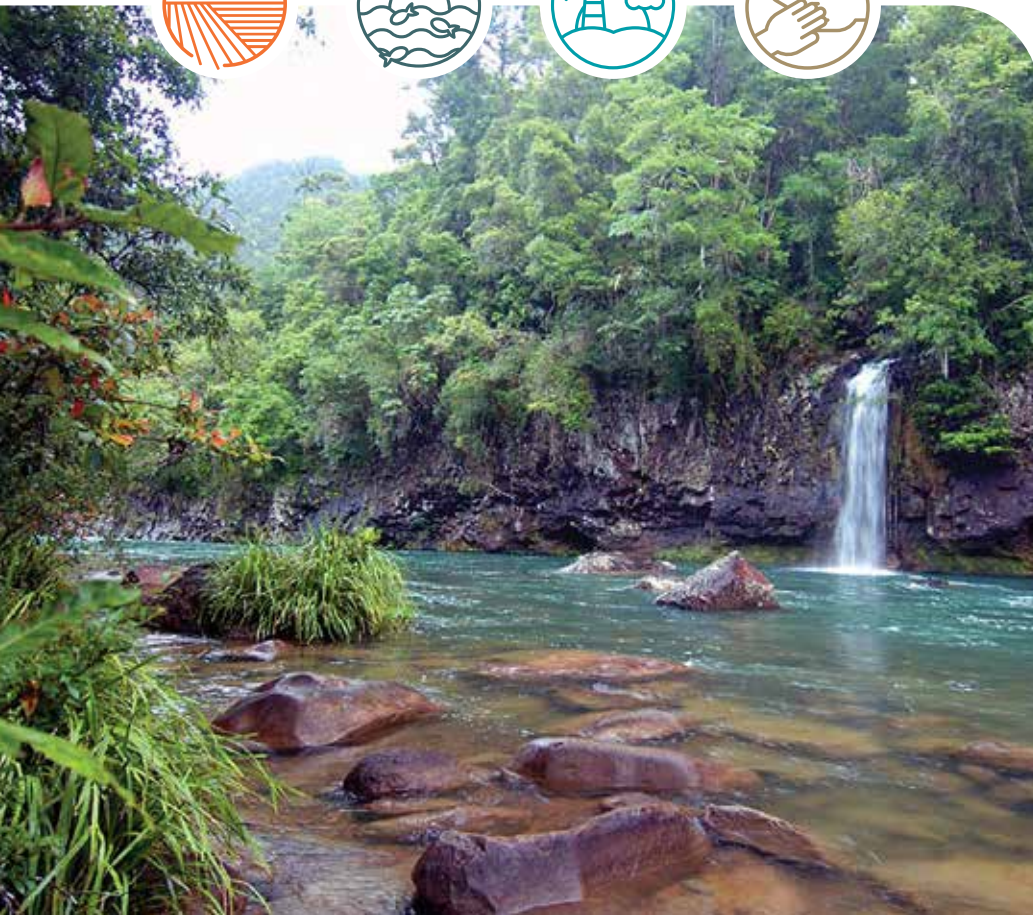




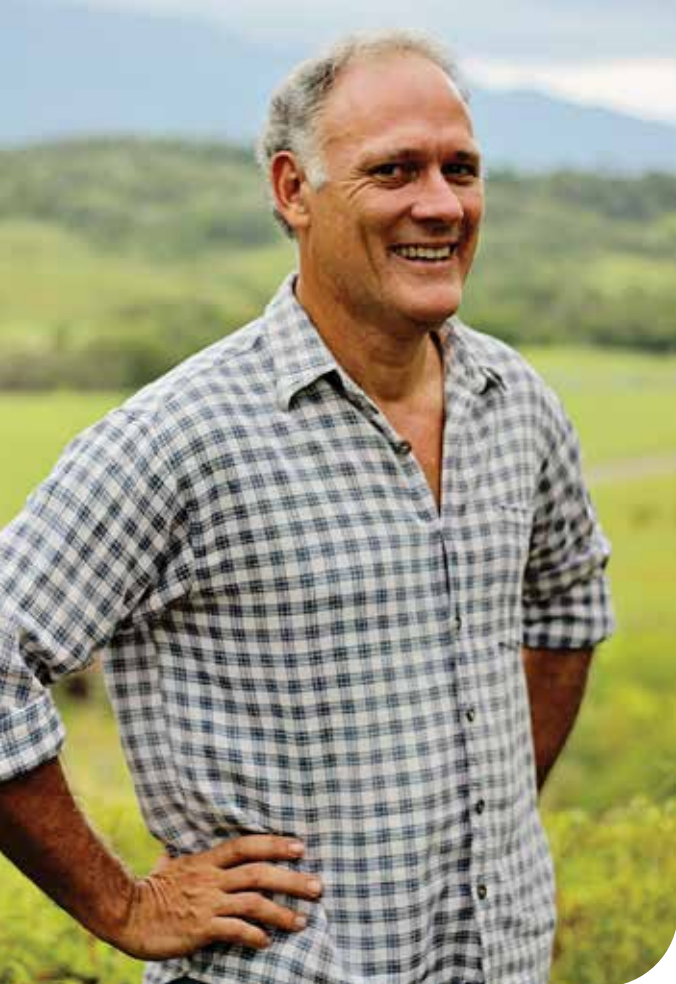
Twenty years of science, partnerships, community, and impact



