



BRIGHT FUTURE: Bundaberg local Elijah Richardson, 7, putting his face behind what he cares about.

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Bundy locals enlist help from celebs to protect reef



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FILMING for a reef protection campaign recently took place in the Bundaberg region, with calls for support from a Hollywood legend, popular musician and *Game of Thrones* star.

Delivered by The University of Queensland, CoralWatch is an international reef citizen science program which will be used to collect data, monitor the reef and reduce carbon emissions and the impact of global warming.



COMMUNITY ACTION: A group of Bundaberg residents took part in the Come Join Our Watch campaign, delivered by CoralWatch and The University of Queensland.

Bundaberg CoralWatch ambassadors Natalie Lobartolo, Rebecca Coulombe and Jess Firth helped in the recruitment of local volunteers, who appeared in a campaign video, which was shot on Lady Musgrave Island and Coonarr beach.

“At the beginning of June when COVID-19 restrictions eased, I went to Lady Musgrave again and the reef looked amazing,” Ms Lobartolo said.

“Many corals went from bleaching to recovery – they have regained their zooxanthellae (symbiotic algae) and are looking beautiful.”

But it hasn't been all smooth sailing this year, after the Great Barrier Reef experienced a mass bleaching event, making it the third in just five years.

Sadly reefs surrounding Lady Musgrave and Lady Elliot Islands were impacted by this severe bleaching and while they have bounced back, the damage serves as a reminder of the importance of reef conservation.



BRIGHT FUTURE: Bundaberg local Elijah Richardson, 7, putting his face behind what he cares about.

In addition to protecting the reef, CoralWatch project manager of education Diana Kleine said the Come Join Our Watch campaign hopes to raise awareness.

“We quite simply need as many people as possible watching out for our reef,” Ms Kleine said.

“Especially with the increased frequency of coral bleaching that is occurring.”

Passionate and protective of the reef, 20 Bundy locals used their voice and appeared in the video which has been shared across social media platforms.

GREAT BARRIER REEF



TEAM WORK: Photographer Damien Bredberg, Diana Kleine, Monique Grol and Rem Bruijn from Brainheart.

CoralWatch project manager of research Monique Grol said in a bid to raise public awareness and participation, the campaign is attempting to grab the attention of three global superstars to help get the message out.

Carefully selected to join the crusade, the campaign hopes to get musician Billie Eilish and actors Robert De Niro and Kit Harrington on-board.

“We realise that securing the support of even one of these megastars is a definite long shot, but the Great Barrier Reef is worth it and that’s why the volunteers have given their time, face and voice,” Ms Grol said.

“It’s also why our production team have all given their time, skill and passion free of charge and with the power of people’s personal networks and social media, who knows.

“The documentation of the weekend’s shoot on Facebook has already created a lot of awareness and engagement and that’s ultimately what we want the celebrities for.”



REEF PROTECTION: Bundaberg local Sean Kelly features in CoralWatch campaign.

Named as a recipient of the Queensland Government's Queensland Citizen Science Grants last year, CoralWatch, The University of Queensland is using the funds to educate the community about threats to the Great Barrier Reef and ways to help by participating in citizen science projects.

Anyone interested in protecting the reef is encouraged to find out more by visiting the CoralWatch Facebook page or coralwatch.org

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