

MEDIA RELEASE
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BEST SCIENCE MINDS IN UNDERWATER THINK TANK

SCIENCE academics and practitioners from around Western Australia delved 8m underwater last Friday Night (19 Feb) to brainstorm marine research projects at the Busselton Jetty.

The Underwater Think Tank was a shark tank of activity as 25 professors, scientists and philanthropists gathered to discuss solutions to some of the world's current issues and how marine biology could be at the forefront of these.

WA Chief Scientist Professor Peter Klinken believes there could be a future in marine medicine, living under the iconic Busselton Jetty.

"I am very passionate about bioprospecting WA's unique biodiversity to find new compounds that may act as antibiotics or anti-cancer drugs. How incredible would it be if one of WA's Major Tourist Attraction, the Busselton Jetty, was also able to be Major Research Centre for drug discovery."

"Research by UWA's Dr Gavin Flematti has shown that some sponges from WA waters contain a compound which can inhibit the growth of breast cancer cells when tested in the laboratory. Who knows what new compounds could be found by examining other marine organisms?"

Professor Klinken's sentiments were echoed by Jetty Marine Scientist Sophie Teede who has been looking at the potential of anticancer drugs being created from marine flora.

"There is a lot of evidence in Queensland, India and Singapore that shows the anti-tumour potential of marine algae-based compounds," she said.

"Busselton Jetty hosts over 300 different species of marine life, some with unique properties due to the shade, shelter and Leeuwin Current. Even nudibranchs, contain bioactive metabolites at the microbial and molecular level that can treat human cancer cell lines."

"There are also opportunities for aquaculture in sponge farming that could be sustainably grown for marine or medical products."

Busselton Jetty Patron and former WA Chief Scientist Lyn Beazley was excited about the new projects that could develop at the Jetty including the old Underwater Observatory being repurposed as a marine research centre once the new Australian Underwater Discovery Centre is built.

Focussing on Clean Oceans and environmental education of the public, the current Underwater Observatory is a unique location for scientists from around the world to be able to work from and share their work and findings with over 700,000 Jetty visitors per year.

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