Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Friday, 17 February 2017

Infrastructure Australia stamps its confidence on STEM vision for Tasmania

The Infrastructure Australia (IA) approval of the business case for Hobart’s $400 million Science and Technology Precinct is a ringing endorsement of its capacity to fundamentally and positively shift the State’s economy and community.

IA has added the project to the nation’s Infrastructure Priority List.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said the project would:

- build the island State’s capacity in the crucial STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics);
- deliver high-level inter-disciplinary research with the potential to create new economic sectors across the State; and
- attract new future-facing enterprises and industries to the State.

“These were the pillars of the business case which was provided to Infrastructure Australia,” Professor Rathjen said. “And the nation’s pre-eminent thinkers in the field of infrastructure investment agree it is worth pursuing.

“This is part of a vision that repositions education and innovation as central to the prosperity of Tasmania. A key part of this is the Northern Transformation plan through which we will deliver modern world-class campuses embedded in city locations and a new form of curriculum suited to Tasmania’s needs. These plans are well underway at the emerging educational precinct at West Park in Burnie and master planning has started for the inner-city campus at Inveresk in Launceston.

“In relatively quick time, we will see bustling hubs hosting a dynamic blend of researchers, academics, industry champions and students bringing new life and energy to the hearts of these cities.

“We are pursuing the economic and social benefits which flow to university cities, including the creation of new knowledge-based industry clusters, and delivery of globally relevant, regionally-specific applied research programs, in such a way as to drive a new, better future for Tasmania.
“The Science and Technology Precinct proposal takes this momentum and strengthens it as part of a fully integrated approach to education, knowledge creation and innovation across Tasmania.

“The Hobart precinct will draw together the world-class science and technology disciplines of the University in a way that promotes multidisciplinary research, providing a foundation for the expansion of new research endeavours across the State. In the south, STEM will be linked with the Medical Sciences, Marine Sciences, and Arts and Cultural Precincts to create new opportunity. In the north, STEM will provide a platform for expanded opportunity in defence, maritime science, wood science, agriculture, design and education."

The Science and Technology Precinct would be built at the corner of Argyle and Melville streets, initially accommodating 3000 students and 700 staff in contemporary teaching environments and cutting-edge research facilities.

The Science and Technology Precinct would be designed to be porous, providing a community asset and bringing into open view the cutting-edge research being conducted within the facility.

Professor Rathjen said the University had formed its plans for the creation of university cities around the Tasmanian context of economic and educative challenge, but informed by outstanding examples from across the world, including the United Kingdom and United States.

“Many of the most advanced economies in the world are investing in higher education as a priority. This makes sense given the pivotal role innovation and human capital must play in our social and economic future,” he said.

Information released by:
University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office
Phone: Jason Purdie – 0455 838 945
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au