

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



UTAS joins global astronomy marathon

The University of Tasmania's Mt Pleasant 26m radio telescope is joining "100 hours of astronomy", which is set to become the largest science public outreach event ever.

The 100 hours event is part of the celebrations for the International Year of Astronomy and is composed of a broad range of astronomical activities held around the world aimed at involving the public.

The 100 hours will take place over four days and nights from 2–5 April and will feature in a live webcast called "Around the World in 80 Telescopes".

The Mt Pleasant observatory is one of five astronomical facilities in Australia participating in "Around the World in 80 Telescopes."

The webcast is providing a world-wide internet audience with the opportunity to see what is happening at astronomical observatories around the world.

Dr Simon Ellingsen from the UTAS School of Physics said the Mt Pleasant telescope will feature in the webcast from 12 - 12:20pm on Saturday 4 April.

"We will be observing the Vela pulsar, a rapidly rotating neutron star about 1400 light years from Earth.

"We are studying giant radio pulses from the neutron star to try and understand the long-standing mystery as to how the pulses of radio emission are produced," Dr Ellingsen said.

The Mt Pleasant radio telescope and adjoining Grote Reber Museum will be open to the public from 11am – 3pm on Saturday 4 April. Entry is free. There will be tours of the telescope facilities and control room and 3D space movies in the virtual reality theatre.

Dr Ellingsen said the open day would be a great chance for the public to find out about the vital role the UTAS astronomical facilities play in a range of international science projects.

The University's Mt Canopus optical telescope will also be open for a viewing evening from 7 – 10pm on 4 April (\$2 per person or \$5 per family).

For directions to the observatories and more information see:

<http://www.phys.utas.edu.au/physics/index.html>

For more information/interviews, please contact Dr Simon Ellingsen from the UTAS School of Physics, phone 6226 7588

Information Released by:

**Media Office, University of Tasmania
Phone: 6226 2124 Mobile: 0417 517 291
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au**