**Women Who Sail to clean up island**

 **MACKAY // TUESDAY 23rd July 2018**

Members of Women Who Sail are on their way to Middle Percy Island, set on dealing with a large pile of marine debris that has been built up over the past few years.

Reef Catchments has teamed up with Coral Sea Marina and Women Who Sail to organise for members who are sailing through the islands this winter to stop in at Keppel Bay or Coral Sea Marina, pick up some large branded bags, then visit Whites Bay to remove the marine debris. The mission is supported by the Mackay and Keppel Bay Marinas.

Participants can collect bags from Coral Sea Marina or the Keppels, depending on their direction of travel, and will soon be on their way through to Whites Bay on Middle Percy Island.

Reef Catchments is looking to make this event bigger and better in the future by including more islands, marinas and organisations. Reef Catchments encourages anyone who may be able to provide sponsorship, prize donations, or additional rubbish drop off points to please contact Cass Hayward on cass.hayward@reefcatchments.com or (07) 4968 4206.

Mackay Marina, Keppel Bay Marina and Thwaite’s Marine have all come on board, offering prizes and incentives for participants.

Joscelyn O'Keefe at Coral Sea Marina said: “We are really pleased to be partnering with Reef Catchments on this project. As an accredited International Clean Marina Level 3, we are committed to offering diverse recycling facilities for our guests, as well as focussing on the reduction of plastics in our marine environment. To be able to provide a drop off location for the debris collected by people supporting this initiative on their journey to the Whitsundays, is our commitment to such a valuable environmental initiative. Collection bags will also be available at the marina throughout the cruising season, for the journey back south.”

Dr Shelley Wright, founder of Women Who Sail, said: "Each winter, hundreds of our Women Who Sail Australia members sail to remote parts of the Great Barrier Reef coast and islands.

“Unfortunately, many of these locations accumulate marine debris, particularly plastic. Our members collect rubbish when they can, however the problem of carrying and disposing of this on a sailing vessel is a limiting factor.

“We are delighted to be invited to take part in this initiative with Reef Catchments and hope we can make a positive impact on the environment.”

This event is a joint initiative of Reef Catchments, Women Who Sail and Coral Sea Marina, with support from Mackay and Keppel Bay Marinas.
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