



Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Tasmanian marine ecologist receives international Fellowship

A Tasmanian marine ecologist is one of only three researchers nationally to receive a prestigious Rod Rickards Fellowship.

Dr Nicole Hill, from the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), has received the award to pursue an international research partnership into predicting the biodiversity of Antarctica's unique marine system.

"I am very honoured to receive the Rod Rickards Fellowship, especially since only three were awarded from fields as diverse as medical science, chemical engineering and of course biological science/Antarctic ecology, which is my area of research," Dr Hill said.

Dr Hill will travel to France next month to study with world-leading Antarctic researchers at the Universite Pierre et Marie Curie and Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle.

"Unfortunately, Antarctic marine ecosystems face increasing pressure from a range of sources including pollution, fishing, invasive species and a changing climate.

"Integral to our ability to protect Antarctic marine ecosystems and envisage how they may be affected by future scenarios, is a thorough understanding of current patterns in the distribution of biodiversity and how these patterns relate to environmental drivers.

"French researchers have conducted extensive surveys in East Antarctica.

"These surveys combined with Australian and Japanese datasets provide the most complete picture of marine biodiversity in East Antarctica, an area where Australia has several research stations.

"Nonetheless a key feature is that data for Antarctica are sparse, and predictive modelling allows us to fill in the gaps and produce maps of biodiversity across large regions and, at the same time, understand which environmental factors are important in driving these patterns."

The study visit is also being supported by a University of Tasmania Career Development Scholarship. The Fellowships honour one of the country's most prominent scientists, Professor Rod Rickards (1934-2007).

Professor Rickards is recognised for his notable achievements in the chemistry of compounds of medical, biological, agricultural and veterinary importance.

Information released by:

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