



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **East Timor Science Trips Planned to Continue**

Northern Territory marine scientist Professor Karen Edyvane is confident trips to East Timor in 2007 to assist the country in understanding and protecting its marine biodiversity, will go ahead, despite the fledgling nation's fragile security situation.

Professor Edyvane, the Principal Scientist (Marine Biodiversity) of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA), said the first of several trips was planned for February 2007.

"The trips aim to continue the solid groundwork that was laid last month by scientists from NRETA, Charles Darwin University and the Australian Institute of Marine Science, as well as cultural experts from the Australian National University," Professor Edyvane said.

"Last month's trip identified particular individuals and partner agencies within the East Timor Government who will benefit from the training and marine research programs that will be undertaken.

"Several field trips are planned for 2007 - with one planned for February focusing on scientific training and finalising the logistics and locations for a large-scale biological survey of the underwater marine habitats.

"This fieldwork during 2007 will primarily map and describe Timor's marine ecosystems, including its spectacular coral reef habitats.

"In addition, we will be undertaking more detailed biological mapping and assessment of Timor's first Marine Park, in the Jacu-Tutuala-Com region.

"The Timorese have already undertaken a considerable amount of remote sensing, but ground-truthing and field work is required to find out the nature of these marine habitats.

"Unfortunately aerial photographs can't tell us what type of seagrasses, coral reefs and mobile marine life is present."

Professor Edyvane said the field trips by NRETA are part of several collaborative coastal and marine research, planning and training projects in East Timor, which have been made possible through recent funding from the East Timor Government.

The principal aim of these projects is to build local capacity and fostering regional economic development, particularly with marine industries, such as eco-tourism, fisheries and aquaculture.

While in East Timor last month, Professor Edyvane also spent some time with her identical twin sister Katherine, who is a surgeon at Dili Hospital, East Timor's only hospital.

Professor Edyvane and Katherine caught up again in Darwin earlier this week during Katherine's stopover back to her home in Perth.

“Katherine will definitely be back in Dili early next year to continue working at Dili Hospital,” Professor Edyvane said.

“Despite the security situation, it is vital that the NT, as their closest neighbours, assist the Timorese with building a future. We have so much to offer each other.”

Ends

**Media Note – For more information contact Karen Edyvane on 0401 115 786**

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