

Media Release:

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Students Participate in Darwin Harbour Seagrass Survey

Students from Darwin High School and Casuarina Senior College took part in their first Darwin Harbour seagrass survey today as part of an international Seagrass-Watch monitoring program with the Northern Territory Government Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport (NRETAS).

NRETAS Marine Biodiversity Director Tony Griffiths said NRETAS staff and around 60 students spent three hours assessing three seagrass meadows at Casuarina, Fannie Bay and Mindil Beach.

“Seagrasses are the main diet of dugongs and green turtles and provide a habitat for many smaller marine animals, some of which – like prawns and fish – are commercially important,” said Mr Griffiths.

“They also absorb nutrients from coastal run-off and stabilise sediment, helping to keep the water clear.

“That’s why monitoring is so important – it raises awareness on the condition and trends of nearshore seagrass ecosystems and provides an early warning of any major environmental changes in Darwin Harbour.”

The project launched last year, receiving \$30,000 in funding from the Territory Government as part of a wider initiative to monitor and protect Darwin Harbour.

“We all need to work together to protect the valuable seagrass along our coasts, and projects like this one give young people the opportunity to get involved and learn how they can make a difference,” said Mr Griffiths.

The students are required to follow Seagrass-Watch survey guidelines when assessing and collecting samples from their quadrats, which they will monitor on an annual basis.

The data they collect from these sites will be submitted to the organisation, where it will become part of a national database, and results will be available on its website (www.seagrasswatch.org).

Seagrass-Watch is the largest scientific, non-destructive, seagrass assessment and monitoring program in the world, with monitoring occurring at over 300 sites across 17 countries.

It originated from community concerns about seagrass loss and community interest in science, as well as government objectives in long-term monitoring of critical fisheries habitats.

Ends

Media Note – for more information, contact Tony Griffiths on 8995 5004 or 0437 741 670

**Images – 1. Tony Griffiths, bottom right, with students from Darwin High School.
2. Darwin High School students Jim Browne, left, Alex Geronimo, back, and Chris Zhao, right.**

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