



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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Underwater artworks to become new Whitsundays tourism attraction

In a Queensland first, Langford Reef in the Whitsunday Islands will become home to new installation of underwater and inter-tidal art.

A trial installation of the artwork is being funded through the Queensland Government and Federal Government's \$7 million Tourism Recovery Fund to assist the Whitsundays tourism industry post Cyclone Debbie.

Federal Member for Dawson George Christensen welcomed the new local attraction as a way to drive tourism growth.

"It's great to see more attractions being installed in the Whitsunday region, to help attract more domestic and international visitors here."

"The Turnbull Coalition Government recognises the significance of tourism to Queensland and the Whitsundays – that's why artworks like this are important, to continue enticing visitors."

"The Coalition is providing record funding into Tourism Australia, which has recently supported singer and The Voice Australia host Kelly Rowland's visit to the Whitsunday region, helping to showcase its beauty to her millions of followers on social media."

Tourism Industry Development Minister Kate Jones said four sculptures by local artist Adriaan Vanderlugt would be unveiled to the public last weekend at the Whitsundays Reef Festival at Airlie Beach.

"We know that to lure more visitors to the Whitsundays, we need to invest in new tourism product," she said.

"Tourism is crucial to creating new jobs in this region, that's why we're backing this initiative to create a unique attraction in the Whitsundays.

"This artwork will provide a new experience for people travelling to the Whitsundays and will help the marine tourism industry recover after Cyclone Debbie.

"Around the world - from the Caribbean, to the Maldives, Spain, Bali and Australia's west coast, underwater art has been used to lure visitors.

"Today is a testament to the resilience of the local tourism industry and is proof that hard work pays off for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Tourism Whitsundays, Reef Ecologic and the CSIRO – all important stakeholders in this project."

The artworks include fish, a nudibranch and a crab and vary in size with the nudibranch 1.8 metres long and weighing about 300 kilograms.



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Tourism Whitsundays General Manager Tash Wheeler said this was a great outcome not only for the Whitsundays but for Queensland, to have secured the first underwater sculpture to be placed in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park that visitors and locals can enjoy.

“Our thanks go to the State Government and Federal Government for their efforts in the wake of Cyclone Debbie in 2017 to provide the destination with new stories and experiences for visitors from around the world to experience,” she said.

“This has been a mammoth effort of collaboration by many stakeholders including the State and Federal Governments, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Whitsunday Regional Council and Reef Ecologic and all should be congratulated on their efforts in making this happen.”

Reef Ecologic Director Dr Adam Smith said “The four artworks will provide a ‘proof of concept’ research opportunity to document the reactions of locals and tourists visiting the artworks in a marine setting,” he said.

“We propose to install the artworks in early August and move them from the beach to intertidal to underwater environments a month at a time and the artworks will be secured and monitored to prevent interference and damage.”

Dr Smith reminded artists with ideas for underwater art at up to six locations in the Bowen-Whitsunday region that the call for submissions closes on 10 August 2018.

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