

## Media Release

### Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday, 1 June 2016

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## From understanding to prevention: University to the fore in dementia education

The University of Tasmania is building on its reputation as a global leader in dementia research and education with the launch today of *Preventing Dementia*, a new Massive Open Online Course (MOOC).

The course follows on from the international success of the University's *Understanding Dementia* MOOC, which has attracted more than 70,000 participants worldwide over the past three years.

Both MOOCs were developed by the Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre, part of the University of Tasmania's Faculty of Health.

The new MOOC, *Preventing Dementia*, brings to light cutting-edge international research on potentially modifiable risk factors, and provides practical steps people can take if they wish to minimise their relative risk for this degenerative condition.

"Most of an individual's risk of dementia is related to their age as well as genetics," Wicking Centre Co-Director Professor James Vickers said.

"However, it has been recently determined that approximately 30 per cent of cases could be effectively prevented by attending to potentially modifiable risk factors at all stages of life – such as vascular health and mental stimulation.

"The goal of this MOOC is to encourage approaches and behaviours that may contribute to reducing risk, and hopefully to reduce the incidence of dementia in our ageing population."

The new five-week *Preventing Dementia* MOOC is open to anyone, anywhere, but is particularly relevant to health professionals, health policy professionals, aged-care service providers and people with an interest in brain health and/or dementia risk reduction.

Those taking part will have the chance to engage with a community of participants from across the globe, without assignments or exams, and to be involved in research in dementia prevention.

Professor Vickers said dementia research and education was imperative to address what had become a significant public health issue, particularly in Tasmania.

“Dementia is becoming the most significant public health issue globally, with the fastest rate of growth in cases in low- to middle-wealth countries,” he said.

“Tasmania will also be particularly impacted as we have the state with the oldest population, and also a suite of dementia risk factors such as low education, diabetes and poor vascular health.”

## **Media Opportunity**

**What:** *Preventing Dementia* launch.

**Where:** University of Tasmania Medical Science Precinct (corner of Campbell St and Liverpool St, Hobart) Lecture Theatre One.

**When:** Wednesday 1 June, 11am.

For interviews or further information contact Liz Stacey at the University media office on 6226 2267 or 0419 587 457.

### **Information released by:**

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