CELEBRATING
20
years

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country where we work and pay our respects to all Traditional Owners of Australia past, present and emerging.

rrrc.org.au



A message from the Chair and Managing Director

For twenty years the Reef & Rainforest Research Centre (RRRC) has worked at the intersection of science, communities, industry, and government to deliver practical solutions for the tropics.

Established in 2006 to manage the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility, the organisation has grown into a trusted program manager and knowledge broker delivering major national initiatives across northern Australia, the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea. Over this period RRRC has attracted more than half a billion dollars in environmental investment into the region while translating world-class research into practical outcomes for ecosystems and communities. The RRRC is a not-for-profit charitable trust.

This anniversary report highlights partnerships, programs and innovations that have shaped the organisation over the past two decades. Together they demonstrate how collaboration, applied science and community engagement deliver lasting environmental and social benefits.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allan Dale".

Prof Allan Dale
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Morris".

Dr Sheriden Morris
Managing Director

Photo by Rickard Abom

About the RRRC

Science in action for the tropics

The RRRC is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to delivering science-based solutions that support healthy environments, resilient communities and sustainable economies across northern Australia and neighbouring regions.

Through a consortium of more than 80 partners, including Traditional Owners, research institutions, governments, industries, and community organisations, RRRC brings together the best expertise to design and deliver complex environmental programs. This unique model ensures research is co-designed with those who use it and translated into real-world outcomes.

Over the past twenty years RRRC has managed and delivered more than \$600 million in environmental research, management and community development programs, strengthening the knowledge needed to manage some of the world's most important tropical ecosystems.



1m

Approx

Hectares of live coral defended through COTS Integrated Pest Management

4

Successive National Environmental Science (NESP) Hubs (2006 – Present)

\$600m

Environmental programs delivered across northern Australia

Over
1000

Scientific and technical publications

20 years

Leading tropical research and program delivery

700+

Scientists and

50+

Research partner institutions delivering applied science programs

80+ partners

Consortium spanning science, community and industry

Our model

Connecting science, communities and Country

RRRC occupies a unique position between science and implementation. Rather than conducting research itself, the organisation convenes best experts, stakeholders and communities to define priority challenges and develop programs designed to address them.

Once programs are established, RRRC manages their delivery: overseeing funding, governance and day-to-day coordination, and working with partners to ensure research findings are communicated clearly and used by policy makers, industry, and communities.

This approach has enabled us to deliver complex multidisciplinary programs cost-effectively and with low overheads while maintaining strong partnerships with governments, industries, communities and Traditional Owners across northern Australia and the Indo-Pacific region.



Photo by Rickard Abom

Science to solutions

Turning research into real-world impact

From its earliest programs, RRRC has focused on ensuring research does more than expand knowledge – it delivers practical outcomes for the environment and stakeholders.

Working closely with traditional owners, governments, industry, communities, and environmental managers RRRC endeavours to turn scientific findings into actions that improve how ecosystems are protected and managed for biodiversity and people.

Through this approach, research coordinated by RRRC has supported advances in areas such as water quality improvement, monitoring and restoration of rainforest and marine ecosystems, the control of Crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks, and the development of disadvantaged communities. By connecting researchers with the people responsible for managing the environment, new knowledge is translated into tools, strategies and management practices that can be applied in the real world.

This ability to bridge science and implementation has become one of RRRC's defining strengths, positioning the organisation as a trusted delivery partner for government programs operating in complex environmental and policy settings.



2007 RRRC manages Reef Rescue Marine Monitoring Program.



2006

RRRC established to manage the Australian Government's Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF).

2008

RRRC hosts tropical science briefing at Parliament House, Canberra.

2010

RRRC provides communications services for Torres Strait Regional Authority Land and Sea Management Unit.

RRRC manages Reef Rescue Water Quality Research and Development Program.

RRRC supports establishment of the Treaty Village Association in Western Province, Papua New Guinea.

2012

2013

2011

RRRC manages the National Environmental Research Program Tropical Ecosystems Hub.



2014

Australian Aid Treaty Village Resilience Program launched in Papua New Guinea.



RRRC constitution updated to establish a skills-based Board.

