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(General welcome and speaker introductions from MC Andy Muirhead)

Speaker 1: Dr Niall Doran, Co-ordinator – BookEnd Trust

It is great to see so many people here today, and it is really a great pleasure that this day has finally arrived. Yesterday was a significant day for many reasons. Firstly, it was Father's Day of course, and secondly it was also Threatened Species Day – I don't think those two are connected, but you never know. The significance of Threatened Species Day also goes a bit deeper for me and for this project, because it is yesterday to the day three years ago that we first contacted Bryce Courtenay with this idea that we had been brewing and developing. It was a bit of a mad scheme in our heads at that time, Bryce responded so positively to the idea and that's when it all really started to take off. So it is very apt that three years and one day later we are actually all here to launch this initiative.

Basically, the BookEnd Trust is a new environmental scholarship program. That's the short summary of it, but it is designed to be a very flexible and very, very interesting program in how it actually achieves that goal. It is independent from the University but working in partnership with the University by bringing funds, students and projects to the University. It is apolitical, and it is a not-for-profit group.

The two key issues that it is trying to address are two very prominent issues within Tasmania at the current time. Firstly, education – and I am sure everyone in this room is aware of the issues with education within the State, the low retention rates we have compared to all other parts of Australia, the issues we have with the standard of education received. We really need to help boost the inspiration the students have to stay within the education system, for the good of our community, for the good of our economy and for the good of the students. And we really need to be helping the teachers who are inspiring those students by providing them with the sort of tools that they can use to help inspire that next generation.

The second issue that the Trust is here to address is environmental issues. Tasmania has environmental issues to face, there are a lot of challenges, and that's the way to view them: they *are* challenges, and they *can* be overcome with the right viewpoint and the right approach. If we can't combine those two – education and environment within the State – to have a good outcome, then we can't do it anywhere.

Tasmania has great natural values, great opportunities for people. I am a very firm believer that for effective conservation we need to show people that there are career opportunities, that there are ways forward to be clever and innovative, that involve an environmental future. And that is why we want to combine education and environment in the way we're doing.

The other key issue there is that we do need to be optimistic. We need to remember that at the moment our upcoming generations are constantly being barraged with images of a world going bad, images of problems, climate change, sustainability issues, that there are problems everywhere they look. We need to give them hope, and give them the tools with which they can actually face those challenges. So we do need that positive element in this mix.

One of our other patrons, Saul Eslake, has talked about the future of Tasmania laying in clever, innovative approaches and thinking and niche marketing, and that is exactly what the BookEnd Trust is aiming to build. Therefore the Trust has three requirements:

- Any projects that it funds or scholarships that it provides must firstly have a good, positive environmental result – they must really produce the goods on the ground for some environmental issue;
- They must also provide an opportunity for a student that otherwise wouldn't be available – so giving an opportunity to grasp a possible future career and really make the most of it;
- And the third thing is it must raise public awareness. So part of the project is actually raising the public and schools awareness of the work that is being undertaken.

There is so much in this State that is already being done by various organisations that a lot of people here are representing, but a lot of it isn't publicly well recognised, people don't know that it is there. A lot of people don't even know the values that are in the State that we should be really proud of. The World Heritage Area: we all know there is a World Heritage Area, very few people in the broader community realise that it actually meets the highest number of criteria for listing as a World Heritage Area of anywhere on the planet. We all recognise the Tasmanian Devil as a threatened species; there are 700 threatened species in the State. So there's a lot for people to be aware of, a lot for people to learn about.

The scholarships that the Trust can fund can fall in any discipline, whether it's science, whether it's media and communications, whether it's law, economics, as long as the projects have that environmental focus because environmental issues aren't just a scientific issue alone.

We also are very keen to fit within existing school teaching frameworks. We are not trying to reinvent what the education system is doing, but what we are trying to do is to provide our students, who are doing the scholarship programs, as mentors that schools can check in with, follow the progress of and deal with directly throughout the course of their projects. Our students won't just be delivering one final product, glossy product all fixed up and nice, but they'll be available to talk to schools and show them the whole process of the projects they're working on, warts and all.

