

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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Funding windfall to boost dementia research

A Tasmanian charity has left a lasting legacy with the University of Tasmania by providing \$400,000 for health research.

The generous donation from the disbanded Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship Hobart branch will support an annual post-graduate position in the areas of dementia, heart complaints or cancer.

The University has established the Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship Medical Research Trust and has allocated the first \$20,000 instalment for dementia research.

Acting Pro Vice Chancellor (Research) Professor Allan Canty said the Trust funds, managed by Tasmanian Perpetual Trustees, will assist in the development of training and new knowledge in this area.

“The University is thrilled that the Victoria League has made the generous offer to this institution as it does high quality work in the field of dementia, heart complaints and cancer and provides excellent postgraduate training for new researchers,” Prof. Canty said.

“This research scholarship is crucial in Tasmania which now has the highest proportion of ageing population in Australia.”

PhD candidate, Kara Martin, has been selected as the first scholarship recipient and will conduct her research at the Menzies Research Institute. Ms Martin has a science degree with honours in statistics and is undertaking a PhD in epidemiology.

Ms Martin said it was a privilege to have been selected for the Victoria League scholarship and it would allow her to focus full-time on her studies.

Under the scholarship, Ms Martin will investigate the association between gait (the initiation of the walking cycle), cognitive function and the risk of falling for 60 to 85-year-old Tasmanians.

“An abnormal gait may precede the onset of dementia by many years,” Ms Martin said.

“This research may help us understand which gait characteristics may best be associated with cognitive function and therefore become important markers of dementia.”

The Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship was formed in London in 1901 in memory of Queen Victoria with the aim of promoting friendship.

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