

SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

What's inside

GBRMMPA pays tribute to former chair Virginia Chadwick	3
Reef in recovery mode as summer approaches	4
Local councils celebrate new commitment to protect the Great Barrier Reef	5
Minister Garrett opens Turtle Hospital	6
New educational material helps educate island visitors about climate change	8

DISCLAIMER

While all efforts have been made to verify facts, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority takes no responsibility for the accuracy of information supplied in *SeaRead*.

ISSN 1834-6774

Copyright Commonwealth of Australia

Please note that you are welcome to photocopy *SeaRead*. However, if the text is reproduced separately, it must not be altered and must acknowledge the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as the source. Illustrations must not be reused separately without permission. Please contact the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority if in doubt.

www.gbrmpa.gov.au

Issue 30 • September/October 2009

Hot off the press – Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009

The much anticipated Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009 was recently released by Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett providing the first comprehensive assessment of the health of the Great Barrier Reef and its outlook for the future.

"The Outlook Report identifies that overall the reef remains one of the world's healthiest coral reef ecosystems, but that significant challenges need to be met to ensure this remains the case," Minister Garrett said.

"Comprehensive, effective and immediate action on climate change is critical. So too is action to help the reef withstand the impacts of the already changing climate."

The Outlook Report was prepared by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMMPA) based on the best available information.

The Report identifies climate change, catchment runoff, loss of coastal habitats and a small number of fisheries impacts as key challenges facing the Reef.

President of the Australian Coral Reef Society Justin Marshall called the report a "must read" for coral reef scientists.

"This is a sobering document based on the latest data and represents a very important moment for the Great Barrier Reef," Justin said.

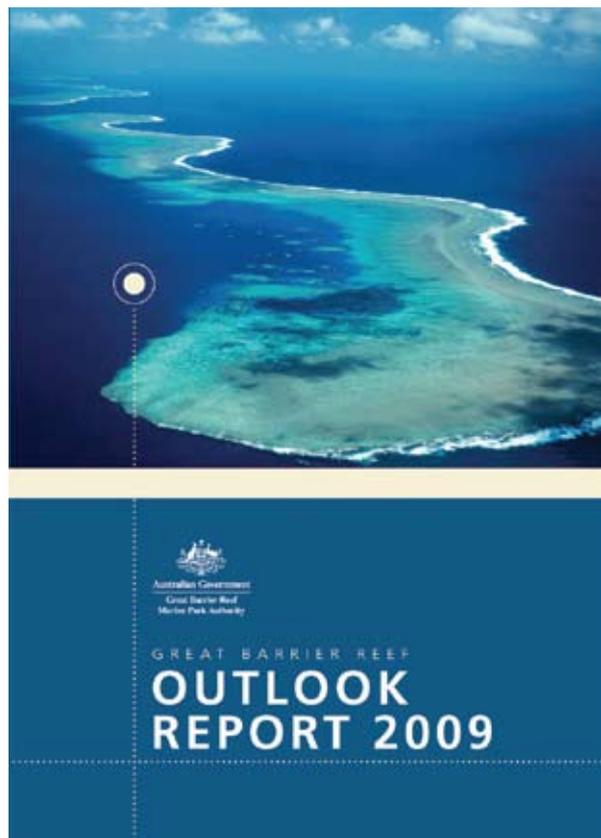
"As it states, we are at a crossroads and it is up to us to decide the direction to go in."

The Outlook Report was welcomed by industry groups such as Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) as a valuable assessment of the state of the Reef.

QTIC CEO Daniel Gschwind described the Outlook Report as a comprehensive document which outlines the ecological health of the Reef, its uses and future opportunities and threats.

"Clearly there are climate change and land use challenges facing the Great Barrier Reef however I would like to assure all Australians that Queensland's tourism industry is committed to doing its part to ensuring a sustainable future for the Reef," Daniel said.

Canegrowers CEO Ian Ballantyne said the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009 appeared balanced and based on science.



"The GBRMPA is once again leading the way on coral reef conservation."

Kacky Andrews, Program Manager for the
US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's
Coral Reef Conservation Program

Continued on page 2

Message from the Chairman



It has been a busy couple of months for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). Topping the list of exciting events was the release and parliamentary tabling of the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009 in early September by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett. The much anticipated Outlook Report was two years in the making and describes the current state of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem, assesses current management approaches, and provides an outlook for the Reef's future.

The Report suggests the future of the Reef will depend to a large degree on the extent to which climate change is addressed worldwide and on the resilience of the ecosystem in the immediate future. The GBRMPA will continue to focus on improvement and preservation of the overall health of the Reef so that it will be as resilient as possible to cope with unavoidable climate impacts.

The Outlook Report was based on the best available information sourced from researchers, Government agencies, local communities and interest groups. I would like to thank all who contributed to the Report and recognise the GBRMPA staff for their outstanding efforts in its preparation and production.

