

Judge Report

CLEAN BEACHES 2014

Rainbow Bay, Queensland



Keep Australia Beautiful National Association

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Introduction

Community

Rainbow Bay, Queensland

Population

1000

Date judged

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Overview

Rainbow Bay is a small community at the southern end of Queensland's Gold Coast. It includes a small resident population and attracts a large number of tourists, many of whom are regular holiday-makers returning to a favoured destination. Rainbow Bay's residents are a small and committed group who have worked together over many years to preserve their beach culture and lifestyle of their coastal community in the face of population and tourism pressures, and in response to threats associated with large scale infrastructure projects associated with the movement of sand along the dynamic coastline.

Amongst the apartment towers of Rainbow Bay, residents have successfully created coastal re-vegetation projects, a community garden, successful clubs, a beautiful community centre and active volunteer groups, and also play host to one of Australia's last remaining independent veteran rehabilitation centres.

Further action to ensure all stakeholders, managers and users of the beach cooperate and coordinate their efforts will likely enhance the outcomes for residents, particularly as Council addresses pressures associated with large-scale tourism.

Community Action & Partnerships

Recognises achievement in community and civic beautification, presentation, health, wellbeing and pride. Also recognises partnerships between government, business, industry and local community networks.

Rainbow Bay has an active and committed group of volunteers in the Friends of Rainbow Bay Society (FORBS). Over the past couple of years FORBS have, in partnership with the Gold Coast City Council and Griffith Centre for Coastal Management, successfully re-established and re-vegetated the dunes system on Rainbow Beach. They continue to lead beach clean-ups and dune care restoration, and have now attracted almost \$20,000 in community grants to support the restoration program for adjacent Froggy's Beach. FORBS is also actively working towards providing solutions to many local issues including:

- Replacing exotic plant species in footpath garden beds with native water efficient plants;
- Establishing and maintaining a community garden in an area where space for such public amenities is very hard to come by;

FORBS also provide a high quality all terrain beach access and surf capable wheelchair that is made freely available to anyone in need. Funded by the local community, this initiative is in high demand and enables people with a disability to easily access all areas of our beach and coastline.

As well as supporting community volunteers in dune care work, the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management run a Coastal Community Engagement Program (CoastEd, BeachCare and Beachology), that aims to provide school and community-based education and community-partnership coast care activities. Griffith reports it held 8 events at Froggy's Beach and Rainbow Bay in the last 12 months, and engaged with over 1000 school students to educate them about the management of the southern beaches.

Rainbow Bay is widely known for its surfing break and hosts surfing's most prestigious tour - the ASP International Surfing Tour. The ASP selects the surfing locations (Snapper/Gold Coast) based upon a number of criteria. The community reports that the event brings multiple environmental, social and economic benefits for the community, including a litter and dune clean up that followed the 2013 event and was carried out in partnership with the 'Quicksilver Foundation'. The area's surf culture also provides many opportunities for local and visiting

board riders to contribute to the community. For example, the active engagement of board riders in the Project Kirra campaign which saw neighbouring Kirra Groyne extended to improve the surfing wave. Local surf organisations and groups successfully lobbied to secure \$1mill for the groyne extension.

Residents of Rainbow Bay are also key members of the Save Our Southern Beaches Alliance. This key group was formed to help protect the southern beaches from unnecessary development that may affect the interests of the general public on the southern Gold Coast, and continues to work with Council and other stakeholders to create a healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities in the Rainbow Bay area.

Dame Phyllis Frost Litter Prevention

Recognises achievement in community litter management and reduction initiatives including the undertaking of litter audits, and litter education programs.

City of Gold Coast provides daily litter collection services, including beach sweepers, park maintenance and dune litter pick-ups. They are supported in their work by members of FORBS who are actively involved in creating effective strategies. The community noticeboard, maintained by members of FORBS, is regularly read and updated to inform the community about local issues and opportunities to get involved. For example, notices regarding storm water runoff and litter washing into waterways are regularly featured and storm water drains in the area have been stenciled with reminders that “water flowing into this drain flows into our sea”.

The community notice board also features children’s artwork about litter prevention strategies. FORBS has initiated an “Anti Shopping Trolley Litter” campaign in response to the number of discarded shopping trolleys that end up in Rainbow Bay. The campaign, which is run in partnership with the Council and local retailers, aims to discourage people from removing them from the shopping precincts. Newly created mobile shopping trolley gardens are providing innovative gardens for homebound residents. FORBS also:

- hand out personal cigarette butt dispensers to the general public to keep the dunes, beaches and parklands free of cigarette butts.
- Works towards continuation of Tangaroa Blue National Marine Debris Database through BeachCare to report back on what litter is being picked up and help the City Cleaning Services best direct resources to local hotspots.
- Contributes to awareness within local schools and the wider community on the beach. For instance, the Disabled Surf Group are well aware of the environmental impacts caused by litter and have become ambassadors to keep Rainbow Bay clean.
- Awareness at the Quiksilver Pro –to keep the ocean clean and avoid using single- use plastics – cross partnered community clean up event with Griffith University, City of Gold Coast and Friends of Rainbow Bay.

The Council also provides effective dog and alcohol management on the beach.

Resource Recovery & Waste Management

Recognises achievement in resource recovery and waste management including initiatives which conserve resources, recover and reuse materials and the appropriate disposal of non-recyclable materials.

City of Gold Coast is committed to delivering its 2020 Vision on Waste that aims to improve resource recovery and waste management. One relevant element is program is GreenGC which provides accessibility to all known city waste initiatives (for example Green Waste bins at home to turn compost into renewable energy that may one day provide enough electricity to power nearly 7,300 homes for a year.

City of Gold Coast also runs a long-term Sand Management Plan as a part of the Gold Coast Shoreline Management Plan/ Ocean Beaches Strategy. The Plan represents a multi-partnered approach to the management of sand movement from NSW to QLD, and provides for management of the Tweed River Sand Bypass System. This system facilitates the natural flow of sand from northern NSW beaches to the Gold Coast around the modified mouth of the Tweed River.

City of Gold Coast has also developed a Wastewater Guide 2012, which is designed to assist businesses, commercial and industrial property owners to better understand their responsibilities for managing wastewater and its impacts.

Environmental Protection & Innovation

Recognises innovative principles and actions associated with developing sustainable communities. Also recognises protection of the natural environment focusing on the conservation of native flora and fauna.

FORBS and the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management drive the Froggys Beach Restoration Program to ecologically restore the headland protect and restore the dunes. City of Gold Coast Council, which has developed active vegetation management plans for the beach area, have supported this work by installing and maintaining dune fencing which ensure native dune vegetation is safe from foot traffic and informal access to the beach.

FORBS have also partnered with Save Our Southern Beaches Alliance to help lead an environmental action campaign to protect the southern beaches from a proposed cruise ship terminal. This was a significant environmental outcome and proved their ability to engage and promote coastal conservation.

FORBS member Tom is a 9 year old Beekeeper and FORBS member who has been breeding bees and releasing them around the local area to help facilitate plant pollination and protect the local bee population. He is known in the local area for his creative attempts to educate the general public on the importance of bees and their plight. He is currently making a community bee keeping shed and workshop at the Enid Street Community Garden, 'flower bombs' vacant blocks with seed, created a- traffic-round-about garden and maintains a full bee hive in the Tweed Heads Police Station car park. His innovative ways and committed action to sustainable practices inspire the local community.

City of Gold Coast has a number of strategies and plans relevant to maintaining and improving the environmental values of Rainbow Bay including their Nature Conservation Strategy, which demonstrates the Council's commitment to conserving the city's natural values and the Ocean Beaches Strategy 2013 – 2023 which aims to maintain and develop lifestyle and leisure opportunities along the beaches as well as protecting coastal infrastructure from erosion and other hazards, and a Surf Management Plan to help alleviate issues surrounding overcrowding, protect surf culture and integrate coastal management with surfing opportunities.

Water Conservation

Recognises sustainable water management within communities which has combined innovative water conservation and water re-use initiatives at the private, industrial and municipal levels, benefiting society and nature.

City of Gold Coast provides automatic shut off taps on all public showers and taps, dual flush toilets and signage in public areas about water conservation. Adding to this FORBS successfully ran a campaign to gain support from the local Councillor to fund drinking water bubblers to reduce the need to bring bottled water to the beach.

At Rainbow Bay's dune restoration, BeachCare's water conservation strategy requires the use of water crystals when planting reducing the need for follow up watering for up to 12 months.

The Council is also committed to using recycled water for garden and landscaping activities, and developed the Wastewater Guide 2012 designed to assist business commercial and industrial property owners to better understand their trade waste responsibilities and the steps they need to take to gain a 'trade waste approval'.

To support education and understanding in the community at Rainbow Bay, the City of Gold Coast's website provides information about water leaks, Garden Watersaver programs, greywater, school, home and business Watersaver programs, rainwater tanks, water efficiency management plans, and water conservation assistance program.

Energy Innovation

Recognises sustainable energy management which focuses on innovative energy efficiency measures and climate change issues.

Within its jurisdiction, Council provides automatic shut off electric BBQs with efficient heating plates, solar-powered automatic street light and safety pathway lights and solar-powered beach patrol towers.

