

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

DATE: THURSDAY 18 AUGUST 2011

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

---



## Scuba divers and scientists team up

A new organisation is providing highly-skilled sets of eyes to allow marine management agencies to see what's happening underwater.

Dr Graham Edgar and Dr Rick Stuart-Smith from the UTAS Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) recently launched Reef Life Survey Foundation Incorporated – the not-for-profit home of the unique marine science and conservation program Reef Life Survey (RLS).

RLS links recreational divers, managers and scientists in activities that improve biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of marine resources.

Dr Edgar said the RLS Foundation represents a co-operation between groups that “rarely interact directly with each other”.

Dr Edgar, who is on the RLS Board, said that the marine environment is suffering from a variety of human impacts.

These include over-fishing, pollution, sedimentation, coral bleaching and introduced pests.

“When trying to deal with these impacts, managers currently find it almost impossible knowing where their limited conservation dollars are best directed, because little reliable information exists on the location and true size of the various threats,” he said.

“Our RLS network of highly trained scuba divers provides an effective set of eyes for managers and scientists to see underwater.”

Dr Edgar said they now have information on fish and invertebrate numbers at more than 1000 sites around the Australian coast – the only inshore ecological data set available to scientists that encompasses a whole continent.

The data is also available to groups such as local dive clubs or schools who may use survey information to look at changes over time on their own local reefs.

Dr Edgar added that despite the Australian focus, survey information collected elsewhere across the globe by trained RLS divers is also utilised in applied scientific outputs of global significance.

“Through the long term, RLS is expected to play a key role in the management and conservation of the world’s marine biodiversity and resources.”

RLS was established by researchers at UTAS with seed funding provided by the Commonwealth Environment Research Facilities Program, an Australian Government initiative.

For more information about RLS visit: [www.reeflifesurvey.org](http://www.reeflifesurvey.org)

For more information or interviews, please contact Dr Graham Edgar, (03) 6227 7238

**Information Released by:**

**The Media Office, University of Tasmania**

**Phone: (03) 6226 2691 or 0447 537 375**

**Email: [Media.Office@utas.edu.au](mailto:Media.Office@utas.edu.au)**