

# SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral



Australian Government

Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

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## Colourful characters to teach children about climate change and the Reef hit YouTube



*Climate change impacts on the Reef feature in new animations*

A lonely hermit crab and a colourful collection of coral polyps join a cast of characters featured in a series of animations designed to teach kids about the impacts climate change will have on the Great Barrier Reef.

The short animations, developed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), recently made their worldwide debut on YouTube.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Chairman Russell Reichelt said while climate change is widely acknowledged as the single greatest threat to the Great Barrier Reef, it was important that students and children around Australia and the world understood they can play a part in protecting the Reef for future generations.

"We want to ensure students understand the risk climate change poses to the plants and animals that make up the incredible Great Barrier Reef ecosystem, while understanding that our every day actions can help keep the Reef healthy and resilient for future generations to enjoy.

"This suite of animations presents some of the complex issues the Reef faces due to the impacts of climate change in a simple and easy to understand way.

"The animations also outline simple actions that can be taken around the home or school to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure our daily activities do not have a negative impact on the Reef."

Russell said everyone has a part to play in mitigating the affects of climate change and ensuring the future of the Great Barrier Reef.

"It is important to remember that the children of today will be the leaders of tomorrow.

"What is so heartening is that through programs like our Reef Guardian Schools initiative we are already seeing students of all ages take an active role in protecting and guarding the Reef.

"Hopefully these animations will inspire more people to follow in their footsteps."

The animations were produced as part of a suite of educational resources about climate change and the Reef which supports the GBRMPA's Climate Change Action Plan.

The animations will also be distributed to zoos, aquariums, wildlife parks, museums, education and visitor centres to help educate the broader public about the impacts of climate change on the Great Barrier Reef.

To view the animations go to [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au) or [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

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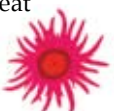
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[www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au)





While the year 2009 draws to a close, the last two months have continued to be busy for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).

On Wednesday 25 November significant amendments to the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Regulations 1983* came into effect. The changes follow amendments made to the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* last year. While zoning boundaries have not changed, the amendments allow increased flexibility for addressing breaches of zoning rules. The changes also establish the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as a nationally protected matter under national environment law (the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*).

The number of Reef Guardian Councils grew to 10 as we welcomed Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook and Tablelands Councils to the program. We look forward to continuing to work closely with all the Reef Guardian Councils to address the pressures facing the Reef.

The innovative Pro-vision Reef Stewardship Action Plan was officially launched earlier this month and is regarded as a global benchmark for sustainability in the aquarium industry. I commend Pro-vision Reef for initiating and developing this plan that begins to set uniform standards for marine aquarium collectors along the Reef to ensure aquarium stocks are sustainably sourced.

The 10 major annual awards for the Reef Guardian Schools program were recently announced and the winners received their \$1000 cheque to continue their environmental activities within their schools. Although these 10 schools were recognised for their outstanding environmental efforts, all Reef Guardian Schools across Queensland are to be congratulated for their hard work throughout the year and their commitment to their Reef Guardian School activities and ultimately improving the outlook for the Reef.

Our hard-working volunteers at Reef HQ Aquarium were honoured with a Queensland Tourism Award for Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or Volunteer Group. The Reef HQ Aquarium Volunteers Association members were recognised for their strong, on-going personal commitment to Reef HQ and the Great Barrier Reef's future. I congratulate and thank each of the volunteers who dedicate their time to Reef HQ Aquarium.

Thank you for your interest and support for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and I wish you and your families all the best for the upcoming festive season.

Regards

Russell Reichelt  
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park  
Authority

## New Reef life to be uncovered

*The creepiest, the crawliest, and some of the most obscure marine creatures will soon get their day in the sun thanks to a new project which aims to find and name 500 of the more cryptic coral reef species in the next three years.*

Waste removing octocorals (or soft corals), infectious parasites like flatworms and tapeworms, vacuum cleaning isopods (a type of crustacean), reef eroding polychaetes (or marine worms) and marine algae are amongst the species that Australian scientists will search for in an expedition to decode the biodiversity of coral reefs.

Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett announced the \$1.2 million dollar project following the publication of the report *Numbers of Living Species in Australia and the World* by the Australian Biological Resources Study.

"The report shows that the science of species discovery is alive and well – in

the past three years in Australia, we've discovered 48 reptiles, eight frogs, eight mammals, 1184 flowering plants and 904 spiders, mites and scorpions.

