



REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Golden opportunity for Gold Coast reefs

Volunteer reef health monitoring organisation, Reef Check Australia, has kicked off their monitoring survey season in South East Queensland with support from locally-based AirAsia! Reef Check volunteer divers jumped in at Palm Beach Reef and Narrowneck artificial reef this week as the first official dives of the 2011 survey season.

"It's amazing to dive with such vibrant and diverse marine life and then surface to see the bustling city skyline along the coast," says, Reef Check Australia's General Manager, Jennifer Loder. *"In half a day we saw breaching whales, dozens of colourful nudibranchs, resting wobbegongs and a multitude of fish. Reef Check programs can help to ensure that there are healthy reef & ocean habitats to support such amazing marine life."*

Over the next several months, Reef Check survey teams will visit reef sites stretching from the Gold Coast to the Sunshine Coast, monitoring reef composition, recording abundance of key fish and invertebrates and documenting reef impacts such as bleaching, coral disease or marine debris. Reef Check's globally-standardised scientific protocols are currently implemented in more than 90 locations around the world, establishing a unique opportunity to compare reef health around the world.

All Reef Check Australia data is available, free-of-charge, to members of the public who want to learn more about their favourite local reefs via the Reef Check Australia Reef Health Database. Data is also provided to government agencies, natural resource managers and industry to assist in reef management efforts, helping to compliment government monitoring efforts and fill gaps in reef health monitoring data.

More than a dozen local dive operators support Reef Check's monitoring efforts by providing dive trips to monitoring sites around the South East Queensland area at reduced rates. Local businesses, such as AirAsia, are now showing their support for the community-based initiative through Reef Check Australia's Adopt a Reef program. *"Queensland's Gold Coast was the very first destination of AirAsia's long haul carrier AirAsia X, it is a community we have always had a strong affinity with and we feel it only fitting to further extend our support of the Gold Coast community beyond its shoreline to its local marine wildlife as well,"* says Stuart Myerscough, AirAsia's Marketing Manager.

Jennifer Loder adds, *"Reef Check Australia is striving to build awareness, appreciation and protection of rocky reefs, like Palm Beach Reef, right here on our doorstep in SEQ; they really are pretty special. Local partnerships are essential to the success of our program, so we're grateful that AirAsia is supporting these efforts as our first Adopt a Reef Corporate Giving Program sponsor."*

Find out more about getting involved in a volunteer training course, the Adopt a Reef program or other ways to protect reef and ocean habitats, visit www.reefcheckaustralia.org.

For additional information and high resolution images, contact:
Jennifer Loder, General Manager at jenn@reefcheckaustralia.org or 0402284681.

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IMAGES



Volunteer surveyors at Palm Beach Reef



Reef Check Volunteer Survey Diver



Resident hermit crab



Nudibranch at Palm Beach Reef



Reef Check surveyor



Wobbegong on the Gold Coast

More about Reef Check Australia

Reef Check Australia is an award-winning, not-for-profit environmental organization that engages the Australian community in hands-on reef monitoring, management and conservation. We believe in protecting reefs and oceans by empowering people.

Established in 2001 by one passionate individual with a strong vision, the charity has inspired over 200 volunteers to train using a scientifically standardised protocol in established monitoring techniques. Our teams of trained volunteer divers are part of a worldwide network of volunteers who regularly monitor and report on reef health in more than 90 countries, helping to watch over reefs on a local scale and compare reef health on a global scale.

Reef Check Australia has been collecting reef health monitoring data on the Great Barrier Reef since 2001 and expanded to cover lesser-known rocky reefs in South East Queensland in 2007. Over the course of ten years, Reef Check volunteer survey teams have completed more than 450 reef surveys on over 150 sites spread across 60 different reefs.

The community-based program provides a low-cost method of monitoring reefs to supporting government monitoring initiatives and engages local communities in protecting their own reef resources. Reef Check data is suitable for management purposes and is easily accessible both for both scientists and the general public. Broad-scale Reef Check data can provide vital early-warnings of changes in reef health.

Our programs promote community education, collect useful reef research and facilitate better conservation of reef resources... all through the power of volunteers and community partnerships. Our mission is to protect Australia's unique reef and ocean resources through a successful recipe of scientific research, awareness raising and capacity building. With a professional approach and recognised integrity, Reef Check Australia works in collaboration with community and industry partners to raise awareness about the importance of reef resources and the role people playing in caring for them through education and participation programs.

Support from government agencies, industry professionals, valued sponsors and dedicated volunteers make our current projects possible but, in order to succeed in our mission, we need to do more. As a charitable organisation, donors can make fully tax-deductible gifts to help Reef Check Australia take positive action towards reaching environmentally sound and economically sustainable solutions to the real challenges of reef conservation.

Our Mission:

To promote healthy local reefs through scientific research, community education and marine conservation.

Our Tagline:

Empowering people to save our reefs and oceans.

For more information or to get involved check out our website at www.reefcheckaustralia.org.

For further press information and high res images please contact Jennifer Loder at Reef Check Australia via email, jenn@reefcheckaustralia.org or telephone 0402284681.