

Media Release: April 2007

## Reef Check Australia launches EcoAction Program

Reef Check, the United Nations' official community coral reef monitoring network, is launching its unique EcoAction program in Australia this month. This initiative aims to help fulfill Reef Check's mission to directly involve the Australian community in coral reef conservation, monitoring and management by providing a high quality range of ecotourism materials developed by Reef Check scientists.

Reef Check is joining a host of international conservation charities who have actively pursued commercial schemes that generate revenue to support their vital work whilst helping to fulfill their organization's objectives. The sale of EcoAction products by dive operators and resorts will raise funds to support Reef Check activities through providing interactive educational experiences, stimulating active participation in coral reef conservation activities and empowering ecotourists to collect reef health data.

The suite of materials and trainings available accommodates every age and experience level, encouraging kids and adults alike to actively participate in the conservation of Australia's coral reefs.

### Reef Check Adventures for little nippers!

Reef Check Adventures is the first 'step' of the EcoAction program. In this exciting and challenging activity book, Reef Check brings to children aged 7-12 the dazzling and diverse world of coral reefs. With over 40 pages of engaging activities and fun coral reef facts, children will discover the mysterious and magical undersea world of color and light. Young readers will also be exposed to the importance of conservation and what they can do to ensure the survival of these ecological wonders. This book promises hours of fun and enjoyment with educational lessons to last a lifetime!

### Get interactive with The Underwater Reef Guide: indo-pacific!

The Underwater Reef Guide will enhance anyone's diving and snorkeling experience. It can be used by anybody with a desire to increase their knowledge and understanding of the fascinating coral reef fish, invertebrates, corals and algae that comprise the Indo-Pacific coral reef ecosystem. Developed by Reef Check scientists, the waterproof Reef Guide contains photographs and information on 50 organisms specifically chosen for their regional abundance as well as their important role in the ecosystem allowing you to identify them. The attached reusable slate allows the user to record what they see and by submitting their data online they will be assisting the Reef Check scientists in tracking global coral reef health. Reef Check Australia has already proved very popular with dive operators in Queensland and has sold the entire first print run of the Underwater Reef Guide.

### Coming Soon: Discover Reef Check and become a marine biologist for an afternoon!

Discover Reef Check is a half day course that allows participants to gain a firsthand experience in how marine biologists conduct coral reef research. The course includes a 1 hour presentation, where the theory and techniques used for monitoring coral reef health will be introduced. This will be followed by a 1 hour guided dive where students can try their hand at some of the sampling techniques.

Proceeds from the sale of the **EcoAction** products will be used to **support local Reef Check conservation efforts**, and offers the chance for new monitoring teams to self finance wherever there are existing resorts and dive shops. The **Reef Check EcoAction program** creates a **win, win, win situation** for participants, dive operators and Reef Check, but most importantly, for the coral reefs.

For further information and images please contact Lauren Bird or Roger Beeden at Reef Check Australia on (07) 4724 3950 or email [media@reefcheckaustralia.org](mailto:media@reefcheckaustralia.org), or view our EcoAction web pages at [www.reefcheckaustralia.org/projects/ecoaction](http://www.reefcheckaustralia.org/projects/ecoaction).

#### Notes to Editors:

A full list of stockists can be found at :

[www.reefcheckaustralia.org/projects/ecoaction/faq.html#stockists](http://www.reefcheckaustralia.org/projects/ecoaction/faq.html#stockists).

Please contact [support@reefcheckaustralia.org](mailto:support@reefcheckaustralia.org) if there are no stockists in your area.

Reef Check Adventures	MSRP \$14.25
Reef Check Underwater Guide	MSRP \$37.95
Discover Reef Check	MSRP \$110 - 175

#### Reef Check

Reef Check is a volunteer, non-profit organization set up by coral researchers following a meeting in 1993 where the global coral reef crisis was first discussed. Reef Check has been collecting data since the first International Year of the Reef in 1997 and is now active in over 82 countries and territories world wide. It is Reef Check's mission to:

- educate the public and governments about the value of coral reefs and rocky reef ecosystems and the crisis facing them
- create a global network of volunteer teams, trained and led by scientists, that regularly monitor and report on reef health using a standard method
- facilitate collaborative use of reef health information by community groups, governments, universities and businesses to design and implement ecologically sound and economically sustainable solutions
- stimulate local action to protect remaining pristine reefs and rehabilitate damaged reefs worldwide especially through the creation of Marine Protected Areas.

[www.reefcheckaustralia.org](http://www.reefcheckaustralia.org)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inGov\\_ipVkk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inGov_ipVkk)

#### EcoAction Programme International

In 2006, Reef Check pioneered a new method of providing incentives for the private sector to become more heavily involved in leading and supporting existing and new monitoring teams in the coral reef regions. Developed through a collaborative effort between Reef Check Headquarters, Australia, Dominican Republic and Indonesia, the new EcoAction program involves a formal Reef Check testing and certification program with multiple levels to appeal to tourists and experienced divers of all ages. Cross certification is available with PADI and NAUI and SDI.

This marine conservation education program is sold to tourists by dive shops and resorts in order to raise funds to pay for monitoring (boats, equipment, gasoline etc). The new Reef Check EcoAction Program has been launched in a number of countries in the Carribean and Indo-Pacific and has been well-received, with a high demand from scuba divemasters and instructors to be certified. The built in incentive is that RC Certified Instructors and Divemasters can then sell the training course and make some profit while at the same time raising funds for their local RC teams.

Reef Check Australia was involved in training the first coordinators in Cozumel, Mexico. Reef Check Australia ran the first in-country EcoAction training in January 2007 at a resort on Magnetic Island, QLD.