

Media Release



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For Immediate Release

Volunteers clean-up marine debris

Flood clean up operations were extended to marine debris on Barubbra Island and the northern rock training wall in the Burnett River (Queensland) last week by local fishermen, Government agencies, and national not-for-profit organisation, OceanWatch Australia.



Vessels and skippers were supplied for the clean-up by Queensland Parks and Wildlife, Bundaberg Regional Council, and the Gladstone Port Authority, to transport volunteers across the river to the island, and to bring rubbish collected back to the marina at Burnett Heads. Qld Parks and Bundaberg Regional Council staff were instrumental in the clean-up, working with volunteers from National Green Jobs Corps and the seafood industry, to clean up the beach area of Barubbra Island and the northern rock training wall in the Burnett River.

Fifteen people were involved in the 4 hour clean-up effort, removing approximately 1000 kilograms of rubbish (2 whole skip bins of rubbish). Executive Chair of OceanWatch Australia, Brad Warren, attended the clean-up, in a show of support for the efforts of the community, industry, and Government agencies to clean-up fishing grounds.

Brad Warren said, *"The local seafood industry throughout the State has been crippled by the impact of recent flood and cyclone events. We are extremely grateful for the support of all the volunteers who were involved in the clean-up in Burnett Heads last week. OceanWatch will continue to work with the industry and partner agencies throughout Queensland over the coming months to assist in the recovery of fishing grounds and marine habitats."*

A post-cleanup survey of the marine debris collected identified the following items;

- 63 bags of litter consisting of an array of plastic bags, bottles, aluminium cans, plastic bottle tops, Styrofoam, fishing line, clothing, rope, and cigarette lighters,
- several large items that posed a navigational hazards as well as a pollutant issue, including a fridge, washing machine, 17 pieces of corrugated iron, a steel gate, sections of pool fencing, large pieces of boats, and a wheelie bin, and
- car tyres, derelict crab pots, saucepans, buckets, kettles, several items of footwear, and torn sails.

Clean up coordinator and local OceanWatch Project Manager, Michelle Haase, says *"All these items have the potential to harm wildlife, pollute waterways and impede commercial fishing operations. It is not biodegradable, and if not for the clean-up effort last week, most likely would have ended up in the ocean. Some of it gets caught up in fishing gear, causing costly damage to fishing equipment, the rest remains in marine habitats continuing detrimental impacts for many years to come."*

Caption: Gladstone Port Authority take a load of rubbish collected off the rock wall by OceanWatch's Chair, Brad Warren, and QPWS Ranger, Terry Kelly.

OceanWatch Australia is a national not-for-profit environmental organisation working to advance sustainability in the Australian seafood industry. OceanWatch Australia supports this initiative through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program.

Media Enquires:

Michelle Haase | Project Manager
OceanWatch Australia Ltd
Landline - (07) 4181 2999 (ext. 123)
Mobile - 0401 890 069

