

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## Community Grants for Rural Health Week

Health Minister Michelle O' Byrne today encouraged local groups from communities around the State to apply for \$30,000 committed by the Tasmanian Government for small grants of up to \$2,500 to run health promotion activities during Rural Health Week (RHW) this year.

Ms O'Byrne also urged rural Tasmanians to nominate local champions of health and wellbeing in their communities for the State's RHW Awards.

RHW will run from 14 - 20 November 2011 and showcases community based programs, projects, research and services that promote health and wellbeing in rural and regional areas of Tasmania.

Ms O' Byrne said that many Tasmanian rural communities were facing hardship brought on by challenging economic conditions which have been compounded by extreme climatic conditions that have seen floods in many areas following successive years of drought.

One of the unique aspects of RHW is that it is about people at the local level taking ownership of their health and that of their community and taking positive steps to enhance the health and wellbeing of their fellow citizens.

Tasmania's Health Plan is also continuing to improve the way we deliver health services to our rural communities.

This has involved a greater focus on disease prevention, early intervention and community-based assistance for self-management programs.

Events like RHW have proved to be a successful way for doing just that, as they empower communities to help improve their own health.

Ms O' Byrne said the Government was again contributing funding of \$30,000 towards a community small grant scheme to support groups in their chosen health promotion activities during RHW.

The Acting Dean of the UTAS Faculty of Health Science, Professor Madeleine Ball, said that establishments such as the University Department of Rural Health played an important role in working with the health sector and local communities in promoting healthy lifestyle choices.

“RHW is an opportunity for rural communities to celebrate their achievements in health and wellbeing under the theme ‘Collaborating for Rural Health,’” Prof Ball said.

“It aims to increase awareness within rural communities about their health issues and the importance of a preventative approach to their health through activities and established programs within the community.

“Up to \$2,500 will be available to each of the RHW regional planning groups for organising health promotion activities,” she said.

Prof Ball said at the same time, communities will also be invited to nominate local champions of rural health in recognition of their outstanding efforts in making a difference to the health and wellbeing of people in their community.

“Four awards – the Rural Health Community Award, Rural Health Worker Award, Rural Health Group Award and Rural Health School Student Award – will be presented to local champions at a gala function at the culmination of RHW on 20 November.”

For more information about RH, see [www.rhwtas.com.au](http://www.rhwtas.com.au).

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