

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Seaweed science comes of age

Advances in knowledge of seaweeds and their critical role in coastal ecosystems worldwide will be outlined in Hobart tomorrow night (**Tuesday 14 October**) at the launch of the latest edition of *Seaweed Ecology and Physiology*.

The book has been a seven-year project for lead author Tasmanian scientist Assoc Prof Catriona Hurd, from the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies.

In coastal seas, from the tropics to the poles, seaweeds supply the energy required to support diverse coastal marine life and provide habitat for invertebrates and fish.

Assoc Prof Hurd says the book, the only one of its type, bridges a 20-year gap since the release of the first edition in 1994.

“Twenty years is a long time in global seaweed science. Since 1994 a host of new seaweeds has been identified as far afield as the Arctic and Antarctic, to depths of 80 metres, and floating on the surface of all the world’s oceans.

“Three distinct seaweed groups – red, green and brown - are only distantly related to each other, and knowing this has helped us understand why the underlying cellular processes, life cycles etc are so very different between the groups,” she said.

The book explores the processes by which seaweeds, as individuals and communities, interact with their environment and how seaweeds respond to local and global environmental change.

Assoc Prof Hurd said local changes in land use practices and global environmental change, including ocean acidification and ocean warming, are having most impact on seaweeds. Land use changes increase nutrients from agricultural and urban run-off, and increase sedimentation, thereby reducing light and inhibiting attachment and development of seaweeds. Invasive seaweeds also alter community structure – they are introduced mostly via human activities such as international shipping.

Assoc Prof Hurd led the revision of 1,500 scientific references during her five years of researching for *Seaweed Ecology and Physiology*, written with co-authors Prof Paul

Harrison from the University of British Columbia, Prof Christopher Lobban from the University of Guam, and Assoc Prof Kai Bischof from the University of Bremen.

The presentation, at the IMAS Aurora auditorium, Castray Esplanade, starts at 5pm tomorrow night, Tuesday 14 October.

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