



Great Barrier
Reef Foundation

Media Release

25 OCTOBER 2018

Coral reef matchmakers win innovation challenge

An out of the box idea to match-make coral and deliver new coral ‘babies’ using robotics onto the reef has won the Great Barrier Reef Foundation’s Out of the Blue Box Reef Innovation Challenge, securing \$300,000 AUD (approx. \$225,000 USD) to bring the idea to life.

The proposal to restore coral reefs on a grand scale is the brainchild of Southern Cross University’s Professor Peter Harrison and Queensland University of Technology’s Professor Matthew Dunbabin whose innovative concept was declared the winner from a short list of five finalists.

The concept is designed to be activated during the annual mass coral spawning event this November on the Great Barrier Reef when corals reproduce simultaneously in spectacular fashion.

Scientists will capture hundreds of millions of coral spawn from the corals that have survived the two recent mass coral bleachings, and rear them into baby corals in mass quantities inside large floating enclosures.

A new generation of robot will then play ‘stork’, delivering the tiny baby coral larvae out onto reefs.

Great Barrier Reef Foundation Managing Director Anna Marsden and The Tiffany & Co. Foundation Chairman and President Anisa Kamadoli Costa congratulated Prof. Harrison and Prof. Dunbabin on the project that has great potential to improve Reef recovery.

“The highly innovative project brings together the scientist who pioneered the coral IVF (larval reseeded) technique, with the robotics team that created RangerBot, the award-winning autonomous reef protector,” said Ms Marsden.

Their plan is to greatly increase the scale of coral spawn that can be leveraged during the Reef’s annual mass coral spawning event and to rear of hundreds of millions of larvae, or baby corals, that will be settled back out on damaged areas of the northern Great Barrier Reef starting in 2018.



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This new upscaling approach will allow up to a 100-times increase in the number of coral babies produced as well as better targeting to settle them onto the reefs that most need them.

The result will be a much-needed boost to restore coral reefs on a large scale and speed up the recovery of ecosystems that have been hard hit by coral bleaching and other impacts.

Ms Marsden added, “The recent IPCC report has reinforced there is a closing window of opportunity for the world to act on climate change and the sharp threat facing coral reefs globally.

“Our increasingly changing climate underscores the urgent need to fund the next generation of ideas that give our coral reefs a fighting chance and this is exactly what this challenge aims to achieve with the support of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation and partners The University of Queensland and SecondMuse.”

The winning idea has the potential to immediately impact the health of corals across the Great Barrier Reef but also has potential application for coral reefs globally.

The Tiffany & Co. Foundation Chairman and President, Anisa Kamadoli Costa said, “As part of our support for conservation efforts, the Out of the Blue Box Reef Innovation Challenge aims to kickstart and accelerate novel solutions from around the world to bolster the Great Barrier Reef’s long-term resilience.”

“The Tiffany & Co. Foundation has supported coral conservation worldwide for nearly two decades and we are thrilled to be supporting new ideas to conserve coral reefs—innovators such as the Challenge winners are a reason for hope to preserve these precious ecosystems for future generations.”

New People’s Choice Prize of \$150,000 AUD launched today

The high calibre, and diversity, of the finalists in the Out of the Blue Box challenge presented a difficult decision for the international judging panel of marine, science and innovation experts.

As a result, an additional prize of up to \$150,000 AUD will be awarded to the finalist whose idea receives the most support from members of the public.

“The finalists range from technical solutions utilising probiotics, 3D printing, through to a behaviour change program with wide-scale benefits,” Ms Marsden said.

“We are delighted to announce that a second novel solution to help preserve our precious coral ecosystem will be funded through the support of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation.”



