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Eco tourism accreditation for Townsville catchment tour

THE Townsville City Council has become the first local government in Australia to receive ecotourism accreditation.

The certification was presented to the council at the 2006 International Ecotourism

Conference which concluded on Friday.

Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Sustainable Development Committee, Ann Bunnell, said the accreditation had been given to the council's ecocatchment education tour developed for students and community groups.

"This is a fantastic achievement and well-deserved recognition for the work that's gone into developing the tour that's primarily aimed at young people," Cr Bunnell said.

"It essentially means the community can be assured our product is backed by a commitment to ecological sustainability, natural area management and a quality ecotourism experience."

The ecocatchment tour takes students and community groups to places such as Ross Dam, Ross River, Mount Stuart and the Town Common to give them an understanding of how activities on the mainland can affect the Great Barrier Reef.

"Through these tours, we're really seeking to foster an understanding of how different parts of our urban and natural environment are all connected and this accreditation is a way of formally recognising the quality of our product."

The accreditation capped off a successful Ecotourism Conference with more than 250 delegates from 21 countries taking part.