

SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral

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Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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Traditional Owners celebrate culture and conservation



State Member for Keppel Paul Hoolihan, GBRMPA's John Tanzer and Woppaburra Traditional Owner Bob Muir

Woppaburra Traditional Owners came together recently to celebrate the first accredited Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) in the southern Great Barrier Reef.

The agreement, which applies to Dharumbal sea country around the Keppel Group of islands near Yeppoon, is specifically designed to ensure traditional use is ecologically-sustainable while still meeting Indigenous aspirations.

The Woppaburra, which in traditional language means 'island people', worked to develop the agreement over the past year.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Executive Director John Tanzer said the agreements were a great example of how Traditional Owner groups and government agencies can work together in the use, conservation and management of marine resources.

"Today is a celebration of the achievements and commitment made by the Woppaburra in developing their very own Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement following its accreditation by the Authority Board and the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency," he said.

"The fact it was simultaneously accredited by both agencies is in itself important."

Bob Muir, representing the Woppaburra Traditional Owners, said it was great to have this occasion to celebrate this historic event.

"Having the agreement accredited by government acknowledges Traditional Owners and their aspirations to be involved in sea country management," he said.

The Woppaburra worked to develop the agreement over the past year and is accredited until 21 June 2010. It will ensure cultural practices continue to co-exist with the conservation and management of the Great Barrier Reef.

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Message from the Chairman



The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is looking forward to working closely with the community in coming months as we undertake a number of projects aimed at understanding the past, present and future of the Great Barrier Reef.

There is no doubt that to protect and manage the Reef for the future we need to work cooperatively and in partnership with all levels of government, industry and most importantly the community - from the Prime Minister of Australia to the occasional recreational snorkeller or fisherman.

Our team will be working with all sectors of the community during the year to collect information as part of our oral history project entitled "Reef Recollections". This is the first time GBRMPA has undertaken a project of this kind and we hope it will help us to create a picture of how you see the Reef. This project will also feed in to the preparation of the first Outlook Report for the Great Barrier Reef.

The Outlook Report is a significant undertaking and will be a major focus for us over the next two years. Workshops will be held in coming months where you will have an opportunity to share your views of how the Reef used to be, how you see it today and what you think it might look like in the future. I encourage anyone with an interest in the Reef to become involved and attend the regional workshops.

2008 is the International Year of the Reef, an initiative to continue the global focus of the importance of coral reefs and related ecosystems to the well-being of the planet. Our major focus for 2008 continues to be building the Reef's resilience in the face of climate change. July 2008 will see the implementation of the Federal Government's Reef Rescue Package and the GBRMPA will continue our work with governments, stakeholders, community groups and in particular Natural Resource Management bodies

to improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

With just a quick look back at 2007, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the 30 Reef Guardian Schools who shared in \$20 000 of prize money for their environmental efforts and initiatives throughout last year.

I look forward to an exciting year ahead and to working with you all to protect and enjoy our Reef for many years to come.

Regards

Russell Reichelt
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
Authority

Meet the Authority's new Chairman

Russell Reichelt has joined the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority after a 30-year career spanning roles in scientific research and management, industry and policy development and lead roles in two national statutory authorities.

He has spent the last 10 of those years contributing at national and international levels to Australian Government initiatives in ocean governance, fisheries policy and management, state of the environment reporting, science policy and management.

Russell is currently a board member of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and has chaired the National Oceans Advisory Group since 1999. He is also a board member of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation and the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre.

He has held varied private sector roles including Director and Chairman of a seafood exporting

company and Director of a biosensor technology company.

Awarded the Australian Centenary Medal in 2004 and the North Queenslander of the Year 2004, Russell has been recognised for his role in forging strong links between business, community, Indigenous groups and research institutions.

Russell served as the Chairman of Australia's Fisheries Research and Development Corporation from 1995-2001 as well as CEO at the Australian Institute of Marine Science and Chief Fisheries Research Scientist for the Bureau of Resource Sciences.

