

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Friday 5 September 2014

Talent blooms at Young Tall Poppy Awards

The achievements of two young scientists were celebrated last night at the presentation of the 2014 Tasmanian Young Tall Poppy Science Awards.

University Physics lecturer **Dr Stas Shabala** and Australian Maritime College Engineering lecturer **Dr Jessica Walker** are the 2014 recipients.

The prestigious annual Young Tall Poppy Science Awards aim to recognise the achievements of Australia's outstanding young scientific researchers and communicators.

University of Tasmania Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Rathjen, congratulated the award recipients.

"A high level of academic achievement is a central goal of any higher education institution and this is something the University is very proud to be excelling at; Dr Shabala and Dr Walker are both wonderful examples of this kind of achievement.

"However, the most pleasing thing about the Young Tall Poppy Awards is the recognition of researchers who are in the early part of their careers, yet have achieved so much.

"These awards also celebrate the winners' commitment to sharing their expertise and working towards fostering an interest in science and higher education with members of the community, particularly school children," Professor Rathjen said.

"It is our hope that the achievements of our Tall Poppies will serve as a continued inspiration to both their peers and colleagues, and those in the community who might aspire to one day follow their paths."

About Dr Stas Shabala: Dr Shabala has a Bachelor of Science with First Class Honours from the University of Tasmania and a PhD in Astrophysics and Cosmology from the University of Cambridge. Dr Shabala has received multiple fellowships, including his current Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Early Career Fellowship. He was also previously an ARC Super Science Fellow.

Dr Shabala's research interests include how galaxies form and massive black holes. He recently helped start a citizen science project called Radio Galaxy Zoo, which enlists the help of members of the public to identify erupting black holes.

About Dr Jessica Walker: Dr Walker is also a University of Tasmania graduate, holding both a Bachelor of Engineering with First Class Honours and a PhD in Mechanical Engineering. Dr Walker's research interests include fluid dynamics research and teaching with renewable energy and energy efficiency applications.

She was the 2012 Fulbright Tasmania Scholar, the 2010 Tasmanian Southern Cross Young Achiever in the Science and Technology Category and a finalist for the 2011 Tasmanian Young Australian of the Year. Dr Walker has devoted a lot of time to interacting with young students to foster an interest in engineering, including hosting lab tours, giving research demonstrations, visiting schools and taking part in the Young Tassie Scientists program.

About the Tall Poppies: Selection criteria for these awards include outstanding research/academic achievement as well as excellence in communication and community engagement to promote an understanding of science. The Award winners ('Tall Poppies') participate in education and community outreach programs in which they become role models to inspire school students and the broader community about the possibilities of science. This involves a range of other science promotion activities for school students, teachers and the broader community, including visits to schools, educational seminars, workshops, public talks and other activities.

For high resolution research images of Dr Shabala or Dr Walker, please email chcooper@utas.edu.au

Information released by:

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