

# MEDIA RELEASE



THE HEART OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

For immediate release  
29 October 2022

## Gleaming and Glittering with Gold at the Whitsundays Tourism Awards

Roll up, roll up, to The Whitsundays night of nights! Held this evening under the big top tent at the Whitsunday Sailing Club, the Whitsundays Tourism Awards is the biggest event on The Whitsundays tourism calendar. Over 330 people attended to celebrate the successes of the tourism and business industries in the region. The first awards event held since 2019, it was a night not to be missed. Attendees dressed to the nines for the circus themed black-tie event, a chance to let their hair down and celebrate after a turbulent two and a half years in tourism.

Tourism Whitsundays CEO, Rick Hamilton, said the Whitsundays Tourism Awards is the regions premier event and has been designed to encourage excellence within the industry and to celebrate the significant contribution the tourism industry makes to The Whitsundays region.

'The process of compiling an awards submission isn't an easy feat and it was designed this way to encourage operators to really look at what they are doing in their business and how that flows onto the customers, locals and region,' said Mr Hamilton

'We have one of the most cohesive and successful tourism industries in the country, tonight is an example of that, everyone is here celebrating their achievements, their competitors' achievements and the overall achievements of the tourism industry.'

Tourism Whitsundays would like to congratulate all the entrants and recognise the following winners of this year's awards category:

Category	Business Name	Award
Major Tourist Attractions	Cruise Whitsundays Reefworld	GOLD
Tourist Attractions	Bowen Tourism and Business The Big Mango	GOLD
Festivals & Events	Great Barrier Reef Festival	GOLD
Ecotourism	Kiana Sail and Dive	GOLD
Tourism Retail and Hire Services	Whitsunday Coast Airport	GOLD
Visitor Information Services	Bowen Tourism and Business	GOLD
Major Tour & Transport Operators	Ocean Rafting	GOLD
Adventure Tourism	Ocean Rafting	GOLD
Caravan & Holiday Parks	BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort	GOLD
Unique Accommodation	Cruise Whitsundays Reefstays	GOLD
Self Contained Accommodation	Pinnacles Resort	GOLD
3-3.5 Star Accommodation	Magnums Accommodation Airlie Beach	GOLD
4-4.5 Star Deluxe Accommodation	Mirage Whitsundays	GOLD
5 Star Luxury Accommodation	InterContinental Hayman Island Resort	GOLD
New Tourism Business	Little Fish Tourism Development Consulting	GOLD
Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or Volunteer Group	Emily Monacella	GOLD
Whitsundays - Young Achievers Award	Crystal Lacey	WINNER
The Bob Porter Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual	Michael and Elizabeth Hackett	WINNER
Award For Excellence In Customer Service By An Individual Or Business	Peninsula Airlie Beach	WINNER

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Award For Most Outstanding Whitsundays Booking Service	Sailing Whitsundays	WINNER
Award For Most Outstanding Whitsundays Hospitality Venue	Fish D'vine	WINNER
Award For Most Outstanding Whitsundays Retailer	Whitsunday Creatives	WINNER
Award For Most Outstanding Whitsundays Service Business	Shiift Pty Ltd	WINNER
Whitsundays Business of the Year	Magnums Unique Accommodation Airlie Beach	WINNER

The Whitsundays Tourism Awards was supported by generous sponsors (in alphabetical order): Airlie Beach Festival of Music, Angel Signs, ARN Mackay, Bendigo Bank, Bookeasy, Cruise Whitsundays, Fraser Ford, Graphic House, KB Designs, Queensland Tafe, Paradise Outdoor Advertising, Reef Gateway Hotel, R Jean Photography, Whitsunday Coast Chamber of Commerce, Whitsunday News Newspaper, Whitsunday Sailing Club, Whitsunday Transit, Whitsunday Tickets, and event partners Tourism and Events Queensland and Whitsunday Regional Council

Information on winning businesses is below.

- ENDS -

To view a Word Document of this release and supporting images, [click here](#).

To view The Whitsundays destination video, [click here](#).

