SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral

Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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From River to Reef

Douglas Shire helps to improve water quality in the GBR

The Douglas Shire River Improvement Trust Project has been recognised as finalists in the Riverprize awards for 2004 for its achievements in working towards improving the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

The Douglas Shire River Improvement Trust Project has been recognised for improving water quality in the Mossman River.

The Douglas Shire River Improvement Trust was named national finalists in the Riverprize awards for their outstanding achievements in river management through the implementation of a range of projects to help improve water quality in the Mossman River.

The Trust aims to preserve the outstanding biodiversity and scenery of the Mossman River through the promotion, adoption and implementation of sustainable land management practices by all landholders, residents and visitors to the region.

According to Cr David Egan of the Douglas Shire Council, the projects and ongoing research conducted as part of the project have made significant contributions to improving the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef lagoon in the Douglas Shire region.

The Douglas Shire Water Quality Improvement Program has been made possible by funding from the Natural Heritage Trust and through the cooperation of various groups including Douglas Shire Council, the CSIRO and James Cook University, as well as the Australian and Queensland Governments through the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

"With all of these groups involved, the Douglas Shire River Improvement Trust has implemented on-the-ground projects focusing on bank stabilisation and revegetation to areas of the Mossman River that had been subject to erosion for a number of years," Cr Egan said.

"The partnerships formed to implement these water quality improvement projects have given researchers, staff and students the chance to work on real life projects, to observe and record their work in the community and the various ecosystems that make up Douglas Shire."

The water quality improvement programs encourage the community and individuals to be responsible for habitat management and the Trust provides technical advice and financial assistance to landholders to enable them to properly manage and enhance the biodiversity of key habitat areas on their properties.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority supports the implementation of these types of projects within the Great Barrier Reef Catchment through the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

Hugh Yorkston, Director of Water Quality and Coastal development at the GBRMPA said the Mossman River project was a vital step taken by local Council to help improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef in the Douglas Shire region.

The Douglas Shire River Improvement Trust, in partnership with landholder and the Natural Heritage Trust, has carried out these works to stabilise eroding banks along the Mossman River since 1997.

END

Message from the chair

the Hon Virginia Chadwick

Welcome to the first edition of our new bimonthly newsletter '*SeaRead*'.

Over the past few years, a spirit of stronger partnerships has been forged amongst the agencies, industries and communities involved in the use and management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

One of my primary goals for the future is to nurture and maintain these partnerships so we can continue to develop important strategies that will help to protect the Great Barrier Reef for generations to come.

We want to let you know what is happening within and around the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and hopefully '*SeaRead*' will offer an opportunity for us to showcase and acknowledge the efforts of our partners, staff and GBR communities.

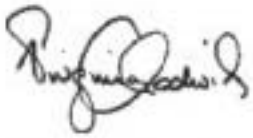
2004 has been a year of significant achievement for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority with the implementation of new zoning on 1 July 2004 creating an historic moment for the Great Barrier Reef and for Australia. Developing the Zoning Plan for the Marine Park was one of the largest and most complex public consultation and zoning processes ever undertaken in this country. We analysed over 31,000 public submissions in developing the final plan.

However, we understand that new zoning is just one of the important processes needed to protect the Great Barrier Reef for the future. Over the next twelve months, the GBRMPA will continue to monitor compliance with zoning in the Marine Park and will focus on other crucial initiatives such as the declining quality of water in the Great Barrier Reef, tourism partnerships and best practices for all Reef users.

To achieve this goal, we will continue to share and communicate our messages with industries, key stakeholders and communities and we will be encouraging you to share your goals, messages and achievements with us.

I'd value your feedback on '*SeaRead*' or story ideas through our feedback email address searead@gbrmpa.gov.au

Regards



Virginia Chadwick,
Chair, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

END

RAP wrap-up

The new Zoning Plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park came into effect on 1 July 2004 following the implementation of the Representative Areas Program (RAP).

The Program involved the most comprehensive process of community involvement for any environmental issue in Australia's history and a massive amount of material has been produced to help people understand the RAP and the new Zoning Plan.

According to RAP Manager, Dr Leanne Fernandes, the new Zoning Plan has been well received by much of the community.

"It is encouraging to note that the level of incident reports has been below average levels, indicating people who use the Marine Park have good levels of understanding and support for the new Zoning Plan," she said.

