



MEDIA RELEASE

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Six artists unveiled for the Whitsundays Reef Recovery and Public Art Project

Tourism Whitsundays and Reef Ecologic have welcomed the appointment of three individual artists and a team of three for the design of six artworks for the Whitsundays Reef Recovery and Public Art Project.

The successful artists were chosen following a global Expression of Interest (EOI), which garnered 73 submissions. Following the EOI process, the successful artists are as follows; Brian Robinson, Adriaan Vanderlugt, Col Henry and Caitlin Reilly, Jessa Lloyd and Kate Ford of the Arts Based Collective.

Arts Based Collective artist and Whitsundays local, Ms Lloyd, said diversifying the tourism experience in the Whitsundays in the linking of arts to nature greatly assists in educating visitors on the fragility of the beautiful Great Barrier Reef.

“The Arts Based Collective are honoured to play a part in restoring to these sites, vibrant reef systems with the installation of our piece *Anthozoa* which not only performs aesthetically in its sculptural form, but importantly doubles as a site for reef restoration,” she said.

“As the underwater form matures, visitors snorkelling and diving the site will see a sculpture festooned with a myriad of coral species, tentacles encrusted with soft and hard corals, marine animals sheltering in and peeking from small holes.”

The Whitsunday Reef Recovery and Public Art Project project, being led by reef management and consultancy company Reef Ecologic in partnership with Tourism Whitsundays and Whitsunday Regional Council, will see Langford Reef in the Whitsunday Islands’ become home to new underwater and inter-tidal art.

Tourism Industry Development Minister Kate Jones said the initiative was part of the government’s jointly-funded \$7 million program to help the Whitsundays tourism industry recover from Cyclone Debbie.

“The Whitsundays has a rich culture and heritage. We want to showcase that to the rest of the world,” she said.

“That’s why we’re partnering with locals to deliver tourism attractions that give visitors something they can’t experience anywhere else.

“We know art installations like this have been successful elsewhere - in the Caribbean, Maldives, Spain, Bali and Australia’s west coast. We’re looking to replicate this success and diversify our tourism offering.”

Federal Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Simon Birmingham said the Liberal-National Government has contributed \$1 million through Tourism Australia to promote the region after Cyclone Debbie.

“The Whitsundays is one of Australia’s most spectacular assets, and to help local businesses and to create more local jobs, we need to continue to encourage people from around to world to come and experience its top tourism offerings,” Minister Birmingham said.



“The recovery of the region following Cyclone Debbie is crucial and unique and creative projects like this one will only help to promote the region and help attract more visitors.”

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer Natassia Wheeler said the project would be a major driver for new tourism experiences in the Whitsundays, which wouldn’t be possible without positive stakeholder collaboration.

“It is exciting to unveil such high quality artists to work on the artworks for the Whitsundays Reef Recovery and Public Art Project,” she said.

“The sculptures, once complete at the end of 2019, will further enhance the Whitsundays visitor experience and provide a significant boost to our tourism sector.”

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Andrew Willcox said it was great to see a variety of new product experiences being developed to lure more visitors to the Whitsundays.

“This project will provide direct economic benefits for the Whitsundays and Council looks forward to continuing our strong collaboration with the various stakeholder groups to ensure the Whitsunday Reef Recovery and Public Art Project is a success,” he said.

Reef Ecologic Director Dr Adam Smith said the appointment of the artists was a significant milestone for the project.

“The project only kicked off in May and is galloping full steam ahead. We are confident the art pieces will provoke conversation and deeper consideration of the marine environment, leading to innovative coral restoration programs being trialled at selected Whitsunday sites,” he said.

About the artists: *Mr Robinson is known for his printmaking and public sculptures in which he uses a variety of techniques to produce bold, innovative and distinctive works. Mr Vanderlugt has been creating sculptures since 1969 and was one of three artists involved in the Whitsunday Sculpture Symposium at Airlie Beach. Mr Henry has extensive art and education related degrees, diplomas and certificates and has been sculpting full-time since 1995. Caitlin Reilly, Jessa Lloyd and Kate Ford of the ‘Arts Based Collective’ have extensive experience across a wide range of arts mediums including public sculpture, photography, print making, paper making, painting and film, where they draw their inspiration from the natural environment.*

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