His work as CEO of the CRC Reef Research Centre and the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, as well as the past five years serving as Chairman on the Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee means he is ideally placed to bring contemporary understanding and leadership to the Authority.



Russell Reichelt

Reefs named in honour of marine park pioneers

A reef in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has been named in honour of marine park pioneer David Perkins in recognition of his commitment and dedication to the conservation of marine species and ecosystems.

David spent thirty-five years working in marine park management with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service before passing away unexpectedly last year.

A key figure during the early days of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Mr Perkins was instrumental in laying the foundations for the day-to-day management arrangements for the Great Barrier Reef.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Chairman Russell Reichelt said David was a highly respected expert in marine parks management and naming a reef in his honour was a fitting gesture.

"David was a driving force behind the protection of the Great Barrier Reef and worked tirelessly in the arena for thirty-five years," Russell said.

Another Reef has been named after iconic Capricornia fisherman and surveyor Wally Muller in

recognition of his passion for exploring the Great Barrier Reef.

Russell said Wally was a real local personality with a passion for the local Capricorn Coast waters.

"Throughout his life Wally was a keen recreational fisherman and was, in fact, the first person to commercially fish on the Swains Reef.

"He also spent years surveying reefs off the Capricorn Coast including navigating the Surveyor General's ship to map all of the Swains Reef.

"Wally was known for naming many of the local reefs so it is only fitting that there is now a Mullers Reef named after Wally himself."

Both reefs are in the Swains section of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Two other reefs have also been named in honour of people who have contributed to the knowledge of the Great Barrier Reef: Callum Shoal – In honour of cartographer Callum Brown and Peter Reef – In honour of Lieutenant Commander Peter Robert Jackson, Royal Australian Navy.

Commercial fisher caught repeatedly trawling in Green Zone

In the Cairns Magistrates Court late last year, a skipper from a commercial trawling vessel underwent sentencing for illegally trawling in protected areas of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The Skipper pleaded guilty to trawling in a Marine National Park (Green) Zone and Habitat Protection Zone (Dark Blue) in October 2006.

In sentencing the Skipper the Cairns Magistrates Court ordered the offender to pay a fine of \$40,000 for fishing contrary to the Marine Park Zoning Plan.

Chairman of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Russell Reichelt said that breaching zoning regulations is a serious matter.

"Illegal bottom trawling in protected areas undermines the ecologically sustainable status of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park," said Russell.

"It reduces the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef's natural systems and has major impacts on the seabed, the communities of plants and animals that live there and the fish stocks that depend on them.

"Such illegal activity cheats those people who conduct commercial or recreational fishing in an honest manner.

"Zoning is helping to protect plants and animals and build the resilience of the Great Barrier Reef, which is important in the face of threats like climate change and declining water quality," he said.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is involved in regular vessel and aircraft patrols to detect illegal activities including fishing in no-take zones, pollution and shipping offences.

"Commercial trawl fishing is monitored very closely by the Authority's Compliance Unit. When trawling in closed areas is suspected, significant resources are allocated to gather any evidence of illegal trawl," said Russell.



Wally Muller - Image courtesy of John Harding



David Perkins

Dedicated conservationists win Cassowary Awards

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) recently announced the 2007 Cassowary Award winners for those community members dedicated to conserving the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

WTMA board director Tom Gilmore said the Cassowary Awards are our chance to give a pat on the back and heartfelt thanks to the Wet Tropics Community.

"Their passion, knowledge and hard work are the backbone of World Heritage conservation and we couldn't do it without them," Tom said.

Two of the winners, Tim Anderson and Bruce Corcoran, are members of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee and received awards for their outstanding contribution to conserving the local World Heritage Area.

Tim won the Unsung Hero award for being the visionary behind the Barron Green Corridor Project to

rejuvenate the banks of the mighty Barron River while Bruce won the Community Conservation award for his work in sustainable farming practices and rehabilitating the Mulgrave River catchment.



Bruce Corcoran with Tom Gilmore



Tim Anderson with Tom Gilmore

Local hero awarded for Coastcare

Whitsunday Local Marine Advisory Committee Chairman Tony Fontes and his wife Beverly have been awarded a Coastcare Local Hero medal for their work with the Order of Underwater Coral Heroes (OUCH).