"We have found that by establishing and using over 200 Community Access Points throughout the region to help distribute zoning information, people have been able to easily access the information they require."

Dr Fernandes said the GBRMPA is committed to continuing education about the Zoning Plan and compliance with it and the community has an essential role in this task.

Some of the ways the GBRMPA has communicated information about the new Zoning Plan include:

- Over 100 meetings were held with stakeholders in approximately 40 coastal Queensland towns
- Eighteen detailed 1:250,000 scale maps were prepared for use by Marine Park users and four overview 1:1,000,000 scale maps were prepared to provide an introduction to the new zoning
- Over 700,000 new zoning maps have been printed and distributed since June
- A new website interface containing the new zoning information was launched in June. Since then GBRMPA has delivered over 40,000 copies of new zoning maps, plans and guides or an average of 400 maps each day via the website
- Over 20,000 packages of information about the new Zoning Plan were sent to all those who made submissions and also to all permitted commercial operators in the Marine Park
- 12,500 CD-ROMs were produced containing all the zoning information including the information about the coordinates of the new zones
- A booklet was prepared offering more detailed information about the new Zoning Plan than available on the back of the maps but less complicated than the legal Zoning Plan document. 200,000 of these have since been printed.
- 140 boat ramp signs along the Queensland coast were replaced.

Information about the new Zoning Plan is still available at over 240 Community Access Points including bait and tackle shops, ship chandlers, Visitor Information Centres, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service offices and Boating and Fishing Patrol offices.

The GBRMPA will continue to closely monitor the compliance with and impact of the new zoning over the coming years.

END

LMAC to help their local Community

The Capricorn Coast Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) will make navigating yellow zones in their region a little easier for Reef users soon with the production of a brochure picturing local zones and regional information.

The Capricorn Coast LMAC is planning to produce a fishing guide that features new zoning in the Capricorn Coast region.

As a joint project between the Capricorn Coast LMAC and the local Sunfish branch, the guide will include the zones in the coastal area of the region, particularly extra information on yellow zone boundaries,as well as a more detailed section on the Great Keppel and North Keppel Islands.

Graham Scott, Chair of the Capricorn Coast LMAC said the guide would help the community to understand the zones and would be a useful product for fishers to study and take out on the boat with them.

"Over the next six months, we will also be focusing on projects for community monitoring, particularly in relation to the RAP zoning implementation and water quality monitoring initiatives," Mr Scott said.

"Our LMAC was fairly heavily involved in the zoning process and we want to ensure the zoning and other strategies benefit our community as much as possible."

There are currently ten LMACs in different regions along the Great Barrier Reef coast. LMACs were set up by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) to involve the community in the management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and help the GBRMPA keep in touch with local marine issues.

LMACs play an educational role by increasing public awareness about impacts on the Reef and benefit local communities by providing an important link for matters relating to the Great Barrier Reef and other marine issues.

LMACs are:

- Cape York Marine Advisory Group
- Port Douglas LMAC
- Cairns LMAC
- Mission Beach LMAC
- Hinchinbrook LMAC
- Townsville LMAC
- Whitsunday LMAC
- Mackay LMAC
- Capricorn Coast LMAC
- Gladstone LMAC

The GBRMPA is also in the process of putting together an LMAC in Bundaberg. END

'New look' GBRMPA website

Besides zoning maps, coordinates and related information, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority website also provides a range of information about activities on the Reef such as tourism, fishing, boating and research and it provides current information about the issues that are impacting on the Great Barrier Reef such as declining water quality.

www.gbrmpa.gov.au

GBRMPA Awards

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has received a number of awards recently recognising the outstanding achievements of the Representative Areas Program that resulted in the new Zoning Plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Leanne Fernandes, Acting Director Conservation, Biodiversity and World Heritage at GBRMPA said all staff were delighted with the recent recognition.

"Staff throughout the organisation worked incredibly hard during the Representative Areas Program and also during the formulation and implementation of the new Zoning Plan. We are both flattered and proud to have received these awards," Ms Fernandes said.

To date the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has received four awards:

Winner of Category 3: Government Leading by example for a sustainable future in the 2004 International Banksia Awards.

This award recognises the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for its valuable steps towards ensuring a sustainable future for the Great Barrier Reef.

Winner of the Botanic Gardens Trust Eureka Prize for Biodiversity Research in the 2004 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes.