When I was working within the State Government, I used to give lectures at the University every year, guest lectures talking about what we did, and what stunned me at the time was how few University students were aware of what job opportunities were available within the Government system for environmental work, and what possible paths their futures might take. If we were not reaching University students with those potential opportunities, we're not reaching the school students, and by the time people are at University it is almost too late for them to make a decision that might change the course of their life.

The first three scholarships being officially awarded today are media and communications scholarships, because these students will actually work very hard on developing the ways that we do communicate with schools and with the broader public, and taking feedback from the schools in particular on the sort of information that we can provide so that the project can develop through these communications students.

There will be three scholarships awarded today: two will be working in a team looking at injured and orphaned wildlife. The Bonorong Wildlife Centre with the Go Wild project is running the injured and orphaned wildlife program for the State, and this is work that is largely unsung. There are a lot of wildlife carers in the room today, and it is very, very little recognised the effort, the expertise and the sacrifice that these people put into their work. Our students will be working with Bonorong and

with the carers to try and bring that story forward, to try and show the public exactly what is involved in that process.

The third scholarship today will be a shark project. We have a student who will be working with a marine cinematographer based interstate, who has been documenting Great White Shark research around the continent. That will be a spectacular project, and an opportunity to see new filming techniques being trialled and tested and invented in the field, and again bringing that information back to schools and showing them where this sort of work can take you.

These are two very, very different topics, and that's quite deliberate: to have a varied mix of topics so that people can actually – so that students and the public – can actually see the variety of work that is available, and we are hoping to bring more and more projects online so that variety increases. We have scientific projects in the pipeline, looking at antibiotic cave silks, and also looking at soil retention in high erosion areas that will help benefit the agricultural community. Lots of exciting work to come.

That's the snapshot of the Trust to date, and I can only give a snapshot at this stage because of the brief time that we have, but we do certainly want people to come up and talk to us. Before I finish, there are a lot of people who deserve thanks for getting us to this stage in the process, a lot of people who have put a lot of work into building what has become the BookEnd Trust.

There are three particular groups of people I want to thank.

Firstly, people who I've dealt with at a personal level, so the immediate surroundings. Vicki Colville, who is in the audience, my partner, has put a lot of sacrifice into this supporting the work that I've done. When this was just a mad idea in my head and starting to grow, Vicki could have quite rightly pointed to the damage that I was inflicting on our mortgage and said "no", but she saw the value to the work and supported that all the way through. And that has helped us get through some very dark times, when it looked like the project wouldn't work, so I thank her very much. I thank Alastair Richardson, who's also in the audience, who came on board to help. Alastair did several consulting jobs with me, which helped bring in cash to feed into the project. That took the financial pressure off me at the early end, and has helped enormously as well. Craig Wellington, who has organised a lot of the media side of today and a lot of the promotional side of the project has been fantastic in the midst of a punishing schedule of producing shows such as *Les Mis* a few months ago, and still managed to find the time. And to save you looking at me for all of this talk, a lot of people have contributed fantastic photos, in particular Bill Brown and Kevin Doran, which are just absolutely stunning and look fantastic on this screen.

The second group are the patrons. What a terrific group of people, and one that really captures attention. I've mentioned how fantastic it was for Bryce to come on board, and he really came on board at the time we needed help most and that was fantastic. He also gave us a lot of brilliant advice that's been worked into the project, the best of which was "don't listen to the people who say it can't be done." Beyond that, Saul Eslake has also been terrific. Saul is an incredibly busy man, you always see him in various parts of the country and involved with various issues, yet he is always able to reply to questions and queries very, very quickly, in great detail and with great thought. He is a great champion for education in this State. Andy Muirhead too is a great face for the program and fantastic to have him here today hosting this event. Nick Mooney, unfortunately can't be here, and

Henry Foster, also putting a lot of effort in and greatly appreciated. And I am very, very pleased to announce today that joining our list of patrons is Liz Dombrovskis, also coming on board to provide her expertise and support to what we're doing, and that is a fantastic name to add to an already glowing list.

