

MEDIA RELEASE



THE HEART
The Whitsundays
OF EVENTS

For Immediate Release
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Immerse Yourself in the Great Barrier Reef Festival's callout to community and creators for visual arts events

There will be plenty of ways to 'immerse' yourself in this year's Cruise Whitsundays Great Barrier Reef Festival from August 4-7.

Whether it's celebrating the reef's 'Great Eight' through the theme for the festival's Street Parade, building lanterns, recyclable rafts or wearable art, or participating in the Vivid-style sculpture and animation installation 'Immerse', there are multiple options on the four-day program for scratching that creative itch.

Running from 6pm-9pm on each of the festival days, 'Immerse' will be an illuminating phenomenon.

Commissioned through federal 'Festivals Australia' funding, award-winning multi-media artists Donna Maree Robinson and Margaret Burgess have been working with a core team of Whitsunday artists including Brigitte Peel, Anita Pender, and Liz Knight, to create marine-themed digital projections and sculptures for a foreshore trail from the Lagoon to Fairy Tree Park in downtown Airlie Beach.

Donna Maree Robinson said festival-goers could expect to see all manner of vibrant reef life animated onto building facades, rock walls, bridges, water, and an iconic fig tree, using specialised stop-motion techniques.

"This is something many people may not have witnessed before – it's an immersive experience that brings to life quirky areas throughout the space we're working in, creating a sense of wonder and awe about the reef, and also hopefully raising awareness about the need to protect it," she said.

The series of sculptures incorporated into the trail are being produced by communities across the Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday region, facilitated through Regional Arts Development Funding (RADF) under the expert guidance of Margaret Burgess.

Renowned for her 'Plastic Boutique' forest canopy installation at Canelands Mackay, Ms Burgess has been conducting reef-themed 'Immerse' workshops in preparation for the festival, with Airlie Beach next on the list.

From 10am-3pm on July 10 she will be at the Whitsunday Neighbourhood Centre, teaching participants of all ages to make sculptural fish and corals from a variety of upcycled materials.

"You don't have to be an artist – you can have an interest in the environment, want to get creative or be somebody who just wants to connect with other people – it's free of charge, and all the materials will be supplied, as well as the instruction," she explained.

"You can help out with a collaboration or make a piece yourself – younger children and even adults who think they're not creative will be able to produce a really good fish with the techniques I've developed and it's inspiring when they realise they can do this.

"So far we've had 40 children from St Catherine's Catholic College making 40 fish, and the communities of Ilbilbie, Flaggy Rock and St Lawrence making life-size dugongs and dolphins for the festival, so this is a real cross-community-participation event."

Festival Chairwoman and 'Immerse' concept designer, Margie Murphy, said if this had whet your artistic appetite, there were numerous additional creative projects to consider embarking on over the upcoming school holidays.

"Just as an African safari has its 'Big Five', our Great Barrier Reef's 'Great Eight' are a checklist of the reef's most mesmerising marine creatures and should provide ample inspiration for costumes and floats for this year's Rotary Street Parade," she said.

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“Think clownfish, giant clams, manta rays, maori wrasse, potato cod, sharks, turtles and whales.

“We’re also looking forward to seeing reef conservation innovatively expressed through our Wilmar Wearable Art and Anything Environmental Recyclable Regatta entries, so the time to get creating is now!”

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Rick Hamilton said the Great Barrier Reef Festival was always as vibrant as its namesake, with 2022 set to be a sensory feast.

“Through its use of visual arts, the festival transforms the town of Airlie Beach into a figurative underwater wonderland, interactively celebrating our position as the destination in the Heart of the Great Barrier Reef,” he said.

“Building on this, it is fantastic to see those artistic initiatives spreading across our neighbouring regions and generating visitation to The Whitsundays at its colourful best.”

Ms Murphy said the growing arts program was also a means of immersing people into a world they might not otherwise be able to access.

“Not everyone has the capacity to travel to the reef, so this is our way of bringing those reef encounters to the shore, as well as getting the community involved creatively and fostering a sense of pride in where we live,” she said.

For more information and to register for upcoming workshops, please [click here](#).

This media release is in partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Festival.

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

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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