

SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

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Fish flourish in Green Zones



Coral trout numbers are increasing in the Green Zones in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

Coral trout numbers on protected offshore reefs are already higher as a result of the new Zoning Plan, according to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, and Minister for Education, Science and Training, Julie Bishop.

Senator Campbell said data from recent monitoring indicated the new Green Zones throughout the Great Barrier Reef were showing substantive positive benefits.

The monitoring initiated by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, as part of the monitoring of the Zoning Plan, clearly indicated the Green Zones established in mid-2004 in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park were having a positive effect even faster than scientists expected.

The work was carried out by the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) and James Cook University and supported in part by funding from the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility.

Senator Campbell said these early positive results were great news for the long-term future of the Great Barrier Reef and positive news for the many users of the Marine Park.

"These results are very encouraging and I am sure this will be of particular interest to recreational and commercial fishermen. They will also be reassuring to tourism operations that rely on fish size and numbers to enhance the experiences of divers and visitors to the Great Barrier Reef," Senator Campbell said.

"The amount of both coral trout and stripey sea perch on protected inshore reefs in the Whitsunday Islands have also increased since the new Zoning Plan was introduced in July 2004.

"Fish stocks are likely to be enhanced and benefit tourism and fishing through improved health of the overall Great Barrier Reef ecosystem. As an additional benefit, it is likely to be an increased spill-over of adult fish and the transfer of juvenile fish from Green Zones to zones open to fishing.

"There will be ongoing reporting of what is happening with other popular species such as sweetlip and red emperor. The results also indicate the compliance programme designed to protect the Reef is working well."

Minister Bishop congratulated the researchers at AIMS and James Cook University on their efforts in working with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

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Good water quality is essential for a healthy and resilient Marine Park and, as such, is a key priority area for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).

A range of strategies and plans are in place to address the issue and educate the community about what they can do at home, work or school to improve water quality and help protect the Marine Park.

The GBRMPA is spreading the water quality message through a series of television advertisements and a range of other educational products for schools and the community.

Known as "Reef House", the advertisements and associated material show the link between how urban activities impact on the Marine Park and encourage the community

to take action to help protect the World Heritage-listed area.

The advertisements have been well received in schools and are being used in classroom learning. I urge you to look at our "Reef House" advertisements, which are available online at www.reefed.edu.au/explorer/reef_house.html.

The GBRMPA is also working with landholders, Natural Resource Management groups and the Department of the Environment and Heritage to monitor water quality and develop on-ground activities.

These stem from the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan*, a ten-year strategy by the Australian and Queensland Governments to halt and reverse the declining quality of water entering the Marine Park.

Central to the strategy is a strong focus on the shared responsibilities of different stakeholders to work in close partnership to address water quality issues.

I believe such collaborations, combined with an active interest and input from the community, will go a long way to the common goal of protecting the Marine Park so future generations can enjoy this natural asset.

Regards

Virginia Chadwick
Chairman
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

END

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"This is an excellent example of scientists collaborating with local communities, industries and other Authorities to provide an ultimate benefit to the Australian nation. The work of AIMS and James Cook University will help to ensure that the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is a healthy ecosystem," she said.

Senator Campbell said the Australian Government was committed to maintaining the historic levels of protection of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Australia was recognised as world leaders in Marine Protected Areas.

The Zoning Plan significantly increased protection of the Park and provided a network of Green Zones, giving greater protection to the Reef's unique and precious biodiversity by prohibiting extractive activity.

It now provides one of the largest and best protected marine parks in the world.

END

Staff answer SOS call

As well as providing invaluable information about where to fish in the Marine Park, zoning maps recently proved to be a possible lifesaver for one Mackay fisherman.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Public Information Unit Supervisor Helen Brackmanski was having her usual hectic day at the office when she received an SOS call from a Mackay man who needed rescuing from his boat approximately 5km's from Clairview.

The man had gone out fishing for the day and ran into trouble when the engine on his boat failed to start. Armed only with a new mobile phone and a zoning map, the man discovered the free-call number on the back of the map and quickly made the call for help.

Helen leapt to the rescue and telephoned for help from the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol in Mackay, who were able to locate the man and return him to shore.

The lesson to be learned here, as Helen points out, is simple: "You should never go fishing without a zoning map!"



END

New turtle centre gets school support

Injured and distressed marine turtles are set to receive some extra TLC thanks to the generosity of students from Townsville's Willows State School.

Year three students donated the proceeds of two classes selling environmentally-friendly bags to a new Turtle Rehabilitation Centre at the Reef HQ aquarium.

Townsville's only facility dedicated to caring for juvenile turtles officially opened at the Aquarium, with staff currently caring for three turtles.

Teacher Jodie Millard said the students were proud and excited their donation helped cover the costs of feeding the centre's turtles for the next three to four months.

"The students really wanted to help the New Turtle Rehabilitation centre at Reef HQ after learning about how marine turtles can be adversely affected by plastic bags," she said.

"It is very appropriate money generated from selling environmentally-friendly bags that help protect marine turtles is channelled back into helping the injured animals.

"The school, which is part of the Reef Guardian Schools programme, also adopted a plastic-free tuckshop to help protect marine animals. Given our proximity to the

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, we are always looking at ways we can do our bit to look after it."

Reef HQ Aquarist Paul Groves welcomed the donation, saying the public were now also able to tour the centre to see how the turtles are looked after.

"The Turtle Rehabilitation Centre has introduced new systems and methods of caring for turtles, ensuring any injured animals are properly treated prior to being released into their natural environment," he said.

"In the first instance, the public should report sick, injured, stranded or dead marine turtles to the Environmental Protection Agency Hotline on 1300 130 372."

Turtle distress may result from torn flippers and other injuries that reduce mobility, and juvenile turtles heading towards the water may be confused by light from cars or streetlights.

The centre spans approximately 100 square metres across the roof of the aquarium, with the design incorporating rehabilitation tanks for mature turtles as well as juvenile holding facilities.

The centre includes temperature controls, filtration and sterilisation systems as well as new methods of feeding to improve nutrition

Tours of the Reef HQ Turtle Rehabilitation Centre are available at specified times only, and are included in the cost of admission to Reef HQ. For more information about times and access, please contact Reef HQ on (07) 4750 0700.



Samuel Kippin, Sophie Jeffrey and Natasha Taylor with one of the rescued turtles

END

Minister unveils new fast response vessel

Marine Park monitoring and surveillance stepped up a notch with the official launch of a new fast response vessel.

The *Bimbi Eungie* (pronounced Bim-bee Oon-gee) was unveiled at Hamilton Island by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage Senator Ian Campbell.

Senator Campbell said the nine-metre vessel was part of a coordinated approach to patrolling the waters between Bundaberg and Cape York.

"This purpose built fast response vessel is crewed by three experienced Marine Park inspectors and is ideally suited to operate in the waters of the Marine Park," he said.

"The Great Barrier Reef is undisputedly one of the world's most important natural assets and these vessels are an important initiative to protect Australian interests, both environmental and economic."

Bimbi Eungie means 'good spirit' in the language of Traditional Owners from the Birri Gubba, whose sea country extends from Townsville's Ross River south to Sarina.

Three Traditional Owners played a key role in the unveiling, officially blessing the vessel and delivering a 'Welcome to Country.'

They were joined by staff from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Local Marine Advisory Committee and Cannonvale State School, which participates in the Reef Guardian programme.

Another crewed vessel of similar design is also in the pipeline after the Australian Government allocated \$2 million over three years.

Both vessels play a key role in a compliance and monitoring programme coordinated by several Australian and Queensland Government agencies.

These include the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, Customs National Marine Unit, Coastwatch and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.



The new fast response vessel

END

Partnerships help protect Marine Park

Australian and Queensland Government agencies and regional natural resource management bodies have teamed up in a new partnership focussing on water quality monitoring and reporting.

This collaboration is a key part of the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan* (Reef Plan), a 10-year strategy to halt and reverse the decline in the quality of water entering the Marine Park.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Water Quality and Coastal Development Director Hugh Yorkston said the partnership saw organisations work together to link governments' and community activities.

