

Environmental Citizen of the Year Award

Community volunteer Dr Swapan Paul was given the inaugural Environmental Citizen 2018 Award by the City of Parramatta council. This award was given on the evening of Friday, the 8th of June 2018, at a ceremony and dinner organised by the Council. Mayor Clr Andrew Wilson handed in the award, which was attended by environment volunteers, leaders, organisers and champions. Among others were present the ABC TV's Impact Producer of the 'War on Waste' program Andy Marks, the CEO of the 'Youth Food Movement' Thea Soutar and the CEO of the 'Take 3' movement Tim Silverwood.

This inaugural award has been introduced by the Council with a view to encouraging and acknowledging the contributions that the local champions have been making in achieving the overall sustainability goals that the Council wishes to attain on its LGA. The Council's target is to also reach those goals in partnership and collaboration with the members of the community. It is hoped that this award will continue in the years to come. The overarching occasion was the celebration of the World Environment Day (5th June each year).

Dr Paul received the award for his exemplary contributions in the participation and organising of the Clean-up Australia Day events over the past 20 years; without missing a single year! The Clean-up Australia Day comes on the first Sunday of every March and Dr Paul himself volunteered in excess of 80 hours. Over the years, up to 26 volunteers joined him on a single Clean-up day. This year (http://bangla-sydney.com/view_item.asp?url=ben-clean-up-aus-day-2018), 26 of them joined the Clean-up in Bicentennial Park and picked 75 bags of plastics that would have otherwise flown in to our rivers and oceans. The real fear is, if nothing is done about it, by the year 2050, the oceans will have more pieces of plastics than the number of fishes! Swapan Paul would like to take this opportunity to extend his sincere thanks and gratitude to all those volunteers who have helped in the Clean-up Australia Day events. His target is to reach 50 volunteers in 2021, in the year of the 50th independence of Bangladesh! He sincerely hopes that this award and recognition will inspire more volunteers to come forward in doing their bits for the environment.

He organises Clean-up mainly under the banner of Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN); an international forum that helps protecting and conserving the environment of Bangladesh (<http://ben-global.net/ben-australia/>). BEN Australia, including the groups in Canberra and Melbourne, also participates in the environmental awareness and on-the-ground actions in Australia, where and when possible.

This award is particularly significant because this year in July BEN is celebrating its 20th year of foundation. The main celebrations will be in New York (BEN Global HQ), however, BEN Australia is also planning for an event. Please keep tuned for this; alternatively contact Dr Swapan Paul (swapanil@yahoo.com), Kamrul Ahsan Khan (kamrulk@gamil.com) or Dr Debashish Mazumder (debamaz@gmail.com), if you would like to get involved.