

## **Snorkelling @Low Isles when the tide is low**

**(egif the tide is expected to be below 1.3m at any time during your visit)**

### **General Orientation:**

Low Isles is surrounded by a fringing reef. It is like a big “doughnut” of reef which surrounds the island. If you look towards the island – the brownish purple area is reef and the lighter blue is the deep sandy bottom.

When the tide is low, you cannot swim on top of the reef because it is too shallow, so instead we swim along the edge of the reef, which is usually the best snorkelling area anyway.

There is a channel through the reef which the boats use to get to the island. Please understand where this is, because that is where we will be snorkelling. We will enter the water near this area. Landmarks that you can use to find the edge of the reef when you are swimming from the beach are (point these out): the pyramid marker, then rest station, and then the pole, which shows that you are near the outer edge of the reef. The pole is an important landmark for another reason – because if you see white on the pole, that means the tide is getting low and it is too shallow to snorkel on top of the reef flat.

### **Choosing & using snorkelling gear:**

**Each boat has their own safety brief re medical conditions, safety signals, swimming with a buddy, marine stingers etc.** Please note: There have been an average of 4-6 stings at Low Isles each year. Nearly all of those would have been prevented with the use of lycra suits. They also provide good sun protection and minimise the amount of sunscreen people have to use, which helps to keep Low Isles Reef healthy!

Check your mask by placing it on your face, without using the strap. Inhale thru your nose, and do the “sniff test” to see if it will stay on your face. Also, when choosing fins, if they are too tight, you can get cramps in your feet.

Noodles are the best way to enjoy the reef at low tide- it is relaxing, you can see more, and they help keep you flat when you are swimming so they protect the reef. Remember when you tread water and your head goes up, your feet go down. There is a very good chance your fins will be kicking the reef, without you knowing it. So we ask even the most experienced snorkelers to consider using a noodle when the tide is low. Hang onto them, so they don't get washed up as marine debris.

When you are snorkelling two things can go wrong – you can get water in your snorkel or water in your mask. Both of these problems are really easy to solve. If you get water in your snorkel, you can blow really hard and make a “t” sound which will shoot the water back up out of your snorkel; or, if that doesn't work, you can take the snorkel out of your mouth and tip the mouth piece so that the water drains

out. If you get a bit of water in your mask, its even easier to get rid of – just use your thumbs to lift the bottom of the mask and the water will drain out by gravity.

Men with moustaches often have small leaks in their mask seal. The seal can sometimes be helped with some extra Vaseline. If all else fails, just hold your nose when snorkelling if you have a leaky mask.

### **The best way to enter the water at Low Isles:**

1. Check that there is no sand in the valve of your snorkel. Wipe some spit in your mask, (so it doesn't fog up) rinse quickly, and put it on. Be sure the mask seal is not broken by any bits of hair or it can leak. . Remember to have your strap above your ears for the best position, and it does not need to be too tight. If you tilt your head too far forward, you can get water in your snorkel, so looking forward at about a 45 degree angle is best.

2. Sit in the water with the water up to about waist level. Put on your fins, and with out getting up, roll over onto your stomach and start swimming. If you stand up with your fins on, you will get sand inside your fins and some people find this really annoying!

3. Put the noodle under your arms and try not to use your arms to swim – its all in the kick. Kick from the hips, legs straight and relaxed – breast stroke kick won't work with fins!

### **Extra tips:**

Low Isles is a green zone and a sensitive location. Please do not touch any coral or marine creatures. If you are swimming and the coral is getting close enough to touch,, just swim backwards the way you came. ( Don't swim forward, thinking it will get deeper). One of the special things about this place is that turtles will often let you swim with them, but they are like people and expect you to keep a respectful distance!

If you find shells or coral, please don't take them home with you, but leave them for others to enjoy.

Avoid the beach rock as it can be very slippery, and some is covered with sharp oyster shells.

**A request to all Skippers/tender drivers** -Please stick to the 6 knot speed limit. Please don't use your tender as a "snorkel guide" (herding turtles, etc!). Please do not go on top of the reef flat unless you are doing a coral viewing tour. The private boats are following your example.....

**Other Island Features- Museum:** available for guests to visit. (Key in boat shed- crew member must be present at all times and lock up after);Location of **Toilet**; Be sure all crew knows about the **RFDS** equipment on the island and the procedure to use; **Heritage Walk** – please stick to the path.