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MEDIA RELEASE

1 June 2011

Virgin Australia takes Tasmanian devil under its wing

Virgin Australia is taking the Tasmanian devil cause under its wing, with the release of eight life-size Tasmanian devil donation sculptures in its airport lounges in major cities around Australia.

The Tasmanian devil is facing extinction through the ravages of Devil Facial Tumour Disease – a rare and contagious cancer sweeping through the wild Tasmanian population.

With Virgin Australia's support, the eye-catching and highly unique sculptures will take the message about the devil's plight to countless travellers around Australia in the hope of raising awareness – and important funds – for the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program.

Virgin Australia will also be supporting project through in-flight promotions.

The project is an initiative of the Program's fundraising arm, the Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal. During the 2010-11 summer holidays, Tasmanian kids were invited to take part in the Appeal's Kids Club competition to redecorate the sculptures with as much creative flair as possible.

According to the Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal manager Jess Tyler, "These gorgeous life-size Tasmanian devil sculptures have been doing a great job in some domestic airport terminals and Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service centres for many years, but just like their wild friends, they needed our help to recover from the ravages of a hard life."

"This project has been an analogy to ravaged wild devils being captured, nursed back to health and re-released to the wild," she says.

"The 'devils' are the tired coin collection sculptures, their 'nursing' has been a complete refurbishment and the 'wild' is the Virgin Australia locations around the country," she says.

"Our vision was to send a bold message to the Australian community about the Tasmanian devil, in a way that made the devil really stand out as a cause worth supporting and the association with Virgin Australia has made that possible."

Virgin Australia Group Executive Corporate Communications Danielle Keighery said the airline was proud to be associated with a project that would save the species from Facial Tumour Disease.

"By hosting the sculptures in our terminal we hope guests will contribute to such a great cause, ensuring a cure is found and that future generations of Devils are not affected," she said.

More...

The donation sculptures will be on display over the next year in Virgin Australia lounges in Launceston, Hobart, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Townsville.





Visuals of the decorated sculptures can be seen at: www.tassiedevil.com.au

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The Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal is administered by the University of Tasmania Foundation and is the formal fundraising arm of the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program. The University of Tasmania, in partnership with the Australian and Tasmanian State Government, launched the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program and Appeal to oversee the response to the disease and raise funds for vital research. The aim of the program is to maintain the Tasmanian devil as an ecologically functional species in the wild.

Ends.