

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## 50 years of stargazing at QVMAG

The Launceston Planetarium at the City of Launceston's Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery turns 50 today.

On 30 January 1968, the 32-seat Planetarium opened in the 'Watercolour Gallery', which is now Gallery 7 at the Art Gallery at Royal Park. A six-metre diameter linen dome was used to project images of the universe during two daily shows.

Since then, technologies have changed — the Planetarium now operates a Zeiss ZKP3 star projector in conjunction with a fulldome digital system — and the Planetarium is now located at QVMAG's Inveresk site. However, audiences from across the globe still enjoy an out-of-this-world experience when they visit.

From Monday to Saturday during the school holidays and Tuesday to Saturday at other times, the Planetarium runs public shows that explore the fascination of black holes, the cosmos, the space race and of course, aliens.

The Planetarium is the southernmost in Australia and is known nationally and internationally. Its Manager, