

# MEDIA RELEASE



In partnership with

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## FISH HOTELS ARE HOT REAL ESTATE FOR MACKAY

**MACKAY | 27 June 2016**

**MEDIA EVENT SCHEDULED TUESDAY 28 JUNE 2016 | MACKAY GOOSEPONDS, 2.30pm**

### **There's one area in town that's not been hit hard by a real estate downturn - and it's underwater.**

For the first time, there are fish hotels<sup>1</sup> heading for Mackay. It's good news for targeted tenants, including barramundi, mangrove jack and sleepy cod, to name a few.

Catchment Solutions aquatic ecologist, Trent Power, said the installation of ten fish hotels in two priority sites at the Mackay Gooseponds was exciting news - "We're looking to attract a variety of fish to our new 'real estate' by creating the kind of habitat they love to live in," Mr Power said.

"It is important to cater for the different habitat preference of our native fish. Currently in the Gooseponds there are ample weeded areas, rock walls, open water and muddy banks, but virtually no snags.

"The fish hotels will help increase the habitat for the fish species that prefer these areas, particularly predatory species, like barramundi, sleepy cod and mangrove jack.

"We will be catering to a diverse crowd – smaller fish are able to hide away in the nooks and crannies, while large predatory fish can wait in the shadows. By increasing habitat availability, our native fish communities can become more resilient and are better able to cope with threats, like the pest fish Tilapia."

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#### **<sup>1</sup> WHAT ARE FISH HOTELS?**

Fish hotels are engineered wooden structures, built to emulate what naturally occurs in rivers and streams when trees fall into the waterway (snags/woody debris). Unfortunately, in areas that have been cleared or developed, this natural process is interrupted. The hotels create spaces that provide habitat, refuge and a living and breeding area for important fish species. Fish hotels provide additional level of complexity to the habitats available for native fish and other aquatic fauna.

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The fish hotel project is proudly supported by Reef Catchments in collaboration with Rio Tinto, through funding from the Hail Creek Mine Community Development Fund and the Australian Government. The hotels will be designed and delivered by environmental consultants, Catchment Solutions.

The project is strongly supported by in-kind partners including: Mackay Regional Council, Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance Inc and the Mackay Area Fish Stocking Association.

Hail Creek Mine's general manager – operations, Rowan Munro said, "We are proud to support this important project to help improve the water quality and habitat for native fish and other aquatic species in the Gooseponds Wetlands area. The Hail Creek Mine Community Development Fund continues to provide opportunities for local projects to deliver real benefits and we look forward to seeing a stronger, healthier ecosystem in the Gooseponds wetlands that community members can treasure into the future."

Mackay Regional Councillor and Economic Development and Planning Committee member, Fran Fordham, said the installation of log hotels at the Gooseponds would help build the resilience of native and iconic fish species such as barramundi.

"Juvenile barramundi willingly move into these freshwater environments, via fishways, from the estuary and use this environment as a nursery habitat before returning to estuaries as sub-adults," she said. "Creating favourable habitats for these higher order predators will give them a better chance at competing with exotic, invasive fish species such as tilapia."

Fish hotel installation follows a comprehensive feasibility study, including flood modelling.

"Flood modelling was completed using the existing Gooseponds Catchment model as well as data provided by the Department of Natural Resources and concept designs," Cr Fordham said. "This was done to ensure this project would not adversely impact the intensity or duration of flooding during high flow events. The results demonstrated that the log hotels would have an insignificant impact on flood conditions during 1 in 5 and 1 in 100 year flood event."

Mr Power said ultimately, he had high hopes the fish hotel chain could be expanded throughout local waterways. "Our initial studies indicated four priority sites for fish hotel construction, but so far we have only secured funding for two – however, we have high hopes the hotels will expand in the future!" he said.

"They can be installed anywhere there is the need for aquatic habitat, including in urban and rural areas, in constructed wetlands and on private landholder property."

Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance Inc spokesperson, Lance Murray, said fish hotels were a strong step forward for the Mackay area. "Habitat protection and water quality are two essential ingredients of fish recruitment and sustainability, this initiative is a good step in the right direction," he said.

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**Mackay's new fish hotels<sup>2</sup> are being installed tomorrow, Tuesday 28 June, at 2.30pm at the Mackay Gooseponds.**

Media are invited to attend, please contact Reef Catchments on the details at the end of this release. Entrance to the Gooseponds will be off Hicks Road, site 1 on the attached map (please drive through, gates will be open) – MAP <http://reefcatchments.com.au/files/2016/06/Fish-Hotel-Media-Location.jpg>

ENDS

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## <sup>2</sup> MACKAY'S FISH HOTELS

The fish hotels being installed in Mackay are being constructed from rosewood timber, secured to large concrete foundations. The timber is stacked (similar to a jenga stack) into a structure that can be easily transported and lifted into waterways.



**IMAGE:** Fish Hotels under construction.

Mackay's 10 x new fish hotels will be installed at two priority sites, identified through a comprehensive feasibility study. The study was conducted to identify the most suitable locations for installation that would maximize the benefit for native fish. Flood modelling completed as part of the study also demonstrated the locations and configuration of the hotels will not increase the risk of flooding to neighbouring residential properties.

The hotels are being designed and implemented by environmental consultants, Catchment Solutions, and will be installed mid-June.

The project has been strongly supported by the community, involving a wide range of stakeholders including: Reef Catchments, Rio Tinto (through the Rio Tinto Community Development Fund), Mackay Regional Council, Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance Inc and the Mackay Area Fish Stocking Association.