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MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Students gain Green Thumbs with Fund

Gaining a green thumb is not usually associated with a formal qualification that you acquire at school, however this will soon be the case for students at Toolooa State High School, thanks to the assistance of the Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL) Reef Guardian Fund.

The school is just one of seven who were successful in obtaining part of the \$10 000 funding made available to local Reef Guardian schools on an annual basis. Established in partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Fund aims to assist schools to develop and implement a variety of worthwhile and sustainable environmental projects that contribute to both the school and the wider community.

QAL Health, Safety, Environment and Communities Manager Ross Greenhalgh said the Reef Guardian Fund continued to provide great opportunities for learning about sustainability both inside and outside the classroom.

"In the last four years, the Reef Guardian Fund has provided \$50 000 of support to local schools and the results have been remarkable. We have student worm farmers, weather watchers and water quality monitors all keeping an eye on their local environment," Mr Greenhalgh said.

"The Fund is a catalyst to inspire other schools in new ways of engaging students with environmental education. We are pleased to see it now also making a difference to the skills base of the young people in Gladstone, with projects such as the one planned at Toolooa State High School. These kinds of projects have the potential to open the door to a future career path for students and QAL is pleased to be a part of providing this opportunity."

The GBRMPA's Director of Communication and Education Karen Vohland said the Authority continues to appreciate the support of QAL and is working with the schools to employ these projects.

"We are pleased to be associated with the great outcomes the schools are providing for not only their students but for the local community as well," Ms Vohland said.

One of Toolooa State High School's Reef Guardian School Co-ordinators Amanda Patzwald said that with the support of the fund, the school would be able to construct a working greenhouse which will be used as a hands on classroom for students to complete a Certificate II in Horticulture.

"Through this project, we aim to offer students a diverse range of practical and theoretical opportunities in an effort to broaden their awareness of the local environment and how they can make a positive difference," Ms Patzwald said.

"Students will be able to gain horticultural knowledge and understanding, and be able to apply their learning in restoration, rehabilitation and conservation projects within the school environment and also the wider community."

Other projects funded this year include: a mini electricity generator which uses carbon fuels to demonstrate the dominant source of electricity, planting of organic fruit and vegetable gardens and native bush tucker gardens, establishment of worm farms, scrap collection bins and compost areas, plus the construction of a facility for the teaching of animal husbandry.

Work will commence on most projects within the next few months.

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About Queensland Alumina Limited:

Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL) commenced operation in March 1967 with an annual production rate of 600,000 tonnes of alumina. Today QAL is one of the world's largest alumina refineries, producing 3.95 million tonnes of the world's best smelter grade alumina per year. With an average workforce of 1050 employees, QAL is the region's largest employer and annually contributes approximately \$200 million directly to the local economy.

About the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority:

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is the principal advisor to the Australian Government, through the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts on the care, development and management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Authority works in partnership with other government agencies, industry, community groups and individuals to help preserve the social, economic and environmental values of the Great Barrier Reef.

For further information and images, contact:

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