

16 December 2008



RRRC media release: 5% a welcome first step

While there is concern from many sectors of the community that the federal government's planned 5% cuts in carbon emissions are too low to reduce the impacts of climate change, Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) CEO Sheriden Morris welcomed the announcement as a necessary first step.

"We've come a long way in the past five years in our understanding of the impacts we're having on our environment. However, we've still got a long way to go," she said.

"It's easy to be overwhelmed by the scale of climate change, and how profoundly it's going to affect not just our environment, but our economy and way of life as a whole. But we're not giving up: in collaboration with our research partners and end users, we're managing a large number of research programs that are aimed directly at finding solutions that will help north Queenslanders cope with the changes," she added.

Sheriden said that research was the key to understanding and managing the impacts of climate change on north Queensland's environments and communities.

What the science is telling us

As the changing climate causes global environmental stress levels to increase, only healthy, resilient ecosystems are likely to survive. A major goal of research is to find ways to build and maintain the health and resilience of the ecosystems that north Queenslanders and their businesses depend on - including both coral reefs and rainforests - as well as "buying time" for natural systems to adapt to the changing climate.

Some of the relevant projects funded by the RRRC-managed Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTRSF) include:

- Developing the most up-to-date climate change projections available for north Queensland (CSIRO)
- Investigating the natural capacity for corals to adapt to increasing sea temperatures (AIMS, JCU, UQ)
- Development of robust indicators of coral reef health and their incorporation into a marine monitoring program (AIMS, UQ, GBRMPA)
- Investigating the effectiveness of marine park zoning for biodiversity and fishery conservation (JCU, AIMS)
- Development of the Risk, Resilience and Response Atlas (AIMS, RRRC, GBRMPA)
- Climate change adaptation strategies for the people of the Torres Strait (UNSW, TSRA)
- Understanding the impacts of climate change on dugongs and turtles, and developing ways to manage those impacts (JCU, TSRA)
- Understanding the connection between water quality and reef health (AIMS, JCU, CSIRO, GBRMPA)
- Identification of extinction vulnerability and climate refuges for rainforest animals (JCU)
- Understanding how climate change will alter the productivity of Wet Tropics rainforests (JCU, CSIRO)
- Managing reef and rainforest tourism for economic sustainability (JCU)

For more information about these and many other projects, please see RRRC's website: www.rrrc.org.au

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