

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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University researchers receive community accolade for air-quality monitoring app

An app monitoring air quality developed by University of Tasmania researchers has been recognised at the State Emergency Service 2016 Resilient Awards.

The AirRater smartphone app, which won the Community section of the awards, was developed to assist people with hay fever, allergies, asthma and other lung diseases and is now used by more than 1,200 Tasmanians.

The app provides users with alerts to assist them to better judge the environmental risks of air pollution and other hazards – such as pollen and temperature extremes - and allows them to tailor their activities and medications to suit.

Data is gathered for the app from air-quality sensors installed across Tasmania and real-time weather data and forecasts, to give users information about the current levels or potential triggers in their immediate area.

The brainchild of University of Tasmania researchers and project leads Dr Fay Johnston (Menzies Institute for Medical Research) and Professor David Bowman (School of Biological Sciences), the Sense-T project is a collaboration with team members from the Environment Protection Authority Tasmania, CSIRO, Australian National University and the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services.

The latest accolade follows AirRater receiving a Merit Award at the Australian Information Industry Association National iAwards earlier this month.

Professor Bowman said the monitor was a tool for human adaption to environmental extremes that were increasing in severity and frequency in response to climate change, and was the result of many years of research.

“While we developed this app in 18 months, the project is a practical expression of Fay and my smoke-health research over the last 15 years,” Professor Bowman said.

“The recognition of this award is fantastic as it helps build our ambition to extend this app into other cities in Australia and elsewhere in the world.”

Aimed at celebrating innovation, the Resilient Australia Awards is a national program which recognises and promotes initiatives which strengthen community disaster resilience across the nation.

The AirRater team will now go through to the national finals of the awards in November.

Several team members will also be presenting the app and its findings at the 2nd International Smoke Symposium organised by the International Association of Wildland Fire in California, in November.

The AirRater app can be downloaded at www.AirRater.org, from the Apple Store and Google Play.

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