

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON SOILS AND TERRAIN

MEDIA RELEASE

6 December 2006

Lucky Bay is Australia's whitest beach

It's official and verified by a national committee of scientific experts: the whitest beach in Australia is Lucky Bay near Esperance on Western Australia's South Coast!

National Committee on Soils and Terrain Chairman, Noel Schoknecht, announced the keenly awaited verdict today.

Mr Schoknecht, a senior research officer with the Department of Agriculture and Food in Western Australia, said the judges' decision had been unanimous, with Lucky Bay a clear winner among the samples submitted.

Second was Tallebudgerra Beach near the Gold Coast in Queensland, equal with Hellfire Bay also from WA and close to Lucky Bay.

Fourth was Victoria's Squeaky Beach (near Wilsons Promontory), followed by Hyams Beach in NSW (near Jervis Bay), Tasmania's Boat Harbour, Main Brambie Island (near Darwin) and finally a city beach at Adelaide.

"The Western Australians were very enthusiastic, nominating two beaches, while other States and Territories only put up one each," Mr Schoknecht commented. "The fact that the winning beaches are pretty remote from major population centres would have worked in their favour to stay pristine and white.

"Only the Australian Capital Territory failed to enter. This was not surprising seeing there's a shortage of beaches around Canberra, but the outlying areas of the ACT around Jervis Bay still would have been accepted."

Whiteness of beaches depends on the presence of quartz or coral, and the contenders were all quartz-based.

Mr Schoknecht said an opaque 'milky' quartz is the whitest form, and the finer the fragments the better. In contrast, too much shell can give a yellowy effect. North Queensland coral beaches might have been very competitive, but no nominations were received from this region.

Under the rules of the competition, up to two beaches from each State or Territory could be entered. Each 250 g sample had to be collected from the top 10 cm of sand, and bulked up from five equal sub-samples collected at least 10 metres apart. Only samples from a current marine environment were to be considered, excluding sand dunes further away from beaches.

The nominated samples were then air-dried and sent to Geoscience Australia for an anonymous visual assessment by judges from all States.

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Mr Schoknecht said the competition has been sparked by friendly interstate rivalries and a claim by the New South Wales representative on the committee that Hyams Beach is the whitest beach in the world. This prompted an out-of-hours quest by the scientists to verify the claim.

Interestingly, Hyams Beach had only come in fifth when competing with other candidates.

“This has been a light-hearted diversion of our normally serious work on sustainable management of the nation’s soils. We are retaining the samples and if anyone believes their beach is purer and whiter, we’d be interested in checking them out,” Mr Schoknecht said.

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MEDIA CONTACT

Noel Schoknecht,

Chair, National Committee on Soils and Terrain