they sell, and making it easy for customers to dispose of products thoughtfully. Container deposit schemes are a good example of this – they reduce beverage container litter by an average of 40% and increase recycling too.

About Plastic Free Foundation

The Plastic Free Foundation is a global not-for-profit organisation which delivers the annual Plastic Free July challenge and works with communities to achieve a world without plastic waste.

The Foundation was established in 2017 by Rebecca Prince-Ruiz and operates across the globe. The Foundation is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC) and the Charities Aid Foundation of America (CAF). As a registered not-for-profit, donations will help the Foundation to continue to help millions of people and organisations across the world make change.

The Plastic Free Foundation's Executive Director, Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, is available for speaking opportunities at events or conferences.

References

['Plastic Free: The Inspiring Story of a Global Environmental Movement and Why It Matters'](#)

[Rebecca Prince-Ruiz, Joanna Atherfold Finn. July 2020, NewSouth Books.](#)