

## Media Release

### Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## Leading future learners: University of Tasmania launches Children's University

Encouraging the state's young learners will be the focus of a significant new initiative from the University of Tasmania.

At today's launch of the Children's University Tasmania, University Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said it was a milestone in the quest to boost Tasmania's educational outcomes.

"Tasmania has a long way to go in encouraging its students to continue education to the end of Year 10, Year 12 and beyond," Professor Rathjen said. "We believe the key to educational attainment is starting early with children and their families.

"By beginning with primary school children, who may not be aware of the full range of educational opportunities that await them, we believe we can foster a love of learning that will carry them into adulthood.

"We have a wealth of knowledge and experience within our state, and we need to leverage it fully to meet the University's goal of encouraging 10,000 more Tasmanians to undertake higher education."

Children's University Tasmania will cater to children aged seven to 14, and will initially target urban schools in areas of greatest need, before being rolled out across the state.

The initiative promotes education by rewarding participation in learning opportunities outside of school hours, with formal certificates awarded at yearly graduation ceremonies to recognise students who complete their Passport to Learning.

The passport is completed by attaining the required number of hours at validated activities through local providers (Public Learning Destinations) such as sports clubs, museums and galleries, and activities at schools during lunchtime and after school.

The children decide which activities they would like to participate in. The system acknowledges children learn by engaging in a range of experiences, not just traditional lessons in a classroom.

University of Tasmania Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students and Education) Professor David Sadler said the program would operate under the mantle of the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment, a University initiative launched in February to investigate factors restricting Tasmanian students from achieving their educational potential.

The Underwood Centre, and the Children's University Tasmania component, has been developed in partnership with the Tasmanian Government.

"The Children's University is a tangible example of the Centre working to improve the state's educational attainment, through partnerships between the University, government, schools, institutions such as museums and galleries, and the community," he said.

"This program has already seen success across the UK and is now being rolled out across parts of Europe and Asia. We are confident it can also drive an uplift in our own educational outcomes."

It is anticipated the first graduation ceremony will be held in March, 2016.

The Children's University began in Birmingham, UK, in the early 1990s, and the Children's University Trust was established in 2006.

The initiative has now spread across the UK and to the Netherlands, Malaysia and Turkey.

In 2013, Adelaide University secured the Australian rights to the program, and the University of Tasmania is the first in the country to join them.

The project was launched today with Education and Training Minister Jeremy Rockliff at the Moonah Arts Centre, Hobart, with 20 students from Windermere Primary School taking part in a Social Circus skills workshop.

**Information released by:**

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