This prize recognised the innovative scientific research that created the basis for the new Zoning Plan, which provides an outstanding and ongoing contribution to the conservation of Australia's biodiversity.

Winner in the 2004 Regional Heads Forum Excellence Awards

Receiving the Overall Excellence Award and the Excellence in Leadership Award.

Winner of the 'Special Achievement in GIS' award at the Environmental Systems Research Institute's 24th Annual User Conference.

This award is given to user sites around the world in recognition of their outstanding work in the GIS field. The GBRMPA received the prize from over 100,000 user sites worldwide. END

Amendment to Cairns Area Plan of Management

The amendment to the Cairns Area Plan of Management has been approved by the Board of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and will be implemented as soon as possible.

According to Nick Wynn, GBRMPA Planning Project Manager this amendment to the Cairns Area Plan of Management will provide for greater operational flexibility for the boutique cruise industry and large day boats by providing an increased choice of destinations.

"It will also provide for growth in tourism based in the Cooktown area by allowing operators from that area to gain a greater level of access to the Cairns Planning Area than previously permitted," Mr Wynn said.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority first released the Cairns Area Plan of Management in June 1998 to provide strategies for the protection of the Cairns Area. The Cairns Area includes some of the most spectacular reefs in the Marine Park and abundant wildlife including dugong, whales, dolphins, turtles and seabirds. These natural attractions are the focus of a dynamic tourism industry, which accounts for over 50% of the total annual visitation to the Great Barrier Reef.

The Cairns Area Plan of Management is going through its third round of amendments. To make the amendment, the GBRMPA has worked closely with the permit holders and operators affected by the Plan. The amendment to the Plan went through a formal consultation process with more than 30 submissions received. END

Reef Guardian Schools recognised

Reef Guardian Schools throughout Queensland are becoming recognised as more than just guardians of the Great Barrier Reef.

Recently a number of Reef Guardian Schools entered the Comalco Green & Healthy Schools 2004 program organised by the popular Keep Australia Beautiful Council Queensland.

Kylie Johnston, Operations Manager for the Keep Australia Beautiful Council Queensland, said the awards attracted entries from 363 Queensland schools with 43 of these being Reef Guardian Schools. Sixteen of these schools were recognised as Comalco Green & Healthy Schools winners.

"It's fantastic that schools and their communities are embracing these programs and in turn being recognised for them," Ms Johnston said.

A special Comalco Green & Healthy Schools Program award was presented to Ms Kym Teufel from Cooktown State School, who won the Beverage Industry Environment Council Outstanding Accomplishment Award (Far North Queensland Region) for the implementation of the Reef Guardian Program into her school.

"Ms Teufel has worked enthusiastically to implement the goals of the Comalco Green & Healthy Schools program by actively engaging students in a number of environmental projects both within the school and in their local community," she said.

Kym at Cooktown SS - Comalco Green and Healthy School

"Ms Teufel is dedicated to the Reef Guardian Schools and Comalco Green & Healthy Schools principles and passionately passes on these values to her students."

The students and teachers at Cooktown State School have shown they are highly committed to a number of successful environmental projects including Reef Guardian activities like screen printing t-shirts and bags, which are sold to the P&C, Cook Shire Council and local businesses, as well as during the Cooktown Festival Weekend to help raise community awareness.

END

Reef Guardian Schools who have been recognised as Comalco Green and Healthy School winners:

- ✓ Belgian Gardens SS, Townsville
- ✓ Holy Spirit School, Townsville
- ✓ Emerald SHS
- ✓ Nerimbera SS
- ✓ Taranganba SS
- ✓ Comet SS, Emerald
- ✓ Boyne Island SS
- ✓ St Joseph's School Park Avenue
- ✓ Hambeldon SS
- ✓ Freshwater SS
- ✓ South Johnstone SS in Innisfail
- ✓ Tully SS
- ✓ St Andrew's Catholic College
- ✓ Woongara SS in Bundaberg
- ✓ Agnes Waters State School
- ✓ Cooktown State School

Thankyou to Community Access Points

Shaun from About Town Bait & Tackle, Ayr

The implementation of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's new Zoning Plan has been a massive effort on the part of many people including the Community Access Points who have been instrumental in getting the new zoning information and maps out to users of the Marine Park.

Bruce Kingston, GBRMPA Director of Communication and Education said the assistance and support from the Community Access Points in helping to distribute zoning maps and related products has been fantastic.

