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Minister for the Environment and Energy

MEDIA RELEASE

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MONITORING REEF HEALTH IN THE CORAL SEA

The first stage of a three-year program commissioned by Parks Australia to monitor the health of coral reefs in the Coral Sea begins this week.

The Coalition Government has provided \$1,065,180 to fund the research and James Cook University will be contributing an extra \$800,000 in-kind. It is just one example of how the Coalition Government is investing in important science supporting Australian marine parks.

Scientists from James Cook University and Parks Australia staff will spend a total of 100 days at sea over three years, monitoring the health of 20 large reef ecosystems each year. They will travel to some of Australia's most remote, pristine and unique reefs and will be monitoring places such as the world-renowned Osprey Reef as well as the rarely visited Mellish Reef.

In this International Year of the Reef, scientists and Parks Australia staff will gain a better understanding of coral reef ecosystems, including how reefs are connected, the impacts of coral bleaching and how reefs are recovering. They will also be looking at the levels and impact of marine debris in the region.

The Coral Sea has significant populations of internationally threatened species as well as species found nowhere else in the world. It is a popular place for fishing and diving, with visitors from around the world experiencing its offshore reefs, sand cays and deeper waters.

This significant investment builds on research collaborations between Parks Australia and James Cook University in 2016 and 2017 and shows our commitment to increasing knowledge of marine areas around Australia.

The project will provide critical insights to help Parks Australia to understand and manage the unique and precious Coral Sea marine environment under the new Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan commencing on 1 July 2018, ensuring that these areas are managed effectively for all Australians and for generations to come.

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