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Cairns and JCU to host world reef conference

Cairns will receive a major economic boost when it plays host to around 3000 of the world's leading scientists at the next International Coral Reef Symposium - the premier world conference on all matters relating to coral reef science and management.

James Cook University's Vice Chancellor Professor Sandra Harding and the Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, Professor Terry Hughes, announced today that Cairns and Australia will be the site for the international conference, which is held every four years.

In conjunction with the International Society for Reef Studies, James Cook University through the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies will host the 12th International Coral Reef Symposium (ICRS) at the Cairns Convention Centre from July 9-13, 2012.

The economic impact of the five-day conference will be around \$14 million.

JCU's Professor Hughes said the conference would bring leading coral reef scientists and reef managers from all over the world to Australia.

"The International Coral Reef Symposium is the world's largest and premier forum for the dissemination and discussion of coral reef science, management and conservation," he said.

"The symposium will attract around 3000 scientists, students, natural resource managers, policy makers, conservationists and others interested in sustaining these precious natural resources."

Professor Hughes, who was awarded the prestigious Darwin Medal at the last ICRS in 2008 in Fort Lauderdale in the United States, said the major themes for Cairns 2012 included climate change, fish and fisheries, genomics, management tools, and the human dimension of coral reefs.

Professor Harding said that it would be a wonderful opportunity for Australia to play host to so many eminent scientists.

"It is also a recognition of JCU's standing internationally in the field of coral reef studies," she said. "Together with AIMS and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, we have some of the world's leading reef scientists already working in this part of Queensland. The ICRS will be a most welcome addition.

"Our leading role in the symposium is a perfect fit with the University's Strategic Intent of a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide," Professor Harding said.

The sponsoring organisation, the International Society for Reef Studies (ISRS), announced in Florida in May that the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, which is headquartered at James Cook University, had won the bid to host the next conference.

Today's announcement reveals when and where the symposium will be held.

ISRS President, Professor Rich Aronson said in May: "We are delighted that JCU will host the Symposium. The University's intellectual standing and organisational capabilities, combined with the opportunity for delegates to explore Australia's coral reef resources, are unmatched.

"ISRS will be working closely with the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies to put on a top-notch conference in 2012," he said.

Previous ICRS have been held in Fort Lauderdale (2008), Okinawa (2004), Bali (2000), Panama (1996), Guam (1992), Australia (1988), Tahiti (1985), the Philippines (1980), Miami (1977), Australia (1974), and the 1st ICRS in India (1969).

With the announcement of Cairns as the next venue, Australia is the only country to host this international forum three times.

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