



COMMUNITY CHAMPION

Coral Sea Marina

We sat down with two key players at Coral Sea Marina (CSM), Dawn Romanella (Asset & Property Manager) and Roxanne Bowen (Brand Experience Manager) to talk about their involvement in the Whitsunday Healthy Heart Project and to celebrate their achievements in the sustainability space.

Why did Coral Sea Marina join the Whitsunday Healthy Heart Project?

Coral Sea Marina is an accredited Clean Marina Level III and Fish Friendly Marina. We are focused on sustainable business operations and protecting the environment in which we live and work, on the doorstep of the Great Barrier Reef. Our mission is to protect the natural assets that surround us, so that we can continue to be recognised as the tourism destination of choice for future generations to come.

As one of the largest marinas of its type in Australia, attracting over 500,000 visitors annually to its precinct, we feel we have a responsibility to set an example when it comes to encouraging other businesses' sustainable environmental practices, particularly when they are on our site. Coral Sea Marina is a hub for workers throughout multiple industries within the Whitsundays. From being home to over 80% of the region's on-water tourism operators, over 30 commercial tenants, to also welcoming the hundreds of individual contractors that regularly work on site.

We joined the project to quantify our efforts. By setting a benchmark it will enable us to accurately see where we are sitting and the affect our initiatives are making. It is important that people are accountable. It shouldn't take long for smaller businesses to complete their benchmarking and it is so important for them to see where they are at. They can line up their benchmark year with a financial year to make it easier when collecting data, and choose whether they want to input monthly, quarterly, or annually.

What kinds of sustainability initiatives have been made since joining the project?

The primary larger initiative we are currently prioritising is waste management, specifically recycling, throughout the site. Whilst a challenging project, it is an important one, and is ongoing. The larger sustainable initiatives that we are currently researching into include the installation of solar energy. This is currently in the investigation stage.

On a smaller level, there are multiple environmental initiatives that have been introduced over the last 12-18 months, with more being added continuously. This includes partnering with Tangaroa Blue on



COMMUNITY CHAMPION

Coral Sea Marina

their Australian Marine Debris Initiative, their “Ditch the Flick” campaign, the “Rig Recycle” project, and more.

We have also pledged to become Single Use Plastic Free by 2025, through the Marina Industry Association. Through this, we have installed Hydration Stations throughout the precinct and sell reusable water bottles. We have eliminated plastic straws from all food outlets within the precinct. We have replaced plastic water bottles with canned Wallaby Water from our marina event venues. We also provide every guest upon check-in a reusable shopping bag.

We have also entered a partnership with CQ University and the Reef Island Initiative to establish a Seagrass Nursery on site at the marina. The project will facilitate the collecting, cultivating and germinating of seagrass seeds to enhance the seagrass meadows in Pioneer Bay.

In addition to all these initiatives, we place an emphasis on ensuring that this information is communicated via interpretive signage, in welcome documents and on our digital platforms, to encourage and educate our guests on the importance of our environmental initiatives and policies.

Now that your benchmarking has been completed, has the marina set an emission reductions target?

Our two biggest emissions have always been waste and power, and it is an ongoing effort to reduce these. Whilst we currently have not set an emissions reduction target, we are looking forward to utilising the report for our EarthCheck benchmark report to create an emissions reduction target timeline which will allow us to commence work on an action plan to reduce emissions.

Have discovered anything on emissions via power, waste or water that have surprised you?

Waste has been the major surprise. As we facilitate multiple business and guest general waste, it is shocking to see how much it all adds up to, in both quantity and cost.

Does the marina plan to offset any of its emissions?

Yes definitely, but it is a bigger project than we ever thought. We are yet to investigate offsets and look forward to seeing what options are available. We are very interested in future local carbon offsets and any programme that recognises the many reef stewardship programmes that we take part in.



COMMUNITY CHAMPION

Coral Sea Marina

The stewardship work, however, creates an awareness, and by starting with our guests and providing a variety of ways they can contribute towards this work, it really gets them thinking about what they can do. Our welcome pack contains items that help get that message out there. It would be wonderful to see a single touch point for volunteer/stewardship work, and a way that this work can be recognised as an offset of some kind.

What kind of benefits are you hoping the partnership will provide for the marina?

There are two primary benefits we hope to make from this partnership: cost savings for us as a business and educating our guests, operators and visitors to help protect the environment in which we live and work. By working to protect the natural assets that surround us, we are also working to ensure the longevity of every tourism business in the region that relies on those assets.

We can see great benefits for the marina in this partnership, however these are benefits that the broader tourism sector can be part of. It will be great to see the project open to more of the tourism sector in the next 1-3 years, as we need to view the destination as a whole. If guests can see the decarbonisation initiatives that are undertaken where they are staying (i.e. marina, hotel, accommodation) and then see it where they are going (i.e. boat trip), these messages will penetrate even further.

What would a Whitsunday sustainable destination accreditation mean for CSM?

It would only further stamp the Whitsunday region on the map as a must-see tourism destination and leaders in sustainable tourism on a domestic and international level. It would benefit the entire tourism industry in the region!

Would you like to add any further information?

Our sustainability initiatives are listed on our dedicated environment page on our marina website: <https://www.coralseamarina.com/environment/>



COMMUNITY CHAMPION

Coral Sea Marina

For more information or to register interest in joining the Whitsunday Healthy Heart Project, please visit our website <https://www.innovationhub.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au/whitsunday-healthy-heart-project>

The Whitsunday Islands is one of three key locations with projects currently underway as part of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation's Reef Islands Initiative, which is working to restore critical island habitats to protect ecosystems and save vulnerable species. The 10-year program is supported by funding from Lendlease, the Australian Government's Reef Trust, the Queensland Government, and the Fitzgerald Family Foundation.