

Media release

Groundwater expert appointed to Flinders University first endowed chair

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Professor Craig Simmons, Director of the National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training at Flinders has been appointed to the University's inaugural Schultz Chair in the Environment.

The position – the first endowed chair at Flinders – was made possible through the D H Schultz Bequest, established through the generous gift to the University by the late Donald Herbert Schultz, a distinguished South Australian optometrist and inventor, who was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science honoris causa by Flinders in 1987.

The Bequest allows for “scientific study and research into the environment and ecology of South Australia with the intent that the information and knowledge so gained shall be applied to or made available for the preservation of the environment and ecology of South Australia and elsewhere”.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Barber said the appointment recognises Professor Simmons's outstanding contribution to advancing our understanding of the nation's groundwater resources and their importance to the environment.

“Professor Simmons, from a young age, has been both a pioneer in groundwater research and a tireless advocate for research and training in the field,” Professor Barber said.

“Under his stewardship, the National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training – a consortium of the country's leading water experts established in 2009 – has already achieved a number of significant milestones, including the engagement of some 60 PhD students and 43 postdoctoral fellows to carry out vital work in the area,” he said.

“In addition to making important contributions to the development of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the NCGRT is now undertaking work that will inform the federal government's National Groundwater Strategic Plan.”

“This work reflects Professor Simmons's own high level of commitment to the nation's water security and its flow-on effects to the environment.”

“I pay tribute to Professor Simmons's extraordinary achievements and congratulate him on his appointment to the inaugural Schultz Chair in the Environment.”

Professor Simmons said he was thrilled and humbled by the appointment.

“Donald Schultz was a remarkable South Australian who was passionate about science and the State. To be appointed to a Chair named after him is a great honour,” Professor Simmons said.

“The position will provide an opportunity to profile the water and environmental research being carried out at Flinders,” he said.

“The Vice-Chancellor and I have already discussed a range of possible activities, including the creation of a Schultz Oration and a series of guest speakers, which will promote the University's ongoing environmental work.”

Professor Simmons was awarded the 2011 Anton Hales Medal for research in the earth sciences by the Australian Academy of Science.

The National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training is an Australian Government initiative, supported by the Australian Research Council and the National Water Commission.

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