

Media release: 15 May 2023

AIMS granted nation's first permit-free marine tech testing status

For the first time in Australia, autonomous marine technology developers have a location to safely test autonomous vessels without needing to apply for a permit.

The [Australian Institute of Marine Science](#)'s ReefWorks inshore test range, near Townsville in north Queensland, was granted regulatory sandbox approval for uncrewed vessels from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

It's the first approval issued under a proposed Australian Maritime Regulatory Sandbox advocated by [Trusted Autonomous Systems \(TAS\)](#), AIMS and AMC Search.

The five-year agreement allows for permit-free testing and evaluation of vessels up to 12m in length, travelling up to 20 knots within the test range.

ReefWorks Project Director Melanie Olsen said the status removed a time-consuming hurdle and uncertainty for developers and helped clear the path to development for Australia's fledgling autonomous marine technology sector.

"For the first time in Australia there is a place where individual developers can go without having to first secure a permit," she said.

"It eliminates a significant amount of red tape as well as the expensive possibility of not securing a permit in time for a planned trial.

"It will also allow ReefWorks to share the lessons we learn with regulators to help reduce risk and drive legislative changes."

AIMS is working closely with TAS to remove the barriers slowing development of Australia's autonomous marine technology industry.

In September, ReefWorks hosted a TAS event which put autonomous vessels through their paces to test a newly published Australian code of practice aimed at bridging the gap between existing maritime safety standards and the advent of crewless vessels in Australia.

Ms Olsen said AIMS was also developing a suite of autonomous marine monitoring technology to provide more comprehensive knowledge, faster, to inform sustainable management of Australia's changing tropical marine environment.

ReefWorks opened its doors to industry, Defence, and academic innovators in 2022, with support from the Queensland Government, to provide one of the world's first tropical water marine technology test ranges.

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Download images and B-roll: <https://cloudstor.aarnet.edu.au/plus/s/vhxkhSbuEnIsF8T>

Video: [TAS Maritime Showcase Demonstration, September 2022 - YouTube](#)

For more information about ReefWorks: www.aims.gov.au/about/facilities/reefworks

More about the Australian Institute of Marine Science:

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) is Australia's tropical marine research agency. In existence for half a century, it plays a pivotal role in providing large-scale, long-term and world-class research that helps governments, industry and the wider community to make informed decisions about the management of Australia's marine estate. AIMS science leads to healthier marine ecosystems; economic, social and environmental benefits for all Australians; and protection of coral reefs from climate change. More here: <https://www.aims.gov.au/>