



MEDIA RELEASE

\$1 MILLION TO FIGHT THREAT TO GREAT BARRIER REEF

Great Barrier Reef research received a \$1 million injection today with the announcement of Future Reef - a four-year partnership between Comalco (part of the Rio Tinto Aluminium Group) and the Great Barrier Reef Research Foundation.

The Future Reef partnership will fund the world's first investigation into the impact of ocean acidification on the Great Barrier Reef, arguably one of the most critical issues facing the Reef and the very valuable industries that depend upon it.

Comalco has been involved as a member of the Foundation since 2000 and Managing Director Judy Stewart said the partnership was the result of a shared interest in climate change.

"The Foundation and its members believe climate change is one of the most critical issues affecting both the short and long-term survival of the Reef," Ms Stewart said.

"The Future Reef partnership provides us with a unique opportunity for industry and science to work together on an issue of mutual concern," she said

Comalco Chief Executive, Oscar Groeneveld, said that as a major aluminium producer, the Company had a vital interest in the impacts of climate change.

"We have a commitment to reduce emissions from our business and to develop a better understanding of the contribution aluminium can make to the environment through its lifecycle advantages," Mr Groeneveld said.

Future Reef will involve a contribution of over A\$1 million over four years from Comalco and will include two programmes, both overseen by the Foundation and run by The University of Queensland.

The first is the four-year Ocean Acidification Research Project - the world's first significant investigation into the impact of increased concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the ocean and on the Great Barrier Reef. (See Ocean Acidification Fact Sheet)

The second is the four-year Comalco Employee Programme (Reef Searchers) which will involve approximately 120 Comalco employees in 12 expeditions to Heron Island Research Station.

Employees will work alongside reef experts to collect data for the research project.

Ms Stewart said The Future Reef partnership allowed the Foundation to deliver upon its core objective.

“The Foundation’s main aim is to deliver private sector funding to the research community and to seek out informed solutions to the Reef’s most urgent threats,” she said.

Mr Groeneveld said The Future Reef partnership allowed Comalco to be actively involved in reef preservation and to add to the scientific knowledge about climate change.

“Future Reef offers Comalco employees an exceptional opportunity to contribute to the development of management systems supporting sustainable use of the Great Barrier Reef,” Mr Groeneveld said.

“We hope we will learn more about climate change and that the experience will encourage us to drive energy efficiency across our whole business with even greater determination.”

Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, who directs The University of Queensland’s Centre for Marine Studies and the Heron Island Research Station, said the Future Reef partnership was providing the resources for scientists to investigate one of the biggest questions facing the Great Barrier Reef.

“The Future Reef partnership is allowing us to produce the first risk assessment for ocean acidification for the Great Barrier Reef and lay the groundwork for developing solutions and remedies to its impacts,” Prof Hoegh-Guldberg said.

For further information:

Genevieve Fraser (07) 3867 1850 or 0409 585 421