



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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GREATER PROTECTION URGED FOR CORAL TRIANGLE REGION

Representatives from six Asia Pacific nations, development partners and experts have converged in Townsville to discuss a regional plan to protect marine biodiversity, fisheries and food security in the Coral Triangle region.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts Peter Garrett said the Australian Government supported the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security.

“We recognise the international significance of the Coral Triangle and that threats to biodiversity and productivity must be addressed for the sake of the marine environment, let alone the 240 million people that depend on its health”.

“Coastal communities rely on healthy marine systems for food security and sustainable industries, we cannot afford to continue business as usual”.

“Australia is eager to support these six countries and we are excited about the momentum building around the Coral Triangle Initiative.”

“Australia’s northern tropical waters are adjacent to the Coral Triangle. There is value in sharing our expertise in marine conservation and protection, marine bioregional planning, sustainable fisheries management and species conservation with our neighbours,” Mr Garrett said.

The Coral Triangle covers parts of Indonesia, East Timor, Philippines, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. It is recognised as an area of global environmental significance, with the greatest marine biological diversity on the planet. Within the region can be found 75 per cent of the world’s known coral species, one third of the world’s coral reef area and more than 3,000 species of fish. Representatives from each of these nations are attending the Townsville gathering from 10-14 November.

“I expect that this week’s meetings will be a key step towards providing greater protection for this outstanding tropical marine environment.”

The Coral Reef Protection and Management Workshop is being held at the Southbank Convention Centre (Rydges) from 10-14 November 2008. Media representatives are invited to attend a news conference at 10am, Monday, 10 November, with Minister Garrett, Research Director of the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences Dr Peter Doherty and Director of the Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies Prof. Terry Hughes.