

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



UTAS Wicking Centre launches \$30,000 appeal for the iRemember community dementia project

How important are our memories for defining who we are and how we relate to other people?

University of Tasmania Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre researchers and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) are teaming up for a new research project to find out how memories can help people with dementia.

The community project will use “iRemember” memory cases. The cases are filled with a collection of artefacts from the 1930s to 1970s, with an emphasis on everyday items.

Professor James Vickers, Wicking Centre Co-Director, launched the \$30,000 appeal to support the innovative community project.

“We are seeking local support for this community project for researchers to develop, in consultation with people with dementia and their carers, a resource for Reminiscence Therapy specifically tailored to the interests of the dementia community.”

The project will try to find out what objects within the iRemember collections trigger the richest memories for people with dementia, helping to stimulate conversation about their past with their loved ones.

This information will be used to inform what the cases should contain to help people with dementia.

Wicking Centre Project researcher Dr Carolyn King said the project was using Reminiscence Therapy.

“This therapy involves the systematic use of memories and recollections to strengthen self-identity and self-worth.

“An effective tool, such as these memory cases, will be at the centre of this unique research opportunity.

“A truly collaborative, person-centred approach is being used.

“The artefacts and literature in these cases will be informed via feedback with Alzheimer’s Australia Tasmania counselling groups made up of people with dementia, therapists, nursing staff and family carers.”

The final result will be a tailored therapeutic tool for Reminiscence Therapy within the local community.

It will also become an educational resource containing the information most pertinent to staff and carers working to enrich communication opportunities for people with dementia.

Prof Vickers said if 1000 people can give just \$30 each, the goal to provide four well-researched memory cases for the benefit of people with dementia and their carers in our community will be achievable.

TMAG Visitor Experience Manager Andy Baird said the museum’s partnership with the Wicking Centre will contribute to community well-being.

“The partnership will enable us to develop a specifically tailored resource for people who may not be able to visit the museum in person.”

“The iRemember cases will be one of a suite of new resources that will be available at TMAG when Stage 1 of our redevelopment is completed.”

The iRemember cases will be available for health and community organisations, and people with dementia and carers, to borrow at no charge from early 2013.

For more information on this project:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/wicking/edu/iremember>

Information regarding the project appeal:

<http://www.utas.edu.au/wicking/quick-links/donate>

For more information about the UTAS Wicking Dementia Research and Education Centre: <http://www.utas.edu.au/wicking/>

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