

MEDIA RELEASE

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Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC), Cairns

For immediate release



Jellyfish workshop brings together scientists, stakeholders



Attendees of the RRRC-organised box jellyfish workshop at James Cook University. Image: RRRC

The excruciating pain inflicted by a box jellyfish sting can really ruin a swim in the warm waters of tropical far north Queensland - and it's notoriously difficult to predict where swarms of the venomous marine organisms might suddenly appear.

However after putting their heads together, scientists, tour operators, lifesavers and other stakeholders now have clear goals to work toward in better understanding the behaviour of box jellyfish and helping swimmers avoid that dreaded sting.

A two-day workshop held at James Cook University's (JCU) Cairns campus on August 20-21 has brought together representatives from JCU, CSIRO, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), Griffith University, the Association of Marine Park Tour Operators (AMPTO) Indigenous rangers, Surf Life Saving Queensland and other organisations to set short and long-term research priorities for dealing with box jellyfish.

The workshop, organised by the Reef and Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) and chaired by jellyfish expert Professor Mike Kingsford from JCU Townsville, produced several key priorities that will be used to guide future research and practical efforts to better predict jellyfish swarms. These include the setting up of jellyfish-tracking cameras, the development of new and existing information databases, better taxonomic understanding to allow faster identification - and reduce the needless closing of beaches and dive sites - , improved understanding of water conditions surrounding jellyfish swarms and even smartphone apps to help raise public awareness to reduce the risk of sting incidents.

Professor Kingsford said there had been a clear need for a comprehensive workshop on the issue.

"Box jellyfish are the second-highest concern for visitors to the Great Barrier Reef," he said.

"The stakeholders - not just the scientists but hands-on operators like AMPTO and Surf Life Saving Queensland - are keen to see progress on reducing risk.

"The bottom line is that this workshop was a stakeholder-driven event - everyone has now had a chance to come together, share their knowledge and express their viewpoints on the issue."

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Media contact:

Boyd Robertson - 0458144909 / boyd.robertson@rrrc.org.au