Public art and reef recovery to improve Whitsundays tourism
7 December 2018

Public Art Project Update
The public art research project at Langford Reef was completed in November. The six major sculptures are progressing with planning, design, models and engineering certification. A permit application has been submitted to GBRMPA for the installation at four sites.

Indigenous Involvement in Public Art Development
Two of the sculptors are collaborating with local indigenous artist Nicky Bidju Prior and one of the sculptures is collaborating with Arthur Gaby.

Artist Feature:
Col Henry and his wife are artists and sailors and regular visitors to the Whitsundays. He has been commissioned as part of the Public Art and Reef Restoration Project to construct a large turtle sculpture, which is planned to be installed, pending approvals, at Langford Island Reef.

Col is constructing a 6m long, stainless steel Turtle Dreams sculpture will be an interactive, evocative piece installed in water approximately 5-6 metres deep at Langford Reef. See some of the sculpture taking shape in the photos.

This long association with the Whitsundays, space and community of the Whitsundays has stained Col’s ideals and thoughts, and the proposed themes of conservation and education of the project overall have heavily influenced Col’s proposed addition to the marine landscape.

Click on the links below to Listen to two ABC radio interviews about Col’s Hawksbill turtle sculpture.

1. Col Henry
2. Dr Adam Smith

Figure 1: Artist Col Henry (right) and his wife Krys at a recent workshop in Airlie Beach.

Figure 2: Col Henry in fabrication of a ‘flipper’ for his turtle sculpture.
Art research and surveys
Our art research project came to a conclusion on 14 November with the removal of the art from its underwater location at Langford Reef. The research was designed to test the social and environmental benefits and impacts of public art in the Great Barrier Reef. We received 439 survey responses over the 3-month duration of the research project. Thank you to everyone who participated and completed our online survey. The results of this research will assist the future location and implementation of the public art project above and future, similar projects that may be proposed throughout the Reef. Results of the surveys will now be collated and available publicly in the coming months.

Reef Restoration
On the 8th of November Reef Ecologic received approval from GBRMPA for the commencement of coral nursery reef restoration project. Under the auspices of permit number G18/41180.1 Reef Ecologic was assisted by 11 volunteers representing Queensland Parks and Wildlife service, the Order of Underwater Coral Heroes (OUCH) and the local tourism industry over four days to install the coral nursery frames and propagate corals at Blue Pearl Bay and Manta Ray Bay. The weather was challenging with northerly winds making surface conditions tricky in out two chosen locations. We collected corals from donor colonies and ‘corals of opportunity’ (loose pieces of coral found lying around the reef) from two locations in the Whitsundays, Stonehaven Bay and Scrub Hen Bay. Corals were then fragmented and a total of 425 coral fragments are now growing successfully on the coral nursery frames at Blue Pearl Bay (225) and Manta Ray Bay (200). Corals represent four different genera and over 10 species of coral. ‘We preferentially chose coral species that are currently absent from these locations’, Reef Ecologic’s marine scientist Nathan Cook said. ‘We hope to increase the genetic diversity of the resident population and increase the speed of recovery at both Blue Pearl and Manta Ray Bay’. Representatives from the local community and tourism industry will be required to assist with future monitoring and maintenance. You can register your interest in either activity by emailing nathan.cook@reefecologic.org.
How you can help the reef

1. Volunteer with Reef Ecologic to assist with reef restoration (nathan.cook@reefecoogic.org or phone 0437 318802)
2. Share this communiqué with your social media and business networks
3. Take a friend snorkelling on the reef
4. Reduce your environmental footprint and take a specific action such as buy local food produce

Upcoming activities

Proposed activities and milestones in December – January
Artwork 1 installation (Horseshoe Bay)  
Reef restoration monitoring and maintenance at Blue Pearl and Manta Ray Bay

![Indicative project timeline](image)

*Figure 5: Indicative project timeline.*

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Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service  

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