

Testing the waters: An overview for Community and Civil Society

THE IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITY

In June 2026, Australia concluded negotiations to join Horizon Europe, the EU's flagship research and innovation program, worth approximately A\$155 billion. From January 2027, Australian organisations can lead and join projects in its Pillar II, spanning climate, energy, food, bioeconomy and the environment.

Greater Hobart has been invited into the EU's International Urban and Regional Cooperation program, which pairs cities with European regions to work on shared challenges. The Greater Hobart Councils Partnership and TasPorts have been paired with Catalonia's BlueNetCat network of universities and research centres working on the ocean economy. This consortium will help establish **TIDE: Greater Hobart's Antarctic, Marine and Blue Economy Exchange**. The TIDE will explore how Greater Hobart's waterfront can become a living lab, where the port, the city and local science test better ways of working, in real conditions and in the open.

WHY THIS WORKS

The partnership works because each region brings capabilities the other cannot readily replicate. Barcelona contributes a mature blue economy cluster and deep experience navigating European networks and funding programs. Europe's interest in Greater Hobart comes from what the region already has: public-good science and working infrastructure we pass every day, spread across the Greater Hobart councils.

ASSET	WHY IT MATTERS
The Derwent and a working port	A deep-water estuary with a working port at the heart of the region, home port of the icebreaker RSV Nuyina and summer base for France's L'Astrolabe.
Science that serves the public	The Australian Antarctic Division at Kingston, IMAS and CSIRO's marine laboratories. Most of Australia's Antarctic and Southern Ocean scientists live and work here.
A global role	The international bodies that manage Southern Ocean fisheries (CCAMLR) and protect albatrosses and petrels (ACAP) are headquartered here.
Local jobs with global reach	More than 1,000 Tasmanians work in Antarctic and Southern Ocean science and support. At Prince of Wales Bay, Incat is building battery-electric ferries for Denmark.
Hobart International Airport	A runway extended to take C-17s links the region directly to Antarctica.
Brighton Innovation Hub	Tasmania's premier intermodal logistics precinct, 25 minutes from the city: the road, rail and port link between the working port and the rest of the state.
A harbour we share	Working port, city waterfront, Macquarie Point and the Tasman Bridge in one compact system, used every day by residents, workers, visitors and recreational users.

WHAT HAS BEEN AGREED, AND WHAT REMAINS OPEN

During the study visit, government, industry and research representatives from Tasmania and Catalonia will bring their expertise together to test and shape the four proposed pilots. The scope and details are in development, with the visit providing an opportunity to identify where the pilots could deliver the greatest value, what practical considerations need to be addressed, and which partners could help take them forward.

Any Aboriginal and cultural dimensions will be developed with Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations, not on their behalf. We want to seek guidance from Tasmanian Aboriginal people and organisations on matters of cultural and environmental significance, and explore how the TIDE can support meaningful participation in future projects and create culturally safe pathways to employment.

THE PROPOSED PILOTS AND WHAT THEY COULD MEAN FOR THE COMMUNITY

Shared framework	Every pilot assessed by one published method, so what happens on the harbour can be understood and questioned.
Dynamic master planning	Joining up port and city planning so the knock-on effects of waterfront decisions are visible before they are made, starting with energy demand around Macquarie Point.
Real-time marine monitoring	Trialling European monitoring technology in the Derwent, starting with safer vessel transits under the Tasman Bridge, and building a better understanding of the harbour.
Nature-positive port infrastructure	Still open for development: as port structures are renewed, designing them to support marine life.

Two other ideas sit in the wider pipeline: a talent pathway giving young Tasmanians blue economy careers without leaving home, and work on plastics and water quality with partner cities in Latin America.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING OF CIVIL SOCIETY

- Help us work out how to bring community and civic perspectives to the development of the pilots and the broader program.
- Help shape the talent pathway, especially if you work with young people, schools or training.

TESTING THE WATERS • 1-4 OCTOBER 2026

A delegation from Catalonia will spend four days in Greater Hobart seeing the port, the harbour from the water, Macquarie Point, IMAS, local industry and Hobart International Airport.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

1-4 October 2026	BlueNetCat delegation in Greater Hobart. Facilitated workshops form the project groups and name champions on both sides.
October – November	Project groups develop the pilots and draft the shared framework; further stakeholders can join.
November 2026	Greater Hobart delegation to Barcelona for the Maritime Hub.
November 2026	IURC Competitive Fund application, decisions in December.
From January 2027	Australian organisations can lead and join Horizon Europe Pillar II projects.

QUESTIONS WE EXPECT

Will this change the waterfront?	Not by itself. It produces information to support better decisions; those decisions stay with the responsible bodies and their usual public processes.
What is the program seeking to achieve?	The program aims to identify opportunities for local employment, strengthen Greater Hobart's research and innovation capability, and support better-informed decisions about the harbour. The study visit is an early step in determining which opportunities are worth pursuing.
Why is information being shared now?	A preliminary framework for the proposed pilots has been developed, but their scope and details are not yet finalised. The October study visit will bring together government, industry and research expertise from Tasmania and Catalonia to help shape the pilots and identify next steps. Opportunities for broader community involvement will follow as the work develops.

Refer to attachment: *What this looks like elsewhere*: Globally significant case studies