A Close Shave for the Tasmanian Devil

One of the world's most prominent computer software engineers will exchange the mouse for a razor today at the University of Tasmania to raise funds for the endangered Tasmanian Devil.

Linux creator, Linus Torvalds, will shave the beard of Hewlett-Packard Chief Technologist, Bdale Garbee, as part of an auction pledge at the week-long Linux national conference, hosted by UTAS. Mr Garbee has had a beard for 27 years.

The auction, which has raised almost $40,000 for the Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal, was attended by self-proclaimed 'geeks', programmers and computing giants including HP, IBM, Google, Intel and Red Hat.

The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program chief scientist, Professor Hamish McCallum, said the funds raised at the conference would directly contribute to a range of scientific research projects into the Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD).

"This is a significant contribution to the program and will fund one of the major grants awarded by the foundation for research into DFTD," Prof McCallum said.

"Donations to the Save the Tasmanian Devil Appeal are critical and the spectacular generosity of the computing community at this conference will considerably help this cause."

The DFTD donation was generated at the conference dinner where almost 500 delegates had the opportunity to bid for a limited-edition copy of an award-winning photograph taken by Mr Garbee's wife, published in America's *Nature's Best Photography* magazine.

Mr Garbee said the auction reached $2500 when delegates decided to up the ante, culminating in an offer to have his 27-year-old beard removed by the Linux creator once bids reached $25,000.

"We love nature and our family has experienced Tasmania's outdoors, so we are thrilled to be raising money for the Tasmania Devil," he said.

Also on the night, a "Geek" Queensland number plate was loaned for 12 months to increase bidding; more than $7000 was collected in ice-buckets; and sales continue for the conference mascot, a hybrid of a Devil and Linux emblem, the penguin.

The Linux conference is one of the world's premier technical conferences with more than 100 influential international and national speakers from major IT companies.

The conference will also present the best of open source software with presentations, displays and hands-on demonstrations at an open day for the public this Saturday at Wrest Point Casino.

The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program and Appeal will also have an information stall at the open day.

For more information contact:

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