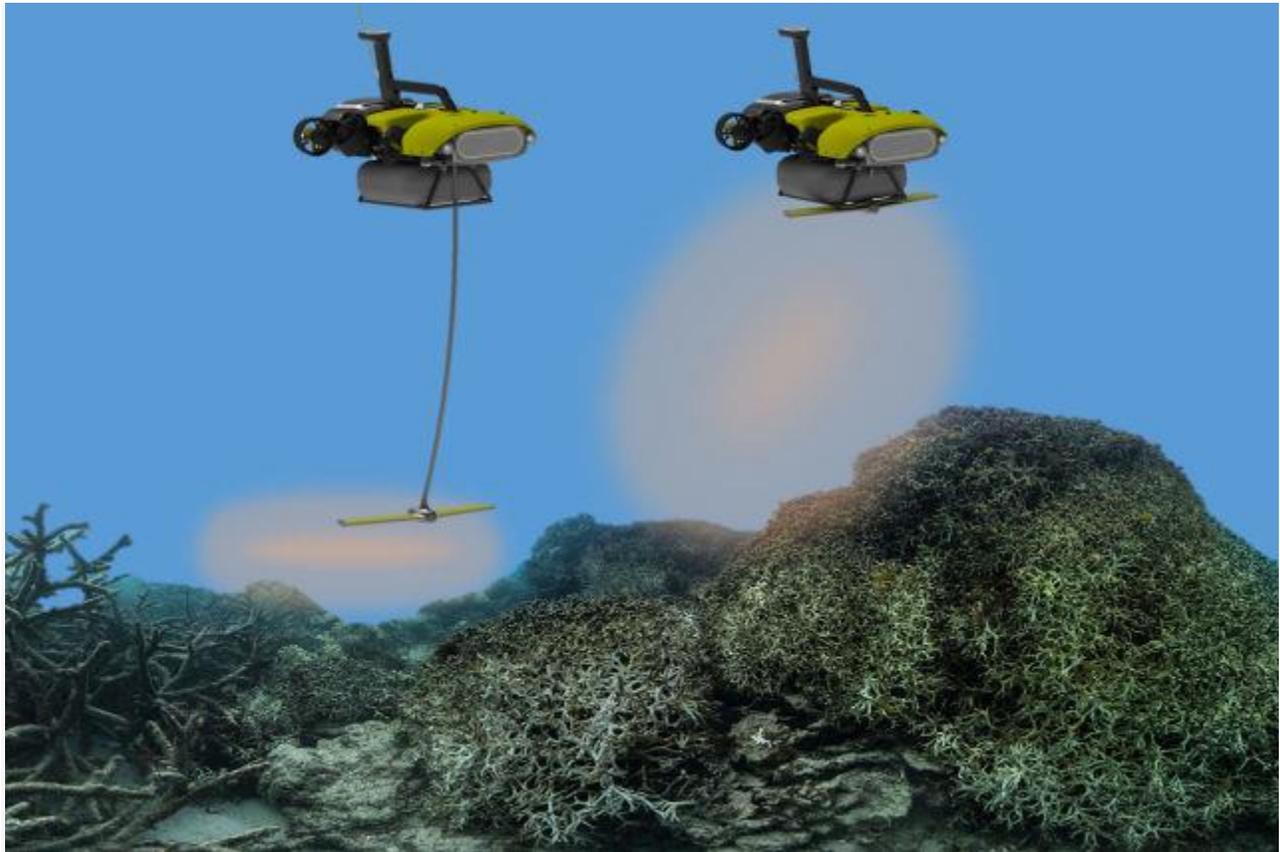
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Over the next two weeks, the public will have the opportunity to vote on their favourite finalist via the Challenge website: www.outofthebluebox.org

Voting for the People's Choice Award will close at midnight AEST Friday 9 November 2018.

The Out of the Blue Box Reef Innovation Challenge attracted 63 submissions from 15 countries spanning the categories of finance, technology and people.

The Tiffany & Co. Foundation's support for the Challenge was made possible through a grant to The University of Queensland in America Inc.



LarvalBot - an adaptation of RangerBot by QUT Prof. Matt Dunbabin