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## Media Release

### Spectators worried about effects of powerboat race on dugongs and turtles

While most eyes on the Strand were focused on the powerboats on Sunday, several spectators did notice the dugong and the sea turtle swimming between them and the racing boats.

“We still have our fingers crossed that no turtles or dugongs were hurt or killed in Sunday’s race and will be found washed up on the Strand in the next couple of days”, says Ms Gitte Kragh, Project Manager for Sea Turtle Foundation. “About 15% of all turtles that wash ashore on the Queensland coast have been hit by boats. The shallow waters of Cleveland Bay have abundant seagrass beds which makes it a prime feeding location for turtles and dugongs and increases the risk of boat strike for these species.”

“We conducted a survey on Sunday and found that almost 85 percent of spectators were actually concerned that turtles, dugongs and dolphins could be injured or killed during the race” Ms Kragh continues. “This is obviously a grave concern to many people and Sea Turtle Foundation will continue to work with the boating public, government agencies and industry to create positive change for turtles and other marine wildlife by taking action to reduce unnecessary mortality. Turtles and dolphins are protected species and it is our hope that in the future the impacts of events like powerboat racing will be assessed under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.”

“The powerboat race has been said to attract a lot of visitors from the surrounding region and bring money to Townsville businesses. However, our survey indicated that half of the visitors on the Strand were not there to watch the powerboats,” says Ms Kragh. She continues, “Likewise, 15 percent of the local Townsville residents present on the Strand were there to enjoy the fine weather and a day at the beach, not to see the powerboats.”

“Organisers expressed their disappointment with the lower spectator turnout this year compared to the September race last year. The Sea Turtle Foundation hopes that the Australian Offshore Superboat Championship organisers do not move the race back to September which is when turtles start turning up at the Strand to begin their nesting season,” says Ms Kragh.

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