Tony said it was fantastic to receive the award.

"It is a privilege and honour to receive it and we really appreciate it," he said.

"We have been working very hard and this award is for all of the OUCH volunteers, not just myself and Beverley."

OUCH is a group of volunteers dedicated to the protection of coral reefs in the Whitsundays.

They are currently involved in four major projects including the Reef Protection Program, seagrass surveys, mangrove monitoring and community education.

"This award will raise awareness of our group, our projects and the need to better protect our natural resources," Tony said.

The awards were handed out as part of Coastcare Week to exceptional local heroes for their tireless work in protecting local coastal environments.



Beverly and Tony Fontes with their Local Hero medal



Reef Guardian Council news

Congratulations to Townsville City Council, for winning North Queensland's Cleanest Beach 2007 Award. The Strand recently won the title of Cleanest North Queensland Beach at the regional awards for Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland's Clean Beach Challenge 2007.

The Clean Beach Challenge is a fun, competitive programme to help keep Queensland's beaches litter free,

and to encourage local governments and their communities to work together.

Run by Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland the competition challenges Queensland's coastal communities to prove they have the State's cleanest beach. For more information see: www.keepaustraliabeautiful.org.au

The judge's noted that the Strand is in every way impressive, clean and welcoming and its many thousands of local and visiting users pay daily testimony to its success and popularity.



The award winning Strand

Aquarium collectors' **world first** climate change initiative

Licensed Queensland aquarium fish collectors have moved to save 'Nemo' from the ravages of climate change by calling a moratorium on collection of the tomato clownfish in the Keppel region, which has suffered coral bleaching events in recent years.

"The moratorium is a precautionary measure by industry to allow habitats, affected by bleaching, the best chance to recover," says Lyle Squire, president of Pro-vision Reef, adding "the measure compliments our industry Code of Conduct which details strategies to meet the challenges of global climate change across our entire fishery."

Pro-vision Reef is an association of licensed aquarium fish and coral collectors whose mission is to engender community and market confidence in the industry through demonstration of the highest standards of operational efficiency and environmental performance. Membership accounts for more than 80 per cent of landed product in the aquarium fisheries on the Great Barrier Reef.

The Keppel region has experienced several coral bleaching events affecting some shallow reef areas including those that are frequented by snorkel tours and some within Green Zones. Licensed aquarium fish collectors have operated in the area

for more than 30 years and believe that all users of the marine environment have an obligation to work responsibly.

"Our environment is increasingly susceptible to natural events linked to climate change, including coral bleaching, cyclones and coastal flooding. Our Code of Conduct details strategies to minimise stress on stressed environments," says Mr Squire.

An important feature of the moratorium is the intensive gathering of population data, regarding all species of clownfish and anemone, which will be voluntarily undertaken by the licensed operators.

"Under the moratorium, collectors will not collect shallow water clownfish or their anemone habitat and will not collect any clowns or anemones at three popular snorkel sites," added Mr Squire.

Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) Acting General Manager, Fisheries Resource Management Dr Brigid Kerrigan applauds the industry's commitment and co-operative approach to promoting ecological sustainability.

"This strategy is an important step towards effective co-management of this small but economically valuable fishery. DPI&F will continue to work



with the industry to achieve the best outcomes for sustainability and economic productivity."

Bruce Wallner, Director of the Fisheries Issues Group at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority commended the initiative.

"The moratorium is a proactive step by industry and forms part of a wider industry strategy to adapt to the effects of climate change. Such an initiative is probably a world first in addressing this growing problem. Importantly, data gathered under the initiative will be independently validated and will underpin future management decisions," he explains.

David Windsor, Executive Director of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators says his organisation supports any measure that protects the Great Barrier Reef and congratulates aquarium collectors on this important initiative.

Top accolade for Great Barrier Reef tourism partnership

An innovative sustainable tourism partnership helping protect the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park scooped another top accolade late last year.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) received the Public Sector Management Award in the 2007 Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF) Corporate Leadership Awards.