"Without the cooperation of the 230 bait and tackle shops, ship chandlers, Queensland Parks and Wildlife offices and many other retailers and organisations who became Community Access Points, we wouldn't have been able to effectively ensure that everyone who needed zoning products was able to access them," Mr Kingston said.

Mr Kingston said the Community Access Points have enabled locals and holidaymakers access to zoning information all along the Great Barrier Reef coastline.

"The response to the maps release has been overwhelming and we could not have achieved such a successful distribution without the work and efforts of the Community Access Points," he said.

"We thank these organisations and businesses for helping us raise awareness and understanding of the new zoning."

Zoning maps and information can be obtained from Community Access Points located from Brisbane to Bamaga. To find the one closest to you log onto the GBRMPA website or phone 1800 990 177.

END

What's new on
www.reefED.edu.au
educate to keep it great

EPA Hotline provides one-stop shop

EPA hotline 1300 130 372

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)/Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) now provides a single contact point for the public to report pollution incidents, marine animal strandings and wildlife issues, and for general enquiries about a range of other Agency services.

The new integrated service, which is being promoted as the **EPA Hotline** is available through the previous pollution hotline number **1300 130 372 (1300 130 EPA)**.

It replaces existing hotlines for marine strandings and wildlife, and will re-route calls regarding licensing and parks/camping enquiries to the Ecoaccess Customer Service Unit and Naturally Queensland Information Centre, as needed. It also provides links for urban wildlife enquiries to the Queensland Herbarium for plant identification and the Queensland Museum for animal identification.

Calls will be managed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The new service allows calls to be prioritised so that urgent incidents can be followed up immediately. While incidents can be reported any time, they may be followed up the next working day.

How it works:

- During business hours, EPA officers will answer calls to the hotline that require personal attention and follow standard customer response procedures.
- The most common wildlife-related calls will be directed to recorded responses that provide useful standard information, refer clients to the Agency website or offer options to receive information packs or talk to Agency officers.
- Outside business hours, a single external service provider will answer calls about pollution and emergency wildlife issues (eg marine strandings) with standard response procedures as needed.

END

Night time beach visitors

Beaches along the Great Barrier Reef coast may have some flippered night time visitors in the coming months as female marine turtles come ashore to nest.

Sarah Pierce from the Species Conservation Unit said most female turtles come ashore to lay eggs between October and February, laying about 120 eggs each.

"The hatchlings then emerge from the nest seven to twelve weeks later, usually between December and May," Ms Pierce said.

Nesting marine turtle.

Six of the world's seven species of marine turtle live in the waters around Australia, and all six are found within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

"All six of these species of turtles are listed in various categories of threat. This is one of the reasons why it is essential people take care when watching female turtles lay eggs or the hatchlings emerge from the sand and make their way to the ocean," she said.

"A number of best environmental practices for turtle watching have been developed to assist people to do the right thing when they are around turtles."

Ms Pierce said human interaction with nesting turtles and hatchlings is not the only danger to turtles. Boating and shipping can create potential hazards for marine wildlife including turtles.

"Vessels can strike, injure or kill turtles, scare them from their feeding areas or disrupt social bonds within populations of turtles. If you are on the water be aware that these animals may be nearby and travel slowly." she said.

"Another major threat to turtles and other marine animals is garbage. Dumping of garbage is prohibited inside the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, but increasing amounts of debris enter the ocean every year."

Ms Pierce said discarded fishing lines can entangle marine turtles, while other kinds of garbage, like plastic bags, may be mistaken for food and ingested.

The long-term survival of turtles is uncertain because of a number of threats, including human disturbance in their foraging and nesting areas. If these animals are to survive for generations to come, people must be aware of and respect them in their habitat.

For more information about marine turtles in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area see the following websites:

www.gbrmpa.gov.au **www.deh.gov.au/coasts/species/turtles**

Best Environmental Practices

If you are around nesting or hatching turtles please ensure you follow these best environmental practices for turtle watching:

- ✓ Keep the use of lighting (e.g. torches) to a minimum.
  Hint: put a red cloth or cellophane over the torch
- ✓ Lights should be no more than a three-volt, two-cell, hand-held torch
- ✓ Do not approach too close to turtles leaving the water and moving up the beach
- ✓ Do not shine lights directly on turtles leaving the water, moving up the beach, building nests, or laying eggs
- ✓ Avoid loud noise and sudden movements near turtles while they are laying their eggs
- ✓ Do not touch the turtles, hatchlings or eggs
- ✓ Keep dogs away
- ✓ Do not light campfires on turtle nesting beaches.

