

Coolum collects two awards in Australian Clean Beach Challenge

Queensland's finalist in Keep Australia Beautiful's Australian Clean Beach Challenge has picked up two national accolades in this year's competition, which is proudly supported by the Packaging Stewardship Forum of the Australian Food and Grocery Council.

Coolum Beach on the Sunshine Coast has been recognised for its outstanding achievements in environmental protection and for the inspiring work of local youth in caring for the beach.

But Queensland was unable to snare the top award, with New South Wales' Toowoon Bay Beach taking out the overall title of Australia's Cleanest Beach 2007.

This year's Packaging Stewardship Forum Australian Clean Beach Challenge saw the best beaches from Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania vie for top honours in the fun environmental competition.

Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland Chief Executive Officer Carole Miller said Coolum Beach was a strong contender and could be justifiably proud of its efforts.

"Coolum Beach is much loved by its community and it seems almost everyone has a role to play in keeping it 'clean and green'," Ms Miller said.

"Young people of all ages are involved in litter cleanups, weeding and revegetation, not to mention water testing and wildlife studies.

"Leading the charge when it comes to protecting the environment are the dedicated volunteers of Coolum Coast Care who, along with a host of other groups and organisations, care for the extensive foreshore dunes.

"Coolum is a wonderful example of what can be achieved when a community comes together to protect and manage its beach."

The announcement of the national winners follows Clean Beach Challenge state awards last year.

More than 300 beaches took part in the state competitions, culminating with today's announcement of the national winners.

The winners are:

Australia's Cleanest Beach 2007 Award

Outstanding Accomplishment Awards

Environmental Protection Award

Litter Prevention & Resource Management Award

Young Legends Award

Friendliest Beach Award

Community Partnerships & Action Award

Toowoon Bay Beach, New South Wales

Coolum Beach, Queensland

Balnarring Beach, Victoria

Coolum Beach, Queensland

Toowoon Bay Beach, NSW Wales

Boat Harbour Beach, Tasmania



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Packaging Stewardship Forum General Manager Jenny Pickles congratulated the winners on being judged the best in Australia.

"The Packaging Stewardship Forum is delighted to support the Australian Clean Beach Challenge," Ms Pickles said.

"Our members recognise a role in encouraging community initiative to reduce litter and care for the environment and we are very proud to partner with Keep Australia Beautiful," she said.

Keep Australia Beautiful Queensland Chief Executive Officer Carole Miller said Australia's beach communities and the thousands of people who flocked to the seaside every summer were the big winners of the Clean Beach Challenge.

"We all reap the benefits of a 'clean and green' beach environment and the Australian Clean Beach Challenge, now entering its ninth year, is becoming a true Aussie institution," Ms Miller said.

"The Challenge is all about caring for our beautiful beaches and foreshores.

"Every year, thousands of enthusiastic and dedicated Australians from the Torres Strait to the southern shores of Tasmania take the time to weed dunes, revegetate foreshores, collect litter and improve their stretch of coastline.

"Across Australia, councils and communities work together to create public spaces that enable everyone to enjoy a day at the beach," she said.

Ms Miller congratulated all the winners and encouraged beach communities to get involved in the 2007 state competitions.

"It's a wonderful way to demonstrate a commitment to the environment and make a difference while having a lot of fun," Ms Miller said.

For more details about the Clean Beach Challenge in Queensland, visit <http://www.keeppaustraliabeautiful.org.au/beaches>.

Editor's Note:

The Australian Clean Beach Challenge is proudly supported by the Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) Packaging Stewardship Forum.

The forum provides a vehicle for broader corporate support for Australia's efforts to improve resource recovery and reduce littering. In addition, it also assists in the delivery of national programs for the National Packaging Covenant and provides an opportunity for progressive businesses to re-engage with their stakeholders and partners in packaging stewardship.



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About the winners

Australia's Cleanest Beach – Toowoon Bay Beach, New South Wales

The Cleanest Beach Award takes into account a beach's geographic, environmental, cultural and economic circumstances, and assesses how efficiently and effectively the beach community uses the resources available to it against a range of criteria, including environmental protection, litter prevention, resource management, youth initiatives, visitor friendliness, community partnerships and action.

