



The Place To Be

Media Release

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MAFRI SEEKING AN ALTERNATIVE TO A NECESSARY EVIL

Researchers at the Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute have begun the search for viable alternatives to what's considered a necessary evil.. anti-fouling products used on ships.

Anti fouling agents are products that prevent the growth of marine organisms on ship hulls. This is essential not only to protect the ship and maintain its performance but also to prevent the unintentional transport of exotic marine species between ports.

MAFRI's Susan Duda has been given \$111,500 by the Natural Heritage Trust to head the search.

"In recent years there has been a call for a global ban on one of these anti-fouling products, Tributyltin (TBT)" she said.

"TBT is probably one of the most toxic substances that has ever been introduced to the marine environment in recent times as it causes many detrimental effects to marine organisms including death, growth, behavioural and sexual abnormalities, reproductive failure and nervous system disorders."

Australia has long been committed to an alternative to TBT and the use of TBT based paints on boats smaller than 25 metres in length was banned in Victoria in 1989.

"At present we don't have much information about the risks of exposing Australia's marine environment to different anti fouling products, and authorities must rely on foreign data which may not be appropriate for Australia's unique and diverse ecosystems." Ms Duda said.

"With a world wide ban on the use of TBT expected within a few years there is an urgent need for the identification of the safest anti-fouling product that could be used in Australian waters."

The study will evaluate the safety of new and currently used anti fouling alternatives to TBT using local Australian temperate marine organisms.

Some more information about National Science Week in Victoria can be downloaded from the National Science Week event diary www.nationalscienceweek.info.au