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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## Winning Businesses

### Cruise Whitsundays Reefworld

The Reefworld pontoon, moored at Hardy Reef, is a unique attraction that provides access to the Great Barrier Reef while supporting the region's natural environment. Working hand-in-hand with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Reefworld takes a sustainable and environmentally conscious tourism approach, delivering reef education and conservation guidance, through a range of remarkable experiences, including guided snorkelling and dive tours, admiring the abundant marine life from the underwater observatory, up-close reef exploration in a semi-submersible or optional helicopter scenic flights. Guests keen to experience the reef can choose between two unique accommodation options: Reefsleeper, or the underwater Reefsuites.

### Bowen Tourism and Business The Big Mango

The Big Mango is located next to the Bowen Visitor Information Centre, 5km south of Bowen at the top of the Whitsundays.

The mango was built in May 2002 and celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2022. Bowen has a population of about 8,500. The Visitor Information centre next to the Big Mango attracts more than 40,000 visitors annually.

Thousands more stop at the Big Mango for a selfie next to this iconic tourist attraction.

Bowen Tourism and Business operate the Visitor Information Centre - a not-for-profit organisation supported by 245 members and operates seven days a week.

### Great Barrier Reef Festival

The Great Barrier Reef Festival takes pride in inclusively connecting the reef to the shore and celebrates the coastal region of the Whitsundays at the heart of the Great Barrier Reef. There truly is something for everyone, from our Friday Night Fireworks and Live Music to the Revvin the Reef Car Show, free Family Fun Day, Comedy Gala and much more!

New to the Great Barrier Reef Festival is the Immerse Underwater Art Installation – Bringing the reef to the Airlie Beach foreshore created using recycled products. And The Master Reef Guide educational experiences, including interactive workshops and guided tours to the outer Great Barrier Reef and Whitsunday Islands.

As a community and tourism event, local businesses and citizen support make this festival happen, all are invited to be involved and BE PART OF SOMETHING GREAT!

The Great Barrier Reef festival attracts approximately 12,000 attendees to The Whitsundays and injects half a million dollars into the local economy.

### Kiana Sail and Dive

Kiana Sail and Dive are the only Outer Barrier Reef expedition marine business that has the unique ability to access the remote reefs off the Whitsunday Coast.

MS Kiana is a sailing vessel chosen specifically to ensure minimal environmental impact as we discover Outer Reefs that are extremely remote with our 5Day/4Night 'Explore the Unexplored' Expeditions. These expeditions are designed for research, monitoring, and coral predation control programs delivering a unique immersive experience for national and international guests.

Kiana also offers a 3Day/2Night' Whitsunday Island' Expedition. Showcasing our natural wonder focusing on conservation, and protecting our World Heritage Area.

### Whitsunday Coast Airport

Whitsunday Coast Airport is the aviation hub of the Whitsundays, connecting a wide variety of passengers through Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Cairns. The airport is critical to the success of the whole Whitsundays and partners with industry to market and promote the greater region.

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Whitsunday Coast Airport strives to provide a unique and memorable experience to arriving and departing visitors by encouraging passengers to relax, slow down and enjoy the terminal facilities. Featuring a heart reef aquarium, an interactive augmented reality screen and locally produced food options through our Restaurant to let visitors taste the Whitsundays.

## Bowen Tourism and Business

Welcoming more than 41,000 visitors annually, the Bowen Visitor Information Centre excels in visitor services across a wide range of offerings. Located on the Bruce Highway, 5 kilometres south of Bowen, the Information Centre sits alongside one of Australia's favourite big things, the 10-metre-high Big Mango. Inside the centre, a team of staff and volunteers greet every Visitor with a wealth of knowledge on Bowen, the Whitsundays and regions to the North and South. The Information Centre also offers accommodation and tour bookings for visitors and an extensive range of souvenirs and mango-inspired products.

## Ocean Rafting

Multi award-winning Ocean Rafting offers two exciting day tour adventures, the Northern Exposure and Southern Lights, with an exhilarating ride to Whitehaven Beach, the ultimate access to Hill Inlet and special snorkelling sites, as well as the Fly and Raft package, 60-minute scenic flights, a range of adventure packages, charter options and the Reef Seeker environmental educational program. The fleet of eight semi-rigid inflatable vessels allows guests to experience an adrenalin-fuelled ride amongst the beauty of the Whitsundays, while a maximum of 32 passengers allows for a personalised experience in the pleasure of a small group.

## BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort

Owned and operated by the McKinnon family for 28 years, 4.5-star rated BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort has developed a reputation as one of Queensland's leading resort holiday parks. Offering a range of accommodations from tropical landscaped campsites to self-contained studios and one, two, and three-bedroom cabins, the resort provides options to suit every taste and budget. With over 15 onsite activities, including a big, huge, mega waterslide park, lagoon-style pool, mini golf, outdoor cinema, Kids' Club, year round activities program and much more, BIG4 Adventure Whitsunday Resort offers the ultimate holiday escape.

## Cruise Whitsundays Reefstays

Moored at Hardy Reef, Reefworld is the setting for Reefstays, encompassing two unique accommodation options: Reefsuites and Reefsleeper. Reefsuites is Australia's first underwater accommodation. Submerged four metres below the surface, the two premium suites are fitted with glass walls and floors, delivering spectacular views of the Great Barrier Reef. Reefsuites stays include arriving via a scenic cruise through the Whitsundays, meals prepared by the resident chef, a private snorkelling and semi-submarine tour, and access to the underwater observatory. Reefsleeper features the same inclusions, with guests retiring to a queen-size Reefbed under the stars on the upper deck of the pontoon.

## Pinnacles Resort

Looking for the perfect holiday home away from home experience? Pinnacles Resort is the ultimate in luxury self contained accommodation in Airlie Beach – the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef and Whitsunday Islands,

Pinnacles are home to 29 stylish 1, 2 & 3 bedroom apartments, all with either balcony jacuzzi or internal spa tub and views that will take your breath away. The onsite tour desk can assist with your Whitsunday adventures, or you may wish to enjoy your day lazing by the 20m wet edge swimming pool, relaxing in the sauna or working out in the gym. Relax, Stay & Unwind at Pinnacles Resort, Airlie Beach.

## Magnums Accommodation Airlie Beach

Magnums is an award-winning provider of affordable accommodation in Airlie Beach, bringing travellers and holidaymakers to the Whitsundays and the Great Barrier Reef. Magnums Accommodation Airlie Beach has been operating in the Whitsundays for over 32 years.

Magnums strive to achieve the highest level of financial sustainability. A contingency fund, daily audits and regular yield revision allow maximum certainty. Magnums achieve benchmark industry levels with their environmental responsibilities by continuing the business's journey as Eco Certified operators, Ecobiz and Healthy Reef partners.

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The Magnums team are informed and educated to achieve our goals and reach benchmark inclusive practices. They work with many Training and Industry partners such as BlackCard, GALTA, 8 Seconds and Shift. Magnums support the local community by practising a "purchase local policy".

Magnums employ 27 full-time locals. Our 96.03% team satisfaction results have ensured our team stay with the business. Allowing Magnums to invest heavily in training. This training and experience result in producing genuine Whitsunday Ambassadors.

Post-COVID, there was only one way for Magnums to grow and recover: to pivot from backpacker to 3.5-star accommodation entirely. Shared facilities have been completely renovated and include added guest services: WiFi, 24/7 check and working spaces for our new market. This resulted in our overall occupancy average increasing by 27% compared to last year.

## InterContinental Hayman Island Resort

Nestled at the northernmost point of Australia's Whitsunday archipelago, InterContinental Hayman Island Resort welcomes guests to experience immersive luxury in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef. Luxury island living is experienced with 180 beautifully-appointed rooms, suites, villas, Pavilions and Residences artfully intertwined with spectacular swimming pools, panoramic seascapes, and tropical rainforest gardens. The resort presents a spectacular sensory experience teeming with natural beauty and mindful enrichment while offering destination-inspired activities. Hayman Island is an iconic private island resort where luxury and nature unite to form unforgettable connections.

## Little Fish Tourism Development Consulting

Crystal Lacey, or Little Fish as she is affectionately known, comes to the stage to accept the award.

Little Fish Tourism Development Consulting brings together 15 years of tourism on water and administration experience. Providing practical and relevant training, product development, new cutting-edge immersive experiential educational guest experiences and business framework auditing and development to the tourism business.

Driven to create innovative immersive educational adaptations for tourism businesses with an undeniable passion for research, education and storytelling. Little Fish Tourism development Consulting provides businesses with the tools and niche market expert experience they require to excel and enhance their interactive educational experiences, delivering leading-edge fresh approaches to business development.