"The partnership supports and co-ordinates water quality target setting, monitoring and reporting to help make the link between management actions in the Great Barrier Reef catchments and the health of Great Barrier Reef lagoon ecosystems," he said.



The new partnership looks at water quality in the Marine Park

"The partnership is one aspect of ongoing collaboration between Australian and Queensland Government agencies and regional natural resource management bodies in the Great Barrier Reef area.

"It places a strong focus on achieving success in addressing water quality issues through the encouragement of shared responsibility and strong partnerships between stakeholders."

Hugh said government agencies and regional bodies would work together to enhance reporting on

river, marine and biological monitoring and develop water quality targets and funding actions to address declining water quality.

"The overall aim is to reduce pollutants from diffuse sources, such as agricultural and other cleared areas, and rehabilitate and conserve areas such as wetlands that have a role in removing water-borne pollutants," he said.

More information on Reef Plan is available at www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/key_issues/water_quality/marine_monitoring.html.

END

Cane farmer pushing for eco-friendly farming practices

Ingham cane farmer Vince Vitale has often been described as an environmental activist for his tireless work in promoting environmentally friendly farming practices.

Vince however, although admitting to have his "finger in a lot of pies," sees it more simply.

He says that all he is doing is taking personal responsibility in tackling an issue that has impacted on the farming industry and the wider environment as a whole.

Vince has seen first hand the impact of the farming industry on the land and waterways having worked on the farm since 1969. He says he can clearly see the difference between then and now and that this is what inspired him to get "get cranky."

Vince started his campaign at his own front door, planting trees on land previously used for cane and limiting the amount of levelling on the farm in an

attempt to slow down run-off into the waterways.

"Water needs time to get rid of sediment and nutrients before it hits the waterways. Most farmers (however) get rid of water too quickly and the downside is ruined waterways," Vince said.

He says rivers blocked with weeds reduce the amount of oxygen in the water, which then results in the loss of freshwater fish and prevents birds from being able to land on the water.

When he became aware of just how much damage run-off was causing, Vince decided that he needed to get involved at a wider level.

Vince is currently chairman of the Lower Catchment Group, which works with the local council to encourage the farming community to plant more vegetation and to create artificial wetlands on their properties.

He is also a member of the Crocodile Advisory Committee, believing crocodiles play an

important part in maintaining a healthy eco-system.

In September, he is going to spread his message nationally when he speaks at The Rivers Symposium in Brisbane about the spread of the hymenachne weed and the impact it has on the environment.

Vince believes that in recent years farmers' awareness has been raised and that some success has been achieved.

"We are now taking up the challenge and doing different things," he said.

Vince's love for the land will no doubt see him pushing for more success in the years to come.

"To me this is a holy place. The river, the fish, the birds. And for me, it's the reason that I live on the planet," he said.



Vince Vitale does his bit to look after the environment

END

Healthy reefs resilient to cyclones

A comprehensive report into the effect cyclone Larry had on the Great Barrier Reef is now available on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) website.

The category five cyclone crossed the Queensland coast in March, with GBRMPA staff inspecting nearby reefs three days later.

Despite the devastation to property around Innisfail, the report on the eight reefs near Larry's path revealed damage to existing coral was moderate to low.

Science, Technology and Information Group Director David Wachenfeld said cyclones were part of a natural process of disturbance and recovery in coral reef ecosystems.

"Healthy reefs, such as the Great Barrier Reef, have an excellent chance of recovery," he said.

"This is why initiatives such as the Zoning Plan – to protect biodiversity – and the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan – to improve water quality – are so important.

"The main impacts observed at affected reefs included damage to the reef's underlying structure, some breakage of living corals, and the movement of sediment and rubble."

The extent and type of impact varied with proximity to the path of the cyclone, with the most heavily

damaged reefs located near where the most destructive winds occurred.

David said the damage observed was within the range seen in previous cyclones and, given favourable conditions, these reefs should recover.

GBRMPA staff surveying for coral bleaching between Cairns and Cooktown also confirmed anecdotal reports from tourism operators that reefs offshore from Cairns were not greatly affected.

