

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Monday 28 July 2014

Science education project spreads its wings in the wilderness

A multi award winning education initiative created by University of Tasmania staff and alumni will expand nationally as part of a project funded through the Australian Maths and Science Partnership Program.

The new project, “Out of the Wilderness: Adventure Learning to engage students in on-ground science” is being run by the Bookend Trust, a philanthropic education initiative based at the University of Tasmania’s School of Biological Sciences and at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, in partnership with the Pennicott Foundation.

Bookend is a not-for-profit education initiative that seeks to inspire students and their communities to consider careers connected with the environment.

The new funding will allow the Bookend Trust to expand the existing Tasmanian-based “Out of the Wilderness” program to a national level. The program provides students with engaging hands-on, on-ground and interactive online learning experiences.

Past Bookend projects have taken primary and high school students on interactive and actual experiences from the World Heritage Wilderness of south-west Tasmania to Lord Howe Island, Antarctica, Papua New Guinea and Thailand.

These adventures have covered volcanos, wilderness survival, coastal management and threatened species, linking students with real-life adventurers as a catalyst for learning about science and the environment.

The Director of the Bookend Trust and Honorary Research Associate with the University, Dr Niall Doran, has just returned from Europe, where Bookend's 2014 education project was showcased to international media experts as one of only seven science and natural history projects selected from around the globe.

“This new partnership with the Australian Department of Education will allow Bookend to build on the work we've been running locally with the Tasmanian

Government, and to expand it to reach schools and students across Australia,” Dr Doran said.

“We've already engaged Tasmanian students on-ground and online with projects that explore biodiversity, coastal management, national parks, threatened species, and wilderness survival.

“We're looking forward to expanding the reach of these projects to a national audience, starting with this year's project on Tasmanian caves and the ancient species living within them - and there's a great prize brewing to be launched for participants across Australia next month.”

The Commonwealth funding consolidates a highly successful few years for the Bookend Trust. In 2012 the Bookend Trust was named Australian Geographic's Conservationist of the Year; it was granted a national Banksia Award "for creating lasting and positive community impact"; it won the 2012 University of Tasmania Vice Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Community Engagement and last year Bookend's Education Officer (and University staff member) Andrew Hughes was named Tasmanian of the Year for his work on this program.

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