Major coral bleaching surveys conducted by RRRC and partners.

Traditional Owner Aspirations and Commitments project delivered under the Reef 2050 Plan.

Crown-of-Thorns Starfish Integrated Pest Management Program launched.

RRRC hosts the National Environmental Science Program Tropical Water Quality Hub.

2015

2017

2016

Reef Trust Crown-of-Thorns Starfish Outbreak Management Program delivery managed in partnership.

Australian Aid Building Resilience in Treaty Villages program launched.



Twenty years of milestones

Key milestones across the past two decades highlight the scale and breadth of RRRC's work – from national research programs to practical solutions that protect ecosystems and support communities.

2018

PNG Ranger graduation ceremony held in Daru.

Great Barrier Reef Restoration Symposium hosted in Cairns.



2021

Remote Female Employment and Leadership program (Deadly Women) commenced to build employment pathways and leadership for Indigenous women.

Russell-Mulgrave Regional Water Quality Program delivered, in partnership, to improve water quality and reduce nitrogen runoff to the Great Barrier Reef.

NESP Tropical Water Quality Hub conference hosted in Cairns highlights impacts and achievements.

2020

Indigenous Engagement Workshop hosted in Cairns to guide Reef Trust investment and strengthen Traditional Owner engagement.

Great Reef Census citizen science program launched.

Crown-of-thorns Forum hosted in Cairns.

RRRC continues delivering and expanding regional environmental programs and partnerships.

2019

Indigenous partnership symposium delivered at AMSA conference.

RRRC and partners named finalists in the Eureka Prizes.



2021

NESP Marine and Coastal Hub (Northern Node) delivered in partnership to support applied science for marine and coastal management.

2022

2023

RRRC and partners win two National Banksia Awards – recognising biodiversity conservation and water quality outcomes.

RRRC develops a carbon trading model for revegetation in the Wet Tropics.

2026

RRRC celebrates twenty years delivering science-based solutions for tropical environments and communities.



2023

RRRC achieves improved livelihoods for more than 40,000 people across PNG Treaty Villages through its decade-long Ranger Program.

Reef Resilience Symposium hosted in Cairns.

2024

NESP projects delivered at scale, supporting marine and coastal management across northern Australia.

RRRC achieves carbon trading accreditation.

2025

RRRC commences Integrated Pest Management projects targeting feral pigs and tilapia.

National Environmental
Science Programs

Delivering Australia's flagship tropical science programs

Since 2006 the RRRC has played a central role in delivering Australia's major National Environmental Science Programs.

Established to manage the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility (MTSRF), RRRC has subsequently delivered successive national research hubs including the National Environmental Research Program (NERP) Tropical Ecosystems Hub, the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) Tropical Water Quality Hub, and the NESP Marine and Coastal Hub (current).

Through these programs RRRC has coordinated large interdisciplinary collaborations addressing the management of the Great Barrier Reef, Wet Tropics rainforests, Torres Strait, and northern Australian coastal systems. Research has focused on critical challenges including water quality improvement, ecosystem resilience, biodiversity conservation, climate impacts, sustainable coastal development, and Indigenous-led environmental management.

Across the four programs, more than seven hundred scientists from dozens of Australian and international organisations have contributed to hundreds of research projects and knowledge products. These partnerships have generated long-term environmental datasets, strengthened monitoring and modelling, and provided practical guidance for governments, Traditional Owners, industries, and regional communities responsible for managing northern Australia's globally significant ecosystems.

700+

Scientists engaged across
research collaborations

\$250M

National environmental
science programs managed

Hundreds of research
projects informing
environmental
management and
communities

50+

Research
institutions and
organisations
involved

Research supporting
management of the
Great Barrier Reef,
Torres Strait, and
Rainforests





122 reefs

COTS control and monitoring delivered

National Banksia Biodiversity Award (2023) recognising program impact

Integrated Pest Management approach developed through research

40

Field staff delivering operations

240+

Young people trained in reef management and boating skills

1m

Approx

Hectares of live coral defended through COTS Integrated Pest Management

3

Dedicated vessels deployed by RRRC

Integrated Pest Management

Protecting coral on the Great Barrier Reef

RRRC has played a leading role in developing and implementing Integrated Pest Management strategies to control outbreaks of Crown-of-thorns starfish on the Great Barrier Reef.

Through a combination of research, monitoring and targeted on-water control operations, these programs have dramatically improved the efficiency and effectiveness of starfish management. Teams operating across priority reefs remove thousands of starfish each year, helping protect coral cover and supporting the resilience of reef ecosystems.

This work has received national recognition, including the 2023 National Banksia Biodiversity Award.

