

National Committee on Soil and Terrain

Media Statement

22th January 2009

LUCKY BAY STILL AUSTRALIA'S WHITEST BEACH

Western Australia has repelled a challenge from Queensland to retain the title as having the nation's whitest beach.

Lucky Bay near Esperance on Western Australia's South Coast successfully overcame the bid from Whitehaven on Whitsunday Island in a unanimous vote from members of the National Committee on Soil and Terrain.

This committee represents all States and the Commonwealth in soil matters and organised the first scientific challenge to find Australia's whitest beach in 2006.

Committee chairman, Noel Schoknecht, said that when samples of sand from the best candidates in each State and the Northern Territory had been compared in a nationwide challenge two years ago, Lucky Bay in WA was the unanimous choice.

"At that time, Tallebudgera in Queensland came second but the Queenslanders reckoned they could find a whiter and stronger candidate," Mr Schoknecht said. "They submitted a new challenge in December 2008 from Whitehaven but were unsuccessful."

Queenslanders are understood to be disappointed but not yet ready to throw in the towel.

Whiteness of beaches depends on the composition and size of the sand particles and can relate to the presence of either coral or fine particles of quartz. Both Lucky Bay and Whitehaven have fine quartz-based sands.

"Until you see the sands side by side, it is hard to know which is whitest," Mr Schoknecht commented. "Some suggest that on parts of Cape York beach-goers need two pairs of sunglasses to protect their eyes from the glare, so Queensland may consider another challenge."

Samples of sand have to be collected from the top 10 centimetres in the active beach zone. Only samples from a current marine environment are considered, not sand dunes away from the beach.

Mr Schoknecht said the white beach challenge was a light-hearted out-of-hours diversion from the committee's normally serious work on the nation's soils.

"The samples are retained and if anyone in the country believes their beach is purer and whiter than the current champion, we would be happy to check them out," he added.