"But we have a long way to go – we have discovered and named only about a quarter of Australia's estimated number of flora and fauna. We need this essential information to do a better job of managing our biodiversity against the threats of invasive species, habitat loss and climate change."

It's estimated that well over 90 per cent of reef life is unknown to science and the project aims to benefit the nation by describing more of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem which is worth more than \$6 billion to Australia's economy.

The project represents a partnership between the Australian Biological Resources Study and BHP Billiton and will add value to the ambitious Census of Coral Reef Ecosystems (CReefs) project that is systematically surveying life on Australian reefs.

"The Australian Institute of Marine Science is leading the species discovery, BHP Billiton is funding the expeditions, and the Australian Government and BHP are each contributing \$600 000 over three years to ensure the discovered species are named and described," Minister Garrett said.

"This is a great partnership between government and industry to build our scientific knowledge."



*The search is on for unknown Reef species*



# New plan helps safeguard jewels of the reef

*New industry standards, ensuring aquarium stocks are sustainably sourced from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, were officially unveiled in Townsville recently.*

Licensed aquarium fish and coral collectors association, Pro-vision Reef, developed the plan for uniform industry standards to ensure their industry operated in a sustainable manner and is adaptable to climate change.

Regarded as a global benchmark for sustainability in the aquarium industry, the plan details low impact strategies for collecting. It also requires Pro-vision Reef members, who represent 90 per cent of active licensees, to provide information on the health of habitats at collection sites.

Pro-vision Reef President Lyle Squire Jr said that while their industry operated within the world's highest standards of fishery management, it was the duty of all industries to demonstrate their best efforts to protect the environment and to plan for climate change.

"Our Stewardship Action Plan is an industry led, bottom up approach to building community understanding and confidence in our day-to-day practices," he said.

"It describes what we do in the water and demonstrates our long-term



## PROVISION REEF

Promoting Sustainable Reef Harvest

commitment to protecting the marine environment.

"The plan is independently overseen and provides opportunities for community concerns to be addressed. We are serious in our endeavour to create an international standard on the basis of the fishery on the Great Barrier Reef and in the Coral Sea.

"In developing the plan we consulted with coral reef scientists and collaborated with fishery and protected area managers to ensure that our initiative is the real deal.

"To ensure the validity and continuous improvement of the plan, our industry has committed funds to independent research that will examine and guide our practices, particularly in light of predictions related to climate change."

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Chairman Russell Reichelt welcomed the plan by Pro-vision Reef as one of the first fishing industry-driven initiatives of its kind, recognising its importance for the long-term health of the Great Barrier Reef.

"Climate change is one of the greatest threats to coral reefs worldwide and the Queensland marine aquarium industry is to be commended for ensuring its activities

are sustainable in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park," he said.

"The Stewardship Action Plan is an excellent initiative, drawing together industry local knowledge and all available research to help this commercial industry adapt to the effects of climate change.

"The plan provides a great model to help other fishing sectors develop their own strategies to address the impacts of climate change."

Jim Groves, Director General of Fisheries Queensland in the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, agreed the plan was a significant achievement.

"By taking practices above and beyond already world-class fisheries management standards this industry has shown its commitment to environmental conservation, sustainable use and co-management of marine resources," he said.

"This industry is establishing an important precedent for eco-friendly and profitable fisheries of the future in Queensland."

The Stewardship Action Plan was developed by Pro-vision Reef in conjunction with marine management agencies. The plan is available online at [www.pro-visionreef.org](http://www.pro-visionreef.org).

## Reef HQ Aquarium volunteers honoured with tourism award

*The hard-working dedicated volunteers of Reef HQ Aquarium recently received a coveted Queensland Tourism Award at a gala ceremony on the Gold Coast.*

The phones were running hot between Townsville and the Gold Coast after the announcement that the Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or Volunteer Group category was taken out by the Reef HQ Volunteers Association.

Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading the Hon. Peter Lawlor said volunteers are the face of our tourism industry and are often the first local a visitor meets.

"I congratulate all of the Reef HQ volunteers without whom Reef HQ Aquarium would not be able to operate as successfully as it does," he said.

The award celebrates the strong, on-going personal commitment made

by an individual or team of volunteers who freely give their time and skill, contributing to the professionalism of the tourism industry and the positive image of tourism in Queensland.

Reef HQ Aquarium Director Fred Nucifora said the volunteer group were very dedicated to Reef HQ and the future of the Great Barrier Reef.

"Our volunteers give the Great Barrier Reef a voice and impart important messages about the Reef and its outlook to visitors.

