Conference spawns gathering of minds

Coral bleaching, the impact of warming waters on coral reefs, marine debris and the management of marine parks are just some of the topics to be discussed in Coffs Harbour this weekend.

The National Marine Science Centre is hosting the 85th Annual Australian Coral Reef Society Conference (ACRS) in the city this weekend, bringing together more than 130 leading national and international coral reef researchers.

Local conference organiser Dr Anna Scott, from Southern Cross University’s School of Environmental Science and Management, said this was the major national conference for coral research.

“We are really pleased to be hosting the conference here in Coffs Harbour for the first time,” Dr Scott said.

“It’s a great opportunity to showcase the excellent research facilities at the National Marine Science Centre and also the beautiful Solitary Islands Marine Park.”

The annual ACRS conference brings together Australia’s coral reef community to exchange ideas and the latest research findings, and to encourage and reward postgraduate students in their endeavours.

Speakers at the conference will include: Professor Peter Mumby, The University of Queensland; Dr Mark Meekan, Australian Institute of Marine Science, WA; Dr Alan Jordan, NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water; Dr Maoz Fine, Bar-Ilan University, Israel; and Professor Maria Byrne, University of Sydney.

Concerned with the study and protection of coral reefs, The Australian Coral Reef Society is the oldest organisation of its type in the world.

The conference will be opened this evening by Southern Cross University Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Lee and will continue on Saturday and Sunday at the Novotel Pacific Bay Resort.