



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

*For immediate release*

**March 13, 2018**

### **Whitsundays on show to the world!**

The Whitsundays will be on show to the world when the Queen's Baton Relay arrives in the region next week and makes an historic visit to Whitehaven Beach!

The Queen's Baton will have travelled around Australia for more than 100 days when it gets to its final destination, the Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony, on April 4, 2018.

On the way, the baton will travel to world famous Whitehaven Beach, on Tuesday March 20, and all eyes will be on the beautiful Whitsundays!

While on Whitehaven Beach, the baton will be carried by local Ngaro and Gia elder "Auntie" Esther Gabey, who was born in Proserpine; former Bowen Rotary Club president Mark Steen, who has been involved in the organisation of many local events; and, Mackay-born dual Olympian and triathlete Courtney Atkinson, who is Tourism and Events Queensland's Ambassador for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Tourism Whitsundays CEO Craig Turner said having the Queen's Baton coming to the Whitsundays was amazing.

"But probably one of the major features around the Baton Relay is the fact that the baton is going to be carried along one of the best beaches in the world," he said.

"Unlike most other destinations that the baton is carried through, the significance of having the baton run down the white sands of Whitehaven Beach is drawing the attention of the major media outlets and, once again, our region will be on show to the world."

The baton will have stopped in every state and territory on its journey to the 2018 Commonwealth Games, on the Gold Coast, and passed through many regional communities.

On Monday, March 19, it's the Whitsundays' turn, with the Baton Relay kicking off at the Bowen Soundshell with a Bowen Community Celebration at 2.56pm, before the baton is passed from person to person in the Bowen relay, until 3.38pm.

The baton will then make its way to Airlie Beach, with the relay scheduled to start at 5.04pm at Abell Point Marina and end at 5.45pm with an Airlie Beach Community Celebration at the Airlie Lagoon.

Jan Claxton, owner/operator, Ocean Rafting Whitsundays, and one of the runners in the Airlie Beach relay, said it was a great honour to be included as a Baton Bearer for the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

“I will carry the Queen’s Baton with pride on its journey through the Whitsundays,” she said.

“Not only are the Commonwealth Games a special event for Australia as a whole, but the opportunity for us to showcase the Whitsundays to the world on this level during the relay is fantastic.

“I am sure that the vision people see on the world stage of the Whitsundays will be attractive to many and we will also benefit greatly from pre and post touring by attendees of the Commonwealth Games. I look forward to putting on my running shoes and being part of this special occasion!”

Local event organiser and volunteer, Wendy Downes OAM, who is also carrying the baton in Airlie Beach, said she was honoured and proud.

“I am extremely honoured and proud to be one of 14 Whitsunday locals selected to be a Queen’s Baton Bearer through Airlie Beach on day 84 of the Australian leg of the Relay,” she said.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and is also very exciting as an opportunity for the Whitsunday Region to be showcased to the world.”

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FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES, CONTACT:

Deborah Friend

PR & Communications Specialist

Tourism Whitsundays

Ph: (07) 4948 5917 or 0417 765 736

Email: [pr@tourismwhitsundays.com.au](mailto:pr@tourismwhitsundays.com.au)

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