



MEDIA RELEASE

## **Mars and Reef Magic collaborate to boost coral resilience on the Great Barrier Reef with installation of Australia's first Reef Star system**

***EMBARGOED UNTIL: 12.00 AM Wednesday 24 June 2020***

**Cairns, QLD – 24 June 2020:** Mars Sustainable Solutions, part of Mars Incorporated, and Reef Magic Cruises today announced the successful installation of a system to support the long-term resilience of the Great Barrier Reef's marine ecosystem. The project is a collaboration with James Cook University and local Indigenous rangers.

Reef Magic marine biologists including Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Master Reef Guides installed the first Reef Stars at the Reef Magic Marine World Pontoon, 40kms offshore from Cairns on Thursday 18 June 2020. The team plans to install approximately 50 additional Reef Stars every six months. This will form part of a five-year scientific study with James Cook University to trial the system's effectiveness in stabilising coral rubble resulting from Cyclone Yasi in 2011.

Central to the [Mars Assisted Reef Restoration System \(MARRS\)](#), the individual Reef Stars are hexagonal sand-coated steel structures that provide a stable base for coral fragments to grow. They have shown impressive results from the initial conception in Indonesia, where coral cover at sites has increased from 10% to over 60% within just two years. The collaborative program of work spans several countries across the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Ocean.

Eric Fisher, Biology Manager at Reef Magic and GBR Biology, says the project is about boosting coral resilience and site stewardship: "This partnership is a great example of using the latest science to underpin our approach to sustainable tourism, and we are particularly pleased to trial this system for the first time in Australia."

The scalable system to increase coral reef ecosystem resilience was pioneered by the company better known for its consumer goods in 2011, in collaboration with local communities and marine scientists from around the world.

Alicia McArdle, Marine Program Manager for Mars Sustainable Solutions, said: "We are thrilled to be bringing the Reef Star system to Australia to help future-proof the health and biodiversity of the Great Barrier Reef. Our goal is to provide coral colonies with valuable time to adapt and increase their resilience at the same time as society seeks to reduce its emissions to reverse the impacts of climate change".



*Before the installation at Moore Reef showing coral rubble*



*Divers completing the installation of MARRS Reef Stars at Moore Reef*

John O'Sullivan, CEO of Experience Co, Reef Magic's parent company, said: "We are delighted to be part of this initiative with this collaboration and look forward to continuing innovative site stewardship around our pontoon. Reef Magic is committed to delivering immersive, memorable and life-changing experiences on the Great Barrier Reef."



The Honorable Sussan Ley MP, Minister for the Environment, welcomed the announcement, stating: "I'm pleased to see businesses, such as Mars, and the tourism industry trialling innovative approaches to help support reef ecosystems at iconic sites like Moore Reef. The Australian Government, through the Reef 2050 Plan, is committed to broader efforts to help the reef resist, adapt to, and recover from the impacts of climate change."

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Hi Res images available: <https://www.dropbox.com/home/MARRS%20Moore%20Reef%20Media%20Release>

**FAST FACTS**

- As a global business, Mars is committed to playing our part in identifying solutions to improve environmental outcomes in the countries where we operate.
- Mars is proud to have operated in Australia for over 100 years and see an opportunity to bring the success of the Mars Assisted Reef Restoration System (MARRS) to the Great Barrier Reef.
- In line with our [Sustainable in A Generation Plan](#), Mars has developed a cost-effective, scalable and proven method to rebuild coral reefs – [the Mars Assisted Reef Restoration System \(MARRS\)](#).
- Since 2007, we have been working with leading experts, researchers and communities in Indonesia to rebuild approximately four hectares of coral reef in Sulawesi, making it one of the largest coral reef restoration programs in the world.
- The system is based on rebuilding the reef from the bottom-up using uniquely shaped and coated steel structures - called 'reef stars' - with live coral fragments tied to them.
- The individual reef stars are connected together underwater to form a large web on the surface of the degraded reef and secured to the ocean floor. This provides a perfect, stable platform for corals to grow.
- To date, through the Mars Assisted Reef Restoration System (MARRS) we've installed more than 19,000 'Reef Stars' covered with more than 280,000 coral fragments that has seen coral cover increase from 10% to over 60% in two years and fish abundance and biomass has increased by 114%.
- Indonesia Program Results: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKPA3R5izT4>

**About Mars Sustainable Solutions™**

The Mars Sustainable Solutions mission is to enable scalable solutions that increase the regenerative capacity of the ecosystems we depend on, improving the resilience and livelihoods of the communities with which we work. Underpinned by science-based evidence, we are ensuring the authenticity of our work and the solutions we develop, as well as the long-term viability of our business.

**About Reef Magic**

Reef Magic is committed to delivering immersive, memorable and life-changing experiences on the Great Barrier Reef. Along with Dreamtime Dive and Snorkel, the Great Barrier Reef's only Indigenous cruising product; this continues to demonstrate Reef Magic's commitment to showcasing the natural wonder of the world through the lens of science, sustainability and sea country. Reef Magic Cruises is owned by Experience Co., an Australian owned company providing thrilling adventure experiences in 18 locations in Australia and New Zealand.