



Media release

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Townsville hosts Youth Ecotourism Forum

Secondary school students from Townsville will hook up with young people from around the globe this week as part of a three day Youth Ecotourism Forum.

The event at Reef HQ is timed to coincide with the 2006 International Ecotourism Conference, which carries the theme of "Sustainable Tourism – Sustainable Future."

Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Sustainable Development Committee, Ann Bunnell, said the forum will give students the chance to present, discuss and debate challenges relating to tourism and their environment.

"This forum really builds on and follows the South African National Biodiversity Institute Urban Nature workshop held earlier this year in Cape Town," Cr Bunnell said.

"It's all about instilling in our future leaders an understanding of their role and responsibility in looking after our natural resources and attractions, while also allowing them to express their views.

"In order to keep a nature-based tourism industry alive we need to engage future decision makers."

On the first day of the conference (Tuesday, October 31) students from local secondary schools will attend a workshop to hear from industry experts on ecotourism trends, issues and opportunities around the three main broad themes of business, environment and community.

An international video conference will take place on the second day (Wednesday, November 1), bringing together students from a range of countries including South Africa, Scotland, France and Brazil.

The main objective of the forum will be for students to develop an Ecotourism Youth Charter that incorporates students ideas about ecotourism and sustainability.

Townsville student delegates will present the forum's findings to participants at the final plenary session of the International Ecotourism Conference on Thursday, November 2.

Ecotourism Australia's outgoing chair, Clare McFarlane, said it was an amazing opportunity for north Queensland students to chart the way forward for ecotourism in their communities.

"We look forward to hearing the Youth Ecotourism Forum recommendations and findings from Australia's future ecotourism leaders," Ms McFarlane said.

The forum is being coordinated by Townsville City Council in partnership with Community Environment Fund, Reef HQ, Townsville high schools, James Cook University and Reef Check Australia.

Media Information: A list of speakers for the event is attached. Vision and interviews from the international video conference on Wednesday night will be available to the media. EMS Media Liaison Sara Lando 0406 959 132. Ecotourism Australia – Clare McFarlane 0409 577 093.