

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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University launches \$23 million national marine biodiversity research hub

The University of Tasmania will today launch a \$23 million national research initiative designed to protect and conserve marine biodiversity – continuing the island’s role as a global beacon of excellence in the marine sciences.

The University’s Institute of Marine and Antarctic Science (IMAS) will lead the Marine Biodiversity Hub, a collaborative project between 10 national research partners and management agencies.

The hub, led by Professor Nic Bax, builds on earlier programs to inform and understand marine biodiversity management and conservation.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said hosting the hub for the third time placed the University at the frontline of efforts to better understand and protect one of the nation’s greatest natural assets: its rich and diverse marine life.

“This hub is here because our University and our island has developed a world-class understanding of these themes,” Professor Rathjen said. “It is very difficult to be the best in the world at something, but this is an area in which that claim can be supported.

“As a result, we tend to attract the very best researchers, and eager young minds to study here.

“The hub will give our students access to world-class scientists working in Australia and overseas, providing opportunities to work across the science policy interface, develop quantitative capabilities and experience marine fieldwork.”

The hub will monitor and report on coastal marine species and ecosystems, support national marine planning and restoration efforts and contribute to recovery plans for listed species.

Professor Bax said the work of the hub would inform those managing marine areas, but also ocean users, industry and the broader public.

“Australia’s ocean territory is greater than its landmass, and most of the action lies beneath the surface, invisible to the naked eye,” he said.

“We need to know not only what is there, but how it is being affected by human activities (including management) and what actions could be taken to improve its value to the Australian public. This is not easy.

“The hub brings together more than 100 scientists from 10 partner agencies to look beneath the ocean surface, and measure, predict and report on how the ocean is responding to pressures such as climate change and the use of marine resources from offshore shipping to coastal pollution.

The hub falls under the banner of the six-year, \$142 million National Environmental Science Programme, an initiative to help decision-makers understand, manage and conserve Australia’s environment by funding six hubs to undertake world-class biodiversity and climate science.

Information released by:

University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office
Phone: Jason Purdie, Director of Corporate Affairs, 0455 838 945
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au