



**Sea Turtle
FOUNDATION**

Sea Turtle Foundation
PO Box 1190
Townsville, Qld, 4810
Phone/fax: (07) 4721 2699
Mob: 0431 259 129
www.seaturtlefoundation.org

MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HELP THE SEA TURTLES IN MACKAY

The nesting season for sea turtles has just begun and in the next few months many turtles will come ashore on beaches in the Mackay district to dig their nests and lay their eggs. This prehistoric ritual has worked for sea turtles for over 100,000 years and ensured their continued existence. Now this ritual is under threat from many sources, most of them created by humans.

Sea Turtle Foundation has teamed up with Mackay and District Turtlewatch Association to distribute a brochure called 'Sea Turtles and Lights' to beachfront residents along the Mackay coast where sea turtle nesting occurs such as Blacks Beach.

The brochure highlights actions local residents can take to help in the protection of sea turtles. Bright artificial lights on beaches at night can confuse turtle hatchlings and they will crawl towards the light rather than the ocean. The hatchlings may then get run over on roads, eaten by predators or overheat in the morning sun.

"We need to involve local residents in the protection of sea turtles to ensure their future in our oceans," said Gitte Kragh, Project Manager for Sea Turtle Foundation. She continued, "We are working with Mackay and District Turtlewatch Association to get the community involved and make residents aware of the impacts of beachfront lighting."

But residents are not the only targets of the campaign - Councils will also be approached as much of the lighting which disturbs turtles comes from street and car park lighting. "We need to ensure the safety of humans and turtles alike," Gitte said.

Actions *you* can take to safeguard the hatchlings on your beachfront include keeping outside lights to a minimum, planting vegetation between your lights and the beach, fitting curtains or blinds to your beach front windows, and collecting hatchlings you find crawling away from the beach and releasing them back on the beach away from artificial lights.

"Six of the seven species of sea turtles in the world are found along the Queensland coasts and we have an obligation to protect these iconic creatures. They are all listed as vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered and we need the local communities to rally to their aid so future generations can experience these ancient mariners", states Dr Andrea Phillott, sea turtle biologist from James Cook University.

You can also help by advising Mackay and District Turtlewatch Association when you see turtle tracks on the beach through the Turtle Monitoring Program. You can call (07) 4954 9613 with the date, time and exact location of your sightings.

Media inquiries:

Gitte Kragh, Sea Turtle Foundation, gitte.kragh@seaturtlefoundation.org / (07) 4721 2699 / 0431 259 129

Fay Griffin, Mackay and District Turtlewatch Association, (07) 4954 9613



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