Things tend to snowball, which is really good. We are already building and growing and getting a list of sponsors, which is fantastic in helping us make this a reality. Go Wild at Bonorong, Sally Bryant and Pru Cotton, are here: fantastic support from them, fantastic access to their facilities and expertise, the ability to work with the injured and orphaned wildlife project is terrific, and they are committing substantial help to what we are doing. Blue Office Productions is the marine cinematographer I mentioned, they also are providing us fantastic access for what we want to achieve. Ruth Waterhouse has been a great support: you might notice that we are all wearing pins that bear the BookEnd logo. Ruth was so taken with the idea of this project that she designed an exclusive, specific pin for us and donated that to the project, and that was absolutely fantastic on her behalf. Sony Central is supporting us by providing the technology for our students to be able to film the work that they are doing and to be able to actually bring that to the students in the schools. Again, something we couldn't have achieved without their support and help. Wrest Point came on board to help us with the launch. This launch is taking place during the University school term, the University term, which means parking at the University is a bit of a nightmare. We outgrew our ability to actually house you, or allow you all to park at the University, and Wrest Point came on board to give us access to this site for the launch. Private donors are now coming on board to add to the program, money is coming in, that is fantastic, that is the lifeblood of the program, and having those private donors come on board is greatly appreciated. We also really appreciate the support that has come from all three political parties. All represented here today, we have had extremely positive meetings and support from David Bartlett, from Will Hodgman, and from Nick McKim, and that is very important for an apolitical organisation to be seen to be doing something valuable that has that unilateral support.

There is a challenge that we are putting out to the business community to match the effort and the input that private individuals have already made for the future of our young, to help fund these scholarships. We have carried the project to here, we have got it up and running, we want to keep it snowballing. So we are certainly, certainly flagging that challenge today for businesses and other individuals to come on board. It might be expertise, it might be resources, it could be any donation, but that is what we are after.

As I said before, by necessity this talk is just a snapshot of what we are doing, and on the screen are just snapshots – a short selection of snapshots – of the type of work that we could have students in the field doing. But we have got here today because of one mad idea, the back of one mortgage, and the selfless help of so many people who have come on board since. So really, my end message is: just see what we can do for our students, who are ultimately our greatest asset for this State, if we can keep that momentum building.

Thank you.

Speaker 2: Professor Daryl Le Grew, UTAS Vice Chancellor

I am absolutely delighted to be here. What a wonderful selection of images and what a great backdrop for what is an amazingly worthwhile BookEnd Trust future.

I acknowledge as Andy has said the members of the three political parties: Michael Hodgman, Nick McKim and Lisa Singh. I also acknowledge Adriana Taylor, the Mayor of Glenorchy, good to see you Adriana. Can I say that there are many distinguished guests and hopefully distinguished sponsors and donors to the Trust.

Niall and Alastair came to see me some time ago, and I preface that by saying my door's always open and people come with propositions – we have hundreds of propositions a year – and usually very encouraging of anyone who comes through the door. There was something special about the way in which Niall and Alastair presented. There was a passion there, and a steely determination I thought, so I was happy to say of course – the University will collaborate in whatever way, shape or form we possibly can.

In not such a long time they have achieved an enormous amount: bringing Bryce Courtenay, Saul Eslake, Nick Mooney, Henry Foster and others into the equation as the 'board' of the Trust; garnering a great deal of support across the environmental communities and the political parties as well; bringing the UTAS Foundation into the equation, and of course the University works through the Foundation which is at arm's length from the University proper and we do that because it's important that all the probity issues are in place. The Foundation works very carefully with people's donations, invests them well under the broad portfolio of the University, gets the results that are required, and all of those dividends then fly back into what is the ultimate end to all of this: and that is to support our students and our staff and the projects that they run in order to achieve the objectives that Niall was speaking of.

Can I say that the other reason for supporting this project has been the coalescence between the objectives of BookEnd and the University of Tasmania. We are absolutely committed to improving the situation in Tasmania, which has involved in the past an under-participation at the school, senior school level and at the University level. The University has set itself a strategic agenda to address that particular problem. In fact, over the last four years it's been the mainstay of the University's strategic intent: to grow the University, in order to grow the number of graduates, in order to grow the capacity of Tasmania to address all the spectacular potential that this island has to be a beacon for not just things environmental but for things social and community based, for cultural activities as well as the economic wellbeing of the State.