The peak body for the tourism, transport and infrastructure sectors recognised GBRMPA for its robust sustainable partnership with the tourism industry and Queensland coastal communities.



GBRMPA Tourism and Recreation Director Lisha Mulqueeny said the award was recognition of the outstanding commitment of the partners in achieving environmental sustainability on the Great Barrier Reef.

"We're proud of our close partnership with the tourism industry and community and that this partnership has been recognised for its role in fostering sustainable tourism in the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef," she said.

"This natural treasure belongs to all of us and we all have a role to play in protecting it for the future.

"The effectiveness of management arrangements is closely linked to the effectiveness of the partnership with the tourism industry and the community."

The award recognises the Authority's work involving industry and the community in policy development, rewarding high standard tourism operations and involving industry in monitoring reef health.

Eyes wide open for the odd and unusual

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park tourism operators and crew, out on the reef every day, are in an excellent position to observe and record interesting and unusual wildlife sightings and natural phenomenon in the Marine Park.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Director of Tourism and Recreation, Lisha Mulqueeny, said this is valuable information and can help managers and researchers better understand the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef.

"The Sightings Network is an innovative tool that allows tourism operators, researchers and managers to work in partnership to increase understanding of the Marine Park and its values," Lisha said.

The Sightings Network, developed by the GBRMPA and trialled with tourism operators and crew in June 2007, has resulted in hundreds of sightings sheets being returned. These have included sightings of pilot whales, hammerhead sharks, olive sea snakes and spinner dolphins, natural events such as coral spawning, and unusual inter-species interactions, such as a sailfish being chased by grey reef whaler sharks!

This information is being incorporated into research,

management and education programmes.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the dedicated crew members who have already provided us with sighting sheets – and we encourage everyone out on the Reef to get involved," Lisha said.

For more information on the Sightings Network, contact Fiona Merida in the Tourism and Recreation Group on (07) 4750 0788.



One of the many unusual sightings - an olive sea snake

Staff create a sea of pink to raise awareness of breast cancer

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) staff recently turned the Townsville Cultural Centre pink in a bid to raise money and awareness of breast cancer.

Coinciding with Breast Cancer Week at the end of October, GBRMPA staff raised a total of \$4600 with proceeds going to the National Breast Cancer Foundation and the Queensland Cancer Council.

The money was raised through staff selling raffle tickets and holding a PINK morning tea, as well as BHP Billiton donating \$1000.

GBRMPA staff member and event organiser Jane McAuliffe said most people know someone that is or has been affected by breast cancer.

"This is a fantastic opportunity to help raise awareness of and help find a cure for breast cancer, which affects 13 000 Australian women each year," she said.

"Organisations such as the National Breast Cancer Foundation have done a great job in raising awareness about older women developing breast cancer.

"But it's now time to get the word out there that young women also get

breast cancer and men, although not as common, can also develop the disease.

"It is quite often the case that if a young woman is diagnosed with breast cancer it is an aggressive form of the disease and therefore early detection is key to survival. Women of all ages (and men) should be doing self-examinations once a month.

"We've had wonderful support from staff at the GBRMPA, Cultural Centre and Museum of Tropical Queensland.

"The community and local business have been incredibly generous in getting onboard with the event and assisting us through donations."



Part of the Pink Morning Tea organising committee



Dominique Casley and Jane McAuliffe enjoy the morning tea

Predicted cooler sea temperatures good news for corals

Lower than average sea temperatures projected for the summer could provide a reprieve for corals on the Great Barrier Reef.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Climate Change Group Director Dr Paul Marshall said the best weather and climate information currently available indicated that it was unlikely the Great Barrier Reef would suffer this year from the type of widespread bleaching experienced in 1998 and 2002, the two hottest summers on record.

"Australia is now in a La-Niña cycle so we are currently experiencing lower than average ocean temperatures which are a welcome relief.

"There are a few localised warm patches in northern areas which have lead to some minor bleaching, but nothing too worrying. We will be keeping a close eye on conditions up north over the coming weeks," Paul said.

