



Media release

Minister for Tourism Industry Development and Innovation and Minister for Sport

The Honourable Stirling Hinchliffe

Reef Program makes a splash with schools

The Great Barrier Reef Education Experience Program is making a splash with Queensland schools and supporting tourism jobs for the Palaszczuk Government's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan.

Tourism Minister Stirling Hinchliffe said to date 36 schools had been approved for the Great Barrier Reef Education Experience.

"More than 1,556 students from the Gold Coast to Cook Shire will be packing their bags for a school excursion experience of a lifetime on the Great Barrier Reef," Mr Hinchliffe said.

"They'll travel to the reef during this year's third and fourth terms.

"Mirani State School will be the first to experience Queensland's biggest classroom with 62 enquiring minds next week exploring the reef in the Whitsundays.

"Each student on this reef excursion receives \$55 from the Palaszczuk Government to help cover costs, which are paid directly to the school."

Schools in Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Mackay, Cairns and Fraser Coast have also been approved for a Reef Education Experience with Government support of between \$40 to \$150 per student.

Excursion destinations for the first group of 36 schools include Port Douglas, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Yeppoon and Bundaberg.

Member for Cairns and Assistant Tourism Minister Michael Healy said more than 45 registered marine tour operators had jumped onboard the program.

"Like many cities, Cairns is looking forward to the arrival of our first cohort of young reef explorers and the boost they will bring to our visitor economy," Mr Healy said

"I've been working closely with marine tour operators through the pandemic and the Great Barrier Reef Education Experience is a welcome initiative up and down the reef," Mr Healy said.

"Reef tours are popular with overseas visitors, so marine tour operators were among the first to be walloped by the pandemic's closure of the international border.

“Marine tour operators are experts in their field and know the Great Barrier Reef better than most.

“They’re keen to share their intricate knowledge of the reef with the Queensland students who will be the future guardians of our State’s biggest living asset.

“With the help of marine tour operators, the Reef Education Experience will bring students face-to-face with the coral and marine animals that make up this unique and fragile ecosystem.

“It gives the next generation an unrivalled opportunity to get a better understanding of the complexity and care of the Great Barrier Reef for the future.

“The Great Barrier Reef Education Experience is a win for student learning, a win for the reef and a win for marine tourism operators keeping their businesses afloat during the global pandemic.”

Mr Hinchliffe said the Palaszczuk Government’s Holiday Dollars campaigns helped Cairns and Whitsundays marine tour operators get more Queenslanders out on the water for an unforgettable reef experience.

“And now our Great Barrier Reef Education Experience is harnessing new opportunities for operators to share their expertise,” Mr Hinchliffe said.

“Supporting reef operators and tourism jobs shows our COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan in action.”

For more information and school application forms go to:

www.qldeducationexperiences.org.au

Media: 0427 475 089.

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