

MEDIA RELEASE

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Training in “First Aid” for the Reef

Government, industry and community group representatives converged on the Great Barrier Reef to learn and share knowledge on current and emerging technologies to assist the recovery and restoration of coral reefs.

Coral reefs are facing unprecedented threats from a combination of climate change and local pressures. People can make a difference to reef health by reducing threats and improving coral reefs using methods such as reef restoration and coral gardening.

Sometimes compared to “first aid for the reef”, Reef restoration is rapidly developing into an exciting approach for helping coral reefs bounce back after damaging events such as cyclones, ship groundings and mass coral bleaching events. New methods and insights are coming online at an unprecedented pace, and it is crucial that people involved in reef conservation and sustainable use understand the benefits, limitations and best practices relating to reef restoration.

Fourteen reef managers, consultants and local community members attended an inaugural reef restoration workshop to learn about the latest in reef restoration and to share experiences and ideas for helping coral reefs. Held at Orpheus Island Research Station on the central region of the Great Barrier Reef in December 2018, the workshop was coordinated by Reef Ecologic in partnership with National Landcare and James Cook University. It provided a valuable opportunity to share contemporary scientific knowledge and practical experience on reef restoration and devise a strategic framework for future training.

Involving an exciting schedule of expert presentations, immersive learning on reef restoration methods and the memorable personal experience of snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef, the workshop provided a unique opportunity for participants to enhance their knowledge of reef restoration and understand the role it may be able to play in helping to build the resilience of the Reef at local scales.

“This was a really amazing introduction to reef restoration and opened my eyes to the future possibilities. I loved practising creating the coral nursery, snorkelling to do Reef Health Impact Surveys and learning more about the Reef first hand. I also enjoyed the opportunity to chat to other people from other industries to hear about their efforts in reef restoration,” said Kalita Free, Graduate Scientist with consultancy group Ecosure.

“It was a great forum and opportunity for scientists to share knowledge and experience of reef management and restoration techniques and innovations. We look forward to working with all stakeholders to provide future focussed solutions in active reef management to



strengthen the resilience of the reef” said Madelaine Hooper, Marine Scientist with consultancy group Cardno.

James Cook University's Orpheus Island Research Station manager Bec Tite was excited by the proposed outcomes for the workshop for the local environment. “We have a rehabilitation zone and a proposed restoration demonstration site on the reefs around Orpheus Island and it would be a great educational tool for all visitors to the station” she said.

“This is the first reef restoration workshop of its kind on the Great Barrier Reef. Our company Reef Ecologic is proud to lead the design of the reef restoration course and workshop and involve the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Ecosure, Tangaroa Blue, Reef Check and Cardno to co-design a future reef restoration training program” said Assoc Prof. Adam Smith, Director of Reef Ecologic. “Everyone's passion and enthusiasm for the reef and education provided significant opportunities for the future.”

“It was great to learn more about coral restoration and discuss future applications that can support reef resilience locally while increasing active community engagement and awareness in the process, ” commented Gemma Molinaro from Reef Check Australia.

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Media assets- Images attached and video available on request.

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/orpheus-island>

<https://reefecologic.org/project/recovery-restoration-and-resilience/>