



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Friday 10 November 2017

### **Bundaberg community builds momentum for turtle conservation**

Dr Blair Witherington, a global expert on sea turtles, is visiting Bundaberg this month, just as the five-month hatching season starts, as part of the Low Glow initiative. The objective is to encourage the community to help safeguard the local sea turtle population by reducing light pollution.

Dr Witherington, Disney Sea Turtle Biologist and Conservation Programs Manager has extensive experience in the Florida area, a region facing the same challenges and has seen first-hand the effect an engaged community can have.

“I know that this kind of community action can make a real difference because I’ve seen it happen before. What seems like a daunting community effort is actually composed of people taking simple steps in their own interests, which work toward a common goal,” Dr Witherington said.

“People often ask me what they can do to help sea turtles. I usually start with some simple things we can do at home to make sure these animals are protected.”

“People living in coastal communities can do a home light audit. Take a look at your outside lighting, and switch off or hide lights that shine outside your property. Every little bit helps, and when we encourage our neighbours to do the same, the collective community action makes a big difference,” he said.

The Low Glow initiative – and Dr Witherington’s visit – is supported by Greenfleet, The Prince’s Trust Australia and The Walt Disney Company Australia

The genesis of the Low Glow initiative began with the Remember The Reef campaign established in 2015 by the Walt Disney Company Australia around the release of Disney.Pixar’s Finding Dory. The campaign involved a donation to Greenfleet that would facilitate the planting of 10,000 trees that would provide habitat, improve water quality to the reef and also sequester carbon dioxide.

Greenfleet’s choice of location was perfect, selecting the Barolin Nature Reserve bordering the Mon Repos Sea Turtle reserve where they planted 80,000 native trees earlier this year, which will grow into a ‘green curtain’ to help shield light pollution from the city and protect turtle species.

Greenfleet CEO Wayne Wescott said that Dr Witherington’s visit was significant because it highlights the global community support for the local turtle population.

“Mon Repos is internationally recognised as a critical place in the Loggerhead turtles’ journey around the world, which is why we’re so passionate about ensuring their future here,” Mr Wescott said.

“Around 30,000 people come to Bundaberg each year to see the turtles nesting here, so saving these animals has benefits for the local community and economy as well as the environment. It’s a win-win.”

Chief Executive of The Prince’s Trust Australia, Janine Kirk, said she was delighted to be working in partnership with Greenfleet and The Walt Disney Company to address the important issue of protecting the turtles nesting on Mon Repos Beach.

“Dr Witherington brings applicable global learnings and experience to the local community and by working together we can ensure the turtles – and local tourism – thrive,” Ms. Kirk said.

While in Bundaberg, Dr Witherington will meet with the community, government and businesses to provide them with new resources laying out the easy actions they can take to play their part.

Dr Witherington is leading two community events as a part of his visit at Bargara Community & Cultural Centre: one for the general community on Monday 13 November at 6:30pm, and one for the local business community on Tuesday 14 November at 7:30pm.

He will also be meeting students at Kalkie Primary School and Bargara Primary School on Tuesday 14 November.

## **ENDS**

**About Greenfleet:** With 20 years' experience, Greenfleet is Australia's most trusted source of biodiverse carbon offsets. As an environmental not-for-profit organisation, Greenfleet's mission is to protect our climate by restoring our forests. Since 1997, Greenfleet has planted more than 9 million native trees across Australia and New Zealand – restoring more than 475 native and biodiverse forests. The projects are funded by individuals and organisations that support Greenfleet's work through carbon offset donations. Greenfleet services many of Australia's leading brands, including Disney, Telstra and Smartgroup. Visit: [www.greenfleet.org.au](http://www.greenfleet.org.au)

**About The Prince's Trust Australia:** The Prince's Trust Australia provides a coordinating presence for the diverse portfolio of His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales' Australian charitable endeavours. The Prince's Trust Australia supports the development and delivery of innovative, high impact projects across seven focus areas, including: addressing youth unemployment; supporting transitioning Australian Defence personnel in small business management; advocating for better health outcomes for indigenous children in remote communities; working to preserve Indigenous cultural, creative and heritage sector skills; improving regional and rural resilience to natural disasters; and encouraging sustainable practices for both the natural and built environment. Visit: [www.princes-trust.org.au](http://www.princes-trust.org.au)

### **About The Walt Disney Company:**

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