

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

DATE: MONDAY 29 JUNE 2009

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



New portal shares oceans secrets

The Australian Integrated Marine Observing System (IMOS) will launch public access to all of its data-holdings today through the Ocean Portal, an innovative system that provides ocean data freely via the internet.

IMOS is a nationwide collaborative program designed to observe the oceans around Australia, including waters over the continental shelves and the 'bluewater' open oceans.

IMOS will provide data to support research on many of the critical issues facing Australia, most importantly the role of the ocean in climate change and sustainability of marine ecosystems that are under pressure from climate change.

UTAS Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Jo Laybourn-Parry, said the launch of the portal is significant on a global scale for oceanographic research, understanding and collaboration.

"It is an enormous first step forward for researchers and policy-makers accessing knowledge of the oceans around Australia," Prof Laybourn-Parry said.

The development of IMOS, based at the University of Tasmania, began in 2007, and received a major boost from the Government's Super Science Initiative announced in this year's Budget. The program is now set to run at least until 2013.

IMOS Director Professor Gary Meyers said researchers, the public and business-sectors will be able to see the oceans around Australia better than ever before.

"This is a great scientific advance for Australia," he said.

"We're beginning to have the long term time series we need to understand climate change and its impacts on the marine environment. We know the major boundary currents are changing, but we don't know what the impact on living marine resources will be."

The IMOS records are currently focused on the major boundary and ocean currents and the offshore environments along the 30,000-km-long Australian coast.

IMOS includes national facilities for Argo floats, ocean gliders, moorings, coastal radar networks, and ocean remote sensing. In many cases IMOS is using technologies that have never been used before in Australia. Capability building was an important part of getting the programs started.

“UTAS, as the headquarters for IMOS, is working to meet the needs of marine researchers and other users in Australia for many of the critical marine issues facing Australia, including the coastal oceans and the offshore blue water environment,” Prof Laybourn-Parry said.

“UTAS is the lead institution for IMOS, but we rely on the partnerships of our collaborating institutions and research facilities to maximise the benefits of Australia's role in international programs of ocean observing.

“It is an important milestone in the development of IMOS that we can now announce that the data collected will be available through the new Ocean Portal – data on topics as diverse as salinity, currents and ocean temperature.

“In this way, IMOS will continue to bring together the Australian marine research community on a national scale, to work towards common goals.”

IMOS is coordinated and managed nationally by staff at UTAS supported by CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research and is a National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy funded project.

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