I am pleased to welcome three new councils to the Reef Guardian Councils Program. I congratulate Isaac, Mackay and Whitsunday Regional Councils for their commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and we look forward to working with them on future initiatives.

A decisive strategy to address the potential impacts of climate change on both the health of the Great Barrier Reef and Australia's \$5.1 billion Reef tourism industry was launched recently. The GBRMPA, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators, teamed up to develop the Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy which sees tourism operators working collaboratively with the GBRMPA to address the impacts of climate change on their industry.

The recent launch of a partnership between Queensland Seafood Industry Association and GBRMPA which aims to ensure commercial fishing on the Great Barrier Reef is sustainable in the face of threats like climate change, is yet another important milestone for the future of both the industry and the Great Barrier Reef.

I would also like to congratulate the Coral and Marine Aquarium Fish Fishers industry on the launch of their innovative Stewardship Action Plan. This industry has voluntarily agreed to develop enforceable collection strategies which will be adapted on an as needed basis to address acute environmental impacts such as those caused by climate change. This world leading management plan, recognises the unpredictable nature of some reef impacts and will be adaptable to accommodate changing environmental conditions.

ReefHQ Aquarium was recognised as north Queensland's Major Tourism Attraction at this year's North Queensland Tourism Awards. This is the second year the aquarium has been presented with this prestigious award. Well done to the team at ReefHQ.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to a great convener of hope and a woman who has made some of the most significant contributions to the protection of the Great Barrier Reef, former GBRMPA Chair the Hon. Virginia Chadwick AO who passed away on Friday 18 September.

Virginia was truly an inspiration to all who knew her. She continually redefined expectations. As the first female chairman of the Authority and during her eight years at the helm, she developed and led many significant environmental initiatives. Virginia was an outstanding leader, an effective environmental champion and a genuine friend. She will be remembered for her important role in preserving one of the world's greatest natural treasures. Now, more than ever, we appreciate the legacy of protection Virginia left behind. It is that protection that has left the Reef as the healthiest and most resilient coral reef system in the world.

Thank you Virginia, you will be missed.

Regards

Russell Reichelt
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
Authority

Continued from page 1

"The report recognises that continuing changes occurring in agricultural practices have a long lag time before water quality impact can be assessed. It also recognises that the Great Barrier Reef continues to be one of the healthiest coral reef ecosystems but will need to be well managed and protected."

Ian said that Canegrowers had long supported the need for a healthy Reef and that it was agriculture's aim to operate sustainably by adopting

improved technology and systems.

GRBMPA Chairman, Russell Reichelt, said it would require a coordinated approach from government, industry and communities to improve the health and resilience of the Reef.

"We've developed some great partnerships with key stakeholders in the Reef's future.

"These collaborations will improve our ability to effectively manage the Great Barrier Reef, an icon for which

protection is ultimately the responsibility of every Australian."

Minister Garrett and Queensland Climate Change and Sustainability Minister Kate Jones released a joint response to the Outlook Report, outlining a cooperative, re-energised, and whole-of-ecosystem approach to protecting the Reef.

The Outlook Report is available online at www.gbrmpa.gov.au

GBRMPA pays tribute to former chair Virginia Chadwick

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) pays tribute to the outstanding leadership and environmental work of former Authority Chair the Hon. Virginia Chadwick AO who passed away on Friday 18 September.

Virginia was the first female chair of the marine management agency and during her eight years at the helm, developed and led many significant environmental initiatives.

GBRMPA Chairman Russell Reichelt said Virginia was an inspiration to all those who knew her and would be remembered for her significant contribution to protecting one of the world's greatest natural treasures.

"Virginia was passionate about protecting the Great Barrier Reef for the future and was at the forefront of many marine management decisions that won acclaim worldwide," he said.

"Her contribution to the protection of the Reef through the Zoning Plan is an important and lasting legacy that will help protect this great natural icon for all Australians.

"Virginia was a well-respected leader, mentor and friend and her genuine passion for the environment was an inspiration for all those who knew her.

"Her passion, interest and involvement in environmental issues won the respect of colleagues and

stakeholders alike, and she will be missed by all those who worked with her."

Among Virginia's most significant achievements at the GBRMPA was overseeing and leading the Representative Areas Program, which culminated in the rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in 2004.

The Representative Areas Program included the most extensive community consultation process ever conducted on an Australian environmental issue.

It set an international benchmark in marine conservation and generated international awareness of Australia's environmental conservation initiatives.

Virginia's role in overseeing the agency's involvement in other management initiatives – such as the Trawl and Reef Line Fisheries Management Plan, Reef Water Quality Protection Plan and Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements – is also noteworthy.

Her genuine interest in environmental issues saw her actively involved across the agency's core business – she was a keen supporter of everything from school education programs and tourism industry partnerships to conservation and research.

Before her appointment as Chairman of GBRMPA, Virginia served in the NSW Legislative Council.



