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PUBLIC tours re-start at the Australian Institute of Marine Science after refurbishment

AUSTRALIA'S premier marine science research facility at Cape Ferguson, south of Townsville will re-open its doors to the public this week after a major refurbishment.

Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) tour guide Varsha Balu will lead the first tours on Friday, now the first stage of the refurbishment has been completed.

The 22-year-old, biotechnology, chemistry and zoology undergraduate student, said she could not wait to show off the Institute's modern new look and give people a behind the scenes view into current research.

"A lot of people should be better informed about what is going on, and we can show them what scientists are doing to help our marine environment," Ms Balu said.

"The new media hub better showcases the invaluable work being undertaken at AIMS."

"When people come for a tour, we introduce them to the work happening at AIMS and they meet our Technology Development Team, then we take them to engineering and to the National Sea Simulator."

AIMS' Operations and Infrastructure Program Leader John Chappell said the tours had been paused during the refurbishment, which was part of a capital works plan to improve the main building.

"We have a 40-year capital works plan and the upgrade included everything from mechanical and electrical upgrades, to walls and flooring," Dr Chappell said.

"We wanted to create a modern collaborative space in the media hub to be a meeting place to draw people together and to improve the storytelling around AIMS.

"This stage of the work has included modernised interior workspaces, new air conditioning systems and high-definition large video displays of AIMS' work, with interactive touch screens in the media hub."

Stage two is due to begin within the next 12 months and will include an upgrade to research laboratories and office spaces.

Dr Chappell said AIMS had offered marine science university students and PhD graduates the opportunity to guide the tours, to allow them to communicate their scientific knowledge and the work happening at AIMS.

"We put it out there to students who use AIMS for their own research or are interested in marine biology, to conduct the tours and they have jumped at the opportunity," Dr Chappell said.

The tours are always very popular with visitors to the region and people from Townsville and are often booked out months in advance.

Tours operate every Friday morning between March and November. To find out more go to www.aims.gov.au.

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