Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday, 8 March 2017

University of Tasmania researchers in the lead at national soil, transport CRCs

The University of Tasmanian’s unique strengths in interdisciplinary research and big data has its scientists leading key components of two national Co-operative Research Centres (CRCs) announced this week.

The centres, announced by the Federal Government, are:

- **iMove CRC**: ($55 million over 10 years matched with $178.8 million in cash and in-kind participant contributions) to exploit digital and evolving vehicle technologies to enable traffic to flow more smoothly, creating more efficient intermodal connections and offer real-time choice to travellers and freight operators.

- **CRC for High Performance Soils**: ($39.5 million over 10 years with $136.8 million cash and in-kind participant contributions) to help farmers bridge the gap between soil science and farm management giving them the tools and knowledge to make decisions on complex soil management issues. These will help optimise productivity, yield and profitability and ensure long-term sustainability of their farming businesses.

In each case, the University of Tasmania’s capability with sensing technology and big data – built through the Sense-T partnership – along with the strength of the University’s Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA), provided the foundation for its involvement.

“The investment by both Federal and State governments, and the University in the Sense-T partnership is showing strong returns,” Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Brigid Heywood said.

“Across the sector, our offering to bids such as these is compelling because of the intellectual and technological capacity which has been built through the Sense-T endeavour.

“Success in these CRC bids is also evidence of the power of research which occurs between disciplines, underpinned by excellence in STEM, which is the reason we have proposed the new STEM complex for Tasmania. It will unlock considerable
potential for the State which is currently constrained, and provide a platform for the expansion of research strengths in Launceston and Burnie, including fields such as agriculture and logistics.”

Sense-T Director Associate Professor Stephen Cahoon said involvement in the CRCs would draw on a range of talent across the University including the Australian Maritime College, TIA, and the Faculty of Science Engineering and Technology.

Associate Professor Cahoon will co-lead the University’s involvement in the iMove CRC with Associate Professor Laurie Bonney, of TIA. With industry partner Woolworths, it will investigate the impacts of transport on freight, seeking improvements in road time and handling.

The University’s involvement in the CRC for High Performance Soils will be led by TIA’s Dr Richard Doyle and focus on soil health, sensors and instruments, data mining and big data analytics.

“Our expertise in agriculture and science, coupled with the ‘big data’ capacity that was built via Sense-T, allows us to look at historically challenging on-farm management issues in different ways,” Dr Doyle said.

“Real-time sensing and strong data analysis allow us to develop powerful tools which will help farm operators increase yield and drive efficiency in their operations.”

Professor Heywood said TIA and the Sense-T partnership were both good examples of the University’s strong track record of research working across disciplines and at the interface of industry.

“Throughout the life of the Sense-T project, and deep in the culture of TIA, a participative approach to the delivery of research has been used,” she said. “Everyone is involved in scoping the design and the methodology of the research.

“While that poses some challenges up front, because people are from different backgrounds, it quickly starts to pave the way of bold, creative thinking with a focus on delivering value and innovation to our partners.”

Information released by:
University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office
Contact: Jason Purdie, (0455) 838 945
Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au