



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**May – August 2010**

## **Celebrating 100 years of amateur radio**

The Radio and Electronics Association of Southern Tasmania Inc. is part of a world-wide celebration of the organised amateur radio in Australia that began with what is now the world's oldest continuing national radio society.

Club Publicity Officer, Justin Giles-Clark said “Club members are mounting a public display and will be talking to the world using the special Callsign VK100WIA for three days – Tuesday 22 June to Thursday 24 June 2010.”

“This display is taking place at the historic 98 year old Coast Wireless Station on the top of the Queen’s Domain from 10:00am on the Tuesday the 22<sup>nd</sup>. This Wireless Station was built in 1912 to house radio equipment to communicate with the Mawson Expedition to Antarctica. The station went on to become a Coast Radio station to monitor marine emergency frequencies which it continues to do today.”

“The public are invited to come up to the Queen’s Domain Wireless Station between 10am and 9pm and see what amateur radio is all about and this will include amateur television on Wednesday the 23 June from around 7:30pm.”

“The club has been proudly affiliated with the Wireless Institute of Australia (WIA) since 1925. We’re very pleased to be actively supporting the national body which is celebrating its Centenary.”

“While the activity of amateur radio goes back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it has undergone a resurgence in the past five years through a new licence system making it much more attractive to a wider range of people.”

The national radio society, the Wireless Institute of Australia (WIA) was founded in Sydney in 1910 making it the world’s oldest continuing organisation of its kind.

WIA President, Michael Owen said, “The historical milestone we are now celebrating starts at a time of early wireless experimentation, when it was a new science being explored by ordinary people who are today called radio amateurs.

“Just think about it, there were amateur experimenters building equipment to send and receive wireless messages in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, more than two decades before radio broadcasting began in Australia.”

Mr Owen said the start of organised amateur radio in Australia was a response to the somewhat harsh and unfair treatment of experimenters by authorities.

Patron Dick Smith AO

“They were being asked to pay three guineas (\$6.30) for the use of the airwaves. To fight that impost and gain better recognition of experimenters, the Institute of Wireless Telegraphy of Australia (now WIA) was established at a meeting in Sydney on 11 March 1910,” he said.

“Wireless was also being explored at the time by Marconi and others as a means of communicating across oceans and with ships. The wireless operator on the SS Titanic put out the distress SOS call in 1912 and in doing so saved many lives.”

Mr Owen said during World War I those who had gained experience as amateur wireless experimenters used, and further developed the technology. The same thing occurred to a much greater extent throughout WWII.

He said “Many of the developments in radio communications have been pioneered by radio amateurs.

“The activity of amateur radio is enjoyed by individuals in more than 100 countries and has undergone a revival in Australia over the past five years through the introduction of a new entry level Foundation Licence.

“Recognised by the United Nation’s agency the International Telecommunications Union, it is a recreation, a means of self-education and radio amateurs can provide emergency communications.

Mr Owen said, “In Australia the first known time radio amateurs provided emergency communications was at a severe tropical cyclone struck north of Cairns Queensland on 9 February 1927.”

“There have been numerous occasions in Australia since then, including the Black Friday bushfire disaster January 1939, **after the 1967 Bushfires in Tasmania**, after Tropical Cyclone Tracy in 1974, the Newcastle Earthquake 1989, after floods, and the Black Saturday disaster of 2009.”

Many WIA affiliated clubs and their members are engaged in various aspects of the multi-faceted recreation.

He said part of the centenary celebration the club members are ‘talking to the world’ using a commemorative radio callsign VK100WIA.

More detail on that activity and other centenary activities are available on the WIA website [www.wia.org.au](http://www.wia.org.au)

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