

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Whitsundays Volunteer Cruise Ship Ambassadors Mark 20 Years of Welcoming Visitors

Last week, the Whitsundays tourism industry celebrated a significant milestone at the Shute Harbour Marine Terminal: the 20th anniversary of the volunteer Whitsundays Cruise Ship Ambassadors. For two decades, these dedicated volunteers, led by the inspiring Lyn Blanch Woodham, have been the welcoming face of the region, supporting the growing cruise tourism sector and helping make The Whitsundays one of Australia's top cruise ship destinations.

In 2004, the Whitsundays saw only five cruise ships a year. Today, the region is a hub for cruise traffic, with over 80 cruise ships now visiting each year, bringing more than 140,000 passengers annually to the area. Over the past two decades, the Ambassadors have welcomed 674 cruise ships and 1.1 million passengers, leaving a lasting impression on visitors from around the globe.

The importance of these volunteers has grown alongside the region's booming cruise industry. In the 2022/23 financial year, cruise passengers contributed \$57 million in direct expenditure to the local economy, supporting businesses and creating jobs.

Lyn Blanch Woodham says The Volunteer Cruise Ship Ambassadors are very proud to have celebrated the milestone of 20 years greeting cruise ship visitors into Airlie Beach.

"It's an incredible achievement for a volunteer group to celebrate 20 years of service.

"We marked the milestone with an event at Shute Harbour Terminal where we were able to network and reminisce with past and current volunteers, and many of our supporters. It was great to catch up with some of the past members of our group and hear their stories.

"With more and larger ships scheduled to come into the region at two locations, we continue to assess future challenges for the group. But, as always, our aim is to provide a friendly, helpful face to all our cruise ship visitors."

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Ry Collins said the ambassadors have provided an exceptional welcome to over 1 million cruise visitors, showcasing the warmth and friendliness that makes our region truly special.

"Their dedication has significantly enhanced the experiences of countless visitors, leaving them with positive memories that reflect the spirit of our Whitsunday community," he said.

"I would like to extend my congratulations and gratitude to Ambassadors Keith, Brian, and Lyn for their outstanding leadership and service over the years, and to Dea from Tourism Whitsundays for her exceptional coordination of the current program.

"Thank you to every volunteer, past and present, for your tireless dedication. You are true ambassadors of the Whitsundays, ensuring that every visitor leaves with a story to tell and a reason to return. Here's to continued success and many more years of extraordinary service!"

Tim Booth, CEO of Tourism Whitsundays, praised the Ambassadors for their unwavering commitment: "Their dedication and passion have been vital in transforming our cruise sector. From just five ships in 2004 to a projected 94 by the end of this year, their efforts have helped boost both tourism and the local economy."

"We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Whitsunday Regional Council and Tourism and Events Queensland for their ongoing support, which has been crucial in helping fund the volunteer efforts and tourism initiatives that continue to grow the region's cruise industry."

Their outstanding contribution was recently recognised at the Whitsundays Tourism Awards, where they won the Volunteer Category, and they are also nominated for the Queensland Tourism Awards.

Special guests from Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) were in attendance at the event to show their continued support for the Whitsundays cruise tourism efforts. The region's ongoing growth has been made possible by the combined efforts of the local community, Whitsunday Regional Council and TEQ.

Looking ahead, The Whitsundays is on track to host a record-breaking 94 cruise ships and welcome approximately 150,000 passengers by the end of 2024, further solidifying the region's position as a must-see destination for cruise travellers worldwide.

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To view a Word Document of this release and supporting images, [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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