



**6 May 2009**

### **Britain's Ben Southall named best candidate for Best Job in the World**

Ben Southall from the United Kingdom has been named Caretaker of the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef in the race for Queensland's Best Job in the World.

Speaking from Queensland's Hamilton Island in front of the world's media, Premier Anna Bligh today announced that 34 year-old Briton Ben Southall had beaten more than 34,000 applicants to be offered the role of Caretaker of the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef.

The final 16 candidates - from 15 countries - have spent the past four days in the Whitsundays in a final selection process, which has included snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef, visiting the islands and blogging on their experiences.

"The Best Job in the World campaign has had people from all corners of the globe talking since its launch in January and has become arguably the most sought-after job in the world," Ms Bligh said.

"I have spent the past few weeks watching in amazement the lengths candidates have gone to in their quest for The Best Job in the World, from scuba diving in a tank in a square in Amsterdam, to riding the London tube in full scuba gear, to embarking on a 12-day whirlwind trip promoting the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef.

"It was a tough challenge for both the candidates and the selection panel and I am proud to announce that on July 1 Ben Southall will become Tourism Queensland's newest employee as Caretaker of the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef."

Ben comes from Petersfield in Hampshire, England, and for the past few years has worked as a project manager and charity fundraiser.

He has worked as a tour guide in Africa and as a charity events project manager in the UK. In his spare time, Ben manages a music festival and keeps fit running marathons and climbing.

In his application Ben said: "The most important thing to me in life is to have an exciting job that makes me happy, puts smiles on peoples' faces and achieves challenging goals."

Ben describes himself as a dynamic, gregarious and hardworking go-getter. He plans to bring his Canadian girlfriend Bre with him to join him in exploring the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef.

Tourism Minister Peter Lawlor said Ben had demonstrated he had the skills to perform the role, could offer a unique point of view on the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef and had the ability to grow and maintain a loyal following during the six months of his contract.

“Throughout the selection process, from the time he was announced in the Top 50, and then the Top 16, Ben has excelled in showing a true passion for Queensland,” Mr Lawlor said.

“His ideas for how he will make the role his own such plus his initiative and ability to rise to a challenge impressed the selection panel and secured his place in the top job.

“Ben has already had the time of his life and there will be more to come when he takes up the role on July 1.”

Premier Bligh said the worldwide response to Tourism Queensland’s Best Job in the World campaign had been nothing short of phenomenal.

“Already we have achieved more than \$110 million worth of global publicity for Queensland,” she said.

“This has been a fantastic campaign but the key now is for Tourism Queensland and the wider Queensland tourism industry to convert the global interest raised by ‘The Best Job in the World’ into visitors to Queensland - to bring more tourist dollars into Queensland’s economy, protect existing tourism jobs and hopefully create new ones.

“We are looking forward to Ben starting his role on July 1 and showing us what he can do during the six months.”

The campaign offered a unique ‘Island Caretaker’ role – an \$AUD150,000 contract for six months beginning July 1.

Ben will be based on Hamilton Island and will spend his time exploring the Islands of the Great Barrier Reef and reporting back on his experiences.