



## **Reef Check Australia ~ Community Participation**

*"Community participation is the key to promoting a sense of stewardship and a duty of care for the marine environment."* [Australia's Ocean Policy](#)

**Our Vision:** To provide genuine opportunities for the Australian community to participate in coral reef conservation, monitoring and management

**Community action:** Reef Check Australia is the only independent not-for-profit charitable organisation actively involving the community in collecting data on the health of the Reef. Reef Check operates in 82 countries and is the United Nations' global community coral reef monitoring program. Our global mission is to monitor the health of the world's reefs, educate the public about coral ecosystems and empower local communities to conserve them.

**Why is Reef Check Important?** Coral reefs around the world are under enormous pressure from human activities and climate change. Although Australia's reefs are among the best managed in the world, they are not immune to these threats. Reef Check Australia trains community volunteers to use an internationally recognised, scientifically validated monitoring protocol to collect valuable information on coral reef health. The information is integrated with data from government and academic research agencies in Australia and around the world to inform reef resource management plans. Training community volunteers to participate in monitoring programs also raises community awareness and builds capacity to participate in the development and implementation of management plans for marine protected areas.

**Partnerships:** We have developed extensive working relationships with federal, state and local government agencies, academic and commercial research organisations, commercial interests such as tourism and fishing associations and other not-for profit conservation groups over the past 5 years. Research collaboration is a high priority, focusing upon refining our training programs to match community needs and making our data readily accessible to effectively communicate the need for management actions to the community.

### **Key Achievements:**

- Since 2001 we have trained more than 100 community volunteers to collect high quality monitoring data at important tourism sites on the GBR.
- We are collaborating with coral researchers such as AIMS, JCU and CRC Reef to refine our monitoring protocol and validate the quality of our data outputs.
- We currently monitor more than 40 reef sites per annum, spanning the GBR.
- Reef Check is supported by a network of 20 GBR dive tourism operators who have provided in excess of \$250,000 of in-kind berth space support since 2001.
- Our active volunteers and membership are united in their enthusiasm and dedication to reef conservation. We represent a diverse cross section of the community including: business people, professionals, scientists, divers, students and Traditional Owners.

For more information contact us on (07) 4724 3950 or [support@reefcheckaustralia.org](mailto:support@reefcheckaustralia.org)  
Po Box 404 Townsville, QLD 4810 Reef Check Foundation Ltd. ACN 108 200 933  
[www.reefcheckaustralia.org](http://www.reefcheckaustralia.org) Banner image © Quiksilver Intl Ltd

- Our Community awareness raising activities have generated significant media attention: National and regional TV, radio and newspaper articles, internet based data dissemination, public meetings, competitions and fundraising events.
- Demonstrated success in securing funding for our projects.
- The refined Reef Check Australia reef monitoring training course has been adopted by the global Reef Check network as a 'best practice'.
- Our partnership with the CRC Reef/Australian Institute of Marine Science's Reef Futures project will enable our reef monitoring results to be accessed online at <http://www.reeffutures.org>

**“A labour of love”**: this has all been accomplished with  
**NO** administrative funding!

## Reef Check Projects

### Active projects:

1. The flagship “Great Barrier Reef Project” has operated successfully since 2002 with the support of many dive tourist operators, James Cook University and the Commonwealth Government's Envirofund. Our volunteer teams currently monitor the health of over 40 key dive sites on the Great Barrier Reef and in the Coral Sea.
2. In 2005 we conducted the first of a series of inshore reef monitoring programs in the Burdekin region. This was funded by Townsville City Council and Envirofund to facilitate community participation in the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

### Future projects:

3. We are currently working to secure MTSRF funding for i) enhanced collaboration with the AIMS long term monitoring program and ii) for a series of Reef Check monitoring and training opportunities for Indigenous communities in the Torres Straits and North Queensland region in consultation with the Indigenous Land Management Facilitation Network.
4. We have also applied for funds through the Natural Resource Management Boards to expand our inshore monitoring program throughout Queensland.
5. We are developing a range of educational ecotourism packages designed to:
  - a) Improve visitor experiences
  - b) Enhance economic return
  - c) Raise community awareness of the importance of coral reefs
  - d) Increase participation in coral reef conservation.

### Reef Check benefits:

- Raised national and international awareness, of the ecological and economic importance of coral reefs.
- An “early warning system” to changes in reef health on both a local and national and global scale.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of management actions: this is important for community support and the long-term sustainability of tourism interests.
- Build community capacity by providing a genuine opportunity to participate in coral reef monitoring.
- Enhance ecotourism capacity within the growing dive tourism sector by providing interpretive expertise and high quality educational products.