

ARC project to build world's biggest prawn farm

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Dean Jerry, head of aquaculture at James Cook University, Townsville. Picture: Cameron Laird Source: News Corp Australia

NOW something of a tiddler in prawn aquaculture, Australia could soon have the world's biggest tiger prawn farm.

The project, which will map the genome of the black tiger prawn and draw on breeding tricks from land animals, is one of seven industry research hubs **announced** this month.

Led by James Cook University, the new hub won almost \$5 million in Australian Research Council funding over five years.

JCU's head of aquaculture, Dean Jerry, said the idea was to lift dramatically the production of tiger prawns.

Sophisticated breeding methods would be used to minimise disease and maximise characteristics important to consumers, such as colour and size, he said.

The project would draw on University of Sydney breeding technology used with dairy cattle. Other partners in the research hub include a biotech institute at the University of Ghent, in Belgium, the CSIRO, Australia's Genome Research Facility, and the aquaculture firm SeaFarms Group Ltd.

The new prawn farm would be somewhere in Northern Australia but the exact location was yet to be decided, Professor Jerry said.

Another new research industry hub, run by the University of Adelaide, is to make copper mining more efficient.

"The ore, when you dig it up, often contains impurities, of which uranium is one," said Adelaide's deputy vice-chancellor for research Mike Brooks.

"We really need to be smarter about how we purify the ore to extract the highest quality copper."