She held various Ministerial positions and was the first woman elected as President of the Legislative Council.

Her significant contributions in the field of research and education were formally recognised by her peers on many occasions.

Among the accolades was being awarded an Office in the General Division of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday 2005 Honours List.

In 2009, Virginia received an Honorary Doctorate at James Cook University in recognition of her significant achievements.

Reef fishing to continue over Christmas holidays

Spawning closures for coral reef fin fish have been overhauled with fewer closures for shorter periods and no more December closures.

There will now be two five-day closures a year instead of three nine-day closures.

The closure dates covering the next five years are:

- 15 – 19 October 2009; and 14 - 18 November 2009
- 5 – 9 October 2010; and 3 - 7 November 2010
- 24 – 28 October 2011; and 22 - 26 November 2011
- 12 – 16 October 2012; and 11 - 15 November 2012
- 2 – 6 October 2013; and 31 October to 4 November 2013.

Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries Resource Manager Brigid Kerrigan said the closures applied to waters on Queensland's east coast between Cape York and just north of Waddy Point on Fraser Island, extending to the eastern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

"The closure dates are based on the new moon phases, which is when coral trout and many other reef species aggregate to spawn and are therefore more susceptible to fishing at those times," she said.

"The closures change depending on the new moon phases so it is important that people who fish for coral reef fin fish keep up to date with the latest closure dates.

"Anglers are reminded that the closures only apply to those who are fishing for coral reef fin fish, which includes coral trout, cods and gropers, emperors, parrotfish, sweetlips, tropical snappers and sea perches."

Fishers are advised to check the latest status of spawning closures and regulations before heading out on the water.

Information on spawning closures, coral reef fin fish, Queensland fishing regulations and the General Fisheries Permit application can be found on the Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries website www.dpi.qld.gov.au or by calling 13 25 23.

Reef in **recovery** mode as summer approaches

With this summer season fast approaching, marine managers are closely monitoring the Great Barrier Reef, which is still recovering from the impacts of last summer.

Last summer the Reef was affected by stifling heat in December, heavy rainfall in January and February, and destructive winds from cyclone Hamish in March.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Chairman Russell Reichelt said while the Reef was recovering well, last summer was a timely reminder to not be complacent.

"Last summer's extreme weather was a stark reminder of the potential impacts of climate change on the Great Barrier Reef and we are keeping a close eye on the Reef in the lead up to this summer," he said.

"Research is now revealing the full extent of the damage. The cumulative impact on the Reef of last year's three weather events was a concern.

"Historically the Reef has been resilient to such events, but it was rare, perhaps unprecedented, to have three such events in a short period of time."

Research from the Australian Institute of Marine Science has now revealed that Cyclone Hamish, which affected more than 50 per cent of the

coral reefs in the Marine Park, reduced coral cover by 10 to 70 per cent in some places.

While the damage was patchy, researchers believe reefs that were in the cyclone's path could take between eight and 15 years to recover if there are no major disturbances such as cyclones, coral bleaching, or declines in water quality which reduce their health.

Marine managers and scientists are already putting their heads together to assess what the upcoming summer's forecasts could mean for a Reef already in recovery mode.

"Summer is a risky time for the Reef because of the increased threats associated with extreme heat, heavy rainfall, flood plumes, cyclonic activity, crown-of-thorns and disease outbreaks, all of which are increasing with climate change," Russell said.

"Predicting and managing these events requires effective collaboration between scientists and managers, well developed response plans, and a healthy dose of community support."

A group of internationally recognised coral reef experts including marine scientists, oceanographers, climatologists, meteorologists, and reef managers met last month to discuss the first early predictions for the upcoming summer.

The meeting brought together representatives from seven different organisations all working together to figure out the best ways to prepare the Reef for whatever challenges the summer may bring.

Oceanographer Scarla Weeks from the University of Queensland said a warmer than average winter was also likely to have an effect on how the Reef copes with conditions this summer.

"Due to the group's diverse expertise, factors such as temperature and wind, as well as parameters such as ocean circulation and current patterns across a large geographic area have all been considered."

"By working together, we will continue to build a much more accurate picture of the conditions we are likely to see on the Reef this summer," Scarla said.



GBRMPA staff are keeping a close watch on temperature predictions as the summer approaches

Tourism strategy to tackle climate change

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Queensland Tourism Industry Council and the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators (AMPTO) have launched a decisive strategy to address the potential impacts of climate change on both the health of the Great Barrier Reef and Australia's \$5.1 billion Reef tourism industry.

GBRMPA Chairman Russell Reichelt said the Great Barrier Reef was one of the most important national and international tourism destinations and that the new plan recognised the urgent need to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts.

"I am pleased to announce the launch of this Great Barrier Reef Tourism Climate Change Action

Strategy which will both mitigate the industry's climate change footprint and encourage visitors to offset and minimise their own carbon and environmental footprints," he said.