"Visitors experiences of Reef HQ Aquarium and the Great Barrier Reef are enriched by our volunteer group and this award is certainly well-deserved," he said.



*Proud members of Reef HQ Volunteers Association Management Committee accept award supported by Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Chairman and staff*

# New avenues to deal with zoning breaches on the Great Barrier Reef

*Amendments to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 which came into effect recently provide increased flexibility for addressing breaches of zoning rules in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park but do not change zone boundaries.*

From 25 November 2009 there are other options to address zoning breaches, such as civil penalty provisions as an alternative to criminal prosecution.

Infringement notices now also apply to a wider range of fishing offences as an alternative to criminal prosecutions and officers investigating marine incidents have broader scope for investigation and evidence collection.

## Key new enforcement mechanisms and provisions include:

- Companies and individuals who breach zoning provisions and other Act offences can now be subject to either civil penalties (large fines) or criminal prosecution, depending on the nature of the offence. Civil penalties have been available under Australian Government environmental legislation for many years, and are commonly used in environmental matters and matters involving companies. Civil penalties are an alternative to criminal prosecution that is particularly valuable when companies are involved and where costs to remediate damage to the Marine Park are being sought (for example, where a ship runs aground on a reef).
- How illegal recreational fishing is dealt with has been already addressed with the introduction of on-the-spot fines for illegal fishing in 2006. To reduce legal processes, this system will be expanded so that infringement notices cover a broader range of offences under the Act and Regulations.
- Officers investigating marine offences in the Great Barrier Reef will have enhanced capacity for investigation and evidence collection.
- Where a serious risk to the Marine Park environment exists, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority will be empowered to issue directions that require a person or group to cease an activity to avoid, mitigate or eliminate the risk.

More information of the new regulations is available at [www.gbrmpa.gov.au](http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au).

These changes follow amendments to the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* as a result of the Australian Government's review of the Act in 2006.

These changes will have no impact on the majority of fishers and commercial operators who currently do the right thing and follow the zoning rules in place in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

# New prawn trawling device set to reduce impacts

*New prawn trawling technology is showing positive results for both fishers and the Great Barrier Reef in terms of reducing by-catch, cutting fuel consumption and having significantly less impact on the sea floor.*

The benefits are thanks to a redesign of traditional prawn trawling otter boards, which are used to keep the mouths of trawl nets open.

Traditional otter boards are made of timber or steel and work at a high angle of attack with a heavy steel shoe that unfortunately has a scraping action on the seabed. On soft sediment areas, the shoe can dig up to 15 cm into the seabed, creating a turbid cloud and scaring unwanted fish towards the net mouth.

A new type of otter board called the Batwing has been designed to reduce the environmental impacts (footprint) of traditional prawn trawling and was the runner up in the World Wildlife Fund 2009 International Smartgear competition, to reward innovative ideas for reducing by-catch.

Inventor Dr David Sterling said that although still in the testing phase, Batwing otter boards are already proving to be a win-win solution with benefits for both fishers and the environment.

"The Batwing boards have been designed to reduce drag by 70 per cent and sea trials are showing significant cuts in fuel costs.

"The new design has a range of environmental benefits as well," David said.

"Because the Batwing otter board has low direct contact with the sea floor it can substantially reduce damage to benthic ecosystems.

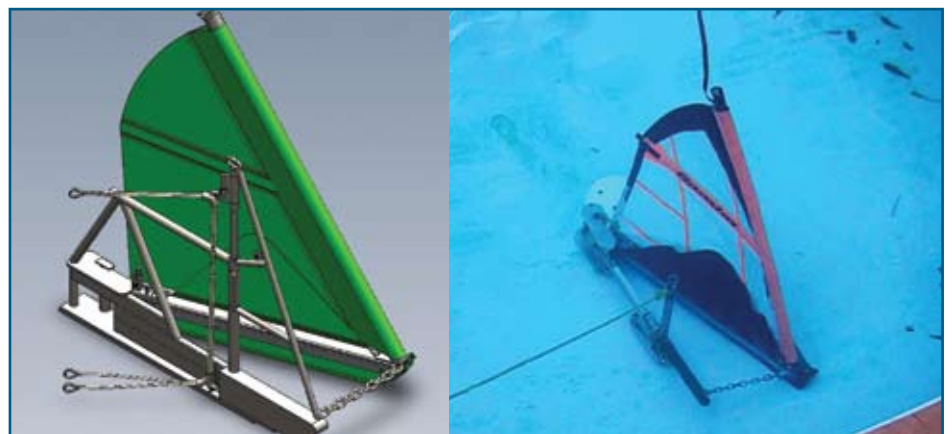
"Sea trials are showing that the Batwing board is reducing by-catch which means less wear and tear on the

trawling gear and less damage to the target catch," he said.

