

# **TASMANIAN VACATIONS SCHOOLS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS: YEARS 3-8**

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Since the late 1980s, at various times, vacation schools for gifted and talented students have been run by universities such as Charles Darwin University (NTU), Charles Sturt University and the University of Newcastle. The latter, however, apparently, is the only Australian higher education institution currently running such a program. These vacation schools have much merit, and would be admirably suited to Tasmanian, with its regional population, and the location of the three campuses of the University of Tasmania.

Typically, there are 15 students in each workshop, and usually a total of 15-20 workshops, depending on availability of workshop leaders/mentors. The duration of the vacation school is usually three days (includes opening and closing/presentation ceremonies, totalling 2 ½ hours).

Students enrol in one workshop for a three-day period during one school vacation each year. Workshops usually include such experiences as: music and creative arts, visual arts, electronics, chemistry, dance, drama, photography, cooking, design, computers, mathematics, biology/zoology.

This discussion paper will describe the history and main features of these vacation schools, and will propose how they might be established in Tasmania.

*Inter alia*, the benefits of the vacation school for the University of Tasmania would include:

- a huge amount of goodwill amongst the community and schools;
- a focal point for undergraduate and postgraduate studies
- the faculty is seen as being proactive in building close linkages with the community and schools;
- much positive media coverage; and
- a statement that the faculty is being proactive in developing educational programs for children with special interests and needs.