

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Friday October 30 2015

University of Tasmania attracts \$5 million in national research funding

The University of Tasmania will investigate deterrents to accessing online child exploitation material and the educational attainment of Indigenous children, after securing more than \$5 million in national research funding today.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen welcomed the news after Federal Education and Training Minister Senator Simon Birmingham announced the Australian Research Council Major Grants for 2016 in Adelaide this morning.

Professor Rathjen said the University's successful bids were for projects across a range of research areas, including marine and plant science, social science and law.

"These research grants reinforce the University's presence at the cutting edge of academia," he said.

"Winning such bids from the Australian Research Council each year cements our competitiveness as a national research organisation, and ensures we lead the way in developing globally accepted understanding and practices in a range of vital fields."

The grants totalled \$3.85 million, and bring with them additional research block funding, taking the total value to the University and the State to just over \$5 million.

For the first time, the University was awarded \$310,000 under the Discovery Indigenous program. Pro Vice-Chancellor Aboriginal Research and Leadership, Professor Maggie Walter, will lead a project investigating the educational experiences and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This research will be used to inform policy to maximise these children's educational life chances.

The University was awarded \$2.94 million for eight projects under the Discovery Projects banner. This includes projects to understand sea level rises, carbon recycling in the Southern Ocean, the reproduction of crop plants, how large herbivores changed native vegetation, genetic variation in eucalypts, climatic tolerance in conifers, and human decision making in complex situations.

Dr Jeremy Prichard will lead a team investigating internet warnings to prevent the viewing of minor-adult sex images. The project will test the effect of different online warning messages with a randomised controlled experiment. The results will assist policing efforts by indicating whether warnings can be used to discourage first-time viewers of child exploitation material.

The University was awarded \$600,000 under the LIEF (Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities) program to purchase a field emissions electron microprobe. The technology may enable more efficient detection and recovery of ore deposits, and help develop environmentally-friendly processes for waste disposal.

Professor Brigid Heywood, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), said the bids would allow the University to continue to conduct ground-breaking research across a number of faculties.

“Today’s results confirm our strengths, particularly in the key themes of Environment, Resources and Sustainability and Marine, Antarctic and Maritime research,” Professor Heywood said.

“What we can also see in today’s overall results, which included a number of proposals ranked amongst the top ten percent of unfunded projects, is a University with a depth of research talent that stands poised to capitalise on future competitive funding opportunities.

“Furthermore, our researchers form key parts of collaborative research partnerships with other institutions who have secured grants in this latest round of ARC funding, highlighting the significance of our expertise to the wider Australian research effort.”

Information released by:

University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office

Phone: 6324 3218

Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au