

3 November 2005

The Strand shines as North Queensland's Cleanest Beach

The Strand, Queensland's Cleanest Beach in 2003 and Australia's Cleanest Beach in 2004, is in the running for the 2005 State title after being declared North Queensland's Cleanest Beach for 2005.

The Strand won this year's regional Clean Beach Challenge title ahead of 23 other strong contenders in the North Queensland region.

This year, the popular Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland competition attracted 136 beach entries across six judging regions stretching from Dauan Island in the Torres Strait to the New South Wales border.

Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland CEO Kylie Johnston said The Strand offered an impressive variety of amenities in addition to the clean and inviting sandy beach.

"Residents and visitors flock to this 2.2km beach and foreshore to enjoy its many facilities.

"Townsville City Council and the local community are to be congratulated for their ongoing efforts to keep this multi-award winning beach in pristine condition," Ms Johnston said.

The Strand was presented with its award at the Horseshoe Bay Café in Bowen today.

As well as the overall title of North Queensland's Cleanest Beach, eight Outstanding Accomplishment Awards were announced*:

1. *Tourism Queensland* Friendly Beach Award | Airlie Beach
2. *Keep Australia Beautiful* Beach Spirit Award | Alva Beach
3. *Don't Waste Australia* Litter Prevention Award | Sarina Beach
4. *Collex* Resource Conservation & Waste Management Award | Queens Beach, Bowen
5. *Three Plus* Community-Local Government Partnership Award | Thuringowa City Council for Toomulla Beach
6. *Kingfisher Bay Resort* Protection of the Environment Award | North Harbour Beach
7. *Outdoor Media Association* Young Legends Award | Horseshoe Bay
8. *EPA* Community Action Award | Lucinda Beach

Ms Johnston said The Strand would automatically join the Cleanest Beach winners from the five other judging regions as finalists for the overall State title to be announced in December.

Within the next few weeks, the top three Outstanding Accomplishment Award winners in each of the other categories from around the State will be selected and shortlisted for the State titles.

*** The judges' comments about each winner are attached.**

CLEAN BEACH CHALLENGE 2005 – North Queensland Judge Allan Kindt

North Queensland's Cleanest Beach - The Strand

The Cleanest Beach Award takes into account a beach's geographic, environmental and economic circumstances, and assesses how efficiently and effectively the beach community uses the resources available to it against a range of criteria, including visitor friendliness and hospitality, resource conservation and waste management, community-local government partnerships, youth enterprise and activity, community action, litter prevention and management, and fauna and flora protection, including dune protection.

Townsville's Strand is an outstanding community recreation venue. Residents and visitors flock to this 2.2 km beach and foreshore to enjoy its many facilities and attractions. The Strand Office is dedicated to the management and promotion of The Strand, with community consultation critical to its operations. The office provides visitor information, as do three noticeboards. Universal signage is colourful but not intrusive. A walkway extends the length of the Strand with exercise stations offering fitness instructions. Public facilities all cater for people with disabilities and are cleaned several times each day by a Strand maintenance team. Beach sand is sifted weekly by tractor and all litter in stormwater drains is trapped and removed. Swimming is popular and stinger nets are deployed when necessary, with prominent signage. Chalkboards at the three swimming locations identify the lifeguards on duty and offer cautionary advice. Two surf lifesaving clubs patrol the beach with both active in youth education programs. The Strand has the only 4WD beach access wheelchair in Australia and it is made available as required. Townsville City Council's resource conservation and waste management practices are commendable. Lawns and mulched garden beds are well maintained with water conservation measures in place and the Strand Water Park recycles its water. *Don't waste the Strand* is a conspicuous adage and *Don't Waste Townsville* is a frequent reminder throughout the city. Bins designated for various uses are appropriately located and a vigilant council crew collect any litter and empty bins regularly. Local schools and youth groups also conduct cleanups. Volunteers monitor turtle nesting on the beach while others assist in weed eradication and revegetation of the dune. The council supplies refreshments for community groups that take part in cleanups. The Strand hosts numerous festivals and celebrations. Sculptures of a dugong and turtle accompanied by interpretative signage promote the marine environment. The Strand is a purpose-designed beachfront and parkland offering an impressive variety of facilities and amenities in addition to the clean and inviting sandy beach. The efforts of Townsville City Council and all groups involved have earned the Strand the title of North Queensland's Cleanest Beach.

