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MEDIA RELEASE

QLD Project chosen as example of best practice in global report

A project started a decade ago to protect the Bulimba Creek Catchment area has been recognised as an outstanding example of community mobilisation in a new global report.

River Heroes - Lessons from Thies Riverprize winners and finalists 1999 - 2006 will be launched by the International Riverfoundation (IRF) on Tuesday 4 September at the 10th International Riversymposium & Environmental Flows Conference.

The report showcases the extraordinary efforts of people to save rivers in Australia and around the world, featuring 13 case studies, including Bulimba Creek from Queensland, of National and International Thies Riverprize winners and finalists and the lessons learnt from their best practice.

International Riverfoundation Chair, Martin Albrecht, said Queensland should be proud to have such forward-thinking people who acted before crisis point to save its waterway and whose project will serve as a model for global best practice in river management.

"The River Heroes report groups the case studies into categories and identifies five key elements which are essential for best practice river management: partnerships and collaboration; community mobilisation; a holistic approach; planning, evaluation and monitoring; and an emphasis on long-term sustainability", Mr Albrecht said.

"The Queensland project demonstrates these elements and is to be especially recognised as an excellent collaborative and community-focused venture."

The Bulimba Creek Catchment Project in South-East Queensland won the National Thies Riverprize in 2005 and was chosen for the report because it demonstrates effective community mobilisation.

Rapid urban growth in 1997, with residential and major infrastructure development encroaching on key waterways and wetlands prompted the establishment of the Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordination Committee (B4C).

B4C developed partnerships with government agencies, corporations and industry leaders, educational institutions and bush care groups to raise awareness on the problems surrounding the river system and gather resources towards restoration and management initiatives.

This wide mix of players coupled with a motivated community led to the successful integration of scientific research, local knowledge and community values and priorities, which in turn have resulted in an exceptional plan to protect, restore and maintain the Bulimba Creek Catchment with targets and responsibilities for all stakeholders.

River Heroes - Lessons from Thies Riverprize winners and finalists 1999 – 2006 concludes by detailing urgent future actions to ensure the health and sustainability of our river systems.

"We need to introduce a progressive, stepped change within governments and societies that leads us from 200 years of taking rivers for granted and competing for rivers' resources, to developing a new relationship towards rivers and effective agreements and processes for natural resource use", the report states.

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Martin Albrecht said for better or worse the urgent issues of water scarcity and climate change are pushing us to rethink how we can ensure a habitable planet for future generations.

“Now more than ever before it is imperative to promote and reward projects that improve river health which is why IRF is proud to fund the National and International Thiess Riverprizes”, he said.

The IRF report will be available for download from 4th September at www.riverfoundation.org.au.

The National and International Thiess Riverprizes, which reward groundbreaking river management projects from a prize pool of AU\$400,000, are a partnership between the International Riverfoundation (IRF) and *Riverfestival*, an annual 10 day celebration of Brisbane’s river, people, culture and environment. The prize money is funded by the IRF and the awards are managed by *Riverfestival*.

The 2007 winners will be announced at a gala event on the evening of Tuesday 4 September, after the launch of the River Heroes report.

The IRF is a leading advocate and catalyst for the protection and restoration of the world’s rivers. Initiated by *Riverfestival*, it was established in 2003 as an independent not-for-profit organisation in response to the critical state of many of the world’s rivers.

The 10th International Riversymposium & Environmental Flows Conference is part of *Riverfestival*.

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Or visit www.riversymposium.com for more information on keynote speakers, discussion topics and programming schedule.