

# MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## UTAS to help bring home historic SpaceX mission

The University of Tasmania is to play a key role in the servicing of the International Space Station (ISS), following the history-making Dragon spacecraft mission by the Space Exploration Technologies Corp (SpaceX).

The UTAS School of Maths and Physics has signed a contract with SpaceX to assist in delivering cargo to and from the ISS.

On Saturday the unmanned Dragon became the first commercial spacecraft to dock with the ISS.

The UTAS Mount Pleasant Observatory's 12-metre telescope near Cambridge was used to monitor Dragon's successful launch, its progress toward the ISS rendezvous and the hatch opening and cargo transfer.

At noon today (**Thursday May 31**) the telescope monitored a tracking pass by the spacecraft 250 miles above, the last pass over Tasmania to be monitored before its planned re-entry early tomorrow morning (**Friday June 1**) AEST. During the tracking pass the observatory received video and telemetry information which was forwarded to SpaceX's California control centre.

SpaceX's Manager of Mission Operations, Dr Marco Villa, who visited Hobart last year, emphasised the importance of the relationship between UTAS and SpaceX. "Hobart is going to be a fundamental station for us."

Professor John Dickey, head of the School of Maths and Physics, said both staff and students would benefit from the partnership. Eventually postgraduate students will be involved in the spacecraft tracking and monitoring.

"It'll be pretty exciting - there are certainly students at UTAS who want to get involved in space work," he said.

Prof Dickey said this relationship demonstrated the ability for Australia to take part in the space programs of other countries. He said Australia was too small a country to operate its own space program but its geographical location was attractive to the international space community.

“Here in Tasmania we can use our special location to advantage, for the benefit of all Australians.” he said. “Eventually we may be able to trade our tracking services for launching of Australian satellites.”

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