

The Loggerhead Turtle 'Hatchery'- Promoting Conservation through Public Engagement

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In 2019, the *Hatchery*, a live-streamed, signature event at the World Science Festival Brisbane entered its 4th year. Loggerhead Turtle eggs, collected from the Bundaberg Coast, were hatched in transparent incubators in the museum's public galleries. The egg collection dates and incubation temperature were such that hatchling emergence occurred throughout the five day event. Post-festival, the hatchling turtles are released off the Sunshine Coast into the Eastern Australian Current. The *Hatchery* was visited by 8000 + visitors including sessions for ~ 1350 school children. In previous years, it focussed on turtle research and the conservation successes that came from this research. The 2019 event also targeted plastic debris in the oceans. School sessions featured talks from turtle researchers and postgraduate students working on plastics in the environment. These were followed by a session with museum staff and WSF volunteers viewing Loggerhead Turtle hatchlings emerging from their eggs and hatchlings swimming in large aquaria. The plastics theme included a school-based program, *Hatchery Crusaders*, which launched an art competition requiring students to create art pieces from discarded plastic and a school work book which linked closely with the Queensland primary school curriculum. Hatchling turtles have tremendous appeal and incorporating them as a focal point for this event provided a platform for delivering its educational content.