

Climate change and the Reef: Children's art competition

Summary

In 2009 and 2010, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority joined with the Wet Tropics Management Authority and other partners to run a climate change education campaign based around a children's art competition. Using the themes of *Keep It Cool* and *Keep It Wild*, children were asked to create posters about protecting the reef and rainforest from climate change, and to highlight simple actions people can take to improve environmental resilience. The winning entries were exhibited in the Cairns Regional Gallery and were featured in annual calendars distributed to the community. The campaign successfully reinforced the connection between climate change and the well-being of the reef and rainforest, and encouraged the regional community to take action to protect these World Heritage icons.

Background

The region of Far North Queensland between Townsville and Cooktown has been identified as one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change in Australia. It is also one of the few places on earth where two World Heritage areas – the Wet Tropics forests and the Great Barrier Reef – lie side by side. The Wet Tropics Management Authority and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority undertook a public awareness campaign to raise local knowledge about the vulnerability of the reef and rainforest to climate change, and to motivate behavioural change to reduce human impacts on these endangered ecosystems. A children's poster competition, art exhibition and the production of a calendar were used to engage the

regional community. The aim was to provide simple messages developed locally that would be easily understood and embraced by regional communities.

Objectives

- To provide the community with messages about the value of reef and rainforest resilience and the need for community level actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and care for the environment (support resilience to climate change).
- To demonstrate to children that their contribution and ideas for solutions are valued and respected.
- To help motivate the community to take personal actions to mitigate climate change and to look after the Reef and rainforest.
- To maintain and build engagement with key regional stakeholders including government, education, tourism and media industries.



All artwork is from the Keep it Wild calendar

Project name: Keep it Wild
Outcomes: C2.2, D1.3 & D2.3
Year: 2009-2010;
Bulletin type: Final

Actions

The *Keep It Wild* initiative was launched on World Environment Day, 5 June 2009. The campaign targeted primary and secondary school

students from Townsville to Cooktown, and asked them to consider "how climate change will affect our reef and rainforest, and how you can help to keep them great". The competition was promoted in *The Cairns Post*, *The Townsville Bulletin* and through fliers distributed to over 100 regional schools in the Townsville, Cassowary Coast, Tablelands, Cairns and Port Douglas areas. Students were challenged to gain knowledge and to think about the impacts and implications of climate change as well as possible methods they can use to reduce their individual climate footprints.

Outputs

Over 250 competition entries were received in 2009 and 350 entries were received in 2010. The shortlisted entries were displayed in August and September in the Cairns Regional Art Gallery as part of the city's *Festival Cairns* celebrations. An estimated 2 000 people visited the gallery during each exhibition period. Winners were announced at the exhibition opening and in *The Cairns Post*, with a number of class and individual prizes donated by reef and rainforest tourism sponsors. Following each exhibition, a 2010 and a new 2011 calendar were produced and 3 000 were distributed to key stakeholders including politicians, catchment groups, government agencies and regional visitor centres. Each page of the calendar focused on "calls to action" for readers to reduce oil spills, carbon emissions, fertiliser and pesticide use, fishing impacts, water use and pollution.



The calendars featured artwork from school children of a variety of ages

Outcomes

The target audience for the exhibitions and calendars included students, school communities, *Festival Cairns* patrons, key stakeholders who received calendars and the broader community. Feedback so far has highlighted that the competition was well received by schools and teachers, and stocks of calendars were very quickly depleted. Following the 2009 campaign, partners and sponsors were keen to collaborate in 2010. It is hoped that throughout 2011, as people use the calendar they gain a greater understanding of the implications of climate change and the need for actions to reduce its impact on the reef and rainforest.



Future directions

Partners are investigating a more regional approach to the campaign in 2011 by harnessing existing relationships with the Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Hinchinbrook and Tablelands Regional Councils to assist in hosting events and helping to engage their communities in climate change activities.

Project partners are also planning to build on the relationship with *Festival Cairns* in 2011. Discussions have begun with the Festival Director regarding reef and rainforest themed activities and events. The festival offers an opportunity to reach a broad demographic with climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

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