The category five cyclone generated a 50km-wide band of 'very destructive' winds between Cairns and Tully, and destructive winds north and south of the area.

The report is available online at www.gbrmpa.gov.au.



Overall, the damage done to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park after cyclone Larry swept through was quite minimal

Cyclone Larry is tracked as it crosses through the Great Barrier Reef and over the Queensland Coast



A satellite image of cyclone Larry crossing the Queensland coast

Environmental impact management praised

Successfully managing the environmental impacts of \$20 billion worth of industries saw staff at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) become the first team to scoop a prestigious accolade.

The Environmental Impact Management major projects team were recently presented with certificates after becoming the first team in Australia and New Zealand to be recognised as Certified Environmental Practitioners by the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand.

GBRMPA Environmental Impact Management Manager Dr Adam Smith said the certification recognised major environmental impact management projects and permits were managed to the highest possible standard.

"The Environmental Impact Management team have performed really well to become the first team in Australia and New Zealand to be certified through the programme," he said.

"It goes a long way to recognising staff's expertise and ethical conduct in managing environmental impacts associated with ports, tourism, defence, scientific research and harvest fisheries."

Among the projects and permits the team worked on during the last year were a Strategic Environmental Assessment of Defence activities (Shoalwater Bay), north Queensland water pipeline (Townsville), Arlington Reef Pontoon (Cairns) and Artificial Reefs Policy and Guidelines.



Certified practitioners Phil Koloj, Gail Hamilton, John Tanzer (Executive Director), Judy Hassall and John Dunn. Absent: Adam Smith and James Monkintch

END

END



Celebrating NAIDOC Week

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) recently supported the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC).

During NAIDOC Week, the GBRMPA hosted a number of events and activities to showcase the culture and achievements of Australia's Indigenous people.

This included a breakfast with many of Townsville's Indigenous representatives, participating in a flag raising ceremony and a morning tea with the Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre staff.

GBRMPA Manager of the Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit Chicka Turner said NAIDOC Week activities were important in raising cultural awareness.

"The GBRMPA works closely with Traditional Owner groups along the Great Barrier Reef to achieve positive outcomes on issues that are both culturally and ecologically significant," he said.

"This is the first year that we have coordinated NAIDOC Week activities in six regional centres along the Great Barrier Reef coast – Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Gladstone, Rockhampton and Palm Island.

"Staff received glowing reports from the community in all centres, so we will use this to help plan future NAIDOC Week events."

The stalls, a joint effort of the GBRMPA and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, provided an opportunity to distribute culturally appropriate information.

"The stalls provided staff and the wider community with an opportunity to raise awareness and ask questions about a wide range of topics," Chicka said.

"They covered topics such as how the traditional use of marine resources is managed and the benefits of sea country partnerships with Indigenous people."

Other activities in the Townsville office included a display in the window at Reef HQ Aquarium showcasing traditional Aboriginal and Islander dress, musical instruments and artwork.

Guest speaker and Bandjin Traditional Owner Russell Butler also shared his life experiences with staff in an interactive cross-cultural session.

Personal accounts of peoples' use and attachment to sea country were also held, along with a seminar on the history of NAIDOC and video sessions about Native Title.



The flag raising ceremony was just one of the events to take place during NAIDOC week

Sea Country Snippets

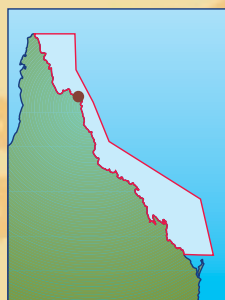
Introducing Traditional Owner groups along the Great Barrier Reef coast



Kuku Yalanji

(Pronounced Cook-ou Yal-and-jee)

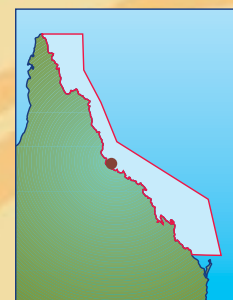
- Kuku Yalanji means 'speakers of the Yalanji language.' Different clans, have different dialects
- The word for turtle in the Yalanji language is 'ngawiya' (pronounced Nay-why-a)
- Kuku Yalanji people are known to have used bark cloth as fish traps, and maintain a strong connection with the sea country today
- The Kuku Yalanji Traditional Owners have been proactive in sea country management issues and are currently progressing land and sea tourism initiatives.



