

Media Release:

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Darwin Lagoons Part of National Program

Lagoons in the Darwin region have been selected as part of a national program to test ways of assessing lagoon health.

Dr Simon Townsend from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA) said the study has commenced.

“What makes Darwin so special is that it has more than 100 lagoons,” Dr Townsend said.

“The lagoons are a quiet feature of our landscape and are usually hidden behind fringing vegetation.”

NRETA’s Aquatic Health Unit recently gained funding of \$70,000 from the Australian Government to assess the health of the lagoons, using nationally proposed indicators in the Darwin Region.

“Indicators on catchment disturbance, physical form and processes, hydrological disturbance, water and soil quality, fringing zone and biota will all be evaluated and aggregated to assess lagoon health,” Dr Townsend said.

“We are trying to establish a relationship between what happens in the catchment and the health of the lagoon.

“Not a lot is known about the lagoons, including their ecological health or even how to measure their ecological health.

“With the Darwin region being increasingly developed we need to ensure the lagoons are protected.

“While the lagoons may be in good shape now, we cannot be sure without a protocol to measure their health and a monitoring effort.”

Dr Townsend said Perth was once surrounded by lagoons that today are in generally poor state because they are polluted and have had their natural water regime altered.

“The fate of Darwin lagoons need not be the same,” Dr Townsend said.

The project is run in collaboration with NRETA’s Land and Water Division, with support from NRETA’s Herbarium and the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (DPIFM).

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Dr Simon Townsend on 8999 3413

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