

Tuesday, 30 October 2007

## **First look at tuna hatchery**

ON the verge of a "revolution" in the southern bluefin tuna industry, Clean Seas Tuna revealed little more - except to say some major announcements would be made soon - at a media open day on Friday.

But for the first time local, State and national media were allowed to take photographs and footage of the world first onshore breeding facility at the company's Arno Bay hatchery.

At the moment there are 24 tuna weighing more than 150kg each in the 6.5 metre deep breeding tank.

They were brought in from the sea cages by helicopter, and while the sex of all hasn't yet been determined, it is hoped they are half male and half female.

Computer controlled conditions in the tank mimic the real-life migratory trail of the southern bluefin tuna and Clean Seas is optimistic of achieving its goal of closing the life cycle of the tuna, as it has already done with kingfish and mulloway.

Doing this will realise the company's long term goal of breeding and growing out tuna from its own broodstock, with the aim of duplicating southern bluefin tuna wild catch, which is subject to a strict quota system.

Clean Seas chairman Hagen Stehr said aquacultural scientists were re-creating conditions of the hormonal therapy used earlier this year to induce male courtship behaviour and the release of sperm, only this time there were females in the tank.

"The planets are aligned - we believe our male tuna are willing and able and we know our female broodstock are ready," he said.

"We are very optimistic that with a bit of help, nature will take care of the rest.

"This has been my dream for decades and I feel like an expectant grandfather - awaiting the delivery of millions of tiny southern bluefin tuna with the potential to revolutionise Australia's billion-dollar seafood industry."

If this is successful, the tuna fingerlings will be taken to pens off Arno Bay to grow.

Mr Stehr said Clean Seas had the potential to double Australia's 5200 tonne southern bluefin tuna quota in a decade without impacting wild tuna stocks.

He explained that Australia needed one million tonnes more seafood by 2050, which, broken down, meant in about five years it would need 250,000 tonnes more, and with depleting fish stocks in other parts of the world, and increasingly strict quotas, Mr Stehr believed he had the answer.