"This results in less processing effort when the catch is landed on the vessel.

"All of this goes a long way to reducing the carbon footprint, by-catch, benthic habitat disturbance and overall environmental impact associated with prawn trawling."

Batwing otter boards are currently undergoing commercial implementation and testing on a prawn trawler in Moreton Bay.



Batwing boards – a new concept in otter board technology for prawn trawlers





## Wet tropic Councils unite to protect the Great Barrier Reef

*Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook and Tablelands Councils celebrated their commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef by officially becoming Reef Guardian Councils recently.*

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Chairman Russell Reichelt said the Great Barrier Reef was facing unprecedented pressures and it was initiatives like Reef Guardian Councils that would help ensure the Reef was well placed to meet the challenges ahead.

"The Great Barrier Reef is at a crossroad and it is decisions made in the next few years that are likely to determine its long-term future.

"Initiatives such as the Reef Guardian Councils program will help to ensure the resilience of the Reef in the face of a changing climate.

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

"The program recognises councils' existing environmental projects while providing them with a fantastic opportunity to broaden current on-ground projects and engage their local community in the idea that we all have a part to play in ensuring our Reef remains healthy for future generations.



*GBRMPA Chairman Russell Reichelt, Cairns Mayor Cr Val Schier, Cook Mayor Cr Peter Scott, Tablelands Mayor Cr Tom Gilmore, Cassowary Coast Mayor Cr Bill Shannon with students from Gordonvale State School*

"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.

"We are delighted that Cairns, Cassowary Coast, Cook and Tablelands 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."

Speaking on behalf of the four councils, Cassowary Coast Mayor Bill Shannon said the program would provide a clear link between councils' current environmental initiatives and the Great Barrier Reef.

"As councils located within the Great Barrier Reef catchment, we have a unique challenge and responsibility to ensure that our environmental practices are among the best in Australia.

"We are looking forward to identifying future initiatives under the Reef Guardian Program that will help to further protect Australia's national icon."

Russell said the joining of the four councils would bring the total number of Reef Guardian Councils to 10.

"We congratulate all of the new Reef Guardian 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."

## Queensland Seafood Industry Association announces new Board of Directors

*A new Board of Directors has recently been elected by members at the Annual General Meeting of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA).*

Newly elected QSIA President Michael Gardner said the Directors brought to the Board a wide array of

valuable skills, as well as enormous professional experience and qualifications.

"I am particularly pleased that seven fellow Directors from the previous Board had nominated for the new Board and have been elected," he said.

The QSIA Board includes fisherman experienced in each of Queensland's four main commercial fisheries as well as the post harvest sector while others have backgrounds in fisheries research, events management and business development.

The new Board of Directors is, Dr Michael Gardner (Brisbane),

Mr Michael Garrahy (Gympie), Mr Bill Gilliland (Mooloolaba), Mr Paul Higginbottom (Mooloolaba), Mrs Elaine Lewthwaite (Hervey Bay), Mr Stephen Murphy (Hervey Bay), Mr Tony Riesenweber (Brisbane), Mr Greg Smith (Bowen) and Dr Andrew Tobin (Townsville).

The QSIA is the peak industry body representing the Queensland Seafood Industry. Members include professional fishers, seafood processors, marketers, retailers and other businesses associated with the seafood industry. Further information can be found at [www.queenslandseafood.com.au](http://www.queenslandseafood.com.au).





## ... and the winner is!

Ten Reef Guardian Schools have recently been recognised for their hard work to protect the Great Barrier Reef when they each received a prestigious Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Reef Guardian Award.

Each winning school received \$1000 for future on-ground school activities in recognition of their work in a range of Reef Guardian Schools projects.

Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett said through the Reef Guardian Schools program Queensland schools are working to protect the Great Barrier Reef and improve its outlook and these awards acknowledge the hard work schools have undertaken over the last 12 months.

"Our Great Barrier Reef is a national treasure and it is fantastic to recognise future generations who are working towards protecting this great Australian icon," Minister Garrett said.

Throughout the year the Reef Guardian Schools have initiated and delivered a number of innovative activities and programs all focussed on protecting the Great Barrier Reef.

