

MEDIA RELEASE



CRUISE WHITSUNDAYS
GREAT BARRIER
REEF FESTIVAL
WHITSUNDAYS • QUEENSLAND • AUG 3 - 6 2023

THE HEART
The Whitsundays
OF EVENTS

For immediate release
22 June 2023

Art and Reef Merge at the Cruise Whitsundays Great Barrier Reef Festival

The Great Barrier Reef comes alive in the Immerse 2023 art installation at this year's Cruise Whitsundays Great Barrier Reef Festival, with the goal of immersing viewers in an underwater wonderland created by local artists.

Immerse 2023 recreates the Reef with projected animations and sculptures using recycled materials created by local and visiting artists and the community. Free community workshops are scheduled in June and July for members of the public to create corals and fish to be incorporated into the installation.

Funded through the Queensland Arts Showcase Program to produce new works and share skills through community workshops, and to extend the footprint of the Great Barrier Reef Festival, Immerse 2023 will be delivered by award-winning multi-media artists Margaret Burgess and Donna Maree Robinson and feature works by local artists Brigitte Peel, Liz Knight, Anita Pender, and Joan Hunter.

Lead sculpture artist Margaret Burgess said she was excited to be working on the Immerse installation again.

"This project ticks all my boxes; community building, creative, inclusive, educational and it creates environmental awareness and conversations about our Great Barrier Reef," Mrs Burgess said.

The Immerse installation initiative, first delivered in 2021, is the brainchild of creative director and Great Barrier Reef Festival Chairperson Margie Murphy, who wanted to create a reef-inspired visual focus for the event.

For the first time, in 2023, the installation will include a composed musical element, inviting musicians aged 15 and over who play a classical instrument to perform under the guidance of Brisbane-based contemporary composer Corrina Bonshek. 'Call from the Deep' will be a purpose-created piece featuring stunning recordings of Eastern Humpback Whales and performed by talented regional youth.

Project creative director Margie Murphy said she was thrilled to be bringing another element to the installation.

"This will be a special performance on the Saturday evening of the festival, which will also provide a soundtrack for the installation. There are so many parts of our community involved in the Immerse 2023 project, and I can't wait to see them all come together," Mrs Murphy said.

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Rick Hamilton is excited for the Immerse 2023 installation.

"It is hugely encouraging to have the State Government support the Immerse installation again this year. This funding opens up significant opportunities for the Festival organisers; it also provides the community with the opportunity to get involved and create their piece of the Great Barrier Reef.

"The Immerse installation brings the Great Barrier Reef out of the water and into the centre of the festival, where kids and adults alike are awed by the almost life-size sculptures hanging from the foreshore fig trees. Using recycled materials is an important element of Immerse and one that fits with the values of the Festival and The Whitsundays," said Mr Hamilton.

Another angle of arts in the festival will be the Coral Sea Marina Lantern Parade on Friday, 4 August. Artist Lalune Croker will lead community lantern-making workshops in July to create lanterns for the parade.

The Coral Sea Marina Lantern Parade will commence at Coral Sea Marina and conclude at the Immerse installation on Friday, 4 August. Immerse 2023 can be viewed in Fairy Tree Park from 4 – 6 August 2023.

To stay updated with workshops and to get involved, visit www.greatbarrierreeffestival.com.au.

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Immerse 2023 is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Community lantern-making workshops are made possible by the Australian Government's Regional Arts Fund, provided through Regional Arts Australia, administered in Queensland by Flying Arts Alliance.

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

To view The Whitsundays Heart of Events video, [click here](#).

About the Great Barrier Reef Festival: Proudly brought to you by Cruise Whitsundays, 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 with Foreshore Cocktail Party and Live Music to the Saturday Street Party including the Revvin the Reef Car Show, free Family Fun Day, Great Barrier Reef Experiences and much more!

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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