

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Cross Boundary Research Funds for Two New North West Projects at UTAS

Two new research projects in the North West have been funded through the UTAS Institute for Regional Development's Cross Boundary Research Fund.

This year's funding will allow researchers at the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture to further their work on developing drought tolerant lucerne fodder crops, and the second project will look at how the UTAS University Preparation Program (UPP) has shaped the lives of its Cradle Coast students.

The Cross Boundary Research Fund is designed to encourage collaborative research projects across the UTAS Cradle Coast Campus, the university and the region. The fund aims to support new and emerging researchers who are working on innovative projects, with up to \$5,000 allocated to eligible projects that meet the selection criteria.

The projects must contribute to growing knowledge or answer significant questions, as well as being based in North West Tasmania and completed within 12 months. The projects demonstrate collaboration between different research organisations.

1. Pembleton, KG and S Puthigae. **'Giving drought the cold shoulder: utilising molecular biology to better understand the relationship between freezing tolerance and drought tolerance in forage crops'** \$5000

Through the use of novel molecular biology research methods within an agronomic context, this project will identify how freezing tolerance and drought tolerance are related in lucerne (*Medicago sativa*) (an agriculturally important forage crop). This project is significant in that it is the first time that next generation gene sequencing analysis will be undertaken on taproots from drought stressed lucerne. Results from this study will assist both primary producers and plant breeders to mitigate the negative impact that drought has on plant production, while providing new insights to both molecular biologists and agronomists investigating strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of drought.

2. Johns, S, N Fitzallen, N Crawford, C Hawkins, D McCormack, M Harris and L Jarvis. **'Impact of participation in the University Preparation Program (UPP) on Cradle Coast students'** \$4932.00

Using a retrospective longitudinal study, several cohorts of past successful UPP students will be tracked in order to understand what they have done since they completed their UPP course, in terms of further study, employment and geographic mobility.

Findings from the study will provide an insight into the longer-term benefits of participation in enabling programs for students from rural and regional areas. Findings will also allow for tentative conclusions to be drawn regarding the flow-on effects for communities, and for the University.

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