END

reef guardian school

Students dress up for celebrations

Woongarra costume winners

Students at Woongarra State School in Bundaberg dressed up as reef creatures for their Reef Guardian celebrations recently, which incorporated the presentation of a plaque to recognise the school for their commitment to the Reef Guardian Schools Program.

Kate Bowmaker, GBRMPA Communications Coordinator, said students showcased their achievements and shared their reef-protection messages with members of the school community and their parents and friends.

"Students also enthusiastically demonstrated some of their reef activities and initiatives to representatives from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and other government agencies," Ms Bowmaker said

"It was fantastic to see students and teachers at Woongarra transform their school into a magnificent reef scene for the celebrations with many students and teachers dressing up as Reef creatures," she said.

Throughout the year, students at Woongarra State School have participated in a range of activities to protect their local land and marine environments such as helping to revegetate coastal areas, printing calico bags and developing programs to reduce, reuse and recycle. Students have also studied marine-related topics in their classrooms.

END

Plaque presentations for Reef Guardian Schools

Reef Guardian Schools that registered in 2004 have been presented with plaques of recognition for their commitment to protecting local land and marine environments and the Great Barrier Reef.

The Reef Guardian Schools Program is an important education initiative of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) that encourages students and teachers to undertake activities that can make a difference and help keep the Great Barrier Reef great for the future.

According to Angela Colliver, National Education Programs Manager at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the plaque presentations to Reef Guardian Schools provides the GBRMPA with an opportunity to thank the school and recognise students for their efforts to protect the Reef.

"It is wonderful to visit these schools and see how much effort and commitment they have put into their Reef Guardian activities. I always learn a lot from the students and teachers who have really made a commitment to help protect the Reef," Ms Colliver said.

"It is also great to see that these schools are supported by so much of their community with parents, teachers, local industries and government agencies assisting the student's in many of their initiatives."

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has recently received a $10,000 grant from the Natural Heritage Trust to broaden the Reef Guardian Schools Program to minimise plastic bags in the marine environment.

END

Education at Reef HQ

Reef HQ Education recently launched four new education units to further encourage teachers to incorporate visits to the world's largest living coral reef aquarium as part of their school work program.

Fred Nucifora, Reef HQ Education Manager, said in addition to a unit studying threatened species three other units in which students use the beauty and wonder of the reef as inspiration for creative thinking.

"We now offer students and teachers three units which aim to provide inspiration to students in the areas of writing, visual arts and business," he said.

"Students can visit Reef HQ and find inspiration for their writing or visual arts projects from the myriad of creatures that inhabit the aquarium. We also offer a unit that looks at Reef HQ from a commercial business point of view."

"The other new unit gives students an insight into the threatened species of the Great Barrier Reef."

Reef HQ Education gives students of all ages and learning abilities a unique environment to experience and learn about the Great Barrier Reef. Reef HQ's innovative education programs are age-specific and allow students to work towards objectives outlined in syllabus documents. All of the Reef HQ Education Programs are supported by our Reef Education website www.reefed.edu.au

Reef HQ Education is facilitated by a team of qualified educators, students of all ages will:

- observe more than 5000 live sea creatures;
- experience the habitats, ecosystems and behaviour of reef creatures;
- analyse the interactions that exist between reef creatures;
- appreciate the requirements for a healthy ecosystem;
- discover the latest in reef research; and
- be empowered to take actions that will protect the future of the Great Barrier Reef.

To find out more contact the Education Team:
Phone: (07) 4750 0800
Fax: (07) 4772 6093
Email: education@reefHQ.com.au

END

Protecting fish spawning on the Great Barrier Reef

The Queensland Coral Reef Fin Fish Fishery has undergone management changes recently. The Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries introduced a management plan for this fishery in 2003. As part of a suite of management measures, spawning season closures are being used to protect spawning fish during the peak spawning season.

Three, nine-day periods have been implemented as closed seasons for the taking of all coral reef fin fish in October, November and December each year around the new moon period. The closures are designed to protect spawning aggregations of most coral reef fish species.

For 2004 the closures will be 8 October to 16 October; 6 November to 14 November; and 6 December to 14 December. During these times Coral Reef Fin Fish species cannot be taken, however, these closures do not apply to the taking of certain other fish species.

