

Blue economy boost

By tbreditorial



Blue Economy CRC Research Director, Australian Maritime College Associate Professor Irene Penesis, left, with Industry, Science and Technology Minister Karen Andrews and Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies Professor Stewart Frusher.

A \$329m research partnership will be based in Tasmania to transform Australia's blue economy and generate more than \$4 billion for the national economy.

The University of Tasmania will lead the largest ever Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), bringing together expertise in seafood, renewable energy and offshore engineering.

Minister for Industry, Science and Technology Karen Andrews said the Blue Economy CRC aimed to drive an evolution in marine- based industries.

The project is a 10-year collaboration between 45 national and international partners from industry, research and government, underpinned by a \$70 million cash investment from the Federal Government. The Tasmanian Government is also a supporting partner.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Rufus Black said the project would build on our distinctive strengths in aquaculture and marine ecology, offshore engineering and marine renewable energy.

"This is big blue sky thinking fused with practical, impactful research to answer one of our planet's most critical questions: how can we sustainably feed and power ourselves from the world's oceans," Professor Black said.

"The Blue Economy CRC imagines a future where integrated seafood and renewable energy production systems operate offshore and where the community and industry have confidence they are safe, reliable, efficient and environmentally responsible.

"This work will leave a compelling legacy of high-impact research, a competitive advantage for Australian industry, and innovation, collaboration and leadership on a global scale."

The Blue Economy CRC head office will be hosted at the University of Tasmania's Launceston campus, supporting a research community of 50 PhD students and 50 postdoctoral research fellows throughout Tasmania and with partner organisations nationally and internationally.

Blue Economy CRC Research Director, Australian Maritime College Associate Professor Irene Penesis said the program was unique.

"Australia has the world's third largest exclusive economic zone and is positioned adjacent to the largest markets for seafood and energy," Associate Professor Penesis said.

"But with over 80 per cent classified as offshore, industries must be enabled to move from the coast zone into more exposed operating environments before we can secure this major opportunity for the nation.

"The CRC will translate new developments in science and technology into commercial activity."

The focus of the first five years of the program will be developing and testing new offshore aquaculture and renewable energy technologies, which will then be brought together on a single platform to demonstrate the economic and environmental benefits of co-location.

"The offshore research platform will act as a living laboratory where we can vertically integrate renewable energy and aquaculture technologies with other engineering activities, such as autonomous and remotely-operated vehicles, in a proof of concept for how we could operate in the future," Associate Professor Penesis said.

"It will be the first offshore research platform of its kind in the world and we're confident that it will deliver ground-breaking research alongside commercially viable new materials, concepts, prototypes and monitoring systems – all informed by best practice and delivered in an environmentally sustainable way."

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