

Federal and state bodies join forces

By ROSEMARY BOLGER

TWO new government bodies to be based in Launceston and tasked with fast-tracking development in the state will join forces.

The federal government is in discussions to co-locate the Tasmanian Major Projects Approval Agency with the state Liberals' Office of the Co-ordinator-General, which are due to start operating next month.

Both were election promises designed to attract new investment and streamline complex approval processes often blamed for stalling or putting off potential development.

The two tiers of government have reaffirmed the July 1 start date, despite being yet to finalise an office space or staff appointments.

The \$2.7 million funding over three years to establish the federal approval agency was secured in the federal budget.

Bass Liberal MHR Andrew Nikolic expected Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane to make an announcement shortly about the exact location and head of the approval agency.

Mr Nikolic said it made sense for the state and federal bodies to work closely together.

"At the end of the three years, this

will be the gold standard about how we encourage new investment, streamline and identify a path," Mr Nikolic said.

He named Barnbougle's sand farming venture and the proposed \$185 million Musselroe Bay ecotourism resort as the type of projects that could be assisted through the layers of approvals needed.

Mr Nikolic said it was not a matter of weakening the environmental and building standards required, but helping proponents navigate the process much quicker and avoid double ups.

State Growth Minister Matthew Groom said yesterday that there had been significant interest in the position of co-ordinator-general, which was advertised nationally last month.

"It's a very important position, we're very confident we can secure someone of real ability, someone that will make a significant difference in advocating opportunities that exist in Tasmania to national and international markets," Mr Groom said.

One of the new office's first tasks will be to assess and assist respondents to the government's call for ideas for development in national parks and World Heritage areas.



The Underwater Centre head of ROV training Paul Bury and Nicolas Lancelot, of Singapore, Keisey Trelour, of Sheffield, and Joel Parker, of Queensland, look at a Remotely Operated Vehicle, which is an unmanned robotic submersible controlled from the surface. Picture: PAUL SCAMBLER

Training program a Tasmania-first

By CHRIS CLARKE

A TASMANIA first specialist underwater vehicle training program has successfully started at Beauty Point this week.

The Underwater Centre, outside Beaconsfield, has enrolled an elite trio of engineering students from across Australia and the world to partake in the remotely operated underwater vehicle course.

The three-week session will give the young men an opportunity to further their engineering careers, with the training offered in very few places across the country.

A forecast expansion of the global oil and gas industry in the next four years has

prompted the centre's decision to promote the training, with head of training Paul Bury saying the program will allow students to work across the globe.

"There is a massive growth in the demand for ROV technology and ROV personnel now," he said.

"We're seeing, across Tasmania and worldwide, as the search for oil and gas becomes more difficult, things are going deeper.

"There is a limit to how deep divers can dive, so we're seeing a massive future with the ROVs."

Following successful employment in Scotland in previous years, the Underwater Centre's \$200,000

CI Falcon, will now remain in Tasmania.

"It's basically an ROV that can go underwater for an unlimited length of time and this particular machine can go underwater to about 300 metres, which is far deeper than most divers would ever, ever venture," Mr Bury said.

"The vehicle has a colour camera, so you can go down and get video footage, or beyond the depth of which divers usually go, to inspect footage of sub-sea pipelines.

"Particularly in places like fish farms, a lot of fish farms now use ROVs."

The centre will offer at least two more underwater vehicle training programs throughout the remainder of the year.

Decision expected today on health boss

A DECISION is expected be made on former Royal Hobart Hospital boss Jane Holden's future today.

Ms Holden was given until the end of yesterday to demonstrate why she should not be sacked.

An Integrity Commission report tabled in Parliament last week accused Ms Holden of improperly employing her husband and former colleague, Tasmanian Health Organisation North-West boss Gavin Austin.

The report found Ms Holden's husband was paid almost \$200,000 working as a builder on King Island and later in the south of the state.

Mr Austin, who has also been accused of misconduct by employing his wife and son, has been suspended pending further investigations.

Ms Holden has rejected the allegations and has indicated she will fight to clear her name. She said the Integrity Com-

mission report did not present all the evidence.

Ms Holden said that as chief executive of THO South, she did not create a job for her husband, and "did not in any way ensure that he got it".

If Ms Holden is sacked she will walk away with a 24-week payout, plus five weeks in lieu of notice and other entitlements.

Health Minister Michael Ferguson is expected to provide an update on her employment in Parliament today.

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