## Emily Monacella

Emily Monacella embodies the future of tourism and is a passionate volunteer in The Whitsundays. She has committed hours of her time to marine debris collection, personal research projects, reef restoration activities and Crown of Thorns Starfish removal. Emily is constantly contributing to the region and the community. She has recently started 'The Whitsunday Active Volunteers for the Environment to involve the community in citizen science projects and education. Emily is a true quiet achiever and deserves recognition for her dedication to volunteer work.

## Michael and Elizabeth Hackett

Michael and Elizabeth Hackett are renowned in the Whitsunday Tourism Industry for the success of their incredible Magnums Backpackers, recently re-developed as Magnums Accommodation Airlie Beach – a very successful business in tonight's awards! With astounding business acumen the duo supported the attraction and growth of the international market into Airlie Beach. With a passion to continue to invest in and see The Whitsunday grow, Elizabeth and Michael contribute to the success of not only The Whitsundays, but the Queensland and Australian tourism industry. Elizabeth has engrained herself into the culture at Queensland Tourism Industry Council, engaging in their indigenous activity, professional mentoring and moving the Tourism Awards program forwards.

## Crystal Lacey

Crystal (Little Fish) has spent the last 15 years working on the water and growing her love for the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef. She is passionate about educating visitors and operators on the complex systems

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of the reef and the ways we can all contribute to protecting it. A dedicated Master Reef Guide, Little Fish has established herself as the go-to tourism and marine expert throughout the Great Barrier Reef.

## Peninsula Airlie Beach

Luxury 5-Star Accommodation, Peninsula Airlie Beach is Airlie Beach's most luxurious beachfront accommodation situated on Shingley Drive Whisper Bay at the northern approach to Airlie Beach – alongside the newly extended Coral Sea Marina – prime waterfront location.

As the name suggests, Peninsula Airlie Beach occupies a rare and highly prized setting. The apartment buildings stand boldly on the point of land, the very shape of a dolphin's dorsal fin jutting out into the Coral Sea.

Paul and Francene Tuddenham host guests receiving the highest accolades, with many claiming that Peninsula Airlie Beach is absolutely hands down the most amazing place to stay in Airlie Beach - Paul & Francine are outstanding hosts, with a wealth of local knowledge, making our trip extraordinary.

## Sailing Whitsundays

Sailing Whitsundays, the company, is a cooperative of boat owners here in the Whitsundays! As a collective of industry operators, they can bring some of the best discounts and deals direct to visitors that no one else can offer! We are committed to providing guests with great products at the cheapest possible prices. Sailing Whitsundays clients are a top priority in ensuring guests' holiday vessel meets and exceeds all expectations.

## Fish D'vine

Fish D'Vine opened in 2004 and are the longest-established independent Restaurant in Airlie Beach. With over 50 in their team, 17 chefs, dedication and a lot of happy customers.

Fish D'Vine is passionate about its business and the importance they place on food provenance. The best produce is on our doorstep with the fertile lands and Great Barrier Reef.

The team is passionate about the experience guests are provided with when they visit our award-winning Restaurant. Fish D'vine aim to continually deliver the best; The best food, the best service, the best presentation and the best guest experience.

Fish D'Vine achieves this by employing the best people, offering the best training and developing the best culture.

## Whitsunday Creatives

Whitsunday Creative opened their fabulous store in Main Street Proserpine to support the many small local businesses in The Whitsundays Region. With over 40 local suppliers in one incredible shop, Whitsunday Creatives will surely have something for everyone. From stunning Whitsunday-created artwork to jewellery, clothes, toys, fragrances, accessories, custom crockery and amazing food and treats, all made by our local Whitsunday producers. If you haven't been in to visit Jade and her team, it is a must on your next visit to Proserpine.

## Shiift Pty Ltd

Shiift specialises in leadership, culture and performance. They create positive, sustainable change that is motivating & productive for your people and profitable to your business.

Shiifts experienced team empowers others to achieve their greatest potential through changing behaviours, leveraging individual and team strengths, building leadership & the capacity for diverse personalities to thrive collectively.

Shiift understands the challenges in finding time to implement effective change strategies – we've been there ourselves! We drive curiosity, provide knowledge & create platforms for self-development whilst supporting the implementation process.

Those seeking inspiration, innovation and continuous improvement will be provided with the tools, training and ongoing support required to create the outcomes your business needs

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