"This strategy will stimulate a range of actions, from site enhancement activities to adaptive management, as well as marine tourism staff training and risk management planning, led by both government and industry.

"The approach confirms the Great Barrier Reef marine tourism industry's commitment to protecting the environment and ensuring a sustainable industry in the face of a changing climate."

AMPTO Executive Director Col McKenzie said AMPTO was vitally concerned about the effects of climate change on the Great Barrier Reef and the flow on effects to businesses.

"The Action Strategy provides us with a strategic way forward so that we can mitigate our carbon footprint, adapt our business practices and

identify the opportunities that will occur."

Tourism Minister Peter Lawlor said the new climate change strategy was an essential step forward in the management of one of the world's most precious natural environments.

"The Great Barrier Reef is an iconic natural wonder and is integral to Queensland's tourism industry," he said.

"It is critical we do all we can to protect and sustain its natural beauty.

"The Great Barrier Reef Marine Tourism Climate Change Action Strategy provides ways for our tourism industry to actively respond to climate change and help decrease the impact tourism activities have on the local environment.

"Tourism Queensland has worked with GBRMPA and other partners to develop this comprehensive strategy and will continue to support its implementation."



Local councils celebrate new commitment to protect the Great Barrier Reef

Isaac, Mackay and Whitsunday Regional Councils, celebrated their commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef by officially becoming Reef Guardian Councils.

The two councils joined the program in July during a fitting ceremony on Lamberts Beach in Mackay.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Chairman, Russell Reichelt, said Reef Guardian Councils was an innovative program that recognised councils existing environmental projects while encouraging participants to foster environmental stewardship of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park through increased commitment to best environmental practices.

"We are excited to join the Reef Guardian Program and we are looking forward to continuing to work closely with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, other government agencies, community groups and schools to protect our local environment, including the amazing Great Barrier Reef. We believe council has an important role to play as the front-line facilitator and promoter of reef protection in our local community," Mackay Regional Council Mayor Col Meng.



Whitsunday Deputy Mayor Rogin Taylor, Mackay Mayor Col Meng, GBRMPA Chairman Russell Reichelt, Traditional Owner Gary Mooney, Isaac Mayor Cedric Marshall with students from Beaconsfield State School

"The Reef Guardian Councils program is unique in that it was developed by councils for councils and the launch today brings together years of work by many local governments along the Great Barrier Reef coastline," Russell said.

"The Reef Guardian Councils initiative follows the GBRMPA's highly successful Reef Guardian Schools program and builds on the recognition that effective protection and management of the Great Barrier Reef requires coordinated efforts from all levels of government, industry and communities.

"The program provides councils with a fantastic opportunity to broaden current on-ground projects and engage their local community on how we all have a part to play in ensuring our Reef remains healthy for future generations," he said.

"We are delighted that Isaac, Mackay and Whitsunday Councils have recognised the importance of the program in protecting the Great Barrier Reef and taken this opportunity to officially come on board as Reef Guardian Councils.

"We congratulate all three councils and look forward to working closely with them to address pressures from climate change and to build the resilience of the Reef by improving water quality flowing from the catchment to the Marine Park."

"Isaac Regional Council is proud to be one of the six Reef Guardian Councils. We have a diverse environment in the Isaac area and one we want to protect for our future residents and visitors. Council will endeavour to support local projects to protect the Reef but also continue to develop partnerships with our neighbours to ensure a pristine environment for everyone to enjoy. We're also pleased some of the schools are undertaking the Reef Guardian challenge and know the community as a whole will also support such a worthwhile cause," Isaac Regional Council Mayor Cedric Marshall.



Whitsunday Deputy Mayor Rogin Taylor, Mackay Mayor Col Meng, Isaac Mayor Cedric Marshall and GBRMPA Chairman Russell Reichelt

Minister Garrett opens Turtle Hospital

The Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett got up close and personal with Torres the turtle, when he officially opened ReefHQ Aquarium's new purpose built Turtle Hospital in Townsville.

Minister Garrett said that the development of the ReefHQ Turtle Hospital was in response to an increasing number of turtles requiring care.

"For many years ReefHQ has been caring for sick and injured turtles on an adhoc basis using a makeshift facility to rehabilitate these animals until they were well and fit enough to be released back into the Marine Park," Minister Garrett said.

"In recent years the number of turtles requiring treatment has continued to increase which moved the staff at ReefHQ to begin working towards the establishment of a purpose built turtle hospital.

"All their hard work has paid off and after 12 months of planning, development and fundraising by ReefHQ and the Townsville community and industry, I am pleased to open a dedicated facility which will rehabilitate sick and injured turtles, ensure long term sustainability for the species, and create a centre of excellence for turtle research.

"In establishing the facility ReefHQ, staff will also be able to continue their work of educating visitors about what they can do to ensure turtles remain an important part of the Reef for generations to come.