The City's Climate Change Strategy 2009 – 2014 looks at the risks of climate change and its likely short and long term consequences for the Gold Coast and builds on the City of Gold Coast's existing climate change related activities and provides a well-defined plan with strategic actions focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Strategy is currently under review.

Heritage & Culture

Recognises how communities proudly preserve and value cultural history.

The southern end of the Gold Coast has some significant cultural and heritage highlights. The strong beach culture, art and colonial history can be seen from Snapper through to Kirra Beach, and beyond. The area's living history is personified in Russel Corowa who is a local indigenous artist and is frequently spotted playing his didgeridoo on Rainbow Bay's Little Mali Rocks.

A significant community achievement is the restoration and continued use of 100 year old heritage listed school buildings on Kirra Hill. The local community and FORBS played a major role in preserving the buildings. At the time when the school closed, the State Government who owned the site saw it as a valuable piece of real estate though the locals saw it as a valuable piece of the community and history. Strong advocacy resulted in a wonderful community outcome with the 'school heritage' preserved, an iconic landmark park preserved and community benefit by having access to host community projects.

And a notable element of the community's commitment to acknowledging and conserving its living history is the St George Returned Services Respite Centre. The Centre has been a place for rest and healing since World War II for servicemen and women in the armed forces and is one of the last such centres in Australia. Rainbow Bay residents hold a local ANZAC Dawn Service and Celebrations at Tweed Heads Memorial Park and then play 'two-up' at Rainbow Bay SLSC and the Twin Towns RSL.

Other elements of the cultural heritage work underway in Rainbow Bay include:

- Historical informative signage and the dedication to colonial heritage at Pt Danger Parklands.
- The City of Gold Coast's Culture Strategy 2023 outlines a future where culture is central to community wellbeing, the city's reputation and liveability and economic growth.
- Bleach* – an artistic, cultural, and environmental educational festival to showcase beach culture for the last two years.
- Historic and refurbished of the shark patrol tower at Greenmount Headland.
- Dedication Plaque for a local historic legend Jack Evans "the founder of Gold Coast's tourism industry".

- Coolangatta Heritage Walk including the memorial waterfall on Greenmount and the Jack Evans porpoise pool remains.
- Kirra Kite Festival – encouraged local businesses and community members to connect and celebrate passive eco-activities along the local beaches.
- Opera on the Beach (May 2014) was a partnership initiative between Opera Australia, Bleach*, Greenmount Surf Club and local community groups. The local community was involved in many volunteer administrative roles and local lifesavers in the production.
- Cooly Rocks On – a nostalgic cultural festival to celebrate the culture of the 1950s- 60s hot rods and classic cars, dancers and music, markets, fresh produce and art and exhibitions.

Young Legends

Recognises environmental achievement through youth initiative and/or by a community, which encourages and promotes youth initiative and environmental education programs and/or achievement.

Rainbow Bay benefits from Griffith Centre for Coastal Management's continued commitment to youth involvement in active coastal management, including through CoastEd, BeachCare activities days, Beachology sessions to inspire children to be Beach Ecologists for a day and BeachCare youth involvement in caring for the beach, dunes and headland.

FORBS is also engages the area's young people, including through:

- the Enid Street Community Garden was established in October 2013 to provide youth and residents with access to garden space and "dirt" because of the high-rise density housing in the area and the lack of accessible gardens. FORBS group was a key catalyst for this initiative: primarily as a result from the success of Tom's 'round-a-bout' garden. The community garden is shared extensively with the broader community of Coolangatta and Tweed Heads with participants from the local disability respite groups, St Josephs' Primary School, individuals, families and elderly citizens who would otherwise be disconnected from the community.
- Youth volunteers to help facilitate a weekly Disability Surf Program with Special - this provides 34 youth with special needs the opportunity to participate in a community program and learn how to surf. Demand for this program continually increases and is looking to extend its reach. The young legends are not only the students with a disability, however, the local able bodied youth who donate their time, skill and enthusiasm to support peers in the surf.
- One of the local young legends and member of FORBS is 9 year old Bee Keeper, Tom. He has been transforming a traffic 'round-a-bout' in the middle of Rainbow Bay into a garden, and created a communal compost bin and worm farm. When he is gardening on the 'round-a-bout', several isolated residents come out and join him. Tom said, 'garden-wise I have had mixed success, however the best bit about it is creating friends with new people". The compost bin and worm farm is tended by random and regular neighbours and has been in successful operation for over 30 months.
- Kirra Kite Festival local school children involvement in the construction and release of sustainable lanterns at the Lantern Parade.