

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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World-leading aquaculture breakthrough to transform lobster production

Media opportunity: Associate Professor Greg Smith will be available for interview today (Saturday) at 11am at the IMAS Tarooma site, 15-21 Nubeena Crescent, Tarooma. Lobsters used in the research will be available for images.

Australian companies are being offered the opportunity to collaborate with the University of Tasmania to scale-up and commercialise the elements of its innovative rock lobster aquaculture systems and related technologies.

Despite the high value of rock lobsters, until now the long and complex lifecycle has made it impossible to produce lobsters in a commercially scalable hatchery process.

In a breakthrough for aquaculture, funded in part by the Australian Research Council, the *ARC Research Hub for Commercial Development of Rock Lobster Culture Systems*, based at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) in Hobart, has developed a unique scalable “closed-loop” aquaculture system that makes it possible to establish a new commercial industry for sustainable rock lobster production.

The University of Tasmania’s Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), Professor Brigid Heywood, said the research is particularly advanced with the tropical rock lobster species, *Panulirus ornatus*.

“This breakthrough has created exciting commercial opportunities for Australian companies interested in establishing rock lobster aquaculture ventures.

“Importantly, it also opens the door for other species that can benefit from our advances in hatchery systems design, nutrition and disease control.”

The Director of the research program, Associate Professor Greg Smith, said the technology had been transferred to a commercial vehicle and researchers are keen to partner with others to trial the process in pilot commercial facilities.

“This world leading science, developed from over seventeen years of lobster research, has significantly reduced disease, shortened larval duration, and overcome long standing density and metamorphosis challenges.

“While further research will optimise commercial benefits and allow us to scale-up, we have demonstrated our hatchery process at our research facility in Taroona in mass rearing tanks which can annually produce tens of thousands of juveniles suitable for stocking commercial grow-out facilities.”

The University of Tasmania is now seeking partnerships with Australian companies to participate in the Research Hub, and invites expressions of interest from potential industry partners in developing a pilot commercial rock lobster hatchery, trialling use of the technology for slipper lobster, western rock lobster and crabs, or evaluating the suitability of the lobster feed formulation for other established aquaculture species.

The new Partner Organisations selected to join the Research Hub will benefit from access to the research capacity of the world leaders in lobster aquaculture and the funding leverage secured via the Australian Research Council’s Industrial Transformation Research Program.

They will join our current partners, Plastic Fabrications Group and experts at the University of Auckland and University of the Sunshine Coast.

In addition to funding from the ARC the lobster propagation program at IMAS has also received long-standing support from the Tasmanian Government and early support from the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).

The underpinning patent protected intellectual property (IP) developed to date is owned by the newly formed UTAS-Nexus Aquasciences Pty Ltd, based in Tasmania.

The University of Tasmania, as the exclusive licensee for the technology in Australia, is in the position to be able to offer new partners in the Research Hub a licence to the relevant IP to allow participants to exploit the technology in Australia and export internationally.

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