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Great Barrier Reef nominated for global environmental award

The Great Barrier Reef has been nominated for a Lifetime Achievement Award in the United Nations Environment Programme's highly regarded Champions of the Earth environmental awards.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Reef Guardian Councils have collaborated with the communities of the Great Barrier Reef including Traditional Owners, marine biologists, the tourism industry and Reef Guardian Schools to nominate the World Heritage Area as the first non-human recipient of the award.

Announcing the nomination on World Earth Day (April 22), Reef Guardian Council's Chair Jeff Baines said the Great Barrier Reef inspired greatness and had a profound impact on both the environment and on the people who visit it.

"The Great Barrier Reef is hands-down the best candidate for a Lifetime Achievement Award," he said. "A catalyst for environmental initiatives, the Great Barrier Reef supports First Nations communities, protects marine life and teaches future generations.

"We are using the voices of the communities of the Great Barrier Reef to persuade the United Nations Environment Programme to crown the Great Barrier Reef as the first non-human recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of almost 10,000 years of positive environmental impact.

"Sir David Attenborough is among the environmental titans to previously win this award which is given to a living individual who has demonstrated decades of impact in protecting the Earth and its inhabitants.

"Only living individuals can win and an individual is defined as a distinct entity, so using UNESCO's definition of the Great Barrier Reef as a globally outstanding and significant entity, we argue that the Great Barrier Reef meets the entry requirements.

"The supporting submission video features Traditional Owners speaking about the Great Barrier Reef being a teacher, healer and provider to First Nations communities for millennia.

"Master Reef Guides and marine biologists have also backed the submission drawing attention to the fact that the Great Barrier Reef protects more than 9000 species of marine life creating one of the most biodiverse environments on Earth and brings millions of people together every year through sustainable initiatives.

"Students from Newman Catholic College, which is part of the Reef Guardian Schools program, describe their wonder at learning about the Great Barrier Reef and the beauty of experiencing it first-hand.

"The Great Barrier Reef is a mentor, leading by example in teaching us that you have got to work together for the future of our planet. A lifetime that great deserves to be recognised."

The nomination is part of The Lifetime of Greatness Project which Tourism Tropical North Queensland is launching today with a worldwide initiative to encourage the global community to get involved.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chief Executive Officer, Mark Olsen said:

"The tourism industry has thrown its weight behind this nomination because we see the impact the Great Barrier Reef has on individuals every day – it really is life changing for many people who visit and finally understand how important this World Heritage area is for biodiversity, Indigenous culture and jobs.

"The people who live alongside and work on the Great Barrier Reef encourage people globally to show their

support by visiting the website alifetimeofgreatness.com and by sharing Great Barrier Reef social content to encourage others to join in.

"We firmly believe that the individual who has had the largest impact on the world is the world's largest individual, and we hope people around the world will share this understanding through The Lifetime of Greatness Project."

Great Barrier Reef Foundation Managing Director, Anna Marsden said:

"The Great Barrier Reef isn't just an environmental icon — it's a living entity that has quietly nurtured life for millennia. This is our moment to give back and honour its contribution with the recognition it deserves while also raising awareness of the ongoing work being done to protect its beauty and biodiversity.

"By nominating the Great Barrier Reef for this award, we are inviting the world to celebrate how it connects people from across the globe, from schoolchildren and scientists to Traditional Owners and international visitors — and the power it holds to drive change.

"We believe the world is ready to acknowledge that greatness can come in many forms — and sometimes it lives beneath the waves, safeguarding thousands of marine species."

Tourism and Events Queensland Chief Executive Officer Craig Davidson said:

"The Great Barrier Reef is a worthy candidate for this prestigious award. As the world's largest coral reef system, stretching over 2300 kilometres along the Queensland coast and home to a staggering diversity of marine life, it is the Earth's most extraordinary living entity.

"The reef is vital to the environment, the creatures that live amongst it, and the communities that live alongside it, making it a true treasure for Queensland, our tourism industry, and the world. This nomination raises much-needed awareness about its preservation and the incredible work that continues to go into that, ensuring that future generations can explore and enjoy its magnificence."

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Tim Booth said:

"Every day, we see how the Great Barrier Reef transforms those who experience it, leaving visitors with a deeper sense of connection, purpose and responsibility.

"As the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef, The Whitsundays offers a front-row seat to one of the world's most breathtaking natural wonders - and with that comes a deep responsibility to protect it.

"This nomination is a celebration of everything the Reef represents - not just a natural wonder, but a global symbol of connection and inspiration. We're proud to stand with the rest of Queensland in inviting the world to recognise its greatness and to take action in protecting its future."

For more information visit alifetimeofgreatness.com.

This project has been made possible by Tourism Tropical North Queensland, and the grant funding received from the Australian Government, under the International Tourism Recovery Program administered by Austrade.

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Video and images [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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