

Program Overview

The Coral Reef Targeted Research & Capacity Building for Management (CRTR) Program is a long-term initiative established to address fundamental information gaps in our understanding of coral reef ecosystems, so that management options and policy interventions can be strengthened globally. Phase One of this initiative commenced on 1 December 2004 and will finish on 30 November 2009.

The Phase One goal is to:

"Build scientific capacity necessary to provide the information needed for management and policy, so that coral reef ecosystems under threat from climate change and multiple human stressors can be sustained for current and future generations".

Centres of Excellence

Currently, most coral reef research is based in universities and research institutes in the developed world, whereas most coral reefs are located in developing countries. Rectifying this global imbalance in knowledge and capacity is a key mission of the CRTR Program.

To accomplish this, the Program intends to build or enhance the capacity of institutions in at least three developing country sites within the first phase so that they can function as regional Centres of Excellence. These three sites will be supported by a fourth site based in a developed country.

The four operational sites or Centres of Excellence are:

1. Southeast Asia: Marine Science Institute of Bolinao, University of the Philippines.
2. East Africa: Institute of Marine Sciences, University of Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Tanzania.
3. Mesoamerica/Western Caribbean: Unidad Academica Puerto Morelos, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Mexico.
4. Australasia/South Pacific: Heron Island Research Laboratory, Centre of Marine Studies, The University of Queensland, Australia.

Australasian Centre of Excellence

The Australasian Centre of Excellence 'hub' is located at the Heron Island Research Station (HIRS) in Queensland and operates as one of the largest platforms of coral reef research in the world. It is operated by The University of Queensland's Centre for Marine Studies in Brisbane, Australia.

HIRS is situated 80km offshore from Gladstone on the southern Great Barrier Reef and was established in the early 1950s. It has developed into Australia's largest, best-equipped and most productive island research station and is an international facility for coral reef research and student training in marine sciences.



Activities

As the node that covers the Australasian/South Pacific area, the Australasian COE provides facilities and expertise for the Working Groups undertaking research in the area. The COE also adopted the objective of becoming a regional resource and during Phase One will develop a strategy to engage and enhance existing local networks.

The Australasian COE has established an advisory panel that includes key research institutes and management organisations. The COE will work closely with these agencies to identify ways in which linkages and disseminate communication outputs between disparate reef system managers and researchers are disseminated. Aiming to utilise its advisory panel as a mechanism for communication and collaboration, the COE hopes to draw upon the knowledge of managers of the Great Barrier Reef, the reefs of Western Australia, Indonesia and the Pacific region to develop a regional understanding of research needs for management.

The COE's secondary role is the development of new reef researchers, through training and research collaboration. It is seeking in-kind and funding support from local agencies and international organisations. The COE conducts specialised activities for young researchers to provide them with opportunities to access the extensive resources of the Great Barrier Reef to improve their knowledge and skills in reef research and management.

The Australasian COE therefore will work towards:

1. Providing a solid technical platform for the research and training activities of the various Working Groups within the CRTR Program.

2. Establishing critical equipment in preparation for research and training activities of bleaching, disease, connectivity and remote sensing working groups.
3. Undertaking research related to coral bleaching and climate issues, the development of stress markers, coral disease, genetic connectivity and remote sensing.
4. Developing and running training courses for Australian and regional developing country students in advanced material and techniques on coral reefs and environmental change.
5. Stimulating and building regional networks across the Australasian, Indonesian and western Pacific in research and training expertise.
6. Supporting activities aimed at increasing regional capacity for understanding and managing coral reefs under environmental change.

Further Information

Further information regarding the Australasian Centre of Excellence can be obtained from:

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CRTR Project partners include the Global Environment Facility (GEF), World Bank (WB), The University of Queensland (UQ), United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), UNESCO-Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC/UNESCO) and approximately 50 research institutes & other third parties around the world.

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