

Aiming for a bright outlook

THE Australian Institute of Marine Science has undergone a major restructure in a bid to further enhance its strong international reputation.

Twenty-five years after its establishment at Cape Ferguson, south of Townsville, AIMS has become recognised as a world leader in marine research.

Its scientists are currently working in several developing countries as well as northern Australia.

In the Chinese province of Fujian, they are guiding farmers on how to better dispose of water waste, improve water quality, agricultural practices and develop aquaculture opportunities.

On the Great Barrier Reef, AIMS scientists are feeding vital data to reef managers, and in Western Australia they are helping private companies to explore marine resources.

Despite recent successes, the need to update the institute's business strategies has become evident to its hierarchy.

Chief executive officer, professor Stephen Hall said the move to restructure was vital to steer the organisation into the future.

"The restructure of AIMS was essentially needed to ensure the enormous talent of our employees was better utilised, to showcase our key areas of expertise and increase our external earning capacity," he said.

Under professor Hall's guidance, the institute has, during the past year, rationalised its core research divisions from five sections down to only three.

"We wanted to concentrate on our recognised core capabilities – the fields in which we excel – and thus deliver greater benefits

Exciting developments at AIMS will see the institute earn further international acclaim. JOANNE DESMOND reports

to the Government, our customers and the general public," Professor Hall said.

The three newly structured divisions include Coastal Processes, Marine Biotechnology and Conservation and Biodiversity.

One research project being conducted under the Coastal Processes banner is the study of toxins and land-based sediments leaching into the marine environment.

It's an issue that continues to grab worldwide attention and has become increasingly controversial.

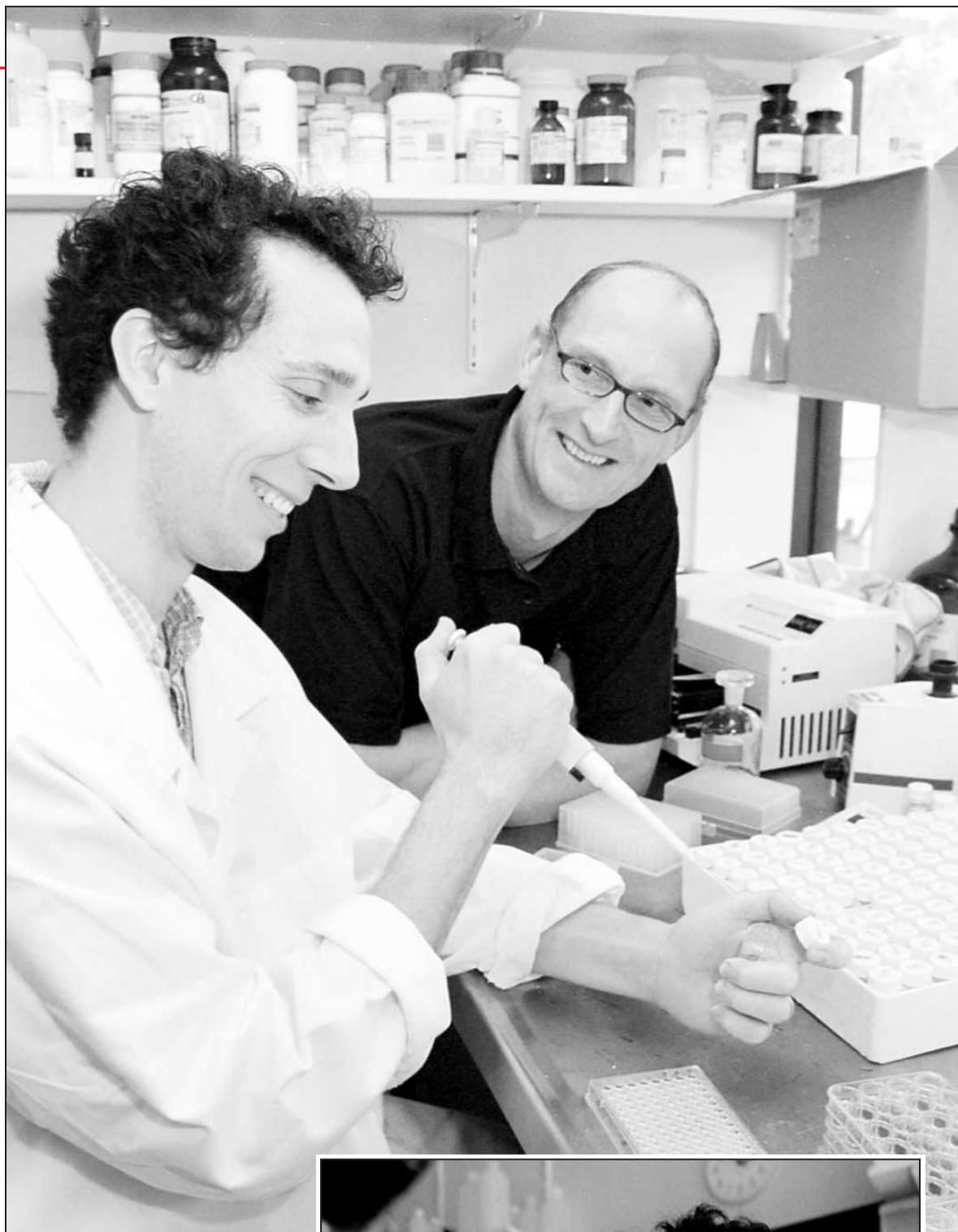
The second core research area, Conservation and Biodiversity, essentially looks at the protection and preservation of the sea, by providing information on how to better manage it.

In this division, scientists are monitoring the reef and studying problems such as the Crown of Thorns starfish, its impact on the reef and ways to manage it.

Coral bleaching is another hot issue on which scientists are working to develop maps showing high risk areas, as well as studying trends within coral communities and how they can change over time.

The third division of AIMS is the area of Marine Biotechnology.

Already the Commonwealth Government has injected \$17



ON TARGET . . . Professor Stephen Hall, with scientist Jason Doyle, is confident of AIMS' future

million for new infrastructure at AIMS, with \$5.6 million going towards a new purpose-built facility to study biotechnology.

And research is showing a new generation of environmentally safe herbicides, which attack weeds and not crops.

The common sponge is also showing promise as a new industry for medicinal and cosmetic purposes, while an exciting recent development is the discovery of a bacteria found in shallow water corals which reproduce a very powerful antioxidant, Co-enzyme Q, which could help humans live healthily into old age.

In addition to restructuring the research divisions, an employee survey was conducted to identify internal management systems and communication flows which could be improved. Staff identified marketing as an area needing more attention.

"A marketing drive will help the scientists capture more international funding, which in turn enables them to do exciting science. We are developing a much better understanding of needs in the community and of potential funding sources to supplement the funding we are allocated by the Federal Government," AIMS science and communication manager Theresa Millard said.



NEW DIRECTION . . . the AIMS facility, south of Townsville