The risk of sea temperatures increasing to levels which are stressful for corals depends on a complex interaction of regional water temperatures, local air temperatures, cloud cover, winds and rainfall.

Increasing summer temperatures associated with climate change

remain a concern for corals in the future.

While the threat of mass bleaching this year is low, the GBRMPA will continue to closely monitor sea surface temperatures and weather conditions using state-of-the art technology including climate models, reef-based weather stations, and a satellite-based monitoring tool called ReefTemp designed to assess the risk of bleaching on a daily basis.

Coral bleaching is also monitored throughout the summer by a network of observers participating in GBRMPA's community-based 'BleachWatch' programme where volunteer observers report signs of coral bleaching.

"This wide network of observers provides information on coral conditions throughout the Great Barrier Reef and works to alert us of any signs of coral bleaching," he said.

"So far this summer, BleachWatch observers have reported some slight paling of corals."

If you have seen bleaching on the reef you can download and submit BleachWatch monitoring forms from the GBRMPA website www.gbrmpa.gov.au



A healthy and vibrant reef

Reef protection against climate change receives a boost

The future of the Great Barrier Reef has received a boost with the development of a new climate change certification module for tourism operators.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is one of two major partners, along with the South Australian Tourism Commission, supporting the development of a Climate Change Certification Module, which will ensure operators take actions to reduce their climate change footprint.

GBRMPA Tourism and Recreation Director Lisha Mulqueeny said that the certification module for tourism operators will be a great way to

provide operators with practical knowledge on how to assist in building the Reef's resilience against climate change.

"This is an innovative opportunity to provide tourism operators with practical approaches they can take to reduce their effect on the Great Barrier Reef," she said.

"The Climate Change Certification Module will be targeted at all operators in the marine tourism industry including accommodation, tours, attractions, transport and other services and will guide operators on how to reduce their ecological footprint within their operations.

"Through this module tourism operators will learn how they can offset and minimise the effects their activities have on the Great Barrier Reef. For example they will learn how to reduce their carbon emissions through design, equipment and changes in their operational practices," Lisha said.

The new climate change certification module will enhance the GBRMPA's existing High Standard Tourism Programme, which ensures best practice in improving both tourism standards and protected area conservation.





Schools rewarded for protecting the Great Barrier Reef

Thirty schools from across Queensland have been recognised for their environmental efforts to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Reef Guardian Schools Programme Manager, Megan Sperring, said the schools were chosen from more than 130 Reef Guardian Schools and were being recognised for creativity and for demonstrating a strong commitment to safeguarding the Reef.

"All Reef Guardian Schools make an outstanding contribution towards protecting, preserving and understanding the Great Barrier Reef and are helping our organisation to achieve these important environmental goals.

"We are very pleased to recognise the many teachers, students, schools and communities who have made this programme so successful," she said.

Megan said the winning schools showed outstanding commitment to Reef Guardianship.

"It is amazing to see the sheer volume of great, innovative work schools are doing to help protect the Reef."

The winners each received \$1000 to go towards Reef Guardian activities in 2008. A further 20 schools received 'Ripples of Change' support funding of \$500 each.



Cannonvale State School students have adopted their local beach area

Winning schools

Reef Guardian Champions Award
for mentoring or facilitating higher learning

Hambledon State School

Hambledon State School were recognised for their work in mentoring other schools. Two Cairns primary schools were invited to Hambledon to learn about alternative energy from the school's 'Energy Trailer' – a travelling display used to promote awareness of energy conservation. In addition, they painted another mural in their community promoting the importance of the Reef.

Sea 'Stars' Award

for youth directed and owned activities

Wondai State School

Wondai students have taken environmental initiatives into their own hands with the 'Rocking Frogs', 'Rocking Tadpoles' and 'Best in Business' environmental groups. The latest is 'Boss Gardeners', a group that plants and cares for the school's vegetable garden. The students were recognised with the Sea 'Star' Award for their initiative, dedication and commitment to protecting the Reef.