Wulgurukaba

(Pronounced Wool-goo-roo-kaa-baa)

- The term Wulgurukaba means 'canoe people' and refers to the Traditional Owners of the Magnetic Island region
- In the Wulgurukaba language, Magnetic Island is known as 'Yunbenun'
- The Wulgurukaba people have stories like the Big Carpet Snake Dreaming which links Magnetic Island, Palm Islands and the mainland and tells of the creation of the landscape during the dream time.



END

Indigenous heritage better protected

Indigenous heritage will be better managed thanks to a comprehensive strategy developed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).

The Indigenous Heritage Strategy is a component of the broader Heritage Strategy for the Marine Park prepared by the GBRMPA to meet the requirements of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

GBRMPA Conservation, Heritage and Indigenous Partnerships Director Jon Day said the strategy would help to ensure the Indigenous heritage within the Marine Park was protected.

"The strategy identifies how government agencies and Traditional Owners can work together to protect Indigenous sites, area, objects, places or animals of significance," he said.

"Each Traditional Owner group with sea country within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park holds past and present heritage values for their country and for surrounding sea countries.

"These values may be cultural, spiritual, economic, social or physical, or a mixture of these and demonstrate continuing connections with the Great Barrier Reef region and its' natural resources."

Jon said various programmes and strategies were underway to address a number of factors that may affect Indigenous heritage in sea country.

"We have developed a range of mechanisms to help protect Indigenous heritage, including a Traditional Owner Information System, the Indigenous sea country and reef naming strategy, and some forthcoming cultural heritage mapping projects," he said.

For more information on the strategy, contact the Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit on freecall 1800 802 251, telephone (07) 4750 0700, or email indigenous_partnerships@gbmpa.gov.au.



Rock art occurs on some islands, and along the coastline of the Great Barrier Reef



GBRMPA's Shaun Skerritt with EPA/QPWS officer John Schwarzrock and Bandjin Traditional Owner Russell Butler on Hinchinbrook Island



Fish traps, such as the stone structure shown above, use the incoming tides to trap fish

END

QPWS manage scale insect outbreak

An outbreak of scale insects on Wilson and Heron Islands is being managed by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS).

The scale insect has the potential to kill *Pisonia grandis* trees, the dominant tree on Wilson and Heron Islands.

QPWS are managing the outbreak by releasing native ladybird beetles to prey on the insects and by baiting ants (a scale insect protector) at affected sites.

Long-term plans to effectively manage scale insect outbreaks include early detection through monitoring and promoting research into scale insect and ant outbreaks.

People on the Wilson and Heron Islands are being encouraged to stay away from outbreak sites and minimise contact with *Pisonia* trees.

END

Community Partnerships

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Community Partnerships Group continue to have a presence at regional forums and shows and a range of other community liaison.

Staff from the group recently went to the Clermont Show and visited the remote school at Mistake Creek, 65 kms north-north-east of Clermont.

Mistake Creek State School's six students recently attended a reef sleep at ReefHQ.



GBRMPA Community Partnerships Group recently met students from the remote Mistake Creek State School

END



Whitfield State School holds Dress in Blue Reef Guardians Day

Whitfield State School held a Dress in Blue Reef Guardians Day recently, with blue hair, hats, t-shirts, skirts, socks and shoes the order of the day.

Organised by the school's student council and environmental team, the Dress in Blue Reef Guardians Day included events to promote awareness of the Great Barrier Reef.

School Environmental Team member Ruth Zee said students learnt the benefits and importance of the Reef, as well as steps they could take to keep it protected through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Reef Guardians programme.

"Our programme serves to educate our students and the community that their actions can make a difference in reef conservation," she said.

