

16 November 2006

## Clean Beach Challenge: Burleigh Beach cleans up on the Gold Coast

Burleigh Beach has been judged the Gold Coast's Cleanest Beach for 2006.

Burleigh won this year's regional Clean Beach Challenge title ahead of 40 other strong contenders in the Gold Coast region.

A record-breaking 176 beaches entered this year's Challenge, from Dauan Island in the Torres Strait to Rainbow Bay near the New South Wales border.

Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland CEO Kylie Johnston said Burleigh Beach demonstrated a very high level of achievement against all Clean Beach Challenge criteria.

"Burleigh is one of the Gold Coast's most popular beaches but the joint efforts of the local community and Gold Coast City Council ensure it is kept clean for everyone to enjoy," Ms Johnston said.

"This council-community cooperation has resulted in a number of foreshore improvements over the past year and a foreshore management strategy to ensure a sustainable future for Burleigh."

As well as the overall title of the Gold Coast's Cleanest Beach, nine outstanding accomplishment awards have been announced\*:

1. *Tourism Queensland* Friendly Beach Award | Currumbin Beach
2. Beach Spirit Award | The Spit
3. *Australian Food & Grocery Council* Litter Prevention Award | Surfers Paradise
4. Resource Conservation & Waste Management Award | South Stradbroke Island Ocean Beach
5. *Three Plus* Community-Local Government Partnership Award | Gold Coast City Council for Paradise Point
6. Protection of the Environment Award | Mermaid Beach
7. *Outdoor Media Association* Young Legends Award | Southport Broadwater Events Parklands
8. Community Action Award | Federation Walk Coastal Reserve
9. Individual Outstanding Accomplishment Award | Sunfish South Moreton Volunteers

Ms Johnston said Burleigh Beach 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.**

## **Keep Australia Beautiful Clean Beach Challenge**

### **Gold Coast Region**

**Judge Sarah Yip**

#### **Gold Coast's Cleanest Beach – Burleigh Beach**

*The Cleanest Beach Award takes into account a beach's geographic, environmental, cultural 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.*

The place to go for surf and swimming, Burleigh Beach is deservedly one of the Gold Coast's most popular beaches. Gold Coast City Council lifeguards patrol all year round, with the assistance of volunteer life savers. There are multilingual signs at all beach access points and wide paths along the foreshore that are well lit at night. The beach is annually nourished with sand and swept daily for litter. Dog litter bags, cigarette butt bins and numerous general litter bins are available to keep the area neat. A gross pollutant trap is being constructed to reduce litter flowing to the sea. Other road and drainage works are in progress to minimise local flooding and improve water quality. Showers and amenity blocks are fitted with automatic shutoff taps for water conservation. New shelters, toilets and a shaded playground complement the recently built lifeguard building. There is good access to the beach and facilities designed for people with disabilities. Contractors regularly weed and revegetate the dunes. Residents have assisted with clean ups of the beach and headland. Many students visit the beach for CoastEd sessions run by the Council and the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management. Burleigh Heads State School students have been particularly active in recent months. Classes from Years 4 and 5 have cleaned up the beach each week as part of their studies. They have also appealed to the community to play their part in dune protection and litter abatement. Burleigh Beach exemplifies all aspects of the Clean Beach Challenge.

#### **Tourism Queensland Friendly Beach Award – Currumbin Beach**

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

Currumbin Beach is a favourite with visitors to the southern Gold Coast. The home of natural wonders such as Elephant Rock, Currumbin is an ideal location for outdoor sports. The beach is patrolled year-round by Council lifeguards and life savers. A wide foreshore path features showers and plentiful seating, including unique timber chairs created by a local artist. Ongoing revegetation of dunes has added to the area's natural appeal. The foreshore is well lit at night and stays litter-free thanks to the efforts of residents and the Gold Coast City Council. There is clear signage to car parks and attractions such as the lookout, cafés and Surf Club. Both car parks have been upgraded in the past year to improve safety. Parking is set aside for people with disabilities and there is wheelchair access to beach facilities. Freshly painted amenities, barbeques and a shady playground are reached by a pedestrian crossing. Nearby noticeboards highlight the recent activities of clubs and the Council. Airy shelter sheds have sweeping coastal outlooks and the beach viewing platforms are popular for weddings. The annual beach Swell Sculpture festival attracts up to 150,000 people each year. This 10-day community event includes concerts, children's activities and an educational program. The Council has just purchased one of this year's artworks for permanent installation at the beach. With so much on offer, Currumbin Beach has something for everyone.

