



**Australian Government**

**Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts**

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## **Press release: Delivering for the Torres Strait**

The outcomes of the latest scientific research being conducted in the Torres Strait will be presented to the Torres community at a meeting on Thursday Island on 9 October 2009.

Staff and scientists from the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA), the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF) and the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC), along with stakeholders from other organisations active in the region, will discuss the implications of a range of research projects aiming to deliver benefits for the Torres Strait's communities and ecosystems.

Chair of the TSRA, Mr Toshie Kris, welcomed this opportunity for local Councillors, TSRA staff and representatives of other agencies to talk freely with researchers about important matters such as climate change adaptation, co-management of marine resources and the development of new economic opportunities for the region.

"We have some very pressing problems here in the Torres Strait, and we really need applied research that actually delivers options for management. We're very pleased to have been able to work so collaboratively and successfully over the past few years with RRRC and MTSRF-funded scientists," he said.

Mr Kris said that the research into increasing the sustainability of the Torres Strait's dugong and turtle populations was particularly helpful.

"Building local capacity to manage these very important natural and cultural assets is a winning long-term strategy for us," he said.

He also highlighted the MTSRF-funded work that was already helping communities on low-lying islands make decisions about how and when they needed to adapt to climate change, particularly rising sea levels.

"Another research project that's generated a lot of interest among Councillors is the work that's led to the new Kailag Enterprises sponge farm on Masig Island," he added.

"Now that the science has shown that this venture is feasible, we're very excited about the potential for a new environmentally sustainable income opportunity for local communities in the Torres Strait."

The \$40 million MTSRF is part of the Australian Government's Commonwealth Environment Research Facility program, and is administered 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.

Sheriden Morris, Managing Director of the RRRC, which facilitated the meeting, said that the RRRC took its responsibility to deliver the MTSRF seriously.

"After three years of research we're at the business end of the MTSRF now," she explained.

"That means that the science is starting to deliver real, workable solutions and management options for the Torres Strait, as well as the rest of North Queensland.

"It's vital that these new solutions and ideas are actually conveyed in a useful form to the people who need to know—managers, policy-makers, practitioners, the general public as well—so that this huge investment in the MTSRF delivers a big sustainability return for our region," she said.

"Knowledge delivery will be RRRC's major focus during this last year."



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Chair of the Torres Strait Regional Authority, Toshie Kris, with the Managing Director of the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre, Sheriden Morris, in the TSRA offices on Thursday Island. Image courtesy of RRRRC.



Samson Lowatta working on the Kailag Enterprises Sponge Farm at Yorke Island. Scientific research funded through many organisations, including the MTSRF, has paved the way for development of this new industry and economic opportunity for the Torres Strait. Image courtesy of Carsten Wolff/AIMS. For more information about this project visit [http://www.rrrc.org.au/mtsrf/theme\\_1/project\\_1\\_3\\_2.html](http://www.rrrc.org.au/mtsrf/theme_1/project_1_3_2.html).

For more information about the **Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility**, please see [www.rrrc.org.au](http://www.rrrc.org.au)