

UWA M4 Wave Energy device celebrates official launch, marking start of Albany's journey as sustainability hub

Melissa Sheil | Albany Advertiser
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UWA Oceans Institute's Professor Christophe Gaudin, Western Australian Science Minister Stephen Dawson, cuts the ribbon, Member for Albany Rebecca Stephens, UWA Deputy Vice Chancellor Anna Nowak and Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre's CEO Dr John Whittington at the launch. Credit: Laurie Benson

Commuters can expect to see a giant yellow rig-device travelling down to the port in the coming weeks, as Albany's first renewable wave energy project is prepared for deployment into the King George Sound.

The ribbon was cut on the Moored MultiMode Multibody (M4) Wave Energy Demonstration Project at an official launch on Tuesday at the MCB construction yard where it was assembled.

Run by the University of Western Australia's Marine Energy Research Australia and funded by Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre and the State Government, the M4 device – a 24m-long, 9.5m-wide sunflower yellow hinging frame kept afloat by four buoys – is Australia's only active wave generating project.

The device will be anchored in the ocean for six months, generating clean energy from the movement of the waves and transmitting real-time data on its effectiveness.

MERA and UWA Oceans Institute director Christophe Gaudin said the project would put Albany on the map as a sustainable energy hub.

As such, this project is of international significance.
Christophe Gaudin

"It is a world-first, a fully open-sourced wave energy generator for which all data gathered during the operation will be displayed on the specific website and be made available to the public domain," he said.

"By doing so, we plan to uplift the whole wave energy industry, sharing the lessons learnt during the project and bringing confidence to investors and users.

"As such, this project is of international significance."



UWA's Albany project lead and MERA manager Wiebke Ebeling with UWA Oceans Institute's Professor Christophe Gaudin. Credit: Laurie Benson

The device's six-month deployment will measure its efficiency and collect data on how much energy it produces, allowing scientists to create larger-scale devices in the future.

It will feature prominently at the International Conference on Ocean Energy hosted in Belgium later this month.

The ceremony was graced by the likes of UWA scientists and staff, Albany MLA Rebecca Stephens, City of Albany mayor Greg Stocks and deputy mayor Paul Terry and Science Minister Stephen Dawson, who said the launch marked a significant milestone.

"This innovative project is bringing together top research bodies and local businesses to conduct this important academic trial examining Albany as a potential nursery test site for wave energy developers," he said.

"The deployment of the M4 prototype into Great Southern waters is a significant project milestone.

"It will be equipped with sensors to collect real-time data on device performance, including energy production, that will be publicly available."



Science Minister Stephen Dawson, UWA Oceans Institute's Professor Christophe Gaudin, Albany MLA Rebecca Stephens, UWA deputy vice-chancellor Anna Nowak and Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre CEO Dr John Whittington at the launch. Credit: Laurie Benson

BECRC chief executive John Whittington said the project had opened up huge opportunities to demonstrate the local supply chain's capability in creating sustainability projects.

"Something really important to us is the value of doing our research in rural communities," he said.

"The stock, the construction, the supply chain, so much value has come and can come from this community.

"We hope that it can be recognised that the ideas and the work that's being done in this remote part of the world is globally significant."



Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre chief executive John Whittington. Credit: Laurie Benson

More than 80 per cent of the materials and labour involved in the device's construction was sourced from Albany, with MCB Construction, A1 Sandblasting, Everetts Consulting, ZKR Transport, Steel Solution WA, Castlehow Electrical, RMI Electrical, Jemco Engineering, Coastal Cranes and SMC Marine all able to add something new to their resumes.

More information about the device and access to the data it collects is available on the [MERA - M4 website](#).



Some of the local contractors at the launch Brett Sutton and Luke Battison, Castlehow Electrical, Jack Curlewis and Michael Stephen, MCB Construction and Murray Ferrell from Jemco Engineering. Credit: Laurie Benson