

QUALIA

Business with purpose

Luxury underpinned by environmental sustainability

The guest experience at **qualia** is designed to showcase the outstanding natural beauty of the surrounding **Great Barrier Reef**.

“Each pavilion is situated to capture the most idyllic views of the ocean and Whitsunday Islands, and the colours and textures of the natural landscape are echoed in the lodge’s design,” explained Scott Ratcliffe, General Manager of **qualia**.

qualia sits at the northernmost tip of Hamilton Island, the largest inhabited island in the Whitsunday Islands, surrounded by the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Protecting the island’s natural environment and the Reef itself is fundamental to the island’s operations and sustainability as a leading tourism destination.



First-hand experience of the reef. Where tourism and education meet...

“The best way to truly understand why the Great Barrier Reef needs protection is to experience it first-hand. Guests have numerous opportunities to explore the island, nearby beaches such as Whitehaven – dubbed the world’s most beautiful beach – and some of the 3,000 coral reefs that make up the Great Barrier Reef,” said Scott Ratcliffe.

qualia offers a variety of snorkelling, glass bottom boat and scuba diving trips, where guests can learn from expert guides about the area’s extraordinary biodiversity and the challenges it faces environmentally.

A number of marine operators in the area operate a program known as Eye on the Reef. This is a citizen science program that incorporates surveys and monitoring by everyday people including Hamilton Island and **qualia** guests. Daily information gathered through this program, informs the conservation efforts of GBRMPA (the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority).

The island’s recently upgraded walking trails - leading to some newly-built lookouts as part of the Icons Trail - were designed to encourage visitors to explore some of the natural bushland that makes up 75 per cent of the island – but stay on track to protect the environment.

“We are so fortunate to be surrounded by natural beauty in the Whitsundays. The opportunity to experience and connect with nature and the surrounding environment here, we believe, has a positive and informative influence on guests, which hopefully encourages them to return home more aware of how to have a personal and positive impact on any environment,” said Scott Ratcliffe.



On-going investment in sustainability

“We are committed to achieving the highest standards of environmental sustainability across the island’s operations, and we are continually working to reduce our environmental footprint” said Scott Ratcliffe.

“In early 2020, we were fortunate to be a part-recipient of the Great Barrier Reef Islands Resort Rejuvenation Fund. These funds were dedicated to a substantial upgrade of our sewerage and water treatment plants. Improvements to our water production are already dramatically reducing our overall energy consumption and allow us to be self-sufficient and resilient in extreme weather events.”

The island’s recently upgraded sewerage facility treats approximately one million litres per day, producing ‘A’ class treated effluent. Approximately 95 per cent of the treated effluent is reused throughout the island’s extensive tropical gardens and lawns, rather than being discharged into the waterways.

“In addition, we were able to complete the purchase and installation of seven liquid composters designed to compost the majority of the island’s organic food waste.”

The liquid composters also convert food waste to grey water. With the seven composters, up to 125 tonnes of organic food waste is diverted from landfill each year, which equates to 541 tonnes of carbon dioxide saved per year. The grey water is used for irrigation of the island’s parks and gardens.

Residential green waste is collected and mulched on the island, with resulting mulch used on the extensive gardens across the island. This helps to reduce waste and aids in water conservation by providing gardens with a protective layer of compost.

There are also island-wide erosion and sediment control measures in place such as rocky reed bed swale drains, silt traps, and promotion of natural vegetation around water courses to minimise runoff and to stop organic matter draining into local marine habitats.

“By continuing to engage all areas of the business and island community we have seen significant gains in our resource recovery rate. Our continued focus on recycling has seen an overall year-on-year reduction of 17 per cent of general waste” said Scott Ratcliffe.

Other sustainability initiatives (Our mandates):

- Energy efficiency is crucial, with many island-wide energy saving measures in place. This was the major driving force behind moving to electric buggies and electric transport vehicles some years ago. Low wattage lighting and energy saving devices are installed in all hotels and most private residences.
- Recycling is a continued focus and the island has seen a 14 per cent increase in recycling in the last year, saving more than 300 tonnes of plastic from going into landfill.
- Any items that have reached their end of life are recovered for recycling such as TVs and computer equipment, household and buggy batteries. Even old mattresses are stripped into their component parts for recycling by a local social enterprise company based in Mackay.
- Single use plastic cutlery, straws, food storage containers, coffee cups and juice containers have all been removed from the island. There has also been a changeover to using Cookers Bulk Oil system, supplied in reusable fresh oil storage units eliminating the need for tins which end up in landfill. The oil product waste is collected, de-watered and refined before being used for biodiesel.