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Marine science research to protect Sydney Harbour

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The NSW Government and the Ian Potter Foundation, one of Australia's leading philanthropic organisations, have joined forces to support marine research and improve the health of Sydney Harbour.

The Deputy Premier and Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Carmel Tebbutt, and the Minister for Science and Medical Research, Jodi McKay, and the CEO of the Ian Potter Foundation, Mrs Janet Hirst, visited the Sydney Institute of Marine Science on February 24 to announce a \$1.2 million joint contribution to the marine research facility.

Ms Tebbutt said the funding partnership would support scientific marine research to improve the environment of Sydney Harbour and the NSW coastline.

"We need the best possible research to protect our harbour and beaches for future generations - and we'll be teaming with some of the world's best marine scientists to achieve that goal," Ms Tebbutt said.

"Protecting our marine assets is important from an environmental perspective and vital to our multi-billion dollar tourism industry given Sydney Harbour and our coastline are major attractions for international visitors."

Ms Tebbutt congratulated the Ian Potter Foundation for its contribution and interest in preserving marine environments.

"I would particularly like to thank the Ian Potter Foundation, for recognising the importance of this work and their generous contribution," Ms Tebbutt said.

Mrs Janet Hirst, the CEO of the Ian Potter Foundation, said the organisation was proud to support marine research and preservation projects around the country.

"The foundation is conscious that ensuring the long term survival and sustainability of our coastal environment is of urgent and immediate concern," Mrs Hirst said.

"We are pleased to be working with the NSW Government and the Sydney Institute of Marine Science to begin this vital work and we feel confident that the new facilities and the high calibre of experts working at this centre will help marine science both locally and internationally."

The \$1.2 million contribution will help the institute build a new marine molecular biology lab and lease a new building to expand its headquarters at Chowder Bay in Mosman.

The centre will also explore the impact and management of climate change on our beaches and coastline and examine how marine bacteria and other microbes affect the ecology of our oceans.

The aim is to achieve sustainability for Sydney Harbour, the surrounding estuaries and our coast through research that will produce a much better understanding of the impacts of large cities like Sydney on their marine surroundings.

The institute, created in 2006, is the NSW headquarters of the national Integrated Marine Observing System which provides information from buoys moored off our coastline on wave heights, tides and currents as well as collecting data from tracking systems and acoustic receivers for fish and marine mammals.

Research carried out at the institute includes a study of sea urchin roe aquaculture for the Japanese sushi market; monitoring pollution and heavy metal contamination in Sydney Harbour using oysters; and tagging and monitoring marine mammal and shark movements.

The institute is also helping to train a new generation of marine scientists and managers through its support of undergraduate courses. There are plans for a Masters in Marine Science course targeted for 2010.

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