

MEDIA RELEASE



THE HEART OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

For Immediate Release
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Founding Member Of Airlie Beach Cruise Ship Ambassadors Wants The Buzz Of Cruise Visitors To Return

Judi Dunn, founding member of the Airlie Beach Cruise Ship Ambassadors who, for the past 17 years, has welcomed thousands of cruise visitors to The Whitsundays, can't wait for the ships to return.

"The last 18 months have been an upheaval for everybody, and we have missed having all the cruise people in town," Judi said. "It is unbelievable how quiet it is without the cruise ships."

The warmth of the ambassadors' welcome has made Airlie Beach one of the most successful cruise destinations in Australia combined with the incredible beauty and attractions of The Whitsundays.

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Tash Wheeler said the loss of cruise ships visiting The Whitsundays has significantly impacted the tourism industry and community.

"The Whitsundays is the most tourism reliant region in Queensland, our cruise ship volunteers and community love welcoming visitors to our backyard and showcasing the 'Heart of the Great Barrier Reef.'

"The last 18 months have been challenging but when the time comes we will be ready to welcome cruise ships back to Airlie Beach with open arms and with warm Whitsunday smiles," Ms Wheeler said.

P&O Cruises Australia accounted for nearly two thirds of the 52 cruise ships that visited Airlie Beach in 2019 carrying more than 100,000 guests. The ship calls included 20 by P&O's then Brisbane-based ship, Pacific Dawn.

Sture Myrmell, President of Carnival Australia and P&O Cruises Australia, said cruise ship visits were a vital part of the visitor economy in Airlie Beach and at other cruise destinations around Australia.

Airlie Beach was a wonderful example of a community that had embraced cruise tourism and its economic opportunities.

"Airlie Beach is a compelling case study of why it is so important for federal and state governments to engage and agree to a pathway for the resumption of cruising beginning with domestic itineraries knowing that it will take months before any cruise ships can return to Australia," Mr Myrmell said.

"Cruise connected businesses and jobs are suffering and the uncertainty of when cruising might return with comprehensive protocols and policies is just adding to their anxiety."

Cruise ship ambassador Judi Dunn has appeared in a special video message in which she speaks wistfully of the absence of cruise visitors from her iconic town.

"When the cruise ships came in, there were thousands of people wandering around and the whole place seemed alive and buzzing," Judi said in the video.

"We want that back again and we can't wait to get our cruise ships to come back on a regular basis. Please come back again. We have so much to show you."

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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.

To view full video and images, [click here](#).

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