Toowoon Bay Beach is nestled on the New South Wales Central Coast, just minutes from The Entrance and Tuggerah Lake. The beach is a haven for families and offers a superb range of facilities, including a reserve, great parking, multilingual and innovative 'talking' signage, clean amenities, picnic and barbeque areas, playground, surf club and dedicated dog exercise area. The beach is virtually litter-free thanks to the efforts of Wyong City Council maintenance crews, Council lifeguards, Toowoon Beach Surf Life Saving Club members and the local community. The surf club is a focus for beach activity and, in partnership with Wyong City Council, the club has installed a 'Talking Sign System' to increase visitor safety. With audible and multilingual visual messages, the sign disseminates information on known risks and hazards at Toowoon Bay, promotes surf awareness and provides emergency information. The sign is solar powered, features UV and vandal resistant graphics and has a vandal alarm system. The surf club building itself includes green design features. A comprehensive double filtration storm water storage tank was installed during construction. When the tank drops to 10% capacity, the Council diverts recycled water to bring it up to 50%. This water is used to wash down equipment and flush toilets. All shower facilities have water saving heads fitted and tapware operates on spring-loaded valves. The club uses natural lighting and there is extensive use of natural heating and ventilation. The club is fully accessible by ramp and members work with the Disabled Surfers Association to stage a Surfers Day for people with disabilities. The club also offers a beach chair for people with disabilities to ensure access to the beach for all. The club has formulated a Beach Management Plan that is downloadable from its website. Together with the Council and local community members, the Club has undertaken an extensive landscaping project with endemic vegetation to attract wildlife. In addition to the normal Nippers' activities, the club has started educating youngsters about the surrounding rock platforms and native vegetation. Nippers are also involved in handing out personal ashtrays to smokers who use the beach. To encourage young people to give back to their community and develop new skills, the club this year initiated participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program. The beach itself is raked regularly and any seaweed collected is dried and reused as fertilizer on Council parks and reserves. Landcare groups care for foreshore vegetation, with Nippers also helping with weeding and planting. Toowoon Bay Beach is obviously much loved by its community and is a deserving winner of the title, Australia's Cleanest Beach 2007.

Environmental Protection Award – Coolum Beach, Queensland

This award recognises outstanding accomplishment in the protection of the local natural environment.

Coolum Beach on Queensland's Sunshine Coast offers rocky headlands, golden sands and natural estuaries. Caring for this precious environment is the committed community of Coolum. Groups from Coolum Coast Care, Nippers and local schools carry out regular beach clean ups, with students also studying the beach environment and learning about its care. The enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers of Coolum Coast Care meet weekly to weed and revegetate the extensive foreshore dunes. Invasive weeds such as Singapore daisy, asparagus fern, corky passion vine, lantana, siratro and pepper trees have been painstakingly removed to allow native vegetation to regain lost ground. Coast Care is also fighting to save the local pandanus from dieback caused by an insect pest and, despite setbacks, continues to enlist support to fund a study into the problem. Revegetation of weeded areas is achieved through a joint venture between Coast Care and Coolum State Primary School and

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Coast Care has also teamed up with Green Corps to regenerate the dunes. Maroochy Shire Council is a strong supporter. Last year, the Coast Care group won a high commendation in the Minister of Environment and Heritage's Award for Coastal Custodians. It was the only group in Queensland and one of just three nationally to receive this honour. Coast Care and Greening Australia have recently submitted an application for an Envirofund grant to assess the health of the entire coastal strip within Maroochy Shire. The outstanding work of Coolum's many volunteers ensures that their unique coastal environment will be preserved for years to come.

Litter Prevention & Resource Management Award – Balnarring Beach, Victoria

This award recognises outstanding accomplishment in litter prevention and education and resource management.

Victoria's Balnarring Beach sits on Western Port Bay, east of Melbourne, and is a favourite with holidaying families. Each summer, the population of 2,800 swells to 4,200 as holidaymakers and campers arrive to enjoy the natural surroundings. The Balnarring Beach and Foreshore Committee do an outstanding job in keeping litter at bay along the beach and in and around the camping grounds. The committee has initiated a number of strategies to prevent litter. An education program has been developed for the local primary school students. Students and teachers meet with the local park ranger to talk about the environment, local plants and wildlife and human impacts. From a young age, the community learns about the importance of responsible litter disposal. Balnarring's ranger constantly monitors the area and removes any litter. Where litter hotspots have been identified in the past, new bins and signage have been placed, resulting in a noticeable reduction in litter. The very clean state of the beach and foreshore encourages visitors to dispose of their rubbish responsibly and to keep the area pristine. Regular community working bees involving the ranger, foreshore committee and local residents are held to collect any litter that has washed up on the beach. Highly visible and well-signed rubbish and recycling stations are sited on the beach and in the camping grounds. Each station provides four bins – three for general waste and one for recyclables. Campers are encouraged to recycle wherever possible. Other resource conservation initiatives include the energy-saving automatic power shut-off at the well-used rotunda and the community has put a lot of thought into energy saving around the Balnarring foreshore. With such an active community and so many measures in place, Balnarring Beach is a wonderful example of what can be achieved when it comes to litter prevention and resource conservation.

