Public generosity fuels further Tasmanian Devil research for 2008

More than $117,000 in research grants and scholarships have been awarded in the latest grant allocation from the Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal, funded by generous public donations.

Funds from the Appeal are allocated three times a year by the University of Tasmania to support a variety of research projects nationwide, aimed at ensuring the survival of the devil against Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD).

Among the important projects to receive assistance in this round is research by Associate Professor Greg Woods, from the Menzies Research Institute at the University of Tasmania, who received $23,524 to continue investigating approaches to protect the devils against DFTD, working from the premise that there could be devils in the wild population that can respond to the disease.

Professor Woods' approach includes a method of skin grafting to detect devils which could have the potential to respond to DFTD.

Managing director of Devils@Cradle, Mr Wade J Anthony, received a $2500 Dr Eric Guiler Tasmanian Devil Research Grant to support his "Devils of the Alpine-Field Monitoring program".

Mr Anthony's project includes a research-based field monitoring program which uses remote passive infrared cameras to monitor the devil population in the Cradle Mountain area and to educate the public about DFTD.

Dr Katherine Belov, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, received $25,000 to continue research into DNA mapping, which will identify and target maximum genetic diversity in devils to be trapped for captive management.

Her work will be critical to the collection of the Tasmanian devil Ark population taking place in late January, which will support captive breeding and the establishment of insurance colonies of devils.

The Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal is the fundraising arm of the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program and is coordinated by the University of Tasmania Foundation. All proceeds go directly toward research into DFTD and donations are tax deductible.

The latest grants included proceeds raised through the QANTAS Airport collection sculptures and Warner brothers stuffed toy and DVD sales.

Visit www.tassiedevil.com.au to find out more about the appeal and the program.

Full list of grant recipients:

Dr Eric Guiler Tasmanian Devil Research Grants:
- $2500 Mr Wade J. Anthony, managing director Devils@Cradle for the "Devils of the Alpine- Field Monitoring Program."
- $25,000 Dr Katherine Belov, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, to undertake genetic analysis typing of devils.
- $20,000 Dr Menna Jones, UTAS, direct investigation of the link between new cases of DFTD and previous social contacts in an open, managed population.
- $5000 Mr Nick Mooney and a team at National Parks and Wildlife toward field support for investigations into the distribution of DFTD in Narawntapu National Park and the feasibility of disease suppression.
- $23,524, Associate Professor Greg Woods, Menzies Research Institute, for to investigate an immunological and immuogenetic approach to protect devils against the disease.

QANTAS Tasmanian Devil Research Scholarships:
- $19,616 Mr Alexandre Kriess, Menzies Research Institute, to continue study into the immune response of the devil and DFTD.
- $15,000 Ms Tracey Hollings, UTAS School of Zoology, to study the transmission characteristics of DFTD.

QANTAS Tasmanian Devil Honours Scholarship
- $7000 to Ms Gabriella Brown, UTAS School of Medicine, to study the immunological factors of the DFTD.

Media Note:

Assoc Professor Greg Woods is available on 6226 4832 or 0408 264 832

Mr Wade J Anthony is available on 0427 659 589

For information on the Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal, contact Ms Lisa Morisset, UTAS Foundation, 6226 2053.