"Part of the Dress in Blue Reef Guardians Day involved Wally the Maori Wrasse from Great Adventures visiting the students with a marine biologist, after which



Whitfield State School students dressed in blue and learned all about the Reef

students asked questions and made pledges to the environment."

Pledges such as riding a bike to school, putting litter in the bin and buying toys with less packaging were written down and displayed in the school's administrative area, a reminder to students and the community to 'do their bit'.

Whitfield State School has been involved in the Reef Guardians programme for three years, with students learning how land, water and waste management can help reduce and prevent adverse human impacts on the Marine Park.

END

Reef Guardian School students meet Minister

Environmental projects at Cannonvale State School were the hot topic when students met the Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage recently.

The students joined Senator Ian Campbell at the recent launch of the new fast response vessel on Hamilton Island.

They presented Senator Campbell with a scrapbook showcasing what they are doing to help protect their environment and the Marine Park.

Within the school, students have been learning about the Great Barrier Reef and monitoring their water use.

They have also reduced the use of plastic bags, replacing them with calico bags printed with the school's name.

The students are also spreading the conservation message to their wider community by participating in the local Reef Festival with a Reef Guardian's float.

Cannonvale is just one of many Reef Guardian Schools doing their bit to help protect the beautiful marine environment around them.



Senator Ian Campbell looks at the scrapbook he was presented with



Reef Guardian School Students from Cannonvale State School at the launch of the new fast response vessel on Hamilton Island

END

10 000 and counting!

Reef HQ recently celebrated a special milestone with the registration of the 10 000th member to the Aquarium membership programme.

Reef HQ Membership Officer Lee Anderson said the Reef HQ membership programme had been running for many years and provided great value for frequent visitors to the Aquarium.

"For the cost of only one and a half visits, Reef HQ Members have unlimited access to the Aquarium all year round," Lee said.

With the current membership figures, just over five per cent of Townsville residents are now members of the Aquarium and this makes the programme one of the largest in the region.

"Our membership base has been growing consistently over the past 12 months, with a seven per cent increase in total memberships," Lee said.

It is hoped that the membership programme will continue to enjoy success, with new incentives and member benefits currently being evaluated for use in the near future.

For information about becoming a member of Reef HQ Aquarium please phone (07) 4750 0800.



reefHQ
AQUARIUM

END

Getting onboard for students

Reef HQ Aquarium got on board with Hermit Park Bus Service to create more opportunities for local school students to learn about the Great Barrier Reef.

The new school subsidy programme, an initiative of Reef HQ Aquarium, follows feedback from teachers.

Reef HQ Education Manager Fred Nucifora said it was often difficult for teachers to facilitate school excursions due to the costs involved.

"For many schools the total cost of going on an excursion can become quite significant," he said.

"We feel that providing transport assistance to schools will enable even more students to visit the Aquarium and learn more about the Great Barrier Reef."

Throughout terms three and four of this school year, every bus booked through Hermit Park Bus Service to bring students to Reef HQ will be matched with another bus trip free of charge.

"Reef HQ will cover the cost of an additional bus to the Aquarium to provide opportunities for even more students to visit," Fred said.

Hermit Park Bus Service Manager Lyle Fenwick said that his organisation was proud to be involved.

"In recognition of the programme, Hermit Park Bus Service will be installing a special Reef HQ panel on one of their school buses," Lyle said.

Anyone wanting further information on the subsidy programme should contact Reef HQ Education on (07) 4750 0700.



GBRMPA's Education Manager Fred Nucifora, Lucky T Turtle and Hermit Park Bus Service Manager Lyle Fenwick

END

Interesting Facts

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park's unique and diverse marine ecosystem comprises about 2900 reefs, 600 continental islands and 300 coral cays. Only six per cent of the Marine Park consists of coral reefs. The rest is made up of seagrass, mangroves, sand, algal and sponge gardens, inter-reefal communities and other habitats.



Report examines shipping and oil spills

Shipping and oil spills come under the microscope in the latest chapter of the State of the Reef report.

The online report is the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) comprehensive account on the condition of the Marine Park.

Shipping is a significant component of Australia's national economy, with more than 2000 ships contributing to 7000 voyages made through the Marine Park each year.

