



## History of the Tropical Forest Research Centre

### History of the Research Centre

The Tropical Forest Research Centre (TFRC) at Atherton had its beginnings in the late 1960s with an agreement between the Queensland Department of Forestry and the Commonwealth Forestry & Timber Bureau.

The Department's research group based in Atherton had recently expanded its activities into tropical rain forest management, concerned with the development of affordable silvicultural techniques and probable timber yields in cutting cycles following harvesting and treatment.

The Bureau's Forest Research Institute needed support in rain forest botany and ecology, and from providing these fundamentals the TFRC has expanded with extensive national and international linkages to provide basic and applied research into a range of different subjects.

These include work on soils, hydrology, plant taxonomy, ecology and physiology, mycology and entomology, vertebrate ecology and behaviour, spatial modeling and aspects of past and future climate change.

Subject matter has ranged from studies of natural forest and savanna systems to replanted rain forest and forestry plantations to papaya and cashew crops.

From the strictly biological beginnings the research foci have also developed to encompass social, economic and conservation planning work, pest and weed management, rain forest water balances, the effects of fire, mine site rehabilitation and natural resource management.

Major outcomes include work on rare and threatened species, understanding of long term forest dynamics, and the Rain Forest Key.

### History of the Atherton site

The TFRC, located on a 3.64 hectare residential block on Maunds Road in Atherton, North Queensland, is a research facility, including offices, student accommodation, arboretum, library, various types of laboratories, an extensive herbarium, a dark room for observing nocturnal animals, a greenhouse, glasshouses, a potting shed, a workshop and a small animal house for short term research projects.

There are 35 scientists, students and support staff from CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, CSIRO Plant Industry and CSIRO Land & Water.

It also provides a research base for a number of scientists and students engaged in projects within the Rainforest CRC, Weeds CRC, Savanna CRC (Cooperative Research Centre) and for other researchers, including international scientists and students studying aspects of the tropical forest environment.

Prior to purchase in 1970 by the Commonwealth Government, the land was used for growing maize, peanuts, potatoes, and for grazing horses and cattle.



In 1970, the site was purchased by the Commonwealth for the development of the Department of National Development, Forestry and Timber Bureau. The centre was opened on the 21st of October 1971, as the headquarters of the now defunct Forestry Research Institute.



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The construction of the laboratories was completed in 1971. Ownership was transferred to CSIRO in 1975 at which time a couple of employees were transferred from CSIRO Tobacco Research Station at Walkamin and from the Queensland Department of Forestry in Atherton.

There have been several extensions. The first was an extension to the herbarium in 1977-78. In 1987 a major redevelopment of the site occurred. Works included the construction of a new wing with offices, research laboratories and a conference room.

In the early 1990s Dr Graham Harrington, the then Director of TFRC, teamed up with Dr Jiro Kikkawa to promote the formation of a CRC for Tropical Rainforest Ecology and Management.

September 5, 1995 was the official opening of an extension to the herbarium, the addition of a two story building which houses the site library as well as offices and laboratories.

CSIRO also owns two other sites in Atherton: a residential building used for accommodation for visitors, situated on the corner of Maunds Road and Kelly Street, and a vacant lot, part of which contains a tree plantation, located on Grove Street.

### Officers in Charge

- Dr Geoff Stocker: 1971-1985.
- Dr Francis Crome: 1985–1986
- Dr Graham Harrington: 1986-1993
- Dr Mike Hopkins: 1993–2001
- Dr Chris Margules: 2001-2002
- Mr Andrew Graham: 2002-2003
- Dr David Hilbert: 2003 to current

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#### **CSIRO Tropical Forest Research Centre.**

**Post** Maunds Road Atherton Queensland 4883

**Phone** +61 (0)7 4091 8800 **Fax** +61 (0)7 4091 8888

**Email** [tfrc-enquiries@csiro.au](mailto:tfrc-enquiries@csiro.au)

**Web** [www.tfrc.csiro.au](http://www.tfrc.csiro.au)