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New research hub to position Australia as world leader in sustainable onshore lobster aquaculture

A new research hub launched today in Hobart is set to deliver transformational change to the lobster aquaculture industry, with its focus on developing commercial, sustainable and socially acceptable lobster production – from hatchery to market.

Headquartered at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), the [ARC Research Hub for Sustainable Onshore Lobster Aquaculture](#) was established through a prestigious \$5 million Australian Research Council (ARC) grant awarded to the University of Tasmania.

“Through this Research Hub, we’re building the knowledge required to establish the world’s first sustainable onshore lobster aquaculture industry, with our research outcomes targeted at positioning Australia at the forefront of onshore lobster aquaculture,” Research Hub Director, Professor Greg Smith said.

“It’s about providing alternate solutions for lobster culture in bio-secure and cost effective onshore systems, with an opportunity for technology transfer to other aquaculture sectors.”

The Research Hub will harness the experience of a diverse group of researchers, technical staff and industry partners, using state-of-the-art research and commercial facilities and advanced manufacturing.

Key partners in the IMAS-led project include the University of Auckland, University of the Sunshine Coast, and Australian industry partners Ornatas and PFG Group, representing a total research investment in excess of \$26 million.

“The project will deliver advances in traditional lobster aquaculture practices that will underpin the establishment of a new industry,” Prof Smith said.

“Research outcomes will be closely connected to commercial success by linking sustainability and technological advances to the development of a successful differentiated export lobster industry for regional Australia.

“Potential research outcomes include reduced environmental impacts, workforce training, new product development, improved aquaculture food safety and biosecurity, and the scientific advancement of aquaculture as a critical technology.”

The Research Hub will build on work undertaken in the ARC Research Hub for Commercial Development of Rock Lobster Culture Systems, which was completed in 2019.

“This work was a breakthrough for aquaculture, closing the lifecycle and developing unique aquaculture systems for the mass production of lobster seedstock,” Prof Smith said.

“Along with our early work funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, this research has advanced our knowledge and made creating new sustainable commercial aquaculture ventures possible.

“It has also allowed the Research Hub to undertake the research that will complete the life cycle of lobster aquaculture in commercial facilities.”

Commercial partner, Ornatas, CEO Scott Parkinson said the company has been running for three years now.

“We started off by joining forces with the University of Tasmania, who have been working with tropical rock lobsters for the last 10 years,” Mr Parkinson said.

“The research being developed is something that hasn’t been able to be achieved by any other organisation. This is really the holy grail of the aquaculture industry and is born and bred from Australia.”

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