GBRMPA Reef Guardian Schools Program Manager Megan Sperring said the efforts of all the Reef Guardian schools was inspiring.

"I congratulate the winning schools and thank all the Reef Guardian Schools for their hard work this year towards safeguarding the Reef and improving its resilience".

### Champions Award

**Winner: Tagai College (Torres Strait)**

Tagai College Champions have provided mentoring and support for all 16 satellite primary schools in the Torres Strait.



Tagai College students wear their hand-made dugong masks during a Reef Guardian activity

### Sea Stars Award

**Winner: Gordonvale State School (Cairns)**

The Gordonvale Sea Stars have led the way in many projects and developed working relationships with Mulgrave Landcare and Catchment Group, Cairns Regional Council, Ergon Energy and local businesses to get their projects up and running.



Proud Gordonvale State School students with their Sea Stars Award



Stuart State School students in front of their school sign that proudly announces their Reef Guardian Award

### Water Warriors Award

**Winner: Stuart State School (Townsville)**

Sturt State School's Water Warriors have undertaken many projects with a water quality focus, including the adoption and on-going maintenance of nearby Stuart Creek and a drain stencilling program reminding us what goes down the drain flows to the Reef.



## Waste Watchers Award

**Winner: Yorkeys Knob State School (Cairns)**

The Yorkeys Knob Waste Watchers take the three 'R's of reuse, reduce and recycle seriously with their Reef Guardian club directing activities such as a re-use bin, worm farm and regular emu parades.

## Learning Legends Award

**Winner: Clinton State School (Gladstone)**

Clinton State School's Learning Legends use the outdoor classroom as inspiration, encouraging activities that have a Reef protection focus.



Clinton State School students tend their wheelbarrow veggie patch

## Action and Adventures Award

**Winner: Port Douglas State School**  
Action and Adventures at Port Douglas included riding push bikes to sporting and other events such as beach clean ups reducing the schools environmental footprint.



Burdekin Christian College students plant trees during a Reef Guardian activity

## Community Connection Award

**Winner: Burdekin Christian College (Ayr)**

Burdekin Christian College Community Connectors have forged many positive relationships within the local community including the Burdekin Shire Council, Burdekin Bowen Integrated Floodplain Management Advisory Committee and NQ Dry Tropics.



Yorkeys Knob State School students show off their Reef Guardian Award with school Principal Rod Kettle

## Habitat Heroes Award

**Winner: St Joseph's Catholic School (Bundaberg)**

The Habitat Heroes of St Joseph's have contributed to the restoration of Bundaberg Creek by planting 2000 native trees along its banks.



GBRMPA's Leonie Madigan and Judy Warner from NQ Dry Tropics with Townsville State High students holding their r-Amp it Down Award

## r-Amp it Down Award

**Winner: Townsville State High School**

Townsville State High students are switched on when it comes to saving energy and have instigated a number of energy saving measures in classrooms.

## Bright Sparks Award

**Winner: Cairns School of Distance Education**

The Cairns School of Distance Education have a unique and innovative way of delivering the Reef Guardian Schools program where students homes and communities are their Reef Guardian schools.



Cairns School of Distance Education teacher Helen McLaren is the happy recipient of the Bright Sparks Award from GBRMPA's John Barrett



# Hybrid solar power system energises Reef island

*Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort is dramatically reducing its carbon footprint by being one of the first island resorts in Australia to move almost entirely to renewable energy with the launch of a hybrid solar power system.*

Sitting 80km off Queensland's coast at the southern tip of the Great Barrier Reef, Lady Elliot Island's annual power consumption has been reduced by at least 75 per cent using a combination of energy reduction measures.

Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort Managing Director Peter Gash said the changes would go a long way to help maintain the island's pristine conditions.

"Climate change is a real threat to the Great Barrier Reef and as an environmentally committed group, we wanted to do everything we could to mitigate our carbon footprint," Peter said.

"Prior to the changes, the island was consuming more than 550 litres of diesel fuel each day, now we are using barely 160 litres of fuel each day".

The combination of solar and gas technology, water desalination and various other actions have been introduced across the island steering it towards its Advanced Ecotourism certification.



*Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort's off-grid three-phase solar hybrid power system is the largest privately owned in Queensland*

Following extensive consultation in conjunction with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and following a Level 3 Energy Audit, resort managers oversaw the design of the electrical and solar component for a hybrid solar power system.

