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Research needs for sustainable growth in tropical north Queensland

Some of Australia's top climate change scientists are meeting on Monday in Port Douglas to scope tropical north Queensland's climate science priorities and challenges, in a two-day workshop jointly sponsored by the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence (QCCCE), the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) and CSIRO.

CSIRO has been responsible for providing the latest information about climate change to the Australian community, industry and government. Together with the Bureau of Meteorology, they are attempting to answer some fundamental questions about future climate and weather – particularly in the Australian tropics. These involve the behaviour of tropical cyclones, the El Nino Southern Oscillation phenomenon, extreme temperatures and rainfall, and rising sea levels.

The QCCCE is a specialist unit within the Queensland Department of Environment and Natural Resource Management that aims to provide decision makers throughout Queensland with information and scientific data on climate change and its impact on the community, the economy and the environment.

The Australian Government's $40 million MTSRF is administered by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) in Cairns. According to RRRC's managing director, Sheriden Morris, the workshop aims to enhance collaboration and delivery of climate change information to researchers and stakeholders in north Queensland.

"We already know that climate change is going to bring more extremes of weather, including temperatures, cyclones and rainfall, to North Queensland," said Sheriden. "Importantly, this workshop will help prioritise future research effort into areas of greatest need, with the ultimate objective of helping stakeholders make better decisions for the region's sustainability."

Representatives from organisations charged with managing North Queensland's key environmental assets – including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Wet Tropics Management Authority, and the Torres Strait Regional Authority - will work with scientists to produce recommendations for future research directions in alignment with their information needs.

"RRRC is consulting widely with North Queenslanders about their current and future research needs, in this case with regard to climate change," added Sheriden. "Research is essential if we're going to improve North Queensland's sustainability, and consultations like this will help ensure that we invest in projects that will deliver for the region."

The workshop will be conducted at Rydges Sabaya Hotel in Port Douglas on Monday 20th and Tuesday 21st July.

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