



## REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA DIVE SITES GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Reef Check Australia (RCA) is an innovative citizen science focused charity dedicated to educating and empowering community volunteers to better understand, appreciate and protect oceans and marine environments. We help people help reefs by providing the tools for the community to take positive action for our reefs. Through our network of volunteers, we engage in citizen science, connect people with reef science, and undertake local conservation projects.

We've been conducting citizen science activities in South East Queensland (SEQ) since 2007 to monitor subtropical reef sites between the Gold Coast, Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. Partnering with local dive groups and industry partners, we have established a number of long-term RCA monitoring sites on the Gold Coast; from shallow, artificial reef structures, to complex and heavily utilised dive, snorkel and fishing sites.

Here, we share information on key survey locations within the Gold Coast, and illustrate just how diverse and important these habitats are.



Proudly Supported By

CITY OF  
**GOLDCOAST.**



Thankyou to our supporters who continue to make the Reef Check Australia Gold Coast program possible; City Of Gold Coast, Gold Coast Dive Adventures, and Kirra Dive.

**Photo credits:**

Image above: Kirra Reef; Destination Gold Coast

Cover images left to right: Turtle; S.W.Hofmann, Anemone fish in anemone; Deb Aston, Sea Urchin close up; Deb Aston, Eagle Ray; Ava Choi.

Back cover image: City of Gold Coast

Page 2 image: City of Gold Coast

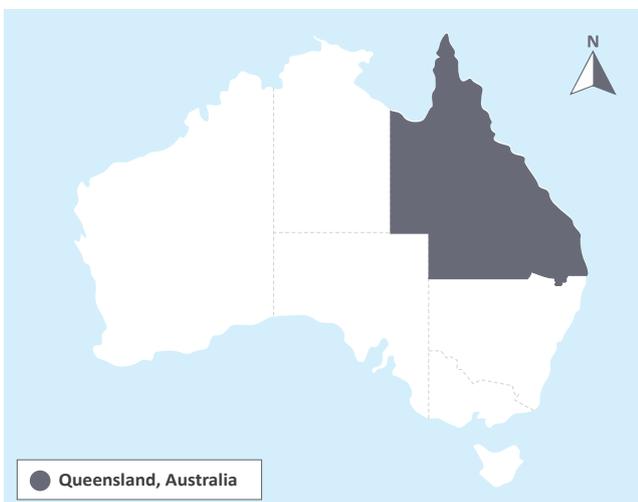


Around the world, reefs are under pressure from factors such as pollution, development, climate change, rapidly increasing human presence and heavy use of ocean environments. Although Australia's reefs are among the best managed in the world, they are not immune to these threats.

As such, long-term monitoring of these habitats is critical—as is sharing our data and other information with the local community and involving them in coral reef conservation, reef monitoring and management.

The Gold Coast is famous for being an ocean-loving community, but many locals may be unaware of the amazing underwater world off their coastline. Gold Coast reefs represent an important transitional zone between tropical and temperate waters; offering the opportunity to explore a variety of interesting habitats that support a wide diversity of macro and micro marine life.

From protected dive sites within the Gold Coast Seaway to offshore sites at the mercy of winds and waves, the Gold Coast offers a range of environments and conditions to suit novice to experienced divers alike.



**Photo credits:**

Top left to right: Feather star; S.W. Hofmann, Trigger fish; Nigel Marsh, Shrimp; Nigel Marsh, Wobbegong; Nigel Marsh.



REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA DIVE SITES  
**GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA**



## SEAWAY – SOUTH WEST WALL

This site is located on the eastern side of the broadwater and accessed from Doug Jennings Park. It consists of a constructed rock wall with a sandy substrate. Seagrass beds are located near the sandy beach at the southern end of the rock wall. The rocks support various amounts of algae and hydroids, which in turn support numerous marine species. The spot is popular for local divers with a sandy beach entry on the southern end and stairs on the northern end. Boat and Jet Ski traffic is heavy in this area, but the southern entry is afforded protection from this traffic by a designated no-go area. There is a cold water shower located near the sandy beach with a new amenities block providing facilities in this area.

- Conditions:** Subject to strong currents, but entry options provide the opportunity for a drift dive. Dive on the slack, incoming tide.
- Dive Depth:** 1-5m
- Marine Life:** Seahorse, nudibranchs, banded coral shrimps, moray eels, octopus, schools of bream and luderick, scorpionfish, lionfish



**Photo credits:**

Top left to right: Nudibranch; Julie Schubert, Stingray; Nigel Marsh, Seahorse; Deb Aston, Moray Eel; S.W.Hofmann.



## REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA DIVE SITES GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA



### SEAWAY – THE PIPE

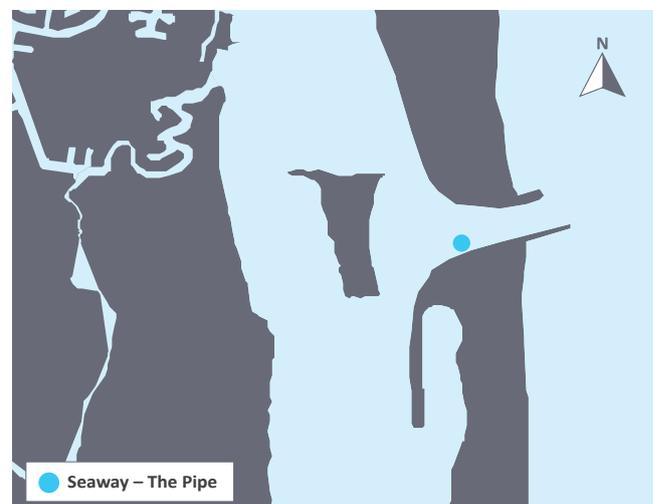
The Pipe is located within the main boating channel providing access to the open ocean. The pipe runs south to north across the channel. The site is characterised by a rockwall, and the 'pipe' that goes from the wall out into the channel. Both areas provide habitat for a wide range of interesting species including schools of fish, frog fish, ornate ghost pipe fish, nudibranchs and so much more!

Entry is via a set of stairs at the end of Seaworld Drive. An alternative to venturing across the pipe is to head west along the rock wall and scour the crevices for critters, round the corner and exit at the southwest wall steps. Tip: bring a clean up bag and if safe to do so, carefully remove some debris on your way back!

**Conditions:** Subject to strong currents and heavy boat traffic. If diving the pipe, aim for the incoming tide, and wait for slack water. Can be subject to swell in big seas.

**Dive Depth:** 1-5m

**Marine Life:** Frogfish, schools of fish, moray eels, nudibranchs.



**Photo credits:**

Top left to right: School of catfish; Ava Choi, Lionfish; Philip Dunbavan, Frogfish; Deb Aston, Stingray; Nigel Marsh.



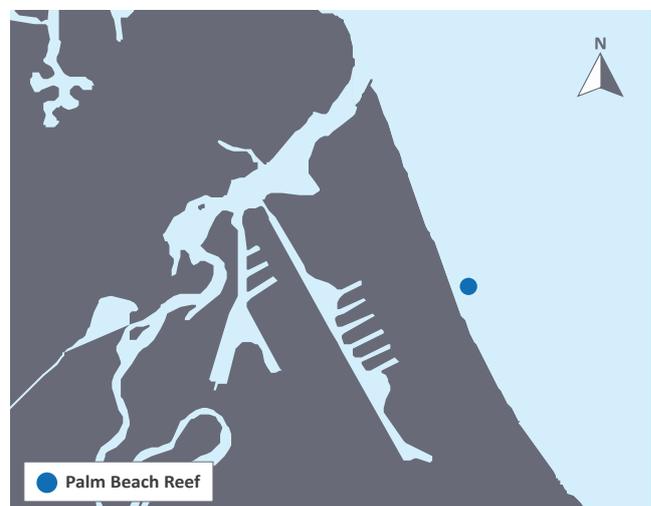
## PALM BEACH REEF

Palm Beach Reef is an extensive rocky reef made up of numerous ridges and gullies, located 800-1000m off shore. The reef has patchy hard coral cover, and hosts a high number of benthic invertebrates such as sponges, ascidians and anemones. It also has a notably high abundance of sea urchins, wobbegongs and octopuses.

**Conditions:** Can be subject to low visibility due to proximity of creeks, but easy site to dive.

**Dive Depth:** 9-10m

**Marine Life:** Anemones, variety of sea urchins, wobbegongs, cowries, nudibranchs, moray eels, octopus.



**Photo credits:**

Top left to right: Sponge; S.W.Hoffman, Turtle; Julie Schubert, Octopus; Ava Choi, Wobbegong in hard coral; S.W.Hoffman.



## REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA DIVE SITES GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA



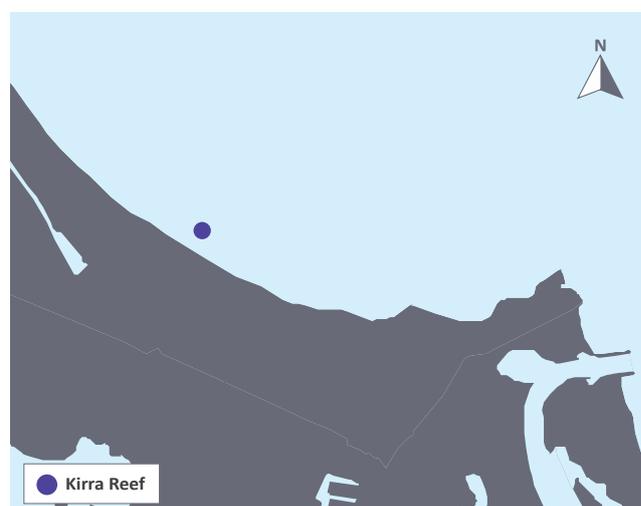
### KIRRA REEF

Kirra Reef is situated at the southern end of the Gold Coast and consists of scattered rocky outcrops that are covered in kelp and algae. It is approximately 400m from the shore, and is protected on three sides by land, making it accessible most of the year. Despite being close to shore, access by boat is recommended. It is approximately 100 metres in length and home to an array of soft corals, feather stars, anemones, cephalopods and an abundance of fish species. Eagle rays and turtles can often be spotted just off this reefal area.

**Conditions:** Although relatively close to shore, a boat is recommended to access this site. There are no markers, the site is small, and there is a wave break between the shore and the reef.

**Dive Depth:** 6-7m

**Marine Life:** Anemones, variety of sea urchins, ascidians, eagle rays and cuttlefish. Eel tailed catfish has also been recorded on this site previously.



**Photo credits:**

Top left to right: School of Yellowtail; Jodi Salmond, Ascidians; Jodi Salmond, Long spined sea urchin; Jodi Salmond, Reef Scene; Jodi Salmond.



## COOK ISLAND

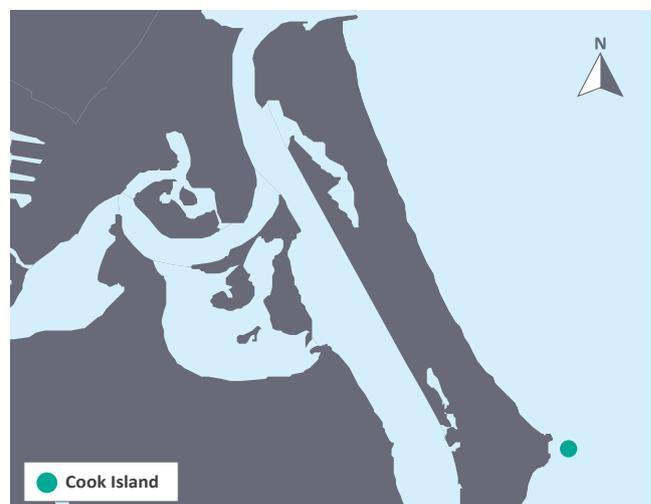
Cook Island is a small island located 4km south of the Southern Gold Coast. The island is a nature reserve with nesting seabirds above; and a protected fauna, flora and habitat area below. All fishing is prohibited, and public moorings eliminate the need to anchor. Its one of the most diverse dive and snorkel sites in the region.

Unofficially nicknamed turtle island due to the number of turtles found here, manta rays and leopard sharks migrate through in summer and the occasional Grey Nurse Shark in winter. Migrating whales also pass close by. The dive site is home to variety of macro and micro fauna such as coral, sea urchins, ascidians and nudibranchs, as well as tropical fish, rays and sharks.

**Conditions:** The exposed rock of Cook Island provides reasonable protection from swell and wind on the opposite side. The site is large, is often protected from wind, and has several moorings. Depths vary from 3m to 18m which make it an ideal site for divers and snorkelers.

**Dive Depth:** 3-18m

**Marine Life:** Turtles, wobbegongs, blue groper, large fish, sea urchins, anemones.



**Photo credits:**

Top left to right: Blue Groper; Nigel Marsh, Collector Urchin; Jodi Salmond, Hawkfish; S.W.Hofmann, Turtle; S.W.Hofmann.