Young Legends Award – Coolum Beach, Queensland

This award recognises outstanding accomplishment by youth and by a beach community which encourages and promotes youth activity.

Coolum Beach on Queensland's Sunshine Coast is a hive of youth activity. Students at both Coolum State Primary and High Schools are studying the beach and coastal environments. Primary students are monitoring birds in the area to gain a better understanding of their role in the coastal environment. In addition, a local artist has been working with one class to develop a public artwork for the recently completed Coolum Cliffs Boardwalk. Older students from the high school are caring for the Coolum coast. Year 10 Marine Science and Biology students are investigating water quality, landforms and the flora and fauna of the area. Following field trips and research, students intend to prepare a list of guidelines for local residents on how to maintain good water quality. The high school has a surfing excellence program that encourages an active and healthy lifestyle as well as respect for the beach. This training has enabled local youth to do well in the Coolum Classic and international surfing competitions. Other youth activity at Coolum has seen a community nursery set up by Greening Australia trainees. There is strong youth support for Clean Up Australia Day and Coast Care planting days. The high level of youth involvement in beach care at Coolum is fostering lasting benefits for the beach environment and the young people who call it home.

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Friendliest Beach Award

This award recognises the importance of visitor hospitality and safety, and instructive and easily understood local information facilities.

Toowoomb Bay on the New South Wales Central Coast offers a friendly welcome to visitors. The beach is patrolled by both volunteer lifesavers and Wyong City Council lifeguards. The adjacent Swadling Reserve is well maintained and provides picnic and barbeque facilities, public amenities and large grassy playgrounds. Dog owners are well catered for, with a designated dog exercise area and accompanying facilities. The Toowoomb Bay Surf Club is the focus of community and visitor activity and the clubhouse is fully accessible. Comprehensive multilingual signage, including the new 'talking sign', provides a raft of information on beach and water hazards, stinger management, resuscitation techniques and Keep Australia Beautiful litter prevention messages. The 'talking sign' also provides beach safety information outside of lifeguard/lifesaver patrol times; broadcasting beach conditions every 30 seconds or motion-activated messages when someone walks past the sign. The beach features a locality map for visitor reference and the area is easy to navigate, thanks to excellent signage. The beach and foreshore are kept very clean by local residents, surf club members and Council crews and there are plenty of bins for rubbish. With so many facilities in place for visitor comfort and safety, it is no wonder Toowoomb Bay is a favourite friendly destination.

Community Partnerships & Action Award – Boat Harbour Beach, Tasmania

This award recognises outstanding partnership achievements in a community and community organisation and pride – expressed through civic, cultural and environmental activities.

Located on Bass Strait, west of the town of Wynyard, Tasmania's Boat Harbour Beach has long been a popular holiday destination. With improvements to access, permanent residents, both retirees and commuters, have come to call Boat Harbour home. The community is very active in caring for their beach. A strong local Residents' Association takes a proactive role in determining management of the beach and public open spaces. The community is also very keen to put Boat Harbour on the map. The beach has graced the cover of *The Lonely Planet Guide to Tasmania* and has also been nominated as one of Australia's top 10 beaches by the travel show *Getaway*. Commercial operators in the community get behind promotional opportunities, whether it is publicising the beach in the Cradle Coast Regional Touring Guide or displaying at Agfest, Australia's largest annual rural expo. Following on from extensive environmental health infrastructure work a few years ago, the iconic settlement continues to undergo across-the-board improvement thanks to an enthusiastic community. The Boat Harbour Beach Surf Life Saving Club has only 35 active members but manages to provide traditional beach patrols and member training as well as compete in both intra- and inter-state competitions. In addition, the club coordinates and controls water safety training and school swimming carnival events for six schools, providing an invaluable service to local youth. Other community projects at Boat Harbour include the upgrade of the popular children's play area and the establishment of walking tracks for the enjoyment of locals and visitors. Weed control is also a priority. Waratah-Wynyard Council's Environmental Services Officer regularly assists local volunteers with working bees to eradicate sweet pittosporum, cotoneaster, mirror bush, cape ivy, banana passionfruit, onion weed and periwinkle. Boat Harbour is a fantastic example of a community working for a better tomorrow.

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