Waste Watchers Award

for reducing, reusing and recycling
Taranganba State School

Taranganba State School's recycling programme saw them take out the Waste Watchers Award for initiatives including aluminium can recycling, recycling ink cartridges, worm farms, chooks and ducks that eat food scraps, wetlands week, permaculture garden, clean up days, litter excursions to clean up local beaches and a water wise programme with Livingstone Shire Council.

Water Warriors Award

for water conservation or water quality improvement

Woree State School

The 'Woree Sustainability Warriors' are keeping staff and students at Woree State School on the ball when it comes to their water conservation initiatives. They have installed water saving devices on water taps, set up rainwater tanks, developed stormwater management systems, built waterless urinals and installed rubbish traps on their stormwater drains to prevent litter from making its way into the local creek and Great Barrier Reef.



Hambledon State School students have some fun while working



St Patrick's College students and teachers accept their cheque from GBRMPA's David Osborn and Megan Sperring

Learning Legends Award

for outstanding education in the classroom arena

Cannonvale State School

Cannonvale State School received their award for greening up their curriculum. They have integrated the Reef Guardian programme into all year levels and incorporated environmental education into every class.

Action and Adventures Award

for action in the field

Townsville Central State School

Townsville Central State School students' action in the field saw them undertake a wetlands catchment adventure to learn first hand about the connectedness of local waterways and the impact of land-based practices on the Reef. The project culminated in canoe trips down Ross and Stuart Creeks where students collected water samples.

Community Connection Award

for reaching out to your local community

St Patrick's College

The students from St Patrick's College used the media to educate the community on best environmental practices. They produced a series of community announcements on ABC radio where they performed songs to encourage water conservation and litter prevention. The students also shared their messages through an appearance on a Nickelodeon special on climate change.

Habitat Heroes Award

for outstanding improvement in your local environment

Aloomba State School

Aloomba State School have dramatically improved their surrounding environment by eradicating more than 2549 invasive fish as part of the school's Tilapia Terminators Fishing Challenge. They also designed t-shirts and hats with conservation messages about invasive species.

'r-Amp It Down' Award

for reducing your ecological footprint through energy conservation

Kalkie State School

Kalkie State School were recognised for their 'Go Green, Flick the switch' campaign. The students participated in initiatives such as the use of energy monitors, a buddy-pair of a year seven and year two student who conduct daily surveys and leave calling cards to remind others to 'flick the switch'.

Bright Sparks Award

for creativeness, inventiveness and innovations

St Francis Catholic Primary School Tannum Sands

The 'Bright Sparks' at St Francis Catholic Primary School have worked closely with their community and in particular the local Indigenous group, the Gooreng Gooreng. Together they have developed an environmental walk and incorporated local Indigenous knowledge about the environment into their education. The students have also implemented a stormwater recovery and reuse strategy.

Winners of the "Ripples of Change" support funding

Innisfail State High School
for energy conservation
buddy-programme

Cairns State High School
for environmentally friendly litter bins

Emerald State High School for water and energy conservation
community education programmes

Heatley Secondary College
for monitoring local creeks

Wonga Beach State School
for a fishing camp

Wartburg State School
for community education

Kelso State School
for environmental monitoring and community engagement

Clare State School
for nets and water testing kits to establish a barramundi aquaculture facility

Seaforth State School
for a worm farm and composting area

Edge Hill State School
for an environmental interpretive centre

East Palmerston State School
for community education and interpretive signage

Tin Can Bay State School
for community education and interpretive signage

St Colman's School
for expansion of the gardening club, composting and worm farms

Beaconsfield State School
for Bedford Road paddock, Sandfly Creek and Turtlewatch projects

Gympie State High School
for Tozer Oval – stage 2 – fencing, mulching and mapping

Whitsundays PCYC
for community environmental awareness campaign

The Hall State School
for an improved recycling area, chicken pen and mosaic made of non-recyclable materials

Willows State School
for a Global Warming Warriors project

Burdekin Christian College
for a water testing kit

St Francis Xavier's School
for a sustainable garden and promotion

Minty still making a difference

Minty will still contribute to the plight of turtles, despite his death last September, through the sale of limited edition Minty turtle toys.

