



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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GREAT BARRIER REEF FIRST: WHITSUNDAYS PUBLIC ARTWORK COMPLETION

Today marks a first for the Great Barrier Reef with the completion of the Whitsunday Public Artwork Project. Four of the six sculptures, purposely designed for the project, have been installed in three locations across the Whitsundays. A Maori Wrasse at Blue Pearl Bay off Hayman Island, two different Manta Ray sculptures at Manta Ray Bay off Hook Island, and a Turtle at Langford Spit.

Following the effects of Tropical Cyclone Debbie Tourism Minister Kate Jones announced the Queensland Government and Federal Government's \$7 million Tourism Recovery Fund to assist the Whitsundays tourism industry. Part of this funding was granted for the extensive research, feasibility, development and installation of the Whitsundays Reef Recovery and Public Art Project.

Six Australian artists were chosen to have their sculptures submerged and on display in various key locations throughout the marine park in a bid to provide a new experience for guests travelling to the Whitsundays and to help the marine tourism industry recover after Tropical Cyclone Debbie.

Tourism Whitsundays CEO Tash Wheeler believes this is a coup for the Whitsunday Region.

"To have a Great Barrier Reef Marine Park first in our backyard is a huge coup for the Whitsunday region. We believe this new tourism offering will be a great drawcard for visitors looking to experience something new.

"The success of this project is down to the strong collaboration at all levels of government a partnership between Federal, State and Local government as well as the incredible effort by Reef Ecologic. This collaboration has ensured this landmark project has been brought to fruition".

Whitsunday Regional Council Andrew Willcox said his Council was leaving no stone unturned to grow tourism in the Whitsundays.

"Council stepped up to the plate and took the lead on this project when "red tape" needed to be navigated, negotiating the underwater artwork permit with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

"This underwater art is an Australian first and just another project that Council has collaborated with to deliver unique tourism product for our region."

Reef Ecologic Managing Director and Associate Professor Adam Smith thinks this project is a game changer for the Great Barrier Reef.

“While this project will be a huge drawcard to tourism in the region, it’s success has also been down to the passion and commitment of local artists, science, managers, education, divers and indigenous culture focussing on innovation and education of the future of the reef”.

“We’re thrilled to be part of the process and the educational outcome of the Ngaro underwater sea trail; this is an absolute game-changer for the Great Barrier Reef and its stakeholders”.

New South Wales artist Col Henry’s striking ‘Turtle Dream’ is a 15-tonne stainless steel creation with well over 800hrs of work going into creating the Hawksbill Turtle that is on display at Langford Spit.

Local artists Adriaan Vanderlugt has two sculptures on display throughout the Whitsunday Marine Park his ‘Maori Wrasse’ located at Blue Pearl Bay, is an impressive almost four-metre-high sculpture designed not only for the viewing of visitors to the site but also designed as a new habitat for marine life . Adriaan’s ‘Manta Ray’ located in Mantra Bay bares the indigenous markings and stories of Whitsundays Traditional Owners, the Ngaro people.

Cairns-based artist Brian Robinson also has two sculptures on display the first ‘Migration of the Mantas’, shows six large Manta Rays that appear to be schooling. The remarkable artwork measures 4m x 6m and is made from concrete and stainless steel. Brian’s second is a sculpture titled ‘Bywa’, depicts a Dreamtime story about the reef, creation and marine life, this is an intertidal piece planned to be installed at Horseshoe bay in Bowen this month.

Whitsundays Arts Based Collective is made up of 3 artists Jessa Lloyd, Caitlin Reilly and Kate Ford working on their enormous creation ‘Anthozoa’ which is a 4-metre-high concrete single coral polyp. This creation is in its final stages of completion and scheduled to go into its location at Blue Pearl Bay in late September.

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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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