The result is the largest privately owned, off-grid three-phase solar hybrid powered system in Queensland, costing more than \$600 000 and funded through a joint venture between Lady Elliot Island and the Australian Governments Renewable Remote

Power Generation Program administered by the Department of Environment and Resource Management.

It consists of 130m<sup>2</sup> of solar panels, battery banks with 48 cells, inverters and a new generator a third of the size of the resort's previous units. The long term goal is to run the entire resort on solar power and to use the generator as a back-up in case of emergency only. Lady Elliot is one of just three permanent resorts built on a coral cay in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

## New ambulance for Reef HQ Aquarium turtle hospital

*Reef HQ Aquarium's turtle hospital services will be given a boost with the generous donation by Townsville's Carmichael Ford of a 4x4 Ford Ranger XLT which will become the hospital's new turtle ambulance.*

Marine turtles found along the Great Barrier Reef coastline will have an even greater chance of survival as the new ambulance reduces the time lag between the discovery of stranded turtles and their transportation to the turtle hospital.

Carmichael Ford Dealer Principal Glen Sharp said he was delighted to be able to help such a worthy cause.

"The use of the marine turtle rescue vehicle will enable staff to get these injured marine animals to care more efficiently.

"With Ford Motor Company's new approach to a greener and more environmentally friendly motor industry, the joint partnership with Reef HQ Aquarium helps us achieve a common goal," he said.

The turtle hospital ambulance will help raise awareness of the plight of marine turtles and work of the turtle hospital.

Reef HQ Aquarium Director Fred Nucifora said the partnership with Carmichael Ford was important to the successful running of the turtle hospital.

"The provision of care and rehabilitation to sick and injured marine turtles is very resource intensive and the in-kind support that the turtle hospital receives from the community and corporate partners such as Carmichael Ford is vitally important to the running of the facility."

"The addition of the turtle hospital ambulance will assist the aquarium in responding quickly to rescue calls and ensuring the swift and safe delivery of injured turtles to Reef HQ Aquarium for treatment in the hospital."

The biggest threats to marine turtles are all associated with human activities including ingestion of synthetic material such as plastics, boat strikes, and entanglement in fishing gear. The impact of these threats on turtles has increased over the last few years in line with the rise in the population enjoying the Great Barrier Reef.





# Award winning environmental practices

The hard work of Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) staff has been recognised with the recent announcement of two major awards.

The Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009 was awarded 'Best Practice in Federal Government' at the inaugural Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) Queensland Public Sector Excellence Awards.

The first of what will be five yearly reports, the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 2009 has been produced to assist decision making for the Reef's long term protection.

IPAA's judging panel said as an example of best practice this report has provided an international benchmark for marine ecosystem reporting as well as establishing a process that will allow tracking of changes and trends into the future.

"The GBRMPA has excelled in all aspects of this project providing an outstanding example of Federal Government service delivery to the Australian community," the judging panel said.

The GBRMPA also received an award for Excellence in Professional Practice from the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ).

This award recognised the Authority's achievements with regard to the Outlook Report, climate change, environmental assessment and the Reef Guardian Schools program.



GBRMPA's Fergus Molloy, Margaret Johnson, Hilary Skeat and Chairman Russell Reichelt

# Reef champions honoured

Two well-respected Reef champions were recognised recently with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) announcing reefs named in their honour.

Ron Isbel, an esteemed charter boat operator and Vicki Harriott, a passionate coral reef researcher were both formally recognised with previously unnamed reefs now bearing their name.

GBRMPA Chairman Russell Reichelt said Ron Isbel, who passed away last year, had an immense knowledge of the Reef, in particular the Mackay/Capricorn area.

"Ron was a well respected operator and an avid promoter of wise use of the Reef.

"His reef knowledge was highly sought after and his vessel was regularly chartered by film and documentary crews and researchers who appreciated his insights," Russell said.

Speaking in the Gladstone Observer, Ron's son James said that his Dad sustained an unsurpassed love and respect for the sea – he had salt water in the veins, tendons made of speargun rubbers, muscles and bones like the shark and barracuda and an exterior as hard as the shell of a green turtle.

Ron Isbel Reef (Reef No 22-108) is located in the Mackay/Capricorn Management Area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park at Lat 22.065°S Long 152.632°E

Vicki Harriott who passed away in March 2005 made a vast contribution to our understanding of coral reefs.

Russell said that Vicki is remembered as a strong advocate whose work in coral reef research, education and management was internationally recognised and widely respected.