"Routine shipping operations and major shipping incidents like groundings or spills from chemicals, oil or cargo can pose a variety of environmental risks to the Great Barrier Reef," GBRMPA Director of Science, Technology and Information Group David Wachenfeld said.

"While shipping in the Great Barrier Reef is managed at one of the highest standards applied to any body of water worldwide, relatively little information is available on the potential environmental impact of cargo spillages by ships in the Marine Park."

Legislation has been implemented by the Australian Government and Queensland Government regarding the management of shipping

activities and ship-sourced pollution in the Great Barrier Reef.

A range of Australian and State Government agencies monitor and regulate Marine Park shipping activities.

Actions include improving the navigational safety of shipping in the Great Barrier Reef, reducing ship-sourced pollutants and ensuring an effective response to shipping incidents.

Although the focus is on preventing major incidents, oil and chemical spill contingency response plans have been developed at local, state, national and international levels.

To read more about shipping management within the Great Barrier Reef, access the new Management status – shipping and oil spills chapter online at www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/publications/sotr/intro/.

END

Litter makes the sea sick

Discarded litter can have a range of environmental impacts on our marine wildlife and their environment, and can even affect humans and damage boats:

- An estimated 100 000 marine animals including turtles, whales and dugong are killed every year as a result of plastic litter, according to the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency
- Seven billion tonnes of litter enter the world's oceans every year
- Plastics are the worst type of litter and usually make up about 60 per cent of rubbish and can last for 10 to 20 years on the ocean floor before decomposing
- Rubbish washed from streets and pathways into stormwater drains eventually drain into adjacent rivers, streams or even directly into the ocean
- Floatable litter can be hazardous to divers, become entangled around boat propellers or even puncture boat hulls
- It is an offence to deposit litter in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*
- The disposal of plastics anywhere in the world into the sea is prohibited under the *International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships* (known as MARPOL 73/78).



Rubbish collected from under the jetty at Picnic Bay, Magnetic Island

END

Public lecture sheds light on Great Barrier Reef

The Australian Coral Reef Society (ACRS) opened the doors of its annual conference to the public recently with a special lecture on coral reefs.

According to Dr Terry Done, Townsville reef scientist and former secretary of the ACRS, it offered a fantastic opportunity for the community to hear from one of the most recognised researchers on coral reefs.

"Dr Jeremy Jackson of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego presented the public session. Dr Jackson spent three decades researching the long-term impacts of human activities on the reef and

recently visited the northern Line Islands in the Central Pacific to see one of the few remaining untouched 'pristine' reefs."

Dr Jackson travelled from the US to attend the conference, with the support of the ACRS and the Centre for Marine Studies at The University of Queensland.

The conference ran over two days and covered a range of topics, including coral degradation and climate change on the Great Barrier Reef.

The Australian Coral Reef Society is one of the oldest organisations concerned with the study and protection of coral reefs; their 2006 conference brought together experts from a variety of organisations to discuss current issues and research concerning coral reefs within Australian waters.

END

Marine Park Partnerships

Profile of Regional Liaison Manager – Far Northern and Cape York regions



Mandi McKaig

Mandi McKaig is the Regional Liaison Officer – Far Northern and Cape York regions, based in Cairns and covering the areas from Cape York to the Daintree and south to Tully.

New to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Mandi has lived in Cairns for only one month, but she is no stranger to marine and coastal management.

"Prior to coming to the GBRMPA I worked for the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries in New South Wales for two years, where my duties involved recreational management and structural adjustment of

commercial fishing businesses following the establishment of marine parks in New South Wales," Mandi said.

"I love my new role as it is different every day and I am able to communicate with people on the issues affecting them and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park."

Part of Mandi's role involves liaison and support for GBRMPA activities and interests within the regions.

"My aim is to help maintain and create a support network that is available to both GBRMPA management and stakeholders for information exchange and advice."

In her spare time, Mandi volunteers with a locally-run programme to regenerate the beach in her home area of Holloways Beach.

"I love that the Great Barrier Reef and rainforests are at my front door," Mandi said.

