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Australian to swim Pacific in bid to highlight pollution

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AFP, SYDNEY
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An Australian filmmaker plans to swim across the Pacific Ocean from Japan to the US in a giant plastic bottle, plowing through a huge floating garbage dump to highlight marine pollution.

Richard Pain said he realized that swimming 9,000km from Japan to California was “completely mad,” but said he hoped it inspired others to think more about the environment.

“If I can do something this crazy, everybody else can do something,” he said on Friday. “Whether it’s recycle, reuse, rethink, stop using single use plastics ... just change their behavior in some simple way.”

Pain, 45, plans to swim in a giant recycled plastic water bottle made out of thousands of smaller plastic water bottles. The structure, which he said is under design, is intended to protect him from the hazards of the ocean.

“All the small bottles will be in the shape of one big bottle,” he said. “I’m trying to create the iconic media image ... a man swimming in the middle of the Pacific Ocean inside a giant plastic water bottle.”

Pain said his journey would take him through what is known as the North Pacific Gyre or the Great Pacific Garbage Patch — an area twice the size of Texas full of plastic garbage to a depth of about 6m.

Because of four competing ocean currents that operate in a clockwise direction, the garbage thrown off ships and blown off land has accumulated in a becalmed area in the center, posing risks to birds and marine life.

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