"ReefHQ has been part of the Townsville landscape for over 20 years and it is that community support, coupled with the generosity of local sponsors and individuals that has turned the dream of a dedicated turtle hospital into a reality."

The biggest threats to marine turtles are all associated with human activities including boat strikes, entanglement in fishing gear and ingestion of synthetic material such as plastics.

The impact of these threats on turtles has increased over the last few years in line with an increase in the population enjoying the Great Barrier Reef.

The Turtle Hospital was made possible by generous donations from sponsors and members of the community.

It is expected to be open to the public soon and will provide visitors with an opportunity to see and learn about the plight of marine turtles through educational talks and guided tours of the hospital.

ReefHQ Aquarium takes out top tourism award



ReefHQ Aquarium has scooped the title of north Queensland's Major Tourism Attraction for the second year running.

The award was presented to the national education centre for the Great Barrier Reef at this year's North Queensland Tourism Awards.

ReefHQ Aquarium Director Fred Nucifora said the award was testament to the hard work of aquarium staff and volunteers.

"We're delighted that ReefHQ Aquarium has been honoured in this way," he said.

"A product or brand is only as good as its people and we're very fortunate to have a fantastic team of staff and volunteers.

"Their commitment to ReefHQ Aquarium is the primary reason for its ongoing success.

"The enthusiasm they put into establishing and maintaining a world class product, and educating visitors about the Reef's beauty and the need for its protection, is truly inspiring."

The Tourism Awards, themed "Learning to Fly," were hosted by Townsville Enterprise Limited and Townsville Airports in September at James Cook University.

A large contingent of the ReefHQ Aquarium team donned their cocktail best to attend the awards ceremony on north Queensland tourism's night of nights.

Award nominees rubbed shoulders with celebrity host Ben Dark from Channel 9's Getaway program, Tourism Queensland's Best Job in World winner Ben Southall and Her Excellency Penelope Wensley, Governor of Queensland.

This year's awards attracted a record number of entries, with 56 entries received and 22 awards won on the night.



Minister Garrett met up with Torres the turtle during his launch of ReefHQ Aquarium's Turtle Hospital



Reef Guardian students recall Future Leaders Eco Challenge

Reef Guardian School students from schools along the Queensland coast, took action to help tackle climate change during 14 Future Leaders Eco Challenges held in regional centres from Gympie to Cooktown over the last three months. The theme of the Eco Challenges was "Kid's Combat Climate Change."

Here is a first-hand account of the Eco Challenge from students of Dingo State School, near Emerald:

By Dingo State School students: Ari Hannah, Rachel Gould, Bailey Woodard and Sarah MacKenzie.

On August 20 we traveled to Yeppoon to represent our school at the Reef Guardian Schools Future Leaders Eco Challenge (FLEC).

We visited three Reef Guardian Schools: Farnborough State School, Taranganba State School and Emu Park State School to learn what they were doing to make their schools Reef Guardians.

Farnborough State School has a veggie and fruit garden which is totally organic in order to prevent harmful chemical runoff into local waterways.

The students use environmentally friendly sprays to ward off pests and diseases.

The school also has rain water tanks which reduce their reliance on town water supplies and students plant drought-tolerant native trees which help to capture carbon dioxide.

Our second stop was Taranganba State School where students showed us their environmental and cultural studies area.

In this area they have a bush tucker garden, a swale or small stream, trees that provide wood for making furniture and wooden objects, and native trees that provide shade.

Inside the school, many of buildings have skylights which



Students from Dingo State School near Emerald were thrilled to pick up some great ideas from other Reef Guardian Schools

provide natural light and save on the energy required to power artificial lights.

Our last stop was Emu Park State School where students showed us environmental projects like solar panels for powering buildings, an aluminium can recycling bin, worm farms, rain water tanks, water saving devices and a bush tucker garden in the far corner of their school.

Students at Emu Park State School also help out the Reef by looking after Fishermen's Beach and picking up rubbish.

It was good to see how three schools in the same region do so many different things to help the environment.

At the end of the FLEC, we all got together to do our bit for the Reef by planting trees on the foreshore between the ocean and the town of Emu Park.

Planting native shrubs and trees along the foreshore helps to prevent soil erosion which preserves our beaches and helps keep our Reef healthy.

All in all, it was a very eventful day. We had lots of fun and took back loads of information to share with our school

to help us become a better Reef Guardian School.

Everyone has a responsibility to care for the environment for future generations and we're doing our bit by being Reef Guardians.



Students undertook a foreshore rehabilitation project during the Reef Guardian Schools Future Leaders Eco Challenge

New educational material helps educate island visitors about climate change

Visitors to beautiful Lady Elliot Island can now add an educational element to their visit as they learn about climate change through a series of signs placed around the island.

The new educational signs are located at 11 sites around the island and provide visitors with a snapshot of how climate change will affect this small coral cay.

