

Media Release



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Drive on beaches safely

Driving on beaches is a popular activity in north Queensland for boaties, swimmers, and explorers.

Beaches in the Burdekin and Townsville regions are under increasing pressure from vehicle use.

Public safety concerns are also rising.

A group established by natural resource management body NQ Dry Tropics is helping to reduce the risks 4WDs, quad bikes and motorbikes pose to beach users, cultural sites and plants and animals.

The Coastal Vehicle Management Steering Committee has released a guide to driving on beaches in the Burdekin and Townsville regions.

The *Vehicles on our Beaches* guide explains how to drive appropriately on the coast, the laws that apply to driving on beaches and what to do if you witness unlawful driving.

Mark Murray from NQ Dry Tropics says drivers need to be aware of the problems that have occurred in north Queensland when vehicles are driven on beaches.

“Inappropriate driving can damage plants, erode sand dunes and disturb shorebirds, sea turtle hatchlings and their habitats.” Mr Murray said.

Driving a vehicle above high tide is subject to various legislative regulations which often prohibit the use of vehicles.

In Queensland beaches can be considered a state road for management purposes and therefore road rules apply.

“Drivers are encouraged to stay below high tide at all times and use allocated access areas only to get onto a beach.” He said.

The Steering Committee involves coastal management organisations that are interested in establishing a plan to manage vehicles on our beaches.

It includes organisations like the Townsville City Council, the Burdekin Shire Council, the Queensland Police Service, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the Department of Environment and Resource Management.

Townsville City Council’s Vern Veitch said the Council is continually erecting, upgrading or replacing bollards to prevent vehicles from driving on beach pedestrian access paths, Council parks and other Council land adjacent to the beach where vehicles are prohibited.

He said, "Townsville's growing population and urban expansion is contributing to increasing interactions between vehicles on our beaches and pedestrians, resulting in public safety concerns.

"Many drivers are behaving inappropriately when driving on our local beaches because they are either unaware of the road rules which apply to them or simply just don't care."

The *Vehicle on our Beaches* guide aims to raise the profile of what is and isn't appropriate behaviour for drivers using our beaches. A copy is available on the NQ Dry Tropics website www.nqdrytropics.com.au

The Committee has is continuing to look at ways of managing the issue.

Extra information: The full list of Coastal Vehicle Management Steering Committee members are; Townsville City Council, Burdekin Shire Council, Department of Environment and Resource Management, Queensland Police Service, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, C&R Consulting, Sea Turtle Foundation and the Townsville Region Bird Observers Club.

The guide will be distributed to people living in areas where beach driving is more common.

A fact sheet is available for people with a general interest in beach driving.

The NQ Dry Tropics region includes the local government areas of Townsville, Charters Towers, Burdekin, Isaac, Barcaldine, Etheridge, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island and the Whitsundays.

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