

*For immediate release  
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## It's time to celebrate at the Great Barrier Reef Festival!

The Great Barrier Reef Festival will be celebrating its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday next weekend and everyone is invited to the party! The annual 4-day festival that celebrates life and community in the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef will take over the town of Airlie Beach from August 5 – 8.

The festival, which is largely free to attend, prides itself on being inclusive and family friendly, and has a strong reef theme throughout many of the program events.

This year's festival comprises a mix of tried-and-tested events as well as new Great Barrier Reef inclusions designed to showcase the connection of the reef to the Whitsunday community.

New to the program is "Immerse – Whitsundays" an art installation which will transform the monumental fig tree on Airlie Beach Foreshore into an underwater wonderland as visual focal point of the festival. Local artists and community members have been working on the design elements of the installation in the leadup to the festival and are excited to be putting it all together to display throughout the weekend.

The installation is a combination of sculptures of reef creatures and corals made out of recycled plastic and marine debris and animated projections to bring the display to life. Immerse can be viewed Friday – Sunday nights from 6 – 9pm.

Recycling is also the theme of the Anything Environmental Recyclable Regatta which is an amusing race of rafts made from recycled materials off Airlie Beach on Sunday morning. Also on Sunday the Wilmar Family Fun Day features a treasure hunt where kids go from environmental stall to stall learning about the reef on the way, along with an amazing array of free, fun activities and entertainment.

Families and visitors new to the region are encouraged to come down to the foreshore on the Friday night to experience the atmosphere of Fireworks on the Foreshore – the biggest night out in The Whitsundays community calendar.

The evening includes night markets along the foreshore, Whitsunday Foodservice Eat Street, carnival rides in Airlie Central car park and two stages of entertainment with the highlight being the magnificent fireworks display over the Coral Sea at 8pm.

Live music will feature on the Beach Music Stage throughout the weekend with food stalls and drinks available from the pop-up bar with the best view in town.

The festival takes over Airlie Main Street, which is closed to traffic on the Saturday, for the Fraser Ford Revvin' the Reef classic car, truck and bike show, Magnums Magic Mile Run and the creative and colourful Rotary Street Parade.

The absolutely action-packed program also includes Thursdays Reef Gateway Hotel Comedy Gala and Whitsunday Green Social Golf day and the Coral Sea Academy's Protecting the Great Barrier Reef workshop and the Coral Sea Marina Lantern Parade on Friday.

Great Barrier Reef Festival Chairperson Margie Murphy said the committee has encountered their fair share of challenges in the leadup to the event after having to cancel the festival in 2020 due to the pandemic.

"We weren't sure what we would be able to produce at the beginning of the year with the ever-changing COVID-19 landscape but are so excited to now be bringing a full program of events with the addition of the Immerse installation." she said.

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“We have unfortunately been affected by border closures in regard to entertainment, but the Main Stage will feature the best of our talented regional acts and we would love to see everyone come out to enjoy some amazing live music and a drink at the bar on our beautiful foreshore over the weekend.”

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Tash Wheeler said the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday celebration for the Great Barrier Reef Festival is not an event to be missed!

“The Whitsundays region is thrilled to welcome back the much loved Great Barrier Reef Festival with a jam packed calendar kicking off on Thursday 5 August and running through to Sunday 8 August.

“The weekend of festivities brings the community and visitors together with a diverse range of events that showcases The Whitsundays as the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef,” Ms Wheeler said.

Proudly presented by Cruise Whitsundays, the festival embraces young and old and there is always something for everyone to enjoy. For all the details go to [www.greatbarrierreeffestival.com.au](http://www.greatbarrierreeffestival.com.au).

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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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