



Beneath the surface: a day with CoralWatch in Moreton Bay

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On April 22, I boarded the SeeMoreton cruise to attend a hands-on professional development workshop hosted by AMSA South Queensland Branch and CoralWatch, based at The University of Queensland.

About 20 people attended, including students, researchers, educators, and marine science enthusiasts. The day combined presentations, fieldwork, and discussions about coral conservation and public engagement.

Opportunities like this can be difficult to access while balancing university, work, and the costs that often come with professional development as a student. I received a bursary from AMSA Queensland South that fully covered the experience. This gave me the opportunity not only to take part in the workshop, but also to connect

with people across different areas of marine science and feel more involved in the community. I felt incredibly grateful throughout the day, and I am excited to share this experience!

Exploring Tangalooma Wrecks

Before we set sail, Diana Kleine, project manager for CoralWatch, introduced us to the project and the corals of Moreton Bay. She showed us how to use the CoralWatch Health Chart and explained its contribution to global research. Her words made complex concepts accessible to all participants, reflecting both her

passion for the topic and her ability to communicate it effectively. We departed the Port of Brisbane at about 9.30 am and reached the Tangalooma Wrecks by 11 am, where we put the coral monitoring techniques into practice. Snorkelling around the wrecks, we used the Health Chart to assess coral health by matching the lightest and darkest colors of a colony to the standardised color codes on the chart. Lighter colors indicate lower concentrations of symbiotic algae and therefore greater coral bleaching or stress. For many participants, it was a rare opportunity to observe these coral communities up close while contributing to reef monitoring. I was particularly amazed by the abundance of coral recruits and established colonies. It was incredible to see a shipwreck so successfully colonised!



From awareness to action

After the snorkel, we returned to the boat for a yummy lunch, ready to upload our data and continue discussions. A key theme was the importance of citizen science and science communication. Dr Tracy Schultz of The University of Queensland introduced the What Can I Do? platform, which bridges the gap between climate awareness and action. Through interactive questions, it encourages people to reflect on their behaviours, identify barriers, and consider steps they can take to support reef conservation. Dr Schultz highlighted that while it is encouraging to see responses from individuals already taking steps towards sustainability, the broader goal of the platform is to reach those who are not yet engaged. In fact, although many Brisbane residents feel deeply connected to Moreton Bay and strongly support its protection, the majority are unaware that coral reefs exist within the bay. This was a striking reminder of how easily scientists can become immersed in their own 'bubble' and assume

that the broader community shares the same knowledge or awareness.

Another key message was that effective conservation is not only about sharing strong science with our peers through scientific literature. It requires communicating research in a way that is accessible, meaningful, and relevant to the broader community.

Connecting through citizen science

Making science accessible is where initiatives such as CoralWatch are especially valuable. Although the scientific reliability of citizen-collected data is sometimes debated, the value of these initiatives extends far beyond the

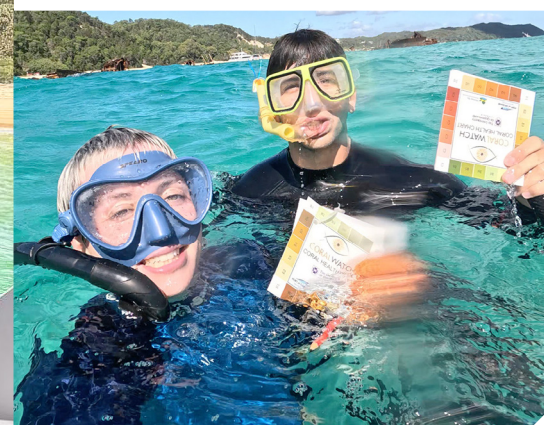
data itself. Encouraging people to engage directly with their environment fosters personal connections and can inspire long-term stewardship. By bringing people to the reef, CoralWatch facilitates these connections, representing a powerful step towards building broader public awareness, appreciation, and support for marine conservation.

At the end of the day, I took home a clear message that will stay with me: publishing research is not the final step, it is only the beginning of making an impact.

See the *What can I do?* Platform on the [CoralWatch](https://www.coralwatch.org.au/) website.



Group photo at Tangalooma wrecks with the participants.
Image: Diana Kleine



Top: CoralWatch Health Chart at the Tangalooma Wrecks. Image: Anusha Vidovic

Above: Adele Comacchio and Emilio Olivastri at the CoralWatch workshop putting theory into practice. Image: Adele Comacchio

Above right: CoralWatch Ambassador 2026 training in Heron Island. Image: Anusha Vidovic



A few words from a CoralWatch Ambassador – Anusha Vidovic

As a CoralWatch Ambassador, I get to spread my love for the ocean and talk about how cool and crucial corals are. The role begins with a five-day workshop at the Heron Island Research Station where we learn about coral biology, reef monitoring, and science communication. When not on land, we were underwater, exploring the stunning marine life and collecting coral data.

Ambassadors remain involved through education and outreach activities. I've represented CoralWatch at the World Science Festival and helped deliver this workshop with AMSA. Every ambassador works on a 'passion project', which is our own initiative to support CoralWatch's mission and benefit the reefs. Mine involves creating promotional videos and a collaborative event with Wildlife Queensland, where I work.

The program connected me with an inspiring community of people passionate about protecting our reefs. Applications for the next ambassador intake open later this year so keep an eye on CoralWatch's social media!