



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

***For immediate release***

**July 12, 2019**

### **Flying start for Great Barrier Reef Festival**

Everyone headed to the Great Barrier Reef Festival is in for a flying start at the ‘Whitsunday Coast Airport Fireworks by the Foreshore’ on Friday, August 2.

Expected to draw more than 5,000 people to the coastal town of Airlie Beach, the fireworks display will also be the start of a new marketing relationship between the festival and airport.

The announcement was made by Whitsunday Mayor, Andrew Willcox, in front of the airport’s unique aquarium feature today.

“We consider the airport to be the beginning of the visitor experience in the Whitsundays and a gateway to the Great Barrier Reef,” he said.

“Linking it to the Great Barrier Reef Festival and its activities on Council’s newly revitalised foreshore is a logical step and one we are proud to support.”

Present for the announcement was Whitsunday icon David Hutchen, who founded the Reef Festival 19 years ago.

“I think it’s great the town has kept it going for all these years and I’m very pleased to see the partners backing it, especially the airport, Whitsunday Regional Council and Cruise Whitsundays – they’re doing a wonderful job,” he said.

The fireworks display is the penultimate feature of the night that gets the four-day festival off with a bang.

Festivities begin with a lantern parade from the newly rebranded Coral Sea Marina Resort, down the Bicentennial Boardwalk to the \$6.3 million redevelopment on the Airlie Beach foreshore.

Here, Mayor Willcox will officially open the festival, beside the night markets, carnival rides and Whitsunday Food Service ‘Eat Street’.

Fireworks will light up the night sky at 8pm, followed by performances on the Beach Music Stage from special return guest, Timomatic, and Sydney songstress, Thandi Phoenix.





Transport will be via a park and ride scheme courtesy of Whitsunday Transit.

Tourism Whitsundays CEO, Tash Wheeler, said with the backing of partners including the Whitsunday Coast Airport, the festival would deliver an opening night to remember.

“The Whitsundays relies on a strong and proactive airport to facilitate growth and support tourist arrivals into the region while ensuring the experience delivered on arrival is unforgettable and essentially part of the holiday,” she said.

“The Great Barrier Reef Festival is one of our key destination events, which is helping to showcase our area and drive visitation; I am thrilled by this and the other partnerships being formed for the benefit of the region.”

Festival chairwoman, Margie Murphy, said traditionally the festival’s Friday event was one of the biggest on Airlie’s social calendar, bringing locals and visitors together.

“We are extremely grateful to all the partners helping us make this year’s festival the best yet, and excited to deliver an event worthy of a revitalised region at the heart of the Great Barrier Reef,” she said.

The 2019 Great Barrier Reef Festival from August 1-4 is proudly supported by platinum partner Cruise Whitsundays.

For more information visit [www.greatbarrierreeffestival.com.au](http://www.greatbarrierreeffestival.com.au) and follow the festival on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**Ends**

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#### **Notes for Editors**

*The Queensland Government, via Tourism and Events Queensland’s Destination Events Program, is proud to support the Whitsunday Reef Festival, which features on the It’s Live! in Queensland events calendar, worth \$800 million to the state’s economy in 2019.*