The University has actually grown by 35% over the past five years. That's pretty remarkable in the national scene. We've lifted the number of Tasmanians having a first degree or above from around 11% of the population to 16% of the population in that time. *But*, and here's the challenge for us all, the national average is running at about 20%, so we're still behind. But we've caught up more than halfway, and we will keep doing that, and we will keep doing it with the support and encouragement of the Tasmanian community.

BookEnd is part of that drive, that impetus, that we feel in the community to support more people coming through the school system, being retained no matter where they come from, no matter what their socio-economic background, it doesn't matter. That tremendous potential that has to be realised, will be realised, by the University working with the schools and colleges, the independent

schools, the catholic schools, working with the community generally, the Parliament, through the State Government partnership, in order to achieve a great objective. Within the next five years, we will be at the national average, or above the national average. We will be leading rather than following in this great educational endeavour.

Of course the other dimension to BookEnd is the environmental mission. And what better place could there be? This is a magic island, there is absolutely no doubt about that. It's a magic landscape for a magic community, and the intensity of the feeling of passion for the environment that exists in this place is indeed a beacon for the rest of the world in my view. It's not just the fact that we have a pristine World Heritage Wilderness Area, it's the care and consideration, it's the genuine excitement and sense of awe and wonder that our community has when we look deeply into all the environmental niches that surround us.

Again, when you look at the University of Tasmania and you look at our major research themes, they all emanate from the experience of this island. It doesn't matter whether it's deep within environmental conservation or within marine science, or our care for the Antarctic Treaty, or within our agriculture or aquaculture, or the care with which we think mining – all those natural resource management issues – should be projected into the future. It doesn't matter whether it's through the Menzies Centre, through the unique population databases that we have, and the unique way in which we go about caring for the health of our communities.

All of these things come from Tasmania. Our aim is to project Tasmania into the world, and that's precisely what we're doing. It's with the help of groups like BookEnd that we can do that. The more we can support our students, the more we can encourage our communities to be part of what's happening, to reach deeply into our schools systems, to reach deeply into our family structures, to encourage people to take care about the future by moving their children through not just to year 10, but to year 12 and beyond...

No matter what their background, whether they're first at University in their families, they should aspire to take all of those PhDs. And they do, but we can achieve more. You know there are more PhDs per head of population in this part of the State, in and around Hobart, for example, than in any other capital city in Australia. We have a tremendous concentration of talent, and there can be more. Can you imagine, if we were working at 20% of the population with the first degree and those who wish to aspire further, moving further on to take PhDs? We'd not only have a capacity to look after our own environment, but to model up from those situations and project those ideas into the wider world.

And that's why BookEnd is absolutely crucial to the future of the University, to the future of education, to the future of the environmental movement, and the island itself. Unless there are more elements in our community like BookEnd, we won't succeed. But we will – because Niall and Alastair and the board and the sponsors and the patrons and the broad support, the supporters of BookEnd, will make sure that that happens. I look forward to seeing BookEnd as a major public Trust working closely with the University. It can be as wealthy as you wish to make it, because the more that it has in terms of its capacity, the more that it can actually demonstrate a perpetual nature, a perpetual element for its survival and its enhancement into the future endeavour.

And that's why the launch today is important, to put in each and every one of our minds the capacity to say "is this a great thing to invest in?" And the answer is: yes it is.

Thank you very much.

Speaker 3: Bryce Courtenay, Guest of Honour

Thank you. I am enormously honoured to be here amongst the politicians, the academics and everyone here.

I was reminded of a biblical quotation: “The sins of the fathers shall be visited unto the children unto the third and fourth generation.”

I am very happy to tell you that the recipients of the scholarships today belong to the fifth generation. And the kids in the schools who are going to be taught about this magnificent, this jewel, this jewelled sceptre, this island in a wine dark sea, this glorious Tasmania, are just starting at school now as the sixth generation.

The first, second, third and fourth cannot be forgiven for what they have done, but the fifth and the sixth will fix it. Because we are going to train your children to be dreamers. The world is composed of two kinds of people: street sweepers and dreamers.

The street sweepers keep everything tidy. They keep the *status quo* going, they tell you what you can and what you can't do. And every election time, they bring up the mantra “jobs for workers”.