"Through her rich and varied career there were a number of highlights including establishing Townsville's Reef HQ Aquarium coral reef exhibit, the largest coral reef tank in the world at its time.

"Vicki was a pioneer in the field of coral reef research and published one of the first papers on bleaching of Great Barrier Reef corals.

"Her career took her to many places along the east coast of Australia and with her colleagues and students she developed a body of information about temperate reefs which represents one of her most important contributions to coral reef science.

"She was a particularly vibrant person whose dedication to her family, students and her work was inspiring," he said.

Vicki Harriott Reef (Reef No 15-070) is located in the Cairns/Cooktown Management Area of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park at Lat 15.503°S Long 145.618°E





## Workshop starts Traditional Owner discussions

*Traditional ecological knowledge with scientific input will inform the development of a Gladstone to Bundaberg regional Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) following a scientific workshop held recently.*

Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements are formal agreements developed by Traditional Owner groups and accredited by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Department of Environment and Resource Management.

TUMRA's describe how Traditional Owner groups work with government to manage traditional use activities in sea country.

Information on threatened species, climate change, water quality and

fisheries and related regulations were presented by both the GBRMPA and the Department of Environment and Resource Management staff over the two day workshop.

In particular, the presentations on dugong, marine turtles and fisheries were well received and generated a lot of discussion.

GBRMPA Indigenous Partnerships Acting Manager Leon Jackson said the workshop drew a good crowd from all four Traditional Owner groups of the region, namely Gurang, Goorenggooreng, Bialai and Taribelang Bunda.

"There was excellent representation and participation from all of the Traditional Owner groups," he said.

"They took on board western scientific information with their traditional ecological knowledge and came to a decision to work toward the development of a regional TUMRA.

"The decision to commence development of a regional TUMRA was a very positive outcome," he said.

Leon also mentioned that the assistance of Uncle Vincent Singleton (Woppaburra Traditional Owner) TUMRA manager from the Keppel Islands area was invaluable.

Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements assist Traditional Owner groups to work with Marine Park management agencies to best manage their sea country.

"The GBRMPA and Department of Environment and Resource Management will now work with these groups to develop and implement a TUMRA that will consider things like sustainable traditional hunting and other traditional use."

## Wunjunga the green turtle released from turtle hospital

*One very lucky green turtle was released off Townsville's Strand recently, thanks to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Reef HQ Aquarium and the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM).*

Named Wunjunga after the beach where the turtle was found suffering from an infestation of external parasites, the turtle was brought into Reef HQ Aquarium on 27 August 2009.

The green turtle was found by Department of Environment and Resource Management staff at Wunjunga Beach, south of Home Hill and approval was given to Reef HQ to house and rehabilitate the turtle at the turtle hospital until it was able to be released.

Reef HQ Aquarium Director Fred Nucifora said the successful rehabilitation of this marine turtle demonstrates why the turtle hospital is so important to these threatened species.

"It is a very proud moment for the staff and volunteers of Reef HQ Aquarium when we release a fit and healthy patient from the turtle hospital," he said.

"This turtle has been given a second chance because of the amazing support we have received from visitors, the Townsville community and our turtle hospital corporate partners.

"To ensure the long-term sustainability of marine turtles it's important that we all keep an eye out for turtles when we're out on the water and dispose of our rubbish responsibly," Fred said.

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.

Department of Environment and Resource Management Senior Conservation Officer Ian Bell said the establishment of the turtle hospital in Reef HQ will assist in maintaining marine turtle populations in the region.

"If anyone finds a stranded turtle I encourage them to call the Department of Environment and Resource Management on 1300 130 372 immediately," he said.

Reef HQ Aquarium turtle hospital was officially opened by Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett on 24 August 2009. The hospital plays a key role in rehabilitating turtles so they can be released back into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.



*Wunjunga the green turtle about to be released*



## Clean creeks for Cairns



GBRMPA's Phil Laycock with one of the driving members behind Clean Creeks for Cairns and LMAC member Glen Budge

*The Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee is passionate about working with their community to clean up local creeks and waterways.*

As part of recent Clean Up Australia Day activities, the Local Marine Advisory Committee led a two-day clean up event around

Cairns focusing on creeks and urban water catchments.

More than 20 community groups, including recreational fishing clubs and schools, participated in the Cairns Clean Up event which had one of the highest levels of participation in northern Australia.

Participants found rubbish items ranging from beer bottles to shopping trolleys, fishing line and even a bottle from 1943 which was a stark reminder of how long rubbish remains in the environment.