The signs detail the impact of climate change on the marine environment and provide tips on how people can look after the Great Barrier Reef.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Chairman Russell Reichelt said the new trail was among a number of useful educational tools.

"Climate change is one of the greatest threats to the Great Barrier Reef and we all have a role in protecting this great Australian icon," he said.



A new interpretive sign trail on Lady Elliot Island allows visitors to stand in a location on the island and learn how that very place will be affected by climate change

"Educational activities like this are important in helping people understand how climate change will affect the Reef.

"Visitors can actually stand at a place on the island and learn how that very spot will be affected by changes in the Earth's climate.

"We hope the trail enhances the visitor experience and that visitors take away some useful environmental tips that they incorporate into their everyday lives."

The interpretative material is in keeping with the environmental focus

of the island, located offshore from Bundaberg.

The island's resort uses low power light bulbs, a closed-circuit anaerobic sewerage waste management system and has just unveiled a new three-phase solar hybrid power station to replace its diesel generators.

They also collect and use rainwater and use a desalination system to purify seawater to fresh water for drinking.

Lady Elliot Island is among the Commonwealth Islands in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. These islands are owned and managed by the Australian Government.

Best job winner visits ReefHQ Aquarium

Tourism Queensland's Best Job in the World winner, Ben Southall, learned all about caring for marine animals during his visit to ReefHQ Aquarium in September.

With a National Geographic film crew in tow, Ben set out to experience a day in the life of an aquarist.

Ben's action packed day included:

- An animal feeding tour including fish and shark feeding
- A dive on the world's largest living coral display using a full face mask fitted with an underwater micro phone
- A tour of the aquarium's new turtle hospital
- Several interviews with journalists
- A meeting with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Chairman, Russell Reichelt to discuss pressures facing the Reef
- And a good old fashioned Aussie barbecue.

Ben graciously thanked his ReefHQ Aquarium hosts for an enjoyable visit.

"I had a very informative and exciting time and it was great to have the chance to get into the tank," Ben said.

ReefHQ Aquarium Director Fred Nucifora said it was a pleasure showing around the easy going British adventurer.

"Ben had a keen interest in the work we do here at the aquarium and the work of managing the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

"He is a great ambassador for the Reef and its incredibly diverse animal life."



Tourism Queensland's Island Caretaker Ben Southall jumped in to lend a helping hand during his visit to ReefHQ Aquarium



Ben helped staff weigh-in the newest arrivals to ReefHQ Aquarium's new Turtle Hospital

Ports partnership protects the Reef

The Queensland Ports Association and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strategically improve coordination associated with port activity adjacent to and in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

GBRMPA Chairman Russell Reichelt said the MOU would be used as a vehicle for cooperation between the two organisations.

"The MOU addresses key areas of strategic planning, research and monitoring, management of port activities, consultation, and strategic discussion on some of the significant issues facing both organisations including climate change, introduction of marine pests and dredging."

Russell said the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report acknowledged that ports and shipping throughout the Great Barrier Reef region were economically important to industries and services in regional Queensland.

"The report also acknowledges that climate change is likely to result in rising sea levels, and more intense storms and cyclones," he said.

"The likely impacts on ports and shipping as a result include increased cost of shipping resources, increased energy demand and demand for construction techniques that reduce the likelihood of damage to infrastructure.

"It is important that we strengthen our existing partnerships with ports to ensure we can meet the necessary future challenges.

"We look forward to working collaboratively with Queensland Ports Association on key matters that affect the ports and shipping industries as well as the health of the Great Barrier Reef."

Queensland Ports Association Chairman Clive Skarott said the Queensland Ports Association and the GBRMPA have common interests and a commitment to common outcomes.

"Queensland Ports Association is pleased to reach an agreement with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and recognises the value of working together on policy, strategic planning developments, ports, port operations, shipping routes, anchorages and dredging."

MackReef gears up for boat ramp surveys

Fishers in the Mackay region will soon have a better understanding of what is happening out on the water thanks to community monitoring group MackReef's plan to conduct boat ramp surveys in the region.

MackReef Chair and recreational fisher Derek Ball said the new boat ramp surveys would build on fishing data that the group had collected since its inception in 2008.

"It is important to understand recreational fishing activity in this region," Derek said.

"We need to know how many people go fishing, how often, and what they catch in order to provide independent advice to fisheries managers.

"Our target boat ramps are in the Mackay and Whitsundays where trained personnel will gather information that will assist with fisheries management in the future."

MackReef was established in Mackay last year following the success of CapReef, a community monitoring group set up in 2005 in the Capricornia region to gather community-based fisheries data to compliment that collected by scientists and managers.

CapReef member Wendi Parsons assisted with the recent boat ramp survey training in Mackay, bringing



Reef Guardian School student Victoria Edwards won the MackReef logo competition with a design representing the lifestyle of the Mackay region

several years of practical experience to the training course.

"It was great to be able to help MackReef get their boat ramp surveys started.

