

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Home-grown science program continues to gain national momentum

A national science recruitment program designed to help stem the projected shortfall of science professionals across Australia is fast gaining momentum.

PICSE – the Primary Industry Centre for Science Education – is marking its 10<sup>th</sup> year in operation in 2009 with a three-fold increase in staff, growth in industry participation and a recent \$3.6 million Federal government grant.

PICSE provides an avenue for young people to experience primary industry career opportunities through camps, industry placements and class activities.

The UTAS Cradle Coast campus in Burnie is hosting a national planning forum **this week (March 10 – 12)** with the centre's science education officers arriving from Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales to attend the three-day workshop.

From Riverland in South Australia to Queensland's Sunshine Coast, the Tasmanian-grown program continues to expand on the national stage, operating six activity centres and counting.

“The scientific community is facing a real dilemma in the not-too-distant future with a dire shortage of professionals predicted,” PICSE national director Dr David Russell said.

“Coupled with that is the real need for scientists with some of this Century's biggest challenges facing us including climate change, nature resource management and food shortages.

“This is where PICSE steps in to help provide a national solution.”

As part of this week's planning forum, science education officers will tour a number of North-West coast industries.

Headquartered on the North-West coast of Tasmania, PICSE began in 1999.

Its premise has always been simple – provide inspiration for future scientists and researchers through in-school class activities, science fairs, camps and industry placements.

“We have so many examples of students who have been a part of PICSE, and went on to pursue a really rewarding scientific career,” Dr Russell said.

“That is what is at the heart of PICSE, helping students make an informed choice on their future career paths.”

The program now hosts six activity centres across Australia and also provides support for teachers with professional development sessions and resources.

While turning the spotlight on primary industry is PICSE’s central aim, Dr Russell said there are now plans to incorporate other industries.

“Over the next five years, we are aiming to include earth sciences, marine studies and to also create stronger ties with vocational education and training,” he said.

**\*\*\*The national PICSE planning forum is running from March 10) until Thursday (March 12) at the UTAS Cradle Coast campus, 16-20 Mooreville Road, Burnie\*\*\***

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