

MEDIA RELEASE



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Celebrating 10 Years Airlie Beach Festival of Music marks anniversary with makeover

Gavin Butlin arrived in Airlie Beach 10 years ago with a dream.

Having once played the main street pubs in a duo, he was already well-acquainted with the lively entertainment scene and believed this was the perfect place to create an annual music festival.

At the time, not everyone shared his vision; after all, what made this dreamer any different from the many before him?

Several promoters had tried to establish music festivals in Airlie Beach and failed, leaving the business community who'd invested time and money jaded.

"It can't be done," people said.

But 'Butto' as he came to be known, remained otherwise convinced and one sector that shared his enthusiasm was the music industry itself.

Literally every musician he approached grabbed a spot on the line-up with glee, and before long 69 acts had signed up for the inaugural festival in 2013.

On meeting with the Regional Tourism Organisation, then known as Whitsundays Marketing and Development, the momentous decision was made to increase that number to 74, so starting the now-legendary tagline of 74 bands for the Whitsundays' 74 islands.

Securing the iconic waterfront site at the Whitsunday Sailing Club for his main stage big-top tent, and surrounded by a small but loyal committee, Mr Butlin pulled that first festival off against all odds.

Headline acts including Mental As Anything, Diesel, the Hoodoo Gurus, James Reyne, Ian Moss (Cold Chisel) and Ross Wilson (Daddy Cool), wowed the crowds in a setting to become synonymous with live music at the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef.

Although it nearly broke him, Mr Butlin was determined his dream wouldn't end at just one event.

Happily, now he had the backing of an entire community, with venues, accommodation houses and service providers all aboard for the ride.

It was widely acknowledged the festival had transformed what was once Airlie Beach's quietest weekend into the busiest, with the calendar re-set for each November on the weekend after the Melbourne Cup.

Fast-forward to 2022, with this coming November marking the festival's 10th year, and featuring acts like Ben Lee, Rogue Traders, the Badloves and Mi-Sex among those already announced.

"It doesn't get any easier but to get to 10 years is pretty amazing," Mr Butlin said.

"I'm proud of what we've been able to build over the years and eternally grateful to everyone who's been a part of it."

Among those building blocks, the festival has achieved critical acclaim within the music industry and among music fans.

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Some of which include the current 2022 Queensland Music Awards 'Festival of the Year', the Airlie Beach Festival of Music has also featured at the 2022 Australian Women in Music Awards, where one of its key organisers, Ellie Hanlon, was one of just eight regional delegates from across the nation invited to attend.

Outside the music world, the festival has once again secured economic recognition as one of Queensland's signature destination events.

For the majority of its 10 years to date, the Airlie Beach Festival of Music has been supported by the Queensland Government through Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) and featured on the It's Live! In Queensland events calendar.

Marking another milestone, that partnership has just been extended, with Tourism Minister, Stirling Hinchliffe, announcing funding of \$175,000 for the event from 2022-24, through TEQ's Queensland Destination Events Program.

Minister Hinchliffe said the festival was one of The Whitsundays' favourite annual events.

"Significant events like the Airlie Beach Festival of Music bring extra visitors to The Whitsundays who contribute to the region's economic recovery," Mr Hinchliffe said.

"Music fans living it up in paradise represent a bounty for accommodation providers, restaurants, cafes and The Whitsundays' world-famous tourism operators.

"This year's festival line-up is predicted to deliver more than \$2 million for the visitor economy, and support for local jobs.

"That's why the Palaszczuk Government is backing the 10th year of the Airlie Beach Festival of Music with new funding and a prominent place on our It's Live! In Queensland events calendar."

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Rick Hamilton, echoed the Minister's comments, saying this was why his team were committed to supporting existing, and growing new events, in the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef.

"The positive impacts and interest in a community that a successful regional event can provide pays dividends both socially and economically," he said.

"For this reason, I encourage all our members and the business community as a whole, to support the Airlie Beach Festival of Music in its 10th year and beyond, recognising this is an event which in turn supports businesses and the destination."

As a visual celebration of all its landmark accomplishments, the Airlie Beach Festival of Music will be moving toward its 10th anniversary incarnation with a fresh, new look.

Unveiled at the May 2022 Tourism Whitsundays networking night, the rebrand includes a new logo and modernised artwork, marrying the elements of music and place, and symbolising the event's uniqueness as the Heart of Live Music at the Great Barrier Reef.

For more information or for tickets to the 2022 festival from November 4-6, [click here](#) and follow @airliebeachfestivalofmusic on Facebook and Instagram.

This media release is in partnership with Airlie Beach Festival of Music.

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To view a Word Document of this release and supporting images, [click here](#).

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To view The Whitsundays destination video, [click here](#).

About Tourism Whitsundays: *Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.*

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