

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



UTAS research a big winner in ARC funding

Research into the Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) is part of \$5.14 million in Australian Research Council grants for the University of Tasmania, which have been announced today.

The University of Tasmania has been funded for 15 Discovery and Linkage projects, including two looking at the cancer decimating the Tasmanian devil population.

UTAS Vice Chancellor Professor Daryl Le Grew said the funding is indicative of the quality of research being undertaken by researchers at the university.

The UTAS School of Chemistry's Australian Centre for Research on Separation Science (ACROSS) has received \$560,000 over four years for its Discovery Project (0987318) to develop technologies at the heart of the separation science system.

ACROSS Director and chief project researcher, Professor Paul Haddad, said the grant will support new research at UTAS and, in conjunction with projects already underway in ACROSS, apply these findings to a series of projects regarded as areas of national priority.

"These include biotechnology for the identification of disease markers in the Tasmanian Devil Facial Tumour Disease, nanotechnology applications for the miniaturisation of microchips, pre and post-blast identification of improvised terrorism explosives, and improved pharmaceutical drug discoveries," Prof Haddad said.

A further \$400,000 over three years (LP0989727) went to a Linkage Project to ensure the continuation of a PhD student to support the senior scientist exploring the immune system of devils and testing resistance to DFTD.

Associate Professor of Cancer and Immunology Greg Woods, from the University's Menzies Research Institute, said the allocation allows for the next phase of devil disease research.

"This research has the ability to completely change the research into the devil facial tumour and to change the management of the remaining devil population," Ass/Prof Greg Woods said.

“This study will determine if wild and naturally existing Tasmanian devils are protected from DFTD.

“Its will also provide critical information about mechanisms of DFTD resistance, natural or artificially induced.”

The world’s largest living carnivorous marsupial was declared endangered early this year as a result of the facial tumour which has claimed 90 per cent of adult numbers in some populations.

Other successful Discovery projects were:

- Integrated microfluidic device for the direct analysis of drugs and metabolites in biological fluids (DP0984745), by Dr M Breadmore. Presented with \$705,000 over five years.
- Redefining the metallothionein’s role in the injured brain: extracellular metallothioneins play an important role in astrocyte-neuron responses to injury (DP0984673), by Dr R Chung, Ass/Prof M Chuah, Prof J Vickers and Ass/Prof A West. Presented with \$516,140 over five years.
- Understanding the behaviour and impact of bond markets (DP0984994), by Dr M Dungey, Ass/Prof O Henry and Prof M McKenzie. Presented with \$230,000 over three years.
- How does warming prevent soil nitrogen availability from declining in response to elevated CO₂? (DP0984779), by Dr M Hovenden, Dr P Newton, Dr E Pendall, Prof Dr M Rillig, Dr P Mele and Dr M Lieffering. Presented with \$450,000 over five years.
- Australia’s changing urban tree estate: a socio-ecological study of patterns, causes and consequences (DP0987099), by Prof J Kirkpatrick and Dr A Davison. Presented with \$130,000 over three years.
- Iron in the Antarctic sea ice zone and its role in the past and future climate (DP0985361), by Dr D Lannuzel. Presented with \$300,000 over three years.
- The innovation pool in Australian biotechnology: assessing strategies for fostering innovation through patenting and patent pooling (DP0985077), by Ass/Prof D Nicol, Dr J Nielsen, Dr C Critchley and Prof R Aoki. Presented with \$412,000 over four years.
- Genetic architecture of species divergence and hybridisation in eucalypts (DP0986491), by Prof B Potts. Presented with \$490,000 over four years.
- Travelling home: a study of Walkabout, Australia’s Geographic Magazine (1934-74) (DP0984449), by Dr M Rolls and Dr A Johnston. Presented with \$109,000 over three years.
- Novel approach to study mechanisms of Na⁺ transport in plants using Lab on a Chip technology (DP0987402), by Ass/Prof S Shabala and Dr R Guijt. Presented with \$220,000 over three years.

Linkage projects:

- Promoting employee mental health through the development of managers' psychological capital: a controlled field experiment (LP0990010), by Dr A Martin, Dr K Sanderson, Dr J Scott and Ass/Prof P Brough. Presented \$245,000 over four years to work with Beyond Blue, Workcover and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- Managing for persistence of the saproxyli biota in production forest landscapes (LP0989609), by Ass/Prof C Mohammed, Dr P Sunnucks, Dr M Glen, Dr S Grove, Dr T Wardlaw, Prof J Spence and Dr E Bockerhoff. Presented \$270,000 over three years to work with Forestry Tasmania and Ta Ann Tasmania.
- Post-invasion trait-mediated indirect interactions: ecological and evolutionary impacts of the invasive European green crab (LX0989775), by Dr J Wright, Dr A Freeman, Dr C Hewitt and Ass/Prof M Campbell. Presented with \$60,000 over one year to work with researchers in the USA.

For more information about any successful projects contact the UTAS Media Office on 6226 2124.

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What is the ARC?

- The Australian Research Council is statutory authority within the Australian Government's Innovation, Industry, Science and Research portfolio.
- The ARC advises the Government on research matters and manages the National Competitive Grants Program, a significant component of Australia's investment in research and development.
- Two major grants are the Discovery and Linkage Grants.
- Discovery Grants fund individual researchers or teams who investigate matters of national importance.
- Linkage Grants promote national and international research partnerships between researchers and business, industry, community organisations and other publicly funded research agencies.
- For more information see www.arc.gov.au