



REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

12 AUGUST 2009

Harnessing the Australian Spirit of the Volunteer

Queensland-based charity, Reef Check Australia (RCA), is justifiably proud of its status as the only organisation in Australia to bring community volunteers into the field of coral reef monitoring.

Conducting underwater scuba surveys on reef health according to a well-recognised international protocol, the trained volunteers gain a new dimension to their diving experience and also help out their local environment along the way. Deb Eastop, a long-standing volunteer enjoys regular survey trips with the organisation, "Having spent years going out to the reef as a dive instructor, it's just nice to be able to get out there and give something back."

This season, running from June to December, RCA has established a permanent co-ordinator in the SEQ region, with survey sites running from Noosa in the north, though the Moreton Bay area and down to the Gold Coast. With a target to survey 20 sites this year, they need all the volunteers they can get.

SEQ Co-ordinator for RCA, Jennifer Loder is pleased with the response from local volunteers so far: "We have a very small but very enthusiastic team down here in the region who are happy to give up their time on a regular basis to venture out in winter waters and collect vital data about the health of our reefs."

Supported by funding from the government's Coastcare | Caring for our Country initiative and with in-kind support from local dive operators, RCA's volunteers are fortunate to enjoy free diving at some of the best sites in the region, in order to help protect them from the serious threats facing our reefs today.

RCA is now recruiting for more volunteer divers to join the next training course in monitoring methods. The course takes place on the Gold Coast in September and includes sessions in Sea World's Shark Bay. For more information, visit www.reefcheckaustrala.org.



Volunteer training in Shark Bay, Sea World



RCA volunteers on survey

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Reef Check Australia

Reef Check Australia is an award-winning, not-for-profit organisation combining education and research to result in the protection and rehabilitation of the world's coral reefs. Established in 2001 by one passionate individual with a strong vision, the charity has inspired over 100 volunteers to train using a scientifically standardised protocol in established monitoring techniques and now collects and distributes valuable data on reef health to marine resource managers and the wider scientific community. This data can provide vital early-warnings of a decline in reef health.

With a professional approach and recognised integrity, Reef Check Australia works in collaboration with community and industry partners to raise awareness, both locally and further afield through education and participation programs, about the effects of climate change and human impacts on the resilience of the reef.

Support from a number of industry professionals, along with some valued sponsors and several hard-working volunteers all 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-deductable gifts to help Reef Check Australia take positive action towards reaching environmentally sound and economically sustainable solutions to the real challenges of coral reef conservation.

Our Mission:

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

Objectives:

To ensure a sustainable future for the Australian and Indo-Pacific region's coral reef ecosystems by:

- 1) The generation and publication of select coral reef data that is highly valued by scientists and marine managers.
- 2) The establishment of reef monitoring programs that are accessible to a wide range of the population and yet still produce valuable data.
- 3) The establishment of a coral reef health database for Australia and the Indo-Pacific region that is integrated in to the global Reef Check network.
- 4) For the majority of Australian adults and children to understand the importance of coral reefs and be able to tell you what they can do to help protect them.
- 5) Development and implementation of cutting edge training programs to enhance the value of the data collected by volunteers.
- 6) Quality marine-based education programs for local communities.
- 7) Meaningful participation by local communities in the promotion and maintenance of coral reefs through Reef Check Australia programs or use of the database.
- 8) Promotion of the sustainable use of coral reefs through partnerships with governments, researchers, businesses and community groups.
- 9) Raising public awareness of the economic, ecological and social value of coral reefs.
- 10) Promotion of the Reef Check Australia brand.
- 11) Financial sustainability of Reef Check Australia.

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 Gemma Routledge at Reef Check Australia via email, communications@reefcheckaustralia.org or telephone 0428 987 457.