Water quality
innovation

Improving catchments for reef health

RRRC has played a vital role in improving the quality of water flowing to the Great Barrier Reef by bringing together farmers, scientists, and Traditional Owners to develop practical solutions.

Collaborative initiatives in the Russell/Mulgrave catchment have demonstrated how real-time monitoring, precision agriculture and landscape interventions can reduce nutrient runoff while maintaining farm productivity.

The insights generated through these partnerships are helping guide water quality management across Reef catchments and contributing to progress toward the Reef 2050 water quality targets.

This work was recognised by the Banksia Foundation with a Banksia Award for Agriculture and Regional Development.

82

Sugarcane growers participating in water quality initiatives

Science-industry partnerships connecting growers, scientists, and environmental managers

9t

Tonnes of nitrogen reduced annually through improved fertiliser practices

Real-time water quality monitoring tracking nutrient movement in the catchment

3500

Hectares digitally mapped to support precision agriculture

11,000

Hectares under improved nutrient management

Demonstration farms testing and displaying optimal land management





Indigenous leadership

Indigenous partnerships and caring for Country

RRRC recognises the central role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as custodians of land and sea Country. Programs managed by the organisation embed Indigenous leadership in research, training, and environmental management.

Initiatives such as the Reef 2050 Traditional Owner Aspirations Project and Indigenous ranger training programs have strengthened the participation of Traditional Owners in reef governance and conservation. For example, around 10% of the workforce on our COTS Control vessels is Indigenous.

These partnerships ensure that cultural knowledge and authority are integrated into environmental decision-making and the long-term stewardship of Country.



Traditional Owner Aspirations and Commitments delivered for the Reef 2050 Plan

Workshops and symposia delivered to strengthen scientist and Traditional Owner collaboration

Indigenous knowledge integrated with scientific research for environmental management

Indigenous engagement embedded across national science programs, including NESP

Research co-designed and co-delivered with Traditional Owners and community organisations





Strengthening communities

Creating opportunities through training and leadership

RRRC's work extends beyond environmental research to include programs that strengthen communities through education, training, and employment pathways.

Initiatives such as the Deadly Women Leadership Program have supported Indigenous women in remote communities to gain qualifications, build leadership skills, and pursue employment and enterprise opportunities, particularly in environmental and tourism sectors.

These programs show how investing in leadership and skills development can support both sustainable livelihoods and environmental stewardship.

71

Indigenous women gained nationally recognised qualifications

Leadership and confidence strengthened through mentoring and skills development

34%

Students employed within six months of completion

Employment pathways created in conservation, community services and local enterprises

11%

Students progressed to further education or training

Regional resilience

Supporting communities in Papua New Guinea

For more than a decade, the RRRC has collaborated with coastal communities in the South Fly District of Western Province, Papua New Guinea through the South Fly Resilience Program.

The initiative grew from earlier work in the Torres Strait region, where it became clear that PNG Treaty Villages in adjacent waters faced significant challenges including poverty and inadequate infrastructure and services, which were limiting participation in conservation and development.

Adapted from Indigenous Ranger programs in northern Australia, the program trained residents as Community Rangers to lead initiatives within their own communities.

What began as a small pilot expanded to more than forty villages across the South Fly District.

Delivered with partners including INLOC and supported by the Australian Government, the program implemented integrated initiatives in health, water security, food production, sanitation, disaster preparedness, and small enterprise development.

By 2023, the program had strengthened community capacity across the region, creating employment opportunities and improving health, sanitation, and food security for thousands of people. The model now continues under PNG-based leadership, demonstrating the long-term value of community-driven development.



178

Community Rangers
trained and employed,
including approximately
40% women

Five-year development plans
created for local wards,
strengthening governance
and planning

119

Villager micro-businesses
established, including
poultry, sewing, cassava
milling and marine repairs

100+

Sanitation facilities
installed to reduce
disease risk

3000+

Birthing kits distributed to support
safer childbirth in remote villages

400+

People trained in financial
literacy and enterprise
development

6000

Improved food plants distributed
to strengthen food security

1.5m

Litres of additional
water storage
constructed or
repaired

Community disaster response and
marine rescue capability established

Programs
delivered across

40

Coastal villages in
Western Province

Looking ahead

Practical solutions to build resilience

Environmental challenges facing northern Australia and the Great Barrier Reef are growing in scale and complexity. Climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing pressure on natural resources demand innovative and collaborative responses.

With strong networks, deep experience in program delivery and a reputation for translating science into action, RRRRC is well positioned to continue supporting governments, industries, and communities in developing practical solutions to these challenges.

The coming decade will build on RRRRC's legacy of partnership and innovation to help secure a sustainable future for tropical ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.





Photo by Rickard Abom



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2023 WINNER



BIODIVERSITY
AWARD



AGRICULTURE & REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AWARD

CELEBRATING
20
years

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