

MEDIA RELEASE

16 February 2009

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED ON
CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 1 MARCH 2009**

Sea Turtle Foundation in association with **Conservation Volunteers Australia** and **Reef HQ Aquarium** is calling on Townsville residents to help us celebrate Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday, 1 March 2009.

We urgently need your help in this nationwide event to clean up the local beaches and shorelines of Townsville. The day will contribute to ensuring the preservation of our unique local marine life, including our iconic sea turtles, and pristine oceans for future generations.

“Each year three times as much rubbish as the weight of fish caught is dumped into our oceans, adding up to a staggering 7 billion tonnes of rubbish a year,” said Gitte Kragh, Project Manager for Sea Turtle Foundation. Ms Kragh continued, “Scarier still is the length of time it takes for all that rubbish to break down; for example a plastic bottle can take up to 450 years to dissolve, resulting in a massive accumulation of rubbish in our oceans. All this rubbish is not only contaminating the fish and other seafood we eat but it is also killing an estimated 100,000 marine animals a year, including sea turtles, dugong, dolphins and seabirds”.

As a result of plastic and rubbish floating around in our waterways, Reef HQ Aquarium has been caring for a hawksbill turtle affectionately named 'Alva' that had ingested a plastic bag and was in need of immediate help. Alva has now been given a clean bill of health and will soon be released back into the wild. Steve Menzies, Technical Operations Manager at Reef HQ Aquarium said, "The team aims to reduce the number of plastic bags and other materials that generally come in contact with marine turtles." Mr Menzies continued, “By cleaning the ocean, we hope to see fewer sick turtles requiring care and rehabilitation in our Turtle Hospital and our staff plan to assist volunteers removing rubbish from the waterways this Clean Up Australia Day”.

Brett King, Project Officer for Conservation Volunteers Australia said, “Clean Up Australia Day gives us a chance to involve and educate the local community and help protect critical marine habitat in the Townsville region.” Mr King added, “So, come and join us to help ensure that we have a cleaner, healthier Australia with abundant marine wildlife in our oceans!”

Clean up Australia Day is a nationwide event that takes place every year and involves thousands of volunteers all over Australia.

To register go to www.seaturtlefoundation.org

Time: 1 March 8 am - 12pm. Show up for the whole period or just an hour!

Location: Ross Creek at the breakwater (across from the entertainment centre)

Contact on the day: Gitte Kragh, 0431 259 129

Media enquiries:

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