Martin Russell, Fisheries Project Manager and Chair of the Society for the Conservation of Reef Fish Aggregations (SCRFA) said this is a proactive step towards maintaining reef fish populations by allowing them to spawn.

"On a global scale, many coral reef fish are being targeted by fishing during the spawning seasons. A key international initiative to address this is the formation of the Society for the Conservation of Reef Fish Aggregations (SCRFA)," Mr Russell said.

"The SCRFA strives to promote and facilitate the international conservation and management of reef fish spawning aggregations."

The key recommendation of SCRFA is for fish spawning aggregation sites to be conserved and protected, in time and/or space, to ensure persistence of the species that form them, the integrity of reef ecosystems and the livelihoods of fishers in coastal communities that depend on aggregating species.

For more information on SCRFA visit www.SCRFA.org. For information on spawning closures visit **www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fish.guide.**

END

MARINE PARK PARTNERSHIPS

Profile of QPWS Officer
Carolyn Williams

Carolyn is the Senior Conservation Officer in the Whitsunday District and has been in the Whitsundays as a Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service employee since February 2001.

In her role Carolyn assesses applications for commercial, scientific and educational use of the Marine Park and makes recommendations as to whether a permit should or shouldn't be issued, as well as what type of permit conditions are applied.

The Whitsunday's area makes up approximately 1% of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, however EMC records suggest use is approximately 45% of all tourism use of the Marine Park. Consequently, Carolyn spends most of her time assessing applications for tourist program permits - people who want to run a tourism business in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and associated State Marine Park.

Carolyn's time is also spent interpreting legislation, finding records of natural resource values of a particular area and coming up with strategies to prevent any further destruction of habitat, ecosystems and bird nests.

Carolyn also finds some time to respond to marine animal stranding calls and oil spills in the Marine Park and to assist with dive operations. Carolyn has been instrumental in advancing the EPA's dive policy and ensuring dive standards are maintained as District Dive Officer over the last few years.

In her role, Carolyn aims to promote a high level of best practice amongst the tourism operators in the Whitsunday region and has developed and maintained cooperative relationships with this sector. She is a respected member of the local QPWS team.

Carolyn has been involved in marine park management for ten years. Previously she has held positions as a Technical Officer (permit assessor) in Cairns and has worked in Western Australia for Conservation and Land Management (CALM) as a Marine Conservation Officer at Ningaloo Marine Park.

Carolyn loves living in the Whitsundays and enjoys the range of good restaurants and the natural settings in the region.

END

Spring is in the tank at Reef HQ

Spring is in the air and the tank at Reef HQ Aquarium and, as happens this time every year, the tank inhabitant's thoughts lightly turn to love!

Reef HQ General Manager, John Hoey said there is currently reproductive behaviour everywhere in the world's largest living coral reef aquarium.

"It's an exciting time of year for staff, volunteers and visitors to Reef HQ as we get to see some truly amazing behaviour as the animals start reproducing," Mr Hoey said.

"The male blue green chromis are displaying a black mark near their dorsel fin which lets the female chromis know they are ready for mating."

"The striking leopard shark is laying eggs and new baby octopuses have recently hatched and are in quarantine to help ensure their survival."

Mr Hoey said that sea cucumbers have already been observed spawning while the corals are getting ready to spawn in early November.

"This is a fantastic time of year to visit Reef HQ and get a feeling of what life under the sea is like during spring. Each exhibit is like looking through a window to the many wonders of the Great Barrier Reef."

Reef HQ Aquarium's main attraction, the Underwater Discovery Tunnel, bisects a 750,000 litre Predator Exhibit and a 2.5 million litre Coral Reef Exhibit where visitors have a fish-eye-view of the coral ecosystem.

The Predator Tank, with its replica of the infamous *SS Yongala* as a backdrop, is a perfect way to view the array of sharks and other predatory fish particularly on the days when the Shark Feeding Show stimulates a frenzy of activity among the hungry residents.

With its hard and soft corals, the Coral Reef Exhibit provides a home for the thousands of beautiful fish, giant clams, sea cucumbers, sea stars and other coral reef creatures.

With impressive displays, thousands of marine animals and a full daily programme of talks and tours, Reef HQ is designed to stimulate curiosity so that you leave in awe of the Great Barrier Reef and eager to discover more.

reefHQ
AQUARIUM

END