



MEDIA RELEASE

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REEF EDUCATION BIG FOCUS FOR THE WHITSUNDAY'S BIG MANGO

Art and edu-tourism are set to become a focus for the Whitsundays iconic 'Big Mango' landmark with large scale artwork to go on display for the public.

'Turtle Dream', a 6m stainless steel sculpture by artist Col Henry, and 'Maori Wrasse' by Adriaan Vanderlugt will be temporary outdoor exhibitions at Bowen's Big Mango Visitor Information Centre, which is located on the Bruce Highway and has close to 40,000 visitors a year.

Commissioned for Reef Ecologic's 'Whitsunday Reef Recovery and Public Art Project', the giant sculptures will be delivered and assembled on site on Thursday 11th April and remain on site pending placement within Great Barrier Reef Marine Park at Langford Reef.

Reef Ecologic's Assoc Prof Adam Smith and Jo Stacey and project artists Col Henry, Adriaan Vanderlugt and Jessa Lloyd will be on site on the day, giving talks and engaging with visitors.

'Turtle Dream' required a massive 800 hours of work and lots of innovation in its creation by artist Col Henry. Col said 'This work is a pinnacle of my long public art career, as it symbolises the passion that many people have for the reef, marine species, the oceans, not to mention the planet'

Managing Director of Reef Ecologic Dr Adam Smith is excited to see the public become involved in the project through the medium of outdoor art, reef restoration and citizen science. "At sites such as Manta Ray and Blue Pearl Bay, artworks are considered to provide a boost to the tourism industry, indigenous knowledge and help tell the story of marine life in the Park. This is a catalyst project that has the potential to grow in the future, with edu-tourism trails that people can be involved in."

Tash Wheeler, CEO of Tourism Whitsundays said of the project, "This is a really exciting project and one that Tourism Whitsundays is thrilled to be involved in. We believe these artworks will play a vital part in providing new exciting experiences for visitors to our glorious region, we also hope this project will highlight the local tourism industries commitment to reef health and education".

Bowen Tourism & Business manage the Bowen Visitor Information Centre and are excited to collaborate through providing project and reef information to visitors and creating interpretive signage design. BTB Chair Jenn Honnery said "Public artwork is such a great way to engage, interact and inspire our visitors and community. Having our information centre

team on hand to engage with and educate visitors on reef health and interaction is a big value-add to the project, which we're so proud to support."

The installation of the artwork complements the sculptures by Adriaan Vanderlugt currently on display in the Big Mango grounds, which were part of the project trial installation at Langford Reef.

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About Tourism Whitsundays: *Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.*

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