Tourism Queensland Friendly Beach Award - Airlie Beach

This award recognises a commitment to, and active promotion of, visitor friendliness.

Airlie Beach is a mecca for backpackers, international tourists and Australian holidaymakers. For most visitors, it is the entry point to the Whitsunday Islands.

The Airlie Beach foreshore and swimming lagoon have prominent signage advising visitors about beach safety, including the threat of stingers. The Whitsunday Shire Council maintains all facilities and signs. As a major tourist destination, Airlie Beach has a number of accredited information centres. A walkway extends the length of the foreshore and while most of it is paved, it also includes a wooden boardwalk. This cleverly designed structure of varying width has been built around the original trees and includes bench and individual seating. An attractive Polynesian style entrance from Shute Harbour Road invites people to enter the coconut palm-studded foreshore. A step or two from the grassed and shaded parkland, the beach is chiefly used by sunbathers and swimmers preferring the safety of the patrolled and stinger-free lagoon. Handrails assist the disabled and elderly into the shallow section of the lagoon. Council staff clean the beach and foreshore daily. Ample rubbish bins with built-in cigarette butt sections encourage visitors to care for the clean and tidy environment. The foreshore of Airlie Beach is well-presented with modern facilities, a sophisticated playground for children, mature shady trees and well tended gardens. Sidewalk cafes and park seating invite visitors to sit and enjoy the friendly ambience of Airlie Beach.

Keep Australia Beautiful Beach Spirit Award - Alva Beach

This award recognises coastal communities that are facing or have faced difficult times, but which show outstanding commitment to solving problems by turning them into opportunities.

The natural features of Alva Beach present the community with many challenges that they meet with resolve and flexibility. The Alva Beach Sports, Recreation and Community Association is the catalyst for unifying this community and protecting the beach. The dynamics of the sea and nearby delta of the Burdekin River make Alva Beach an ever-changing environment. Throughout any year, Alva Beach can be transformed from the best of swimming beaches to one that suits windsurfers or anglers best. At times, it allows people to walk for kilometres without getting wet; at other times, walkers must cross sandbanks and deep pools of water. The Surf Life Saving Club endures many hardships in making the beach a safe and enjoyable place to swim. The club is forced to change their patrolling position along the beach depending on prevailing conditions, while the logistics of organising the annual surf life saving carnival are particularly challenging. The event could not be held without the cooperation of the Burdekin Shire Council and other community groups and supporters. Subject to damaging erosion, the frontal dunes are a changing landscape that volunteers are trying to stabilise through revegetation with species native to the area. A grant from Envirofund has enabled 3km of dune protection to be erected so that recreation vehicles are prevented from entering the fragile dunes. Landladders protect the fixed beach crossing points. The community of Alva Beach has adapted to living with the shifting landscape while endeavouring to control and protect the frontal dune from the erosion caused by both the elements and vehicles. Their optimism and commitment in the face of adversity demonstrate their considerable beach spirit.

Don't Waste Australia Litter Prevention Award - Sarina Beach

This award recognises outstanding accomplishment in litter prevention, management and education.

Sarina Shire Council works cooperatively with the residents and Progress Association of Sarina Beach to maintain a clean and tidy environment. An annual booklet published by the council outlines strategies for effective collection and disposal of waste. Local residents collect litter on their daily walks while members of the Surf Life Saving Club attend to litter disposal after carnivals and training days. If a special effort is required, then the Sarina Beach Progress Association turns their monthly meeting into a working bee.

Negotiations with the council have resulted in additional bins being placed in particular locations to cater for visitors needs. The bins allow people to deposit their cigarette butts and other rubbish before moving onto the beach while those located near barbecues and picnic tables encourage visitors to maintain the litter-free environment. The colourful murals on the picnic shelter are an added inducement to the visiting public to avoid spoiling the area with litter. A contractor empties the bins weekly. Sarina Beach is dog-friendly, with signs advising that pets should be kept on a leash. Earlier this year, a funding grant enabled the upgrading of park amenities. Locals monitor park cleanliness and remove any litter. The Sarina Inlet Trail linking the township and Johnsons Beach was opened this year. The trail follows the beach and mangroves on the shoreline, allowing those who frequent the path to clear rubbish that once accumulated along the foreshore. The common goals of Sarina Shire Council and Sarina Beach residents who take pride in their environment result in a very clean beach and foreshore.