## REEF CHECK AUSTRALIA DIVE SITES GOLD COAST, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA



### NARROWNECK ARTIFICIAL REEF

Narrowneck reef (sometimes called “Gold Coast Reef”) is an artificial reef that was constructed in 1999. At 70,000 cubic meters, it holds the title for the largest multi-purpose reef ever constructed.

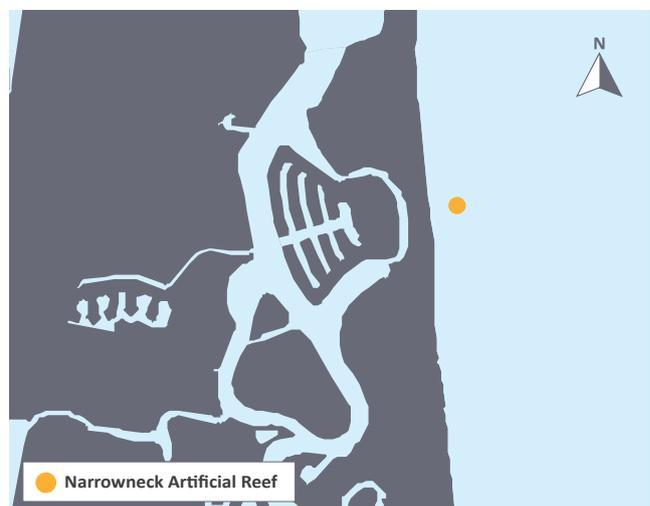
The reef was designed primarily as a shoreline stabilisation structure. Creating better surfing waves was a secondary concern. However, it’s generally accepted that it did improve the quality of surf during its earlier years by improving the shape and frequency of rideable waves.

Due to degradation, the reef was refurbished in 2017 and 2018, providing improved shoreline stabilisation and an increase in waves. However anecdotal information suggests the reef is seldom surfed.

**Conditions:** Subject to swell due to proximity to shore. Best dived on swell below 0.5m.

**Dive Depth:** 7-9m

**Marine Life:** Lobsters, schools of fish, sea stars, nudibranchs, wobbegong sharks, turtles



**Photo credits:**

Top left to right: Sea grass; Terry Farr, Lobster; Philip Dunbavan, Seastar; Julie Schubert, Wobbegong; Terry Farr.



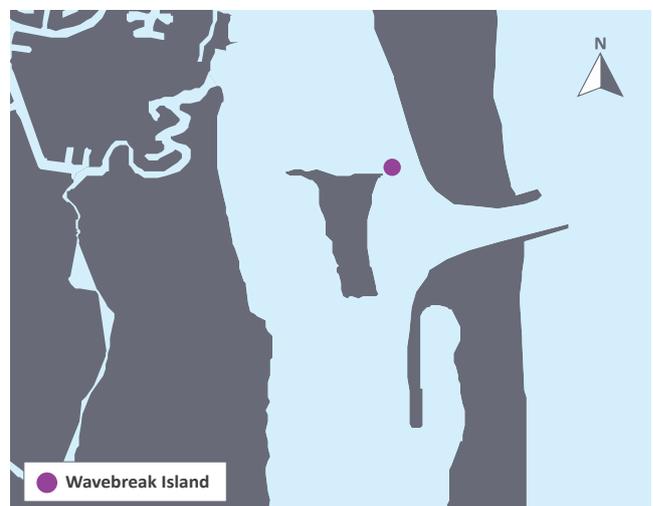
## WAVEBREAK ISLAND

Wave Break Island is located within the Gold Coast Broadwater (inshore) and is therefore protected from ocean swells. It provides an ideal environment for introductory diving and snorkeling. It's a perfect dive spot for beginners or for someone seeking calmer conditions. The rocky scree environment allows divers to navigate in both shallow and deep depths, however divers should take care diving here on anything other than a slack tide, as the water can move quickly around the rock wall. The rock formation to the north of the island is an ideal area to explore as it's home to numerous sponges, small corals and plenty of octopuses. A huge number of fish are found here, resulting in this site being heavily utilised by fishermen, divers and snorkelers alike.

**Conditions:** As with sites within the seaway, this site can be heavily influenced by the tide, so try to dive as close to slack as possible, as the water can move fast around the rock wall otherwise.

**Dive Depth:** 5m-12m

**Marine Life:** Sponges, soft coral, schools of fish and lots of octopuses.



**Photo credits:**

Top left to right: Octopus; Jodi Salmond, Sponges and soft coral; Jodi Salmond, Seastar; Arthur Hines; Reef Scene; Jodi Salmond.

