

Media release: Friday 12 December 2025

One of world's largest reef restoration trials during Reef spawning

Photos and video available: [PDP NORTH DEC 2025 - FotoWeb](#)

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) has led one of the world's largest reef restoration tests on a coral reef ecosystem during the recent mass spawning on the Great Barrier Reef.

Under the Pilot Deployments Program (PDP), spawn was collected in partnership with locally based groups in far north Queensland, to rear millions of young corals. These were placed onto test reefs near Cairns, Port Douglas and around the Keppel Islands, further south.

This was done using two different science techniques and the power of people — their skills, vessels and local knowledge.

The aim of the reef restoration methods being tested is to create a means to fast-track coral recovery on degraded reefs, when needed.

The methods were developed under the [Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program \(RRAP\)](#), a collaboration of experts across Australia developing and testing novel scientific solutions to help the Great Barrier Reef and other coral reefs survive in the decades ahead, as the world endeavours to arrest global warming.

AIMS' PDP Director Dr Mark Gibbs and his team are teaching tourism and fishing operators and other marine businesses how to coral seed on a large scale, while also harnessing their local knowledge and expertise.

"We'll gain first-time insights into best-practice approaches, supply chains, technology and the people power needed to build a large-scale operational reef restoration program and a supporting aquaculture industry," he said.

"Over the next three years, we'll be improving the efficacy of deploying RRAP interventions at scale on the Great Barrier Reef."

Dr Gibbs said the best future for coral reefs to survive the effects of climate-induced marine heatwaves required global carbon emissions reduction alongside best-practice reef management and innovative scientific interventions.

Cairns Reef Fishing General Manager Corey Brown said participating in the program had connected himself and his crew to the lifecycle of the Reef and reminded them of its essential role in sustaining healthy marine populations.

“As operators who spend our lives on the water, we see firsthand that the Reef is under pressure,” he said.

“Being part of this program reminds us how vital a healthy reef is — not just for tourism and fishing, but for the entire ecosystem that depends on it.

“We want the Reef to be thriving for future generations of anglers, families and visitors. Supporting this work is one way we can give back and help protect the place that supports our livelihoods.”

AIMS will monitor these corals over the next 12 months to assess the effectiveness of the restoration methods in terms of coral survival, growth and response to stressors such as bleaching and competition with algae.

The northern test reefs are: Elford, Arlington and Agincourt.

The Pilot Deployments Program is funded by the Australian Government’s Reef Trust and led by the Australian Institute of Marine Science. RRAP is funded by the partnership between the Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

The use of the coral larval rearing pools is through AIMS’ collaborations with:

- *Professor Peter Harrison from Southern Cross University; and*
- *SECORE International {whose pools are referred to as CRIBs (Coral Rearing In-situ Basins)}.*

-ENDS-

Media contact:

Danielle Koopman, Senior Communications Officer: media@aims.gov.au; +61 499 744 677

Images and vision: [PDP NORTH DEC 2025 - FotoWeb](#)

More about the Australian Institute of Marine Science:

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) is Australia’s tropical marine research agency. In existence for half a century, it plays a pivotal role in providing large-scale, long-term and world-class research that helps governments, industry and the wider community to make informed decisions about the management of Australia’s marine estate. AIMS science leads to healthier marine ecosystems; economic, social and environmental benefits for all Australians; and protection of coral reefs from climate change. More here: <https://www.aims.gov.au/>