

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



VISIT A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...

Distant galaxies may not seem so far, far away with an Australian-led imaging development that's opening up exploration of the far reaches of space.

Astronomy leader Dr Elaine Sadler, from The University of Sydney, will be discussing the potential of wide-field telescopes - which are thousands of times more powerful than traditional telescopes - during a free public talk at the University of Tasmania next Tuesday evening.

Professor John Dickey, from the UTAS School of Mathematics and Physics, said many of us know what it's like to take pictures with a six or eight megapixel camera. But the new wide-field telescopes feature hundreds and thousands of megapixels, allowing astronomers to study vast areas of the sky through a single image.

"Instead of looking at one object through a normal telescope, it means we can look at thousands of things all at once," Prof Dickey said.

"It will provide astronomers with a different type of information. If you study one galaxy, for instance, you can find out how fast it is moving or how many stars it contains.

"If you capture a million galaxies in one shot, you learn about galaxies as a class, such as how bright they can be or when they formed or how far away they are – information that starts to tell us what galaxies are."

Prof Dickey and Dr Sadler are among the professional astronomers who will be attending the annual science meeting of the Astronomical Society of Australia, to be held at UTAS from 4 – 8 July. It is the first time in a decade that Tasmania has hosted this event. Up to 200 professional stargazers are expected to take part.

All areas of astronomy will be represented, from studies of how the universe began through to stellar and planetary astronomy.

Various discussions and special sessions will be held in conjunction with the meeting - in particular, the Harley Wood Winter School in astrophysics, organised by and for postgraduate students in astrophysics. It will be held at Woodfield Lodge, near Kempton.

Dr Elaine Sadler is President of Division VIII (Galaxies and the Universe) of the International Astronomical Union. One of her main research areas is the study of how galaxies form and change over time. Her free public discussion will begin at 8pm on Tuesday 6 July 2010 in Physics Lecture Theatre 1, Clark Road, the University of Tasmania, Sandy Bay.

Professor John Dickey from the UTAS School of Mathematics and Physics is available for interview and can be contacted on (03) 6226 2447 or John.Dickey@utas.edu.au During the conference he can be contacted via the UTAS Communications and Media Office on 0418 510 121.

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