6. *Describe how the proposed Whale Heritage Site celebrates the cultural association between cetaceans and people e.g. events, exhibitions, festivals, museums, etc.*

A: In 2018, the annual Hervey Bay Whale Festival celebrated its 23rd year. The festival stages events across the whale season between July and November. (see www.whalefestival.com.au)

- **Blessing of the Fleet**: An age-old tradition includes the blessing of the vessels to ensure a safe and prosperous season for all. The modern-day event includes stalls, live entertainment, a sail past and inspection of vessels and fireworks.

Paddle Out for Whales: This event started as a peaceful protest and has now grown into a celebration marking the return of the whales each year. Hundreds of paddlers use anything that floats to form a circle for a minute's silence to remember the whales that have been lost.

Whale Parade and Concert: Schools, businesses and community groups take to the street with floats, lanterns and all things ocean themed for a colourful and bright street parade, followed by a concert in the park.

In 2016, the Hervey Bay Whale Festival grew to include many local community events, including the famous Hervey Bay Seafood Festival, attracting a crowd of up to 10,000. It is now a 10-day festival to celebrate all things ocean.

To coincide with the **2019 World Whale Conference** in Hervey Bay, the Fraser Coast is undertaking a **Community Art Project** (concept design, right) as part of the 2019 Whale Festival. Constructed of bamboo, the project located on the high-traffic Hervey Bay foreshore will build on the theme of the conference – *Journeys that Inspire Change* – reinforcing the need for action by the world's human population to ensure the sustainability of the planet.

Local schools will be mobilised to participate in waste collection that will be a focal point of the project, which will be a lasting symbol of the world conference and its campaign for clean oceans.

In addition to the annual festival paying homage to whales and their migration journey along our coastline, a highlight of the region is the **Fraser Coast Discovery Sphere** – a multi-million dollar facility with interpretive displays providing year-round educational opportunities on the wildlife and natural environments of the region. Standouts in the centre include an immersive audio visual 'underwater encounter' with humpback whales and a full-sized reproduction of a whale skeleton. There is also a looped film on continuous display in the theatrette depicting indigenous cultural aspects of the area and First Nation people's connection to the land and waters, including Fraser Island. (www.ourfrasercoast.com.au/Discovery-Sphere)

In 2015, award winning producer and presenter Greg Grainger visited the region to complete a documentary called **'The Whale Whisperer'**. It featured the Hervey Bay humpbacks as the stars and their interactions with local whale watching vessel *Tasman Venture* and their very own 'Whisperer' Vicki Neville. Since then, it has been aired on National Geographic channels.