The dreamers are untidy. They drop bits and pieces of information on the pavement of life. They go to University, they dream, they make things possible, and they ask “what if?” And there hasn't been enough questions.

This island, this [*inaudible word*], I don't understand – I don't understand how Taswegians don't see it. I have travelled all over the world, I travel frequently. I got back from America 48 hours ago, where I was teaching, and I was asked – as I am asked constantly in every language – “where is the most beautiful place you have ever been?” And there is a singular answer: *Tasmania*.

This morning at 4:30, I stood at my bedroom window in John and Barbara Tooth's home up in Bracken Lane in Fern Tree gully, and I watched the dawn coming over the city. At first, it was absolutely dark. And then there was this wide whitish, silvery smudge which was the Derwent, and then the pallets started to build and build and build, until finally the rhododendron tree next to the bedroom window blazed with pink, and I saw again the sceptred eye of this beautiful place.

And yet, and yet, we allow the graffiti of physical destruction, to cut down these giant trees. Every time 700 species are threatened that is a full stop, an end stop, an end game of something that is more precious than anything on Earth: it's called life. And we're adding a full stop in the narrative of the environment, and we do it carelessly and without thinking.

The only people, the *only* people who can help us are our children. We are leaving them a dark heritage, and they are going to have to rescue us because we have done this task badly.

Now: the politicians here today, I want you to legislate a new tax. Are you listening to me? It's very important. Every single person who visits this wonderful island has to pay five bucks for the environment. An environmental tax of five dollars: it'll raise you \$30 million a year to look after your environment, and it's that easy. You can do it. “Oh nah,” you're saying, “oh no, too difficult, collecting all that money, oh we can't do that...” Yes you can – if you just be a dreamer.

The world has to pay for this beauty. This world, we have to stop putting dioxins into the seas. We have to, but there has to be compensation. There has to be jobs for workers – of course. They will work in this environment. How proud would that be? To know that they are sustaining something that is the single most beautiful thing on Earth?

If you said to somebody would you like to contribute to the most beautiful thing on Earth, and you can actually make a difference, are they going to say “piss off, I’m not interested”? Of course they’re not. We have to make people aware, and I can’t think of a human being on Earth who if he visited this beautiful island and you said to him “Sir, Ma’am, we’d like you to pay \$5 against the endangered species, it’s a special tax”, who’d resent it? It would probably become 15, 20... it’d be the happiest tax we ever paid!

Why don’t you do it? Yeah, of course, it’s full of terribly difficult administration problems and all that... Crap!

We must start dreaming. We must start taking this beautiful place, this closest island to the ice, and keep it for all of human kind.

Last year I was in the Amazon, and I watched the destruction of these tall trees and these beautiful places. And I could only think there must be something on Earth where money doesn’t count for a change, where the eyes visit the vistas of the world, where we drink in this beauty, this joy, this love, a tree that stood tall when van Diemen sailed past – you can’t put a chainsaw to *that*. You can’t do that, none of us can, not Taswegians, nor us – the whole world. We must, we must understand that beauty is something that *can* be destroyed, that life is something that *can* be destroyed.

Each year 100 million sharks are killed for shark fin soup. Now next time you have a cold, sniff it back and taste it: that’s what shark’s fin soup tastes like. The Chinese Government in 1977 invited me to be the first lecturer of any Western person on free enterprise, and I had 39 banquets in 37 days. Unfortunately, most banquets have 30 or 40 dishes, and the guest has to taste every single one of them otherwise nobody can partake of the banquet. I’ve got to tell you, shark fin soup tastes like shit. 100 million sharks are being killed every year to create a soup that makes you want to throw up. And we do nothing. And we do nothing...

Each one of us has the Power of One. Each one of us has the power to do almost anything, to make *anything* happen, if we’ll get off our arses and do something. No matter how small it is.

BookEnd is about trying to stop the full stops in the narrative of nature. BookEnd is about preserving the beauty and the joy and the whole business of being able to celebrate the business of being a member of humankind. We are at the top of the tree and we are chopping the branches below us. That is suicide.

Please my darlings, please, let’s get started. Let’s change it all. Stop the street sweepers, and become a dreamer.

Thank you.