From the sale of each of the fluffy white toy turtles five per cent of the purchase price will go towards Reef HQ Aquarium's Turtle Rehabilitation Centre.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Acting Director Communication and Education Fred Nucifora said the production of the commemorative toys was a fantastic way to honour the much-loved turtle.

"Minty touched the hearts and minds of not only our staff but the people of the Thuringowa and Townsville community so it only makes sense that we would honour him in this way," he said.

"While only with the aquarium for 18 months Minty provided an outstanding opportunity to raise the plight of the green sea turtle.

"Local, national and international visitors were attracted to the aquarium because of Minty's uniqueness, which contributed to increased awareness and education about the vulnerability of the green sea turtle species and the need for their protection," said Fred.

Minty, the white turtle was found as a hatchling by Turtle Watch Volunteers at Black's Beach in Mackay.

The turtle arrived at Reef HQ Aquarium at just one day old and lived in the aquarium for 18 months.

Minty was a green sea turtle with a rare genetic condition called leucism, which made it appear white.



Tegan Merry with the new Minty turtle toys

Arty party in Port



Tania Heben painting Low Isles' historic lighthouse

Port Douglas' historic old sugar wharf came alive again recently for an art exhibition to celebrate and raise money for the beautiful Low Isles.

The gala opening night was a sell-out, attended by over 300 people who enjoyed a blessing by an elder of the Kuku Yalanji Tribe, presentation by ABC's Pat Morrish, followed by an auction, sumptuous food and great local music.

Twelve artists, including leading painters, sculptors, environmental, glass and fashion artists displayed their work that was inspired by many things including the historic lighthouse, the plants and animals of the region and the people who have visited and lived at Low Isles.

All artwork was for sale and a percentage of the proceeds was shared by Arthouse Port Douglas and the Low Isles Preservation Society.

Turtle mania in Reef HQ

A new freshwater turtle exhibit has been unveiled at Reef HQ Aquarium. Come and meet our 3 Krefft's river turtles in their new exhibit by the Waterside Café and wetlands exhibit. Learn about the important connection between our freshwater environments and the Marine Park and how you can help protect these marvellous critters. The exhibition is for a limited time only.



A Krefft's river turtle

Science Snippet

New research suggests that corals may be able to 'see' moonlight, and that moonlight triggers the mass coral spawning seen on the Great Barrier Reef. They have an ancient light sensitive gene called a "cryptochrome" that functions like a primitive eye.

Corals in the Great Barrier Reef spawn in a synchronised mass spawning event each year. While scientists know that temperature and tide provide cues for corals to spawn, the fact that corals spawned at the same time on the same night was difficult to explain.

The discovery of cryptochromes in corals and the fact that they are most active under blue moonlight suggests that corals may use these genes to trigger coral spawning at the same time on the same night.

Research carried out by the University of Queensland in collaboration with the ARC Centre of Excellence at James Cook University.

Abstract of Science paper
<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/abstract/sci;318/5849/467>



Coral spawning

Mates are great when mates donate

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) staff encouraged city workers and visitors to follow their lead and roll up their sleeves to help the Australian Red Cross Blood Service (ARCBS).

The ARCBS Donor Mobile made a special stop outside the Reef HQ Aquarium complex in Flinders Street as part of their Mates Donate campaign.

Among those people who joined the GBRMPA staff was Vice Captain of the Toyota North Queensland Cowboys Aaron Payne, a keen recreational fisherman and regular blood donor.

GBRMPA staff member and event organiser Sally Harman said this was a great opportunity for people to help boost much-needed blood stocks.

"Staff at the GBRMPA really supported this idea and we hoped to inspire others to follow our lead and help," she said.

"We contacted our friends at Reef HQ Aquarium, the Museum of Tropical Queensland, Cultural Centre, Sunferries, Townsville Enterprise and Flinders Mall supporters to get them onboard."

ARCBS Liaison Officer Bruce Muller said the Mates Donate campaign was proving successful in boosting blood stocks and raising awareness.

