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Press release: Working together for the Torres Strait

The latest scientific research being conducted in the Torres Strait was presented to the Board of the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), plus leading community leaders and representatives from Federal Government agencies at a meeting on Thursday Island on Friday 26th September 2008.

Members of the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTRSF) today met with key Torres Strait management agencies to highlight some of the important outcomes from the latest research projects being conducted in Australia's most northern region.

Seventeen Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) Board members and local representatives from Federal Australian Government agencies such as Australian Fisheries Management Authority and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, attended a consultative public meeting and interacted with scientists and research managers from the MTRSF.

Researchers from the Marine & Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTRSF) presented a wide range of results including ways to increase the resilience of Torres communities to climate change, improving the sustainability of dugong and turtle harvesting practices through community-based planning, the potential economic benefits of sponge aquaculture, and co-management of hand-collectible fisheries.

"Research projects like these are vital for the future of the Torres Strait," said Mr Toshie Kris, Chairperson of the TSRA. "The results will help both managers and the community make better decisions about the sustainable use of our important environmental resources."

Sheriden Morris, Managing Director of the Reef Rainforest Research Centre which manages the MTRSF said, "Scientific research has been conducted in the Torres Strait for many years with the Torres Strait being a source of enormous scientific knowledge".

A focus of discussion during the meeting was on the project that is being developed collaboratively between RRRC and TSRA's Land and Sea Management Unit. This project, which will also be funded through the MTRSF, aims to repatriate research knowledge generated by the researchers back into the Torres community.



Australian Government



“This knowledge repatriation project will help change community perceptions of researchers as knowledge-takers,” said Mr Kris. “Instead, we want researchers to become knowledge-sharers, by delivering relevant, accessible, useful information to the community.”

“Each year the RRRC invests approximately \$400,000 of Federal Government MTSRF funding in Torres Strait research,” Sheriden added, “The job of the RRRC is to work together with the TSRA and other organisations so that the Torres community receives a good return on this investment.”

Sheriden Morris noted that close cooperation between the MTSRF and TSRA was fundamental to this process. “MTSRF researchers consider themselves partners of the community in these projects. Involvement of the community from the beginning is the key to success in terms of actually delivering benefits from research.”

The \$40 million MTSRF is part of the Australian Government’s Commonwealth Environment Research Facility program, and is managed in North Queensland by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC). The MTSRF aims to provide solution science that will help ensure sustainable use and management of North Queensland’s key environmental assets: the Great Barrier Reef and its catchments, Rainforests of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and the Torres Strait.

The TSRA is an Australian Government Statutory Authority, established in July 1994, which has an elected Board of twenty Members, all of whom are Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal people living in the region. The Board is supported by a Public Service Administration on Thursday Island.

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For more information about the **Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility**, please see www.rrrc.org.au