"We have learned a lot by implementing the surveys in the Capricornia region and it was good to be able to share that knowledge for the benefit of fisheries management along the Great Barrier Reef."

For further information about MackReef please contact Derek Ball on 07 4968 4202. To learn more about CapReef contact Bill Sawynok on 07 4928 6133

High speed race car drivers chill out at ReefHQ Aquarium

V8 Supercar drivers Craig Lowndes and Jamie Whincup from Team Vodafone went for a leisurely snorkel in ReefHQ Aquarium's 2.5 million litre coral reef exhibit during their visit to north Queensland's top tourist attraction.

Footage of the visit appeared during the telecast of the V8 race which made its debut in Townsville this year.



V8 Supercar drivers Jamie Whincup and Craig Lowndes

Plan tackles coral stress

Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland Tim Mulherin announced an innovative plan to help coral reefs affected by stress.

"Just like people, our magnificent coral reefs are at times subject to stress and this could have severe impacts, including coral death," he said.

"At these times the Coral Stress Response Plan aims to promote recovery by reducing any further stress that may result from harvesting coral and aquarium fish."

A significant coral bleaching event on the Great Barrier Reef several years ago highlighted the need for a coordinated approach to respond to the impacts of future coral stress events and to develop actions that would assist in coral recovery.

The plan was developed by the Queensland and Australian Governments with significant input from the coral fishery and marine aquarium fish industries, as well as other fishing sectors that rely on the

fish stocks supported by the Great Barrier Reef.

Fisheries Resource Manager with Primary Industries and Fisheries, Brigid Kerrigan said a key part of the strategy was the assessment and monitoring of areas at risk of stress and an early warning system.

"Higher sea surface temperatures and freshwater runoff caused by heavy rain during the summer months periodically cause coral bleaching, a stress response of corals.

"If long range weather forecasting indicates a high risk of bleaching during summer months, industry will begin monitoring the health of corals in the areas where they are collecting coral.

"This will provide timely information on any changes in the health of corals, and help us to prevent further damage while also helping with faster recovery.

"This plan will help improve the resilience and health of reef ecosystems by letting them recover from stress, while allowing commercial fisheries to continue operating in a restricted capacity.

"This response plan introduces additional measures such as restrictions on the harvest of healthy or bleached corals that can be put in place if an area is identified to be at risk."

Lyle Squire Jnr, president of the Aquarium Supply Industry Association, Pro-vision Reef Inc, says the response plan complemented an important new industry initiative.

"Our industry advocates a collaborative approach to managing the fallout from events linked to global climate change," he said.

"Linking the response plan to our Stewardship Action Plan, which details strategies to minimise impacts on stressed environments, will enable government agencies to receive vital and timely information from the people that are on the water."



Marine managers and Queensland seafood industry team up on climate change

Queensland marine managers and the Queensland seafood industry have joined forces to help ensure commercial fishing on the Great Barrier Reef is sustainable in the face of threats like climate change.

The partnership between the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) was recently launched in Townsville.

Together, the organisations will work on a number of projects that will be economically beneficial for industry and good for the environment.

To assist with kick-starting the partnership, the GBRMPA is providing financial support to assist in the appointment of new climate change and industry liaison officer Eric Perez who will work with industry to develop and implement these projects.

GBRMPA Chairman Russell Reichelt said this was the first time the organisations had formally worked together in this way and it was an important step forward.

"We're delighted to work with the Queensland Seafood Industry Association to help ensure the industry is well-placed to cope with the impacts of climate change," he said.

"We recognise that this industry depends on the Reef for their livelihoods and, for this reason, are concerned about the future of the Reef.

"Commercial fishers and seafood marketers are interested in the long-term health of the Reef and we are keen to work with them to ensure their industry remains sustainable."

New industry liaison officer Eric Perez will work on several projects including a fishing industry emissions calculator that will help commercial operators monitor and reduce their carbon emissions.

He will also work with the GBRMPA, Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries and James Cook University on research into how cyclone Hamish impacted on reefs in

the southern Great Barrier Reef and the fishers who rely on the Reef.

QSIA President Michael Gardner said the industry body was actively engaged in working with GBRMPA to develop scientific projects that will assist and provide both environmental and business benefits.

"It's important for us to work with marine managers to future-proof the industry by introducing projects that are beneficial for both businesses and the environment," he said.

"A healthy Reef with good water quality and plenty of marine life means there is a healthy fishing industry.

"To ensure industry is well-placed to cope with economic and environmental changes that may impact on the industry, we're looking at a number of projects that put the commercial fishing industry on the front foot.

"This way they can be the leaders of change with capacity to predict and shape their business rather than simply having to respond to these impacts."

Hands-on experience prepares us for an oil spill on the Reef

Field staff who cared for wildlife affected by an oil spill in Moreton Bay earlier this year are using this hands-on experience to fine tune incident response plans for the Great Barrier Reef.