"We're delighted the GBRMPA got onboard with the Mates Donate campaign and encouraged organisations near them to be involved as well," he said.

"It is a fantastic example of the power of this campaign – great things can happen when people get together and inspire others to give blood.



Bruce Muller, Aaron Payne and Sally Harman

Creature Feature

Blacktip reef shark

- This is one of the most common sharks found in the Great Barrier Reef.
- These sharks are easily recognisable by their rounded snout, lemon-brown to grey back and very distinctive black fin tips.
- It is sometimes seen swimming slowly around the reef flats and shallow lagoon with its dorsal and tail fins sticking out of the water, and ventures into mangroves
- Blacktip reef sharks are generally a timid species and remain within a home range of just a few kilometres.
- Around the world, the blacktip reef shark is regularly caught in inshore fisheries and is utilised for its fins and meat, but has limited market value due to its small size. This species is important for dive tourism.



Image courtesy of Triggerfish Images

Doing your bit to look after it!

Some facts you might not know about the computers in your office...

- Simply leaving a computer running consumes electricity and adds to computing costs.
- The use of screen savers does not save energy and therefore costs.
- It is estimated that a typical desktop PC with a 17-inch flat panel LCD monitor requires about 100 watts – 65 watts for the computer and 35 watts for the monitor.
- If left on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for one year, this same system will consume 874 kilowatt hours of electricity – enough to release 340 kilograms of carbon dioxide in to the atmosphere and the equivalent of driving 1320 kilometres in an average car.
- According to the Columbia University Guide to Green Computing, if the paper used each year for personal computing were laid end to end, it would circle the Earth more than 800 times.

How can you help...

- Turn your computer and monitor off at the end of every day.
- Use the monitor off power saving function instead of a screen saver.
- If you have a laptop turn off the power adapter at the wall outlet at the end of the day.
- Conserve paper: only print what is necessary and double side whenever possible.
- Recycle your printer cartridges.

Community Links

A profile of **Phil Laycock**

Senior Regional Liaison Officer –
Community Partnerships Group



Phil Laycock joined the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Cairns office in September 2007 in the position of Regional Liaison Officer.

Before joining the GBRMPA, Phil spent most of his life involved in either studying the biology and ecology of the Reef and its animals or applying this knowledge to ensure environmental sustainability within reef tourism operations.

A true local, Phil has lived in the region all his life and said he can't imagine living anywhere else.

"It's such a beautiful area and you never have to travel far to find your own bit of pristine paradise," he said.

Phil is passionate about fishing and snorkelling and as a result has spent much of his life on the Reef.

"I love to fish, in fact I live to fish so I am out there as often as I can wetting a line.

"One of my earliest childhood memories is snorkelling with my Dad at Green Island. The wonder of that first experience has never dimmed and it is why I can never go too long without getting in the water and embracing the Reef."

Phil's vision for his work is to bring the community and the GBRMPA closer together.

"My role involves facilitating and fostering partnerships, and identifying community concerns and opinions to help the GBRMPA better manage and protect the Reef together with the community.

"What I love about it is the diversity and there is plenty of that in what I do."

Coming in March

Earth Hour - Make your 60 minutes count for the Reef.

Join the globe in turning off your lights for one hour at 8pm on 29 March 2008 and show your support for the need to take global action on climate change. For more information watch out for the March/April edition of SeaRead or visit www.earthhour.org



Calendar of events

2008 – International Year of the Reef

26 February 2008

Business Clean up Day

29 February 2008

Schools' Clean up Day

02 March 2008

Clean up Australia Day

02 – 08 March 2008

Seaweed

Reef Recollections Community Workshops

19 February 2008

Gladstone

20 February 2008

Yeppoon

28 February 2008

Sarina

2 March 2008

Bowen

6 March 2008

Ayr

9 March 2008

Cardwell

11 March 2008

Innisfail

13 March 2008

Port Douglas

16 March 2008

Cairns

18 March 2008

Cooktown

27 March 2008

Bundaberg

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Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority



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let's keep it great