Following the Clean Up day, the Local Marine Advisory Committee supported a local school fishing competition aimed at removing invasive species and funded a drain stencilling project intended to raise awareness of the connection between cities and the Great Barrier Reef.

As part of their efforts to reduce marine debris and to promote their new 'Clean creeks for Cairns' program, the committee is using the phrase "what goes into our creeks ends up on the Reef".

You can help the Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee help look after the Great Barrier Reef by reducing, reusing, recycling and by disposing of rubbish properly. If you don't know how to dispose of something, contact your local council.

## Drains are only for rain

*Cairns Reef Guardian Schools are putting their environmental passion into action by raising awareness about how litter and chemicals from drains and gutters can affect the Great Barrier Reef.*

The Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) purchased material for Reef Guardian Schools to stencil reminders on drains and gutters about keeping these areas clean.

The move follows a request from Gordonvale State School to undertake drain stencilling work in their area. The LMAC plans to lend the stencils, which say "this leads to the Great Barrier Reef," to other Reef Guardian Schools.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Reef Guardian Schools Program Manager Megan Sperring said it was great to see schools and community groups working together on environmental issues.

"We're delighted that Reef Guardian Schools have teamed up with the Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee to raise awareness of the link between land based activities and the Great Barrier Reef," she said.

"Sometimes people forget that what goes down drains and gutters can end up in the marine environment, and this can impact coastal ecosystems and the plants and animals in the Great Barrier Reef."

Cairns LMAC Chairman Paul Gregory said the committee was pleased to lend their support to local Reef Guardian Schools.

"We're delighted to assist Gordonvale State School with raising awareness about the importance of protecting the Great Barrier Reef," he said.

"Because the project is such a good idea, we thought it would be worthwhile to make the stencils available to other Reef Guardian Schools so they too have the opportunity to undertake similar work."



Gordonvale State School students Nataya Ryder and Nicola White stencil a drain to remind people "This leads to the Great Barrier Reef"

## Creature Feature

### Flatback Turtle

- The flatback turtle gets its name from its relatively flat, smooth shell.
- Adult flatbacks can have shells up to one metre long and can weigh up to 90 kilograms.
- Flatback turtles are endemic to Australia, meaning they only live here.
- They require sandy beaches to nest and sand temperatures between 25 °C and 33 °C to incubate their eggs. Beaches free from light pollution are required to prevent disorientation, disturbance, and to allow nesting females to come ashore.
- Females lay about 50 eggs in each nest.
- The gender of the hatchlings is determined by the temperature of the sand. Less than 29 °C produces males and higher temperatures result in females.
- The hatchlings are usually larger than other marine turtle hatchlings and weigh around 43 grams.
- Juvenile and adult flatbacks live and feed in shallow, soft-bottomed sea bed habitats away from reefs.
- They are carnivorous, feeding mostly on soft bodied prey such as sea cucumbers, soft corals, hydroids, jellyfish, gastropod molluscs, squid, cuttlefish and crinoids (sea lilies).
- Flatback turtles are considered vulnerable and face a number of threats associated with human impacts like coastal development, light pollution, feral animal predation, some fishing activities, unsustainable take, water pollution, boat strikes, dredging, climate change and marine debris.
- Only one in about 400 will survive to adulthood.
- The flatback is one of the six species of marine turtle found on the Great Barrier Reef.



## Doing your bit to look after it!

### 10 things you can do to help marine turtles

1. **Refuse** plastic grocery bags, **Reduce** your use of plastics, **Reuse** bags and containers and **Recycle** plastic drink bottles
2. Make a big commitment and be **plastic bag free**
3. When near nesting beaches, **turn out as many lights as possible** during the main nesting and hatching season (October to April) – even while on holiday!
4. Keep turtle nests cool by **reducing your energy use**
5. **Dispose of rubbish properly**
6. **Go slow in boats** and keep an eye out for turtles
7. **Dispose of fishing rubbish** such as hooks, nets, lines and plastic bags in closed bins on land
8. **Don't approach nesting turtles**
9. **Make a donation** to a turtle rehabilitation centre or conservation society
10. **Report sightings** of injured turtles by calling the Department of Environment and Resource Management on 1300 130 372.



## Calendar of events

05 December

International Volunteer Day

07 – 13 December

Coastcare Week Life on the Edge

25 Dec – 03 January

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Christmas office closure

25 December

Reef HQ Aquarium Townsville closed

2010

International Year of Biodiversity

## GBRMPA contacts



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