



MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

It was a special milestone for the iconic Underwater Observatory (UWO) at the end of the Busseton Jetty last Friday (Dec 14), when it turned 15!

The UWO, one of only five natural aquariums in the world, has put Busseton on the international map.

Busseton Jetty Inc (BJI) Chairperson Jenny Sheehan said in 2003 when the UWO opened, the Jetty attracted 200,000 visitors annually, it now attracts over 500,000.

“The concept for the UWO was developed after the Jetty was twice threatened with demolition after it ceased operating as a port in 1973 and was destroyed by Cyclone Alby in 1978.”

“A group of passionate community members formed a group, now known as BJI, to save the Jetty.”

“The restoration of the Jetty, development of the Interpretive Centre and the creation of the UWO was driven by this active community group and led by the late President Allie Scott, who devoted many years of his life to restoring the Jetty,” Jenny said.

“Allie’s vision for the UWO created a new world-class eco-tourism opportunity and significant flow on benefits from increased tourist numbers for Busseton and the region.”

BJI Marine biologist Sophie Teede said that the construction of the UWO commenced in 2002 by Doric Construction.

“It was quite a challenge designing a building that could sit on the seafloor, withstand the brunt of winter storms and allow people uninterrupted views of marine life,” Sophie said.

“Made of concrete and steel, the UWO is shaped like a large water tank, is 13m deep and 8.5m wide, weighing 550 tonnes with 11 viewing windows.”

“The sheer engineering feat of the build and the transport is very impressive - the structure was built in Fremantle, floated down to Busseton, put into place and held down using 12 anchors driven 18m into the sand.”

BJI CEO Lisa Shreeve said the UWO opened to the public in December 2003 with more than 60,000 people visiting in the first six months.

“Although natural underwater observatories are a rarity where people are in the tank looking out, the creation of this \$3.6 million attraction is a testament to the quality of the underwater viewing beneath the Jetty,” Lisa said.





“With over 300 known marine species living beneath the Jetty, visitors are treated to the sight of an array of creatures they may never otherwise have the opportunity to see, especially international visitors who don’t swim.”

“Last year 73,650 visitors enjoyed a tour of the UWO, the proceeds from these tours contribute to the ongoing preservation of the Jetty for future generations,” Lisa said.

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