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MEDIA RELEASE

Students Get Down and Dirty to help the Reef

Queensland's newest Reef Guardians, Miriam Vale State School, are preparing to get down and dirty with a comprehensive recycling program thanks to the assistance of Queensland Alumina Limited's (QAL) Reef Guardian Fund.

The school is just one of eight 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 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 applications continued to exceed expectations.

"This is the third year the Reef Guardian Fund has been operating and it is great to see schools coming up with interesting, complex projects that involve teaching the students about protecting the environment and living sustainably," Mr Greenhalgh said.

"The Fund is providing an avenue for teachers to implement their innovative ideas without being hindered by the availability of support, and QAL is pleased to be able to provide them with these opportunities."

The Director of Communication and Education for GBRMPA, Karen Vohland, said the Authority continues to appreciate the partnership developed with QAL and is thrilled that the schools are participating in positive activities to improve their local environment and the Reef.

"It is exciting to see initiatives that promote sustainable environmental behaviours both in schools as well as the broader community.

Miriam Vale State School Principal Ms Margie Burrell said the school is excited about becoming actively involved in protecting the Great Barrier Reef.

"The Great Barrier Reef is at the heart of the recreational activities of our Miriam Vale community, so the sustained health of the Reef is intimately linked with our own wellbeing," Ms Burrell said.

"In our first year as a Reef Guardian School our projects are fairly small, but importantly they go to the idea of how we need to change our behaviours to make sure our actions don't have a negative impact on the Great Barrier Reef.

"We are creating a composting program – separating suitable food scraps from 'rubbish', developing worm farms to reuse some of our compost material and then using the worm tea in our own grounds, as well as developing a compost area to create and extend our gardens and horticulture projects.

"We're committed to undertaking major and complex projects in the future and already have a committee formed that has members from the Gladstone Regional Council, staff and parent community, and student body."

Other projects funded this year through the QAL Reef Guardian Fund include: a hydro electric plant to demonstrate alternative sources of energy, data loggers and water quality probes, a weather station, participation in professional water quality monitoring and a water tank for special needs students to care for their school's vegetable garden.

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

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Miriam Vale State School students Kelsie Raelf, Breanna Harmes and Brodi Dahl receive their Reef Guardian School sign from Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Director of Communication and Education Karen Vohland and Reef Guardian Funding cheque from Queensland Alumina Limited Community Relations Advisor Courtney Brown.

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 QAL Reef Guardian Fund:

The QAL Reef Guardian Fund was established in 2006 by QAL in partnership with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). Providing \$10 000 of support annually to Reef Guardian schools in the Gladstone Regional Council Area, the fund aims to encourage the development of environmental projects that benefit both schools and the greater community.

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.

About the Reef Guardian School program:

The Reef Guardian Schools program is an education initiative of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority that develops partnerships between schools and their communities to work towards a sustainable future for the environment and our Great Barrier Reef. Currently in its seventh year, over 60 000 students in more than 150 schools across Queensland are involved in the program.

For copies of images and further information, contact:

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