

What is Reef Check?

Reef Check is an international non-profit organisation, which monitors the health of coral reefs in over 60 countries around the world.

Reef Check in Australia has evolved from a one off project in 1997 into an Australian Foundation in 2004, and is headquartered in Townsville Queensland, on the doorstep of Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Reef Check is the United Nations' official community-based coral reef monitoring program.

Reef Check partners with leading Australian marine research organisations, leading tourism companies and dive operations, universities, Government, local and international volunteers and a variety of other businesses and organisations.

Reef Check's current activities are focused on the Great Barrier Reef, the largest system of coral reefs in the world. However, we are developing plans and seeking partners to expand activities to other Australian coral reef areas and into the Indo-Pacific region during 2005.



What are Reef Check's objectives?

- *Educate the public and governments about the value of coral reefs and the crisis facing them;*
- *Create a global network of trained volunteer teams, led by scientists, to regularly monitor and report on reef health using a globally accepted standard method;*
- *Facilitate the collaborative use of reef health information by community groups, governments, universities and businesses to design and implement ecologically sound and economically sustainable solutions; and*
- *Stimulate local action to protect remaining pristine reefs and rehabilitate damaged reefs worldwide.*

How does Reef Check check our reefs?

- Reef Check attracts a diverse range of committed volunteer teams around the world, with members ranging from budding marine biologists to keen surfers, from recreational divers to village fishermen - all are members of the community who greatly value their oceans and reefs.
- Reef Check also attracts volunteer marine scientists who train teams of these volunteers how to scientifically identify and monitor the unique ecology of their coral reef systems.
- Reef Check volunteer members who pass this training course and the identification tests become Volunteer Researchers and are then permitted to collect data on Reef Check Australia surveys. Volunteers who are not yet fully qualified to collect data may perform Volunteer Research Assistant roles on dive expeditions, and are encouraged to continue training for further qualifications.
- Reef Check also has a growing team of committed strategic sponsors, partners and collaborators who provide vital financial, in-kind and professional support making our community, research and operational activities possible.
- Reef Check's various Dive Operator sponsors transport our volunteer teams to the various survey sites on the Reef, accommodate them when required and provide any dive resources necessary to successfully carry out their surveys.
- Reef Check survey team leaders and lead scientists coordinate and administer the expedition, delegate roles and responsibilities to team members, locate and manage survey sites, provide all briefings and debriefings, prepare data and scientific reports, and manage further liaison associated with the trip.
- Reef Check team members accept the responsibilities and tasks particular to their allocated role on the dive expedition, act professionally as representatives of Reef Check and work with their expedition team to deliver a successful survey while having loads of fun.

What are Reef Check's achievements and aims?

Increased monitoring of the Great Barrier Reef and other Australian coral reefs.

We survey reefs as far north as Lizard Island and south to the Capricorn bunker group off Bundaberg on the Great Barrier Reef, as well as out in the Coral Sea. We aim to increase the number of sites we survey and continue to monitor all sites annually. We also plan to charter vessels to take us to other parts of the Reef beyond commercial dive locations.

Create partnerships between the public and private sector to strengthen marine management initiatives.

We have begun to involve local communities, schools, businesses, universities and government departments in working together to save the Reef.

Boost Queensland's Dive Industry by providing important and fun community training in coral reef ecology, conservation and monitoring, as well as involving recreational divers in collecting information on coral reef health.

Divers who participate in Reef Check tell us that it has made their diving experiences better than ever.

Teach stakeholders how to communicate with managers. Anecdotal reports of reef degradation are common from long-time divers, but it is difficult for managers to use subjective descriptions. Reef Check trains people to collect scientific information on coral reef health that managers, like the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, can use.

The continuation of Reef Check into the long-term will provide managers with information on how our reefs are changing over time.

Increase stewardship of our coral reefs through public participation in monitoring

Divers care about coral reefs and love to participate in activities that aid their conservation. We continually receive emails from divers wanting to participate in Reef Check. We aim to tap into this public interest by increasing our activities and training opportunities.

World leading development of Reef Check training courses and materials.

Reef Check course training materials developed in Queensland during 2003/2004 are now being adapted for use internationally.

Student training opportunities through our 'train the trainer' program

We have begun to train marine science students to become Reef Check trainers. These students will have enhanced employment opportunities and help Reef Check to expand by training and leading more volunteer divers.

Capacity Building by Reef Check in Indo-Pacific communities.

We are currently negotiating with a number of countries who have requested our assistance in providing training and qualified teams to survey Indo-Pacific reefs.

Enhance reporting of our results to the public.

We have developed a partnership with the CRC Reef Research Centre / Australian Institute of Marine Science Reef Futures project (www.reeffutures.org) where our reef monitoring results will be available on-line. We need to further develop our own website to detail our activities, partners, approaches and aspirations for the future.

Real results and findings reported globally by Reef Check International scientific teams.

*Reef Check released its five-year report in August 2002, *The Global Coral Reef Crisis - Trends and Solutions* at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. Reef Check also reports findings in the biannual 'Status of Coral Reefs of the World' report by the Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network.*

International awards for our achievements, standards and operations.

Reef Check has received numerous international environmental awards for its work including the Global Environmental Prize from CMAS, the World Underwater Federation in January 2000, the Chevron Award in August 2001 and the NOAA Environmental Award in December 2001.

www.reefcheckaustralia.org