Collex Resource Conservation & Waste Management Award - Queens Beach, Bowen

This award recognises outstanding accomplishment in resource conservation and waste management.

Queens Beach is an extensive length of coastline, varying from native vegetation on a frontal dune through golf course, caravan parks, residential areas and developed parklands offering all the facilities and amenities expected on one of Bowen's most popular beaches. Bowen Shire Council has effective waste management policies and procedures in place. Ample rubbish bins of various styles are provided with a removable cage in the recycle bins to facilitate recovery, cleaning and monitoring. A pamphlet produced by the council explains which items are recyclable and encourages people to separate rubbish responsibly. Council workers empty bins regularly. Dog litterbags are provided at beach track entrances. Ongoing maintenance has involved Queens Beach State School students undertaking beach cleanups in conjunction with other curriculum-related projects. The council coordinates general community cleanups, such as Clean Up Australia Day, and it presents a waste education program to all students in Bowen. Along the foreshore of Queens Beach, the council utilises green waste produced by the Parks and Gardens section to mulch gardens and to protect beach access tracks. The Bowen Shire Council conserves resources. Its water-wise policy has led to a commitment to minimise waste by fitting vandalproof cut-off taps to all public outlets. Low wattage lights are provided in public facilities and under trees to provide security at night. All new lights are being fitted with timers. A pamphlet that describes how the council's business activities have reduced plastic bag usage motivates the community and local businesses to follow suit. The council provides support to Bowen State School in their efforts to print and sell calico bags. Assisting the council in conserving the natural resources of Queens Beach are members of the Queens Beach Action Group. They organise regular working bees in which they remove weeds so that native plants can flourish. To stabilise the dune, they plant and care for native grasses, creepers and casuarinas. The initiatives of Bowen Shire Council and the Queens Beach Action Group in resource conservation and waste management are to be applauded.



Three Plus Community-Local Government Partnership Award – Thuringowa City Council for Toomulla Beach

This award recognises outstanding partnership achievements by a local government and its community.

The Thuringowa City Council, in consultation with the community of Toomulla, has developed a Beach Management Plan. Council environmental officers regularly attend Progress Association meetings and the council leads community information and feedback forums. Surveys are also conducted.

In line with its involvement in the Cities for Climate Protection Program, the council promotes and encourages residents to implement initiatives to reduce water and energy use. The council leads the way with the largest effluent re-use irrigation system in Queensland. If successful in its application for funding, the council will replace existing single flush cisterns and inefficient showerheads in its park areas, including Toomulla, with more efficient water-saving devices. Local residents who manage the manicured parkland adjacent to the esplanade remove green waste to a designated site for council removal and mulching. The council uses various means to communicate initiatives and conservation awareness measures to the community, including brochures and fact sheets as well as items in the *Toomulla Community Newsletter* and the *Rollingstone Rag*. A quarterly magazine, the *Thuringowan*, highlights recent activities and accomplishments of the council. Environmental officers inspect the beach and esplanade at least weekly and communicate with local residents. The beach park at Toomulla, with its free gas barbecues, children's playground, grassed areas for camping and caravans, toilets and a boat ramp, is maintained on a regular rotation. The Thuringowa City Council assists residents and Green Corps with young plants, mulching of green waste and general mowing. It supports the Toomulla Coastcare group in funding applications and has recently awarded a micro-grant to the community for development of signage to highlight the biodiversity of plants and birds in the area. To protect the frontal dune, Green Corps has planted more than 2,000 native trees, shrubs and creepers, with water irrigation pipes laid along the access paths to enable the local community to water the plants. Additionally, bollards and fencing protect the sensitive dune areas from vehicles and unlimited pedestrian access. Paths to the beach are signposted and defined by treated pine posts and blue wire. Where necessary, sandladders are in place to reduce erosion. Thuringowa City Council has a strong commitment to environmental sustainability. The management plan for Toomulla Beach incorporates all aspects of fauna and flora preservation, dune restoration and protection, weed eradication and control of public access. It also seeks to improve public awareness and education. The many successes achieved by the council in cooperation with the Toomulla Progress Association are the result of a harmonious and productive partnership.

Kingfisher Bay Resort Protection of the Environment Award – North Harbour Beach

This award recognises outstanding accomplishment in the protection of the local natural environment and, specifically, the preservation of fauna and flora.

