

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

DATE: WEDNESDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2007

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Devil disease, platypus fungus and human cancers among conference presentations

A number of pressing scientific concerns will be the focus of the “Our Environment” conference, sponsored by the University of Tasmania, which starts at the Wrest Point Casino, Sandy Bay, Hobart **today (Wednesday November 28)** and runs until Friday (November 30).

Researchers and scientists will deliver more than 30 presentations, with local experts and visitors from institutes around the world sharing their expertise.

Topics covered include the effects of global warming on human health, the childhood causes of some cancers that show in adulthood, the mysterious disease affecting the Tasmanian platypus and current research on Tasmanian Devil Facial Tumour Disease.

Some of the conference topic highlights and contact details for speakers are attached below.

For more information:

Associate Professor Greg Woods, conference organiser and speaker: 6226 4832
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Information Released by:

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Conference topic highlights:

- **Greg Woods, Menzies Research Institute, University of Tasmania.**
“The devil you know and the devil you don’t.”
Derwent Room, Wednesday 28 November at 5pm
Research examined the immune response of the Tasmanian devil to the Devil Facial Tumour Disease. Results showed that the devil *can* produce an immune response against DFTD.
Available Wednesday, November 28 (3.40-4pm) or after 5.15pm
Mobile 0408 264 832
- **Stephen Ullrich, MD Anderson Cancer Center, University of Texas**
“Sunlight and skin cancer: lessons from the immune system.”
Derwent Room, Thursday November 29 at 9am.
The UV radiation found in sunlight is the primary cause of skin cancer. This research could lead to novel anti-cancer agents that could protect against UVB induced skin cancer.
Available for interview – Thursday, November 29, 10.50 – 11.15am.
Contact via Greg Woods Mobile 0408 264 832
- **Heather McGee, Menzies Research Institute, University of Tasmania**
“Neonatal exposure to solar simulated ultraviolet radiation alters skin immune system development and function.”
Derwent Room, Thursday November 29 at 11.30am
Childhood exposure to ultraviolet radiation has been linked to an increased risk of diseases in adult life, including melanoma skin cancer. This research proposes that childhood exposure to ultraviolet radiation alters the development of the skin immune system, which increases the risk of disease in later life.
Available for interview- Thursday November 29, 12.30 – 1pm
Heather McGee Mobile 0438 294 491
- **Niall Stewart, Menzies Research Institute, University of Tasmania.**
“The Tasmanian platypus and the risk posed by *Muco Amphibiorium*.”
Derwent Room Thursday November 29 at 5pm
Ulcerative mycosis is a serious infection that only affects platypuses in Tasmania. It causes large ulcers and is usually fatal. The fungus that causes this condition is a pathogen of amphibians that exists around Australia, where it infects various amphibians, but not the platypus. This presentation discusses why Tasmanian platypuses are susceptible to the fungus.
Available Thursday November 28, 3.40 – 4pm or after 5.45pm
Niall Stewart Mobile 0407 054 629

- **Janet Bornman, International Global Climate Institute, Hamilton, New Zealand.**

“Linkages between ozone depletion and climate change and their consequences.”

Wellington Room, Friday November 30 at 9am

Many health-related issues such as eye damage, skin and internal cancers, are showing evidence of linkage between UV radiation and other climate factors such as temperature effects. Some of these linkages will be presented in this talk, highlighting the significance of climate change events, especially for biotic systems.

Available Friday November 30, 10.40 – 11am

Contact via Greg Woods Mobile 0408 264 832