

May 2020

Small school wins big for turtle conservation

A confronting sculpture of a turtle, made from discarded plastic and downed power lines from cyclone Nora in 2018, has taken out first place in the *The Hatchery Crusaders* state-wide school competition that aims to raise awareness of plastic pollution and its effect on marine turtles.

Students from Pormpuraaw State School, 2,300 kilometres from Brisbane, on the west coast Cape York Peninsula, beat more than 40 schools around the state to win the competition.

The small school of 97 students took up the challenge to reflect their learnings about plastic pollution and the devastation ocean pollution has on marine loggerhead turtles.

Queensland Museum CEO Dr Jim Thompson said the students from Pormpuraaw State School should be very proud of their art piece.

“I’d like to congratulate the students for winning *The Hatchery Crusaders* competition this year, with their outstanding sculpture of a turtle filled with plastic— a stark reminder of the problem our marine animals face,” Dr Thompson said.

“The competition is also an extension of *The Hatchery* the hugely popular display at World Science Festival Brisbane, reinforcing our commitment to help raise awareness about Queensland-based turtle research, ocean pollution and the plight of marine turtles.

Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch congratulated the students of Pormpuraaw.

“Students, teachers and the Pormpuraaw community are to be congratulated for their incredible effort and commitment to this important cause,” Minister Enoch said.

“I am also pleased to see so many schools take part in this important initiative to help raise awareness about Queensland-based turtle research, ocean pollution and the plight of marine turtles.

“The competition is a great starting point for conversations about the impact of plastics in marine environments, and the winning entries will go far to inspire people to look after our oceans and marine animals.”

Students from Years 2 to 7 at Pormpuraaw State School were inspired to take part in *The Hatchery Crusaders* competition after their involvement with the local Junior Ranger Program, and recognising how important it is to educate the community about looking after country.

Pormpuraaw State School Principal Anne Walsh said the whole school community is incredibly proud of the students for winning the competition with their sculpture aptly named ‘Ghost Net’.

MEDIA RELEASE

“Ghost Net is a term used for commercial fishing nets illegally abandoned into the sea. They drift with the currents and continue to catch and kill fish, sea turtles, whales and many other kinds of sea life,” Ms Walsh said.

“They often sink, smothering corals and seabeds. Some of these nets wash up onto our beaches where rangers collect them. It’s a problem facing many coastal towns, so to be able to use ugly pollution to make beautiful art has been a valuable lesson about our environment.”

As a World Science Festival Brisbane ‘City of Science’ partner since its inception, the BHP Foundation has this year extended their support to *The Hatchery Crusaders* to help raise awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution and its effect on marine life.

Chief Executive James Ensor said the Foundation’s work with world-leading experts was focused on driving new ways of conserving and sustainably managing natural environments for the benefit of future generations, like the students from Pormpuraaw State School.

‘What’s so exciting about *The Hatchery Crusaders* is that it’s enabling students to understand the tangible impacts of pollution on our ocean and the ways we can all work together to reduce it,’ said Mr Ensor.

Unfortunately World Science Festival Brisbane 2020 was cancelled due to COVID- 19.

Dr Jim Thompson said the cancellation was a precaution to help slow the spread of transmission of the virus.

“We are disappointed to cancel World Science Festival Brisbane, but the health and wellbeing of our visitors, staff and participants is paramount to us at Queensland Museum Network.”

The final artworks can now be viewed online at www.worldsciencefestival.com.au or on Facebook and Instagram.

World Science Festival Brisbane will return in 2021 for five days from 24 – 28 March.

For more information on the festival visit www.worldsciencefestival.com.au

Winning Schools

1ST PLACE

- Pormpuraaw State School, Pormpuraaw: ‘Oliver Ridley Ghost Net Sculpture’

2nd PLACE

- St Patrick’s School, Bundaberg: ‘The Uncomforter’

EQUAL 3rd Place

- Home school: ‘Our Plastic Footprint’
- Charters Towers school of Distance Education: ‘The Great Plastic Reef’
- Caboolture Montessori School: ‘A Smack of Jellyfish’

MEDIA RELEASE

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For further information, images or interviews please contact: media@qm.qld.gov.au

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ABOUT WORLD SCIENCE FESTIVAL BRISBANE

Queensland Museum Network has secured the exclusive licence to host World Science Festival in the Asia Pacific from 2016-21. The only global extension of this hugely popular initiative, World Science Festival Brisbane reinforces Queensland Museum's position as a leader in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and engagement.

World Science Festival Brisbane is a key pillar event of [Curiosity](#), a major new annual event for Brisbane in March and April, where the CBD, Southbank Cultural Precinct and the creative hub around the Brisbane Powerhouse in New Farm will come to life with a range of curious encounters with [Science, the Arts, and Technology](#).