

Distinguished Professorship

Professor Peter Harrison

A Southern Cross University Distinguished Professor is a highly prestigious and honorary title accorded to eminent professors or industry figures of distinction who have made exceptional and sustained contribution to their field, discipline or industry and who may demonstrably contribute to building the reputation of Southern Cross University in Australia and internationally.

Highlights

- Over the course of his tenure at Southern Cross University, [Professor Peter Harrison](#) has been awarded more than \$17 million in research grants and Antarctic field support, much of this coming from the national and international competitive research grants including prestigious category 1 funding from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and some Australian Research Council (ARC) grants.
 - In 2021 alone he has been awarded \$2.7m in funding for two separate projects from the Australian Government Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program (RRAP) and from the [US-based Paul G Allen Family Foundation](#).
- [Southern Cross University's membership of the RRAP Joint Venture](#) – the only NSW university to be included – is largely due to Professor Harrison's longstanding work on the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) and his pioneering restoration work.
- A prodigious research scientist, publishing over **200** scientific research papers, books, invited major review chapters and major reports. His work has been cited more than 12,000 times by other researchers, highlighting his research leadership.
- [Awarded the 1992 Eureka Prize for Environmental Research](#) (joint recipient) for the discovery of and research on the mass coral spawning phenomenon on the GBR (first published in [Harrison et al. 1984 Science: 223: 1186-1189](#)). This discovery led to a global change in understanding sexual reproduction in reef-building corals and development of new techniques used around the world today.
- In 2015 he jointly received the [Whitley Commendation Award](#) for the book [The Action Plan for Australian Mammals 2012](#), which catalogues the conservation status of all terrestrial and marine mammal species in Australia and has become highly cited.
- A distinguished record of teaching excellence. Has been awarded an **Australian Learning and Teaching Council citation** for outstanding University Teaching, and two **University Teaching Excellence Awards**. He

has produced **consistent outstanding student evaluations** for his teaching over a 30-year career.

- A significant track record of higher degree research supervision, and is responsible for more than some 60 completions (PhDs, Masters and Honours), including multiple Chancellor's Medals awarded to his PhD students for outstanding theses and University Medals for Honours theses.
- In recognition of his leadership in marine science, Professor Harrison has been appointed by Ministers for the Environment to serve on various national scientific committees including:
 - Australian Government's **Threatened Species Scientific Committee** from 2005-2015 (Deputy Chair from 2009)
 - Christmas Island Expert Working Group 2009-2010
 - National Environmental Research Program Advisory Panel in 2010
 - two Expert Panels to assess the impacts of a proposed Supertrawler operation on marine wildlife
 - Member of the 2012 DIISRTE Australian Science Delegation to the Australia-EU JSTCC Meeting in Brussels and the Australian-German JSTM Cooperation Meeting in Bonn.
- An appointed member of the Port Curtis and Port Alma Ecosystem Research and Monitoring Program Advisory Panel, the Sea World Research and Rescue Foundation Scientific Committee, and a member of the IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (Oceania).
- Selected as the Project Leader with the United Nations in 1995 on a funded mission

to assess the impacts of the first Gulf War on the coral reef systems of Kuwait

- [A new coral species discovered in the Arabian Gulf named after him \(*Porites harrisoni*\)](#) in honour of his coral research.
- Has led two major research projects on impacts of fuel pollutants on marine invertebrates in Antarctica with the Australian Antarctic Division.
- Demonstrated outstanding academic and research leadership over three decades at Southern Cross University including representation on Academic Board and elected staff representative on the Southern Cross University Council. In addition, he led the development of two highly successful research centres at the University: as Director of the Whale Research Centre (2002-2010); and Founding Director of the [Marine Ecology Research Centre](#) (2010-2021).