### **Beach Spirit Award – The Spit**

*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.*

As one of the last remaining open spaces on the Gold Coast, The Spit has been the subject of much development interest, prompting the local community to form the Save The Spit Alliance. The alliance is comprised of community, environment, fishing, tourism and business groups. Members meet fortnightly to discuss ways to maintain The Spit as a public space and to protect the waters of the Broadwater. Alliance volunteers liaise with stakeholders, including the State government, park users and schools, to increase awareness of this special area. The Alliance has organised a day of celebration at The Spit, held stalls at local events and set up an informative website. To date more than 20,000 signatures have been collected in support of the group's aim. In addition, the Alliance intends to raise funds for further facilities and revegetation at the beach. Community members at The Spit have come together with a common goal in a great example of beach spirit in action.

### **Australian Food & Grocery Council Litter Prevention Award – Surfers Paradise Beach**

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

Queensland's Cleanest Beach 2005 continues to keep litter at bay. Surfers Paradise Management has teamed with the Gold Coast City Council and local businesses on a number of initiatives. A machine that removes cigarette butts by vacuum has been trialled and discussions are underway to acquire a unit for the beach. Cigarette butt bins are already sited at each access way along the esplanade. An audit is in progress to locate cigarette butt hotspots, following an increase in butt litter since the introduction of the new smoking laws. Surfers Paradise Management also works with businesses on cigarette butt litter management plans. Butts on the beach will be the subject of further campaigns in the near future. In an attempt to crack down on graffiti, details of the Council's graffiti hotline have been distributed to all traders in the precinct. These efforts complement regular activities to keep Surfers clean. Each day the beach is swept, the many local bins are emptied and the dunes are cleaned. Cleaning crews and local resorts also collect litter from the beach. Surfers Paradise Beach continues to build on its litter prevention achievements.

### **Resource Conservation & Waste Management Award – South Stradbroke Island Ocean Beach**

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

The sophisticated resource and waste management measures at South Stradbroke Island's Ocean Beach are impressive. Couran Cove Island Resort has upgraded its tertiary sewage treatment plant in the past year, improving the quality of waste water. Biosolids from composting toilets in the nearby park are mixed with green waste for fertiliser. Organic waste is either composted or passed through worm farms, while grey water is reused on gardens. There are many bins, including special cigarette butt bins, around the resort and beach. The foreshore park also offers recycling bins, which are prevalent on the island. Staff and students clean up the resort and beach at regular intervals. Plastic bags washed ashore are collected for disposal and the environment centre features a memorable recycling display. More than 1,000 bicycles are loaned to visitors during peak periods and other vehicles are powered by gas or electricity. These measures all form part of the resort's resource conservation and waste management strategy. South Stradbroke Island's Ocean Beach is a case study for creative resource management.

### **Three Plus Community-Local Government Partnership Award – Gold Coast City Council for Paradise Point**

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

Paradise Point is an aptly named stretch of foreshore with stunning views of the Broadwater and abundant visitor facilities. Gold Coast City Council crews maintain the beach's modern jetty, barbecues, shelters, playgrounds and amenities, which are linked by walkways. The path network will soon be upgraded to cater for increasing numbers of walkers and cyclists. Under the Council's BeachCare program, a group of residents has been weeding, cleaning and revegetating the beach over the past year. This project has been coordinated by the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management. The residents have been assisted by Conservation Volunteers Australia and up to 30 people have joined each planting day. The Council and the Paradise Point Progress Association have also worked together to improve infrastructure and develop a master plan for the foreshore park. A public meeting was held to define residents' priorities for the plan. The Council's strong partnerships with the community at Paradise Point are ensuring that this little patch of heaven will remain just that for years to come.

