

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

DATE: MONDAY 25 JUNE 2012

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## “Daughter of Tasmania” given honorary degree

The University of Tasmania today conferred an honorary degree to Nobel laureate Professor Elizabeth Blackburn.

The Doctor of Science honouris causa acknowledges the outstanding contribution to research and science by Prof Blackburn.

UTAS Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen presented the doctorate today in Hobart.

“Prof Blackburn is a world-renowned scientist and a Nobel Prize winner- she is also a daughter of Tasmania,” Prof Rathjen said.

Prof Blackburn was born in Hobart and her early education took place in Launceston. Her interest in science was sparked by a likeable chemistry teacher during her early schooling.

She completed her schooling at Melbourne’s University High School where she topped the state in three matriculation subjects and went on to complete a Masters degree in biochemistry at the University of Melbourne.

She then went on to Cambridge and Yale for her doctoral and post-doctoral research.

Prof Blackburn’s career has been marked by many prestigious awards, culminating in her selection in 2009 as Australia’s 11<sup>th</sup> Nobel laureate. She was one of only 35 women to receive that prestigious prize at the date of her award.

Prof Rathjen said Prof Blackburn’s impact on Australian science runs deep.

“In Australia everyone knows about her work and we are deeply proud of what she has accomplished.”

Prof Rathjen said the honorary degree was a token of the esteem in which Prof Blackburn is held by the university and the people of Tasmania.

“You are an extraordinary role model for our community,” he said.

“You have had a Tasmanian education and you are the first Tasmanian to win a Nobel Prize.

“You speak volumes to young Tasmanians about what their future might hold.”

Prof Blackburn said she is deeply honoured to receive the recognition.

“The means a lot to me because I was born and brought up in Tasmania; it was wonderful, in many ways, to be able to grow up here.

“I’m grateful to the university that I’ve been chosen for this honour but I think that this honour really goes to the education I received in Tasmania and later as a university student in Australia. Later I was able to be further educated overseas in the UK and the US.

“I think what this award is really honouring is all the efforts of the different teachers I had at different stages of my education and the mentors, and more recently, the wonderful colleagues I’ve been able to work with from around the world,” she said.

“These colleagues, research trainees and research team members- it’s really their work that is being recognised - I’m being singled out but it is all of their work that is being honoured today.”

Prof Blackburn cited Marie Curie (who was a Nobel laureate twice) as an important personal inspiration and shared a Curie quote: “Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood.”

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