



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIPS FOR NORTH QUEENSLAND

Federal Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, today announced nine scholarships for research projects into environmental challenges facing north Queensland.

The students will receive funding of \$720,000 over three years under the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility Graduate Scholarship Scheme – part of the \$100 million Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities (CERF) program.

“These research projects will give us a better understanding of the environmental pressures on the Wet Tropics rainforest, the Torres Strait and the Great Barrier Reef,” Mr Garrett said.

“These are great natural treasures, and they also make a significant contribution to the Australian economy. The Great Barrier Reef alone is worth \$6 billion a year, with more than 63,000 jobs in associated tourism, fishing, cultural and recreational industries.

“However, these areas face significant threats from coral bleaching as well as threats to rainforest biodiversity from growing population pressures.

“The Australian Government recognises the urgent need to address these problems.”

More than \$7.6 million is being allocated in research funding for 2007-08 for projects under the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility program. The projects include the development of a simulation model for the dispersion process of weeds or invasive species in tropical landscapes, leading to more effective targeting of weeds and introduced pests. Another project is developing an ‘early warning system’ to help the tourism industry to prepare protective measures against the Crown-of-Thorns starfish.

“The stronger and more conclusive the science and the more extensive our knowledge on the changes being wrought by climate change and other pressures on this fragile environment, the better our chances of finding effective and timely solutions,” Mr Garrett said.

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