Twenty-nine Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service staff from the Field Management Program played a major role in rehabilitating oiled wildlife and assessing the condition of the foreshore affected by the oil.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Field Operations Manager Malcolm Turner said they contributed greatly to the response and were also using this experience as a learning opportunity.

"We are using this incident as a chance to refine our skills and have looked at our own incident response plans and equipment to ensure it is appropriate, should we have to use it," he said.

"We are very fortunate not to have had as large a spill of this nature in the Marine Park, but will be well-placed to quickly and effectively respond after our experience in Moreton Bay.

"We are also keen to share the knowledge we gained in this situation with other marine management agencies in Australia and around the world."

As part of the response in Moreton Bay, a semi-trailer load of oiled wildlife gear went from Cairns to ensure field staff had adequate supplies for looking after animals.

Staff involved in the clean-up drew on training in animal rehabilitation and oil spill incident response, which is a major part of the Field Management Training Program.

Pelicans proved a major challenge to treat. Hundreds of litres of water were used to clean birds and swimming pools and specific pens were used to help care for the birds

GBRMPA staff were also appointed to the Scientific Advisory Panel set up by the Queensland Government to provide advice on the environmental impacts of the spill and on clean-up options to minimise long term impacts.



Pelicans are among the many seabirds affected by oil spills



Staff learn how to care for oiled wildlife

Registrations open for Island Arks Symposium

Registrations are now open for Australia's first national conference on Island Ecosystem Management - Island Arks Symposium 2009. The symposium will be held in the beautiful Whitsunday Islands during 7-11 December 2009.

The symposium aims to bring together environmental practitioners to identify, discuss and resolve management challenges, and identify pathways for long-term conservation of island ecosystems including sustainable use.

Keynote speakers include:

- James Cook University, Professor Bob Pressey
- WWF Australia Director of Conservation, Raymond Nias
- Northern Territory's Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sports, Principal Scientist, John Woinarski
- 2008 Suncorp Queenslander of the Year, Graeme Wood
- Renowned Conservation Biologist, Andrew Burbidge.

For more information visit www.islandarks.com.au

Creature Feature

Anemone

- An anemone resembles a very large single coral polyp without a skeleton.
- Like hard corals, anemones' tentacles occur in multiples of six.
- They are loaded with stinging cells (nematocysts) which can paralyse fish but only a few species are capable of penetrating human skin.
- The bottom of the anemone is attached by a special disc but is capable of moving around by sliding very slowly over rocks and dead coral.
- Many have resident zooxanthellae, or tiny live-in algae, and grow best in shallow, sunny waters.
- Tube anemones usually feed at night and can retreat out of sight into tubes burrowed quite deep in the sand.



Doing your bit to look after it!

Turn your rubbish into fertiliser

A lot of domestic rubbish is kitchen and garden waste that can be composted to create nutrient-rich fertiliser for your garden. Compost is simply decomposed organic material. It reduces the amount of rubbish we throw away and decreases our need for landfill sites. Compost returns nutrients to the soil that would otherwise be lost, improves soil structure and increases the water holding capacity of the soil.

- Compost can be made in either a heap or bin, depending on the amount of material for composting and the needs and size of your garden. Bins are widely available at garden and hardware stores.
- Bins should be open at the top and bottom. The top needs a tight-fitting lid. The other end is placed in contact with the soil to allow earthworms to enter. Consider placing it directly on level soil in a garden bed.
- Compost works best if you add a balanced mixture of rapidly decomposing 'green' material (e.g. fruit and vegetable scraps) and 'brown' material that decomposes slowly (e.g. twigs). These can be added in any order.
- Once you have a mixture of materials, cover with a layer of soil, add some water and a lid to keep the heat in and speed the rotting process.
- Composting matter should feel damp, but if waterlogged it will smell, attract flies and be inefficient. Control the moisture level by adding absorbent materials such as sawdust, newspaper, straw or dry manure.
- Turning the heap with a fork will speed decomposition.
- Compost is ready to use when it has a crumbly appearance, an earthy smell and you can't identify any of the things you put in it. You can use compost on gardens and vegetable patches.

For more tips on composting visit www.climatesmart.qld.gov.au



Composting your own food scraps and green waste is one way to reduce your household carbon emissions and improve soil quality

Calendar of events

October

Energy Awareness Month
International Walk to School Month

02 October

World Walk to Work Day

05 October

World Habitat Day

14 October

National Ride to Work Day

18 – 25 October

National Water Week

9 – 15 November

National Recycling Week

21 November

World Fisheries Day

GBRMPA contacts



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

2-68 Flinders Street
PO Box 1379
Townsville Qld 4810

Phone: (07) 4750 0700
Fax: (07) 4772 6093
Email: info@gbbrmpa.gov.au

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in the future or if you would like to receive this newsletter via email instead of as a hard copy, please email searead@gbbrmpa.gov.au or phone the GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0700.