

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



New tool sets course for world-wide coral reef management

An innovative world-first tool for exploring the future of coral reefs around the globe has been developed at UTAS.

The Coral Reef Scenario Evaluation Tool (CORSET) will be useful to coral reef managers, policy makers, conservation groups and researchers.

A web portal, "Reef Scenarios", allows anyone connected to the internet, even by smart phone, to access and use CORSET on the UTAS supercomputer from anywhere around the world, for free.

Dr Jess Melbourne-Thomas developed CORSET as part of her PhD while a UTAS/CSIRO Quantitative Marine Science student.

She then worked with staff from the Tasmanian Partnership for Advanced Computing (TPAC) and electronic Marine Information Infrastructure (eMII) to create Reef Scenarios, which provides an easy-to-use interface through which anyone can use CORSET.

"Coral reefs provide essential ecosystem services that support the livelihoods of millions of people in coastal populations around the globe," Dr Melbourne-Thomas said.

"But human activities have severely degraded a large number of reefs worldwide, and reef ecosystem function is under continuing threat from human impact."

Dr Melbourne-Thomas stressed the need for novel approaches like CORSET to develop strategies for ensuring reefs are managed effectively.

"Simulation models like CORSET are great tools for predicting future responses of reef systems to multiple threats and for evaluating the effectiveness of alternative management strategies" Dr Melbourne-Thomas said.

"The fact that the model is now available via the web to anyone who wants to use it is a great demonstration of how web technologies can be applied in making tools like CORSET accessible to end-users."

Dr Melbourne-Thomas said CORSET is a generic model framework that can be applied at a regional scale to tropical coral reef systems anywhere in the world.

Dr Melbourne-Thomas worked on the project with UTAS researchers Dr Roger Proctor (eMII), Professor Craig Johnson (Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies) and Professor Nathan Bindoff (TPAC).

CORSET stemmed from an international team effort of researchers in the Modeling and Decision Support Working Group of a global research program on coral reefs – the Coral Reef Targeted Research Program – funded through the Global Environment Facility and World Bank.

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