North Harbour Beach and the 73 hectare reserve adjoining it are well cared for through the joint efforts of the Friends of the Reserve Slade Point and the Mackay City Council, in accordance with a detailed management plan. Protection of flora and fauna is essential for the area to retain its biodiversity. Mapping and identification of indigenous flora has been undertaken and the information shared with the community through brochures and conducted walks on the three walking trails. Weed eradication is an ongoing task performed by the Friends of the Reserve, the council, Green Corps and the Natural Area Team, a group set up by the Mackay City Council in partnership with relevant government departments and managed by Conservation Volunteers Australia. The Natural Area Team and Green Corps provide expert advice on preservation and revegetation activities. Grants from Enviro Fund and assistance from Mackay City Council have led to the provision of signage, fencing, bollards, chains and sand ladders to protect the fragile environment by restricting unauthorised vehicle access. Additional funding has been received to fence an area on the frontal dunes where trail bikes are accessing the reserve. Mackay Turtle Watch and the Mackay and Whitsunday Bird Observers Club are also active in protecting the natural environment. Community support for the reserve is considerable, with one resident purchasing land adjoining the reserve to prevent commercial development. The owner has arranged Land for Wildlife and Nature Refuge protection for the land. Mackay Port Authority is also educating the public through the boardwalks and interpretative signage it has provided in the adjacent Port Authority Wetlands conservation area. The Friends of the Reserve Slade Point are the driving force behind the conservation of this unique ecosystem, which is an asset to the local community.

Outdoor Media Association Young Legends Award – Horseshoe Bay

This award recognises outstanding accomplishment by youth and by a beach/community that encourages and promotes youth activity.

Bowen State School is proactive in making a difference to the quality of the local marine ecosystem. Year 7 classes have been heavily involved in preserving and improving the quality of local beaches and in informing the public about their roles and responsibilities in keeping the ecosystem healthy. The students have adopted Horseshoe Bay, Rose Bay and Front Beach. They have established a proud tradition of being *Guardians of Our Local Marine Habitat* and uphold it through their Environmental Program 2005. Student achievements are communicated to the community through a regular radio program, the local newspaper and school newsletters. A strong relationship exists between the school, the Bowen Shire Council, Xtrata and the Ports Authority, with grants provided to the school by Xtrata and the Ports Authority. The Bowen Shire Council launched the school's Environmental Program for 2005 and contributed funds for its Adopt-a-Beach excursions. The council erected signs identifying the beaches as being adopted by the school and also rendered the toilet block wall at Horseshoe Bay so that students could paint a colourful turtle mural. When the mural is complete, the council will construct a garden bed in front of it to further beautify the area. To keep the beaches litter-free, the students have developed some very ingenious tools that they wield with energy and enthusiasm. The council supplies personal protective equipment, brooms and collection bags. Students monitor the litter collected and report their findings to the council. The students also design cigarette butt bins which they place in suitable locations and they stencil drains with messages such as *This Drain is Just for Rain*. While the participation of students in beach activities is an integral part of the school's curriculum, their efforts in making a difference to the beaches of Bowen make them Young Legends in their local community.



EPA Community Action Award - Lucinda Beach

This award recognises outstanding community organisation and pride – expressed through civic, cultural and environmental activities.

Lucinda Beach is the focus of cooperative action by the Lucinda Progress Association, the Hinchinbrook Shire Council, the Queensland Ports Corporation and local volunteers. A Management Plan and a Public Space Development Plan provide the council and the community with a clear blueprint for ongoing maintenance and improvement of the foreshore, having regard to community expectations and desirable environmental outcomes. Lucinda Beach hosts many community events. The annual family fun day, Coconut Capers is a major fund-raising day for the community with many prizes for events donated by local businesses. Markets are held monthly at the Lucinda State School. Most Sundays, families gather in Lions Park to continue the tradition of card playing, Bocce and fishing. Carols by Candlelight and Boxing Day activities are enjoyed in Borello Park. Several schools use the foreshore as a component of their curriculum and local children have been involved in painting a mural on the Lions Park toilet block. Volunteers and Green Corps, with the assistance of the council and school students, have been progressively eradicating weeds from the frontal dune. At the same time they have been revegetating the area with native species. The council mows areas adjacent to the beach buffer zone. Where possible, resources are recycled, with aluminium cans collected by a resident. The efforts of the Lucinda Progress Association in leading the way for the whole community have resulted in colourfully painted power poles, Coastcare projects, walkways, open space development and improved public facilities for everyone to use and enjoy.

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