



Media Release

## Catlin Seaview Survey partners with Heron Island for Great Barrier Reef Expedition

Breakthrough technology allows for Virtual Dive experience

(Australia, September 27) Heron Island, located on the southern tip of the Great Barrier Reef, reinforced its position as one of the most spectacular underwater environments today when it was linked to the launch of the Catlin Seaview Survey at the high profile Blue Ocean Film Festival in Monterey, California.

This critically important series of expeditions, which run from September through until the end of December, will take in 20 specially selected coral reef locations in northern Queensland and will be the first comprehensive study to benchmark the health of the Great Barrier Reef and assist in understanding changes to these critical marine environments.

There are two science programs within the survey exploring Shallow Reef and Deep Reef environments.

“The beauty of this survey is that it is not just another scientific expedition, it also aims to capture the public’s imagination and engage people with science like never before,” said Richard Vevers, Director of the Catlin Seaview Survey, in Australia.

The Shallow Reef Survey uses state of the art digital technology including a purpose built camera to capture tens of thousands of 360 degree panoramic images necessary for the monitoring project. This camera equipment was trialled over multiple dives which took place on Heron Island over recent months.

Heron Island was designated as the “Official Location Partner” for the project. The Island hosted the Catlin Seaview Survey team and worked closely with them as they worked underwater, and at the Heron Island Research Station to trial their camera equipment and translate the images into the virtual dive capability that has been launched today in the United States.

Heron Island’s sister property, Wilson Island – just 30 minutes away, has also been featured in the Survey. Wilson is an exclusive island retreat hosting up to just 12 guests at one time, but the new technology will allow visitors from all over the world to take a virtual dive in the pristine surrounding waters and coral gardens.

“Briefly stated, the 360 degree images that are captured with the underwater camera will be “stitched together” digitally allowing people to choose a location along the Reef, dip underwater and go for a viewer-controlled virtual dive,” said Vevers.

This unique underwater experience will invite the world to watch this science in the making for the first time when it appears from today in the Street View feature within Google Maps, Panoramio, Google+ and Google World Wonders.

Heron Island was selected by the Catlin Seaview Survey team due to the importance of its location on the southern end of the Reef which provides a home for an abundance of marine life. This includes the amazing Green and Loggerhead turtles who come to the Island once a year from November to March to lay their eggs and provide hatchlings with an opportunity to return to the Reef.

Snorkelling and diving at Heron Island also provides visitors with the opportunity to see rays, reef sharks, brilliantly coloured coral and a diverse array of fish species. Last year the Island successfully kicked off a partnership with the Sea Turtle Foundation to provide guests with an opportunity for involvement in important turtle preservation and education programs.

To explore these unique locations go to:

[HERON ISLAND - Dive in!](#)

[WILSON ISLAND – Dive in!](#)

For further information on Heron Island visit: [www.heronisland.com/](http://www.heronisland.com/)

For further information on Wilson Island visit: [www.wilsonisland.com/](http://www.wilsonisland.com/)

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## **Notes to editors:**

**About Heron Island:** Heron Island is located 72km off the Capricorn Coast, northeast of Gladstone in Queensland, Australia. It is an internationally acclaimed dive destination, featuring at least 20 sites within easy reach of the resort.

The island is located on the World Heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef and is one of only a handful of coral cays off the Queensland coast.

It is considered to be one of Australia's top dive destinations. Jacques Cousteau listed the Heron Bommie as one of his top 10 favourite dive sites in the world.

Diving at Heron Island is relatively shallow, with an average depth of around 15 to 35 metres, and snorkellers can enjoy the shallow reefs that come up to within two or three metres of the surface in places. The waters of the reef off Heron Island are home to around 60% of the 1,500 species of fish and around 72% of the coral species found in the Great Barrier Reef.

Heron Island is owned and operated by Delaware North Australia Parks & Resorts, owners of iconic Australian resorts including neighbouring Wilson Island, El Questro Wilderness Park, Lizard Island and Kings Canyon Resort.

**About Wilson Island:** Wilson Island is a tiny five-acre coral cay located approximately 80km off Gladstone on Queensland's Capricorn Coast and just 40 minutes from Heron Island.

Wilson Island is essentially natural - a divine sweep of sugar white crushed coral that is home to turtles and birds: its pristine waters are home to an unimaginable variety of marine life, including colourful coral and fish, with some of the best snorkelling in the Great Barrier Reef, just off the beach.

Those who are drawn to the Wilson Island experience will see the pristine nature of the island, its seclusion and freedom from modern-day living as part of its appeal. The island caters to a maximum of just 12 guests in six luxury tents with access to the magnificent reef and beach environments, including rare turtle and bird breeding grounds.

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