Mandi's personal goal is to complete her PhD in fisheries management in marine parks and she is currently writing her thesis with the University of Wollongong.

Creature Feature

Squirrelfish

Family *Holocentridae*

- Squirrelfish are ancient, dating back over 50 million years – heavy spines over their heads are considered a primitive feature of fish
- Squirrelfish have large eyes and mouths, large coarse scales and prominent fin spines
- Squirrelfish are mostly nocturnal and prefer to hide in caves or under ledges during the day
- Squirrelfish can become almost invisible at night thanks to their red colouration as red is the first colour absorbed by water
- A large venomous spine at the back of each cheek of a squirrelfish is capable of causing a painful sting.



Doing your bit to look after it!

The Great Barrier Reef is a significant breeding ground to about 30 species of whales and dolphins. Between May and September each year, humpback whales trek north to the warmer waters of the Reef to court, mate, give birth and rear their calves. Disturbing them during this important time may result in calf mortality.

- ➔ Be alert and watch for whales at all times
- ➔ Keep a lookout and avoid disturbance to mother whales and their calves, especially from May to September
- ➔ Reduce your vessel speed to minimise the risk of collision in areas where whales have been sighted



Humpback whales are becoming an increasingly common sight in the Reef

- ➔ Abide by approach restrictions - vessels must stay at least 100 metres away from the animal and 300 metres away in the Whitsunday Whale Protection Area, and jet skis must stay at least 300 metres away from the animal throughout the Marine Park
- ➔ Be quiet when you are around a whale
- ➔ Do not get in the water if you see a whale - if you are already in the water do not disturb, chase or block the path of a whale and if possible, return to your vessel.
- ➔ If there is a sudden change in whale behaviour, move away immediately
- ➔ Report sick, injured, stranded or dead whales to the EPA Hotline 1300 130 372.

Community Links

A profile of

Arthur Bosworth

Chair of the Hinchinbrook LMAC



Newly elected Chair of the Hinchinbrook Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) Arthur Bosworth is a busy man.

In addition to his role in the LMAC is also Deputy Mayor of Hinchinbrook Shire Council, a member of Corporate Services in local council and a cane farmer.

Arthur says this community involvement will help him in his role on the LMAC.

"The LMAC allows government committees to get community input to develop policies and provide community feedback," he said.

"As a community enterprise, LMAC's are a vital link in the chain so that we can feed any issues that come up in the community to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority."

He believes the LMAC plays a key role in working with government agencies to manage and protect the Marine Park.

In his role as chair of Hinchinbrook LMAC, Arthur is looking forward to being able to get his teeth into a wide range of issues.

This includes looking into the possibility of getting all-tide access to Lucinda and Forrest Beach because the coast guard can only get out onto the water at high tide.

He would also like to see the LMAC broaden their horizons to look at other issues that may not usually fit under the LMAC remit, such as fish management.

As well as addressing these issues, Arthur is also committed to ensuring all committee members as well as members of the community have a say in the LMAC.

"My goal is to make sure that all people sitting at the table are fairly listened to and given opportunities to put forward ideas," he said.

"We can then come up with solutions that everybody is happy with."

Arthur is also a proud family man and is happily married with two children. In any spare time he has, Arthur enjoys recreational fishing.

LMAC member wins national crab tying championships

Don Tyson is the new Australian mud-crab tying record holder, smashing the previous record by eight seconds.

The final of the championships was held in June at the Moreton Bay Seafood Festival.

The Hinchinbrook Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) member earned the top spot by tying his crabs and baiting the pot in just one minute and seven seconds beating the next contender by 10 seconds.

"I've never seen it done faster than that," event co-ordinator David Perkins said.

Calendar of events

07 September 2006

Burnett LMAC meeting

12 September 2006

Hinchinbrook LMAC meeting

13 September 2006

Mission Beach LMAC meeting

15 – 17 September 2006

Clean up the World Day

03 October 2006

World Habitat Day

09 October 2006

Cairns LMAC meeting

15 October 2006

Port Douglas LMAC meeting

15 – 21 October 2006

National Water Week

17 October 2006

Mackay LMAC meeting

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