### **Protection of the Environment Award – Mermaid Beach**

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

Mermaid Beach is a popular beach that is being well managed for visitor use and environmental protection. The Gold Coast City Council has fenced dunes and access ways to protect the fragile ecosystem. Since the completion last year of a rock barrier to protect against erosion, significant dune reconstruction has been carried out. Council contractors have eradicated weeds and revegetated sections of the beach. Several enthusiastic residents have formed a BeachCare group with the support of the Council and the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management. These volunteers have planted more than 200 tube stock and 300 ground layer cuttings since April 2006 to complement other dune works. The group also collects litter and pulls weeds from the dunes each month. The Council is currently assisting a community member to undertake a dune vegetation plan for an area adjacent to his property. The site will then be cared for by the BeachCare group. All of these activities fit well under the beach's Vegetation Management Plan and the Council's overall Dune Vegetation Policy. The determined efforts of the Council and community to create a sustainable dunal system at Mermaid Beach are commendable.

### **Outdoor Media Association Young Legends Award – Southport Broadwater Events Parklands**

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

The Year 5 students at Southport State School are to be congratulated for their efforts to care for the nearby Broadwater Events Parklands. This foreshore is a haven for families as it offers playgrounds, a swimming enclosure and wide paths perfect for bikes and prams. Due to the parklands' popularity, litter can be a problem. Southport State's Year 5 students noticed this issue and started visiting each week to clean up. After attending a CoastEd session by the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management, they began to gather data on the beach's facilities, environment and weather patterns. The students have collected and audited litter items, including nappies, batteries and thousands of cigarette butts. Reports are included in the weekly school newsletter and each student has produced a web page about their initiatives.

The students have also presented their findings at assembly and the Gold Coast Show. A display at the show included letters from the students to the Gold Coast Bulletin, their anti-litter posters and photos. As a result of the beach visits, teachers have devised a beach first aid course that will be taught to the students along with swimming next term. Contact has also been made with a school in Victoria to encourage similar activities. The students of Southport State School are true young legends.

### **Community Action Award – Federation Walk Coastal Reserve**

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

Federation Walk is a peaceful pathway through The Spit, popular with walkers, runners and cyclists. The Friends of Federation Walk have been caring for this site to protect it for future generations. Members have developed a draft management plan and are in discussions with Gold Coast City Council to have the strategy adopted. Under the plan, new entrances and signage will be added to encourage passive recreation and learning. Following fires in recent years, the Friends are planting a screen of trees at the worst of the burnt sites. Volunteers meet weekly to irrigate new plantings with a system that uses recycled effluent water. They also mulch plants and collect litter. The group recently received a Community Water Grant to upgrade and extend the watering system. Monthly planting days and events such as National Tree Day and Clean Up Australia Day are well attended. Youth are involved through the Council's BeachCare and Griffith University's CoastEd programs. In recent months, several plantings by schools have taken place, complementing efforts by Work for the Dole, Green Corps and other community groups. As a result, almost 5,000 trees have been planted in the past year. The local Councillor has been particularly supportive of these endeavours. The outstanding teamwork at Federation Walk is an inspiring example of local action for community and environmental benefit.

### **Individual Outstanding Achievement Award – Sunfish South Moreton Volunteers**

*This award recognises individuals or groups who have made an outstanding contribution to Queensland beaches and who espouse the principles of the Clean Beach Challenge.*

Volunteers from the South Moreton branch of Sunfish have put in a massive effort to organise 10 'Clean Up the Pin' events in the past decade. These large-scale litter removal days target foreshores and waterways in the Jumpin Pin and Moreton Bay islands. Last year, the event attracted 58 volunteers, who contributed almost 500 hours of labour. Since the program began, more than 120 tonnes of rubbish have been removed by boat from Southern Moreton Bay. A committee of six, led by John Johnston, spend nine months planning each event. The committee is supported by other Sunfish members, community organisations, Gold Coast City Council, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. Throughout the year, the volunteers distribute rubbish bags to passing vessels and monitor the islands for litter. They also conduct water quality testing and teach students about sustainable fishing practices. The Sunfish team has noted a decrease in the amount of rubbish collected over the years, which can only be good news for the Bay and anglers. The Sunfish South Moreton volunteers have overcome many funding and resource challenges to reduce litter in one of Queensland's most precious environments.

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