



Media Release – 20/11/2009

TAS ECO-TOXICOLOGY RESEARCH FUND LAUNCH

Grand Chancellor Hotel, Launceston, 12.00 noon

Today, Environment Tasmania and Pollution Information Tasmania, with fund patron **Peter Cundall** are publicly launching the Tas Eco-Toxicology Research Fund at the Grand Chancellor Hotel in Launceston at 12.00 noon. The funds first educational brochure about the impacts of pesticides on Tasmania's drinking water will also be launched.

“The formation of the *Tasmanian Ecotoxicology Research Fund* is the idea of several concerned Tasmanian individuals and groups who feel it is definitely time that our community became involved in an issue where governments have failed us. If Tasmania is to maintain its *clean-green* image and ultimately a healthy and toxic-free environment, urgent action is needed,” said Simon Branigan, Policy Coordinator for Environment Tasmania.

Dr David Obendorf, Veterinarian, Wildlife Researcher and founder of the research fund, pointed out that there has been a dramatic rise in unusual illnesses and diseases in our wildlife.

“In the thirty years of working with wildlife I've seen the good, the bad and the shockingly ugly. Biodiversity decline and the impact of insidious disease processes are now the hallmarks of Tasmania's wildlife and ecosystems - a transmissible cancer in Tasmanian devils, fungal diseases in frogs and platypus is only the start.”

“The formation of this research fund is a bottom-up approach that will support independent and strategic eco-toxicology testing and research – which will help to join up the disease dots,” concluded Dr Obendorf.

Dr Alison Bleaney, General Practitioner and Toxicology Researcher, will also be launching an educational brochure to raise awareness about the contamination of our water catchments.

“Our drinking water catchments are not protected from pesticide pollution, be that from aerial and ground spraying of endocrine disrupting chemicals, such as atrazine and simazine or other sources.”

“This pamphlet is to raise awareness of these issues in the general community and ensure that our politicians and those that control our water quality get the message.”

For Comment before & after: Dr Alison Bleaney, Toxicology Researcher – 0417 303 549

Simon Branigan, Environment Tasmania – 0409 087 278

Dr David Obendorf, Dr Andrew Lohrey & Peter Cundall will also be available for comment at the launch.