



## Coral reef charity improves kids' Reef IQ at Sea World

Students throughout Australia can now conduct a coral reef health check without getting wet.

Queensland-based coral reef monitoring organisation, *Reef Check Australia* launches its new education program for young people at *Sea World*, Gold Coast, on 18th June. The program has been two years in the making with piloting and reviewing of the program taking place at schools across the state, such as Belgian Gardens State School, Townsville; Mercy College, Mackay and Coolum State School.

Among the activities played-out in the course are classroom-based "surveys" of the reef, allowing children to understand how the Reef Check Australia monitoring methods are carried out. All of these virtual reefs, in the form of photocards laid out along tape-measures on the ground, are actual photographs taken from underwater surveys as part of the Great Barrier Reef Community Monitoring Program. Future releases of surveys will include images from the new South East Queensland Monitoring Program, covering sites from the Sunshine Coast down to the Gold Coast.

Final drafts of the complete education program have been enthusiastically received by key players in marine-based education, such as Project AWARE Kids; Sea World, Marine Teachers Association of Queensland (MTAQ), and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). All have agreed that their members would benefit from the materials available and will be promoting the program independently to their contacts. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority acting Director of Communication and Education, Fred Nucifora, said Reef IQ would be made available to more than 150 Reef Guardian Schools throughout the Great Barrier Reef catchment: *"This is a fantastic educational resource for schools and will help foster a greater appreciation for the Reef."*

In an effort to ensure that the maximum benefit is gained by schools, partnerships have been fostered with Catholic Education, Independent Schools, Queensland Education and the Marine Teachers Association of Queensland (MTAQ). Sheree Bell, Vice President at MTAQ says: *"We believe that the Reef IQ project will provide a unique and educationally beneficial teaching and learning experience for students at all stages of learning. There is a great need for resources such as these that provide teachers and other community leaders with valuable, activity-based materials to support the environmental education of young people. This program will provide young people, as future caretakers of the environment, with an enhanced capacity to protect Australia's natural environment."*

The program is aimed at children from seven to 14 years and is linked into key curriculum outcomes for all states. The complete program, including teachers' guide, factsheets, powerpoint presentations, activity materials and a fun Reef IQ game, will be available on the Reef Check Australia website and can be downloaded free of charge after the initial launch. The schools tailored package includes two courses, **Coral Reefs and Sustainability**, and **Coral Reef Monitoring for Management**.

Teachers will appreciate the truly comprehensive nature of the courses, which impart current, relevant information through fun and engaging activities, set out in an inquiry-based learning framework. Children will enjoy the unusual activities, such as finding out how a crayfish finds his dinner, using drinking straws as antennae; learning how to assess the health of a coral reef through simulated surveys; and thinking about a "My Sustainability Action Plan" that they can carry out through the term.

Federally-funded in part by the Australian Government's Caring for our Country, the program will have a soft launch in Queensland this month, followed by the development of a specially-tailored indigenous version of the courses over the next quarter, thanks to funding from The Myer Foundation.

Reef Check Australia hopes that the program will roll-out to a national audience within the next twelve months. Jo Roberts, Education and Outreach Officer at the charity believes, *"It is our vision to raise awareness of coral reefs, their ecology, the threats they face and how humans can mitigate these threats on a daily basis, for a sustainable future. It is crucial that all Australians become more enlightened about these issues from a young age, not just those living in coastal areas."*

For more information and to download materials, visit <http://www.reefcheckaustralia.org/for-teachers.html> .

#### **Launch event**

**Where: Shark Bay, Sea World**

**When: 18 June**

**Time: 9-1030am**

***Reef IQ is an education initiative from Reef Check Australia.***

#### **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-deductible 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](http://www.reefcheckaustralia.org).

**For further press information and photos please contact Gemma Routledge at Reef Check Australia via email, [communications@reefcheckaustralia.org](mailto:communications@reefcheckaustralia.org) or telephone (07) 4724 3950.**