

For immediate release
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Tourism Whitsundays Highlights Key Achievements Of 2019/20

Tourism Whitsundays has today released the 2019/20 Annual Report. The report highlights the organisation's key annual achievements as well as its upcoming goals heading into 2020/21.

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer Tash Wheeler is happy to be sharing the organisation's achievements for the past financial year.

“As we finished 2019 the Whitsunday region was in an excellent position, we had launched the new destination brand; we had a range of new and improved tourism products, and the industry was reporting strong forward bookings. It felt like we had put the past tough couple of years behind us.

“Then, the world changed as we faced COVID-19. The last half of the 2019/20 financial year was undoubtedly a challenging time, the likes of which the global tourism industry has never seen.

“We were able to have a positive impact on the industry throughout the year, and I think it is important we highlight those as we embark on the post-COVID-19 recovery. In 2019/20, we generated in excess of \$4 million in direct bookings for members through campaigns and achieved \$68 million in publicity value for the destination. Our social media channels continued to grow, and we reached over 13 million people throughout leisure Facebook and Instagram.”

During the 2019/20 financial year, Tourism Whitsundays converted \$1,552,000 of base funding into an annual budget of \$3,286,009 through initiatives such as grants and partnerships.

Tash continued, “As an organisation that runs on a lean budget, it is critical that we use the funds we have to purchase marketing space wisely and get a strong return on investment. These strategies are vital in ensuring we can compete for market share across not just the state, but Australia,” she said.

Tash added “I am also happy to add that this year the average length of service for the Tourism Whitsundays team has increased to three years. It is fantastic to see the team enjoying and growing in their roles, and also for the organisation to retain the learnings year to year.”

Tourism Whitsundays Chairman, Matt Boileau is very proud of the work done by Tourism Whitsundays throughout the past year and to be releasing such a positive report in light of the challenges of 2020.

“During the initial lock-down period, we are pleased to report that the team worked hard, strategising the business and marketing plans, and continued to develop new ways to keep potential visitors engaged.

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“Tough business decisions had to be made, such as decreasing the team's hours and reducing overheads, but that did not slow them down. Instead, in many respects, they worked harder than normal, ensuring the organisation set the Whitsunday industry onto the strongest path possible as restrictions eased.

“Because of Tourism Whitsundays dedication to restarting our vital tourism industry, the organisation has been leading the pack since restrictions have begun easing, five campaigns were launched in the month of June to target various domestic markets, delivering a 20:1 return on investment at a critical time for the industry.” he said.

One of the reasons Tourism Whitsundays is a strong organisation is due to the solid membership base of 295 businesses which represented 12% of the organisation's income last year.

Matt continued, “Membership is an integral part of who we are and what we do; it is the local industry and business community investing in the marketing of the region to ensure The Whitsundays can thrive. I am pleased to say that 2019/20 saw the organisation with the highest membership in recent years.

“On behalf of the Board and the team, we want to thank all businesses and our partners, including Whitsunday Regional Council (WRC) and Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ). I would like to give a special thanks to the Mayor and Councillors for their continued investment in tourism.” he said.

Whitsunday Regional Council Mayor Andrew Willcox said Council virtually doubled its funding support for Tourism Whitsundays when he first stepped into the role as Mayor in 2016.

“Tourism Whitsundays is our region's peak tourism body, and from day one, my Council has boosted funding for such a key industry for the Whitsundays.

“Tourism forms one of the economic pillars of the Whitsundays and the largest employer in the region, accounting for 1 in 3 jobs.

“It's a no-brainer that strong investment and backing of Tourism Whitsundays is an investment in the many stakeholders, businesses and employees that rely on this industry to survive.

“As the most tourism reliant region in Queensland, we need to ensure we have the strongest possible tourism organisation.

“Tash and her team repeatedly punch well above their weight and always deliver great outcomes. Last year, for every dollar of Council funds, Tourism Whitsundays turned this into \$4.56 through collaborative funding which is an outstanding return on investment from our perspective.

“Any time you can give an organisation \$1 and they turn it into \$4.56 is a huge win.

“We look forward to continuing our partnership with Tourism Whitsundays into the future,” he said.

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To read the 2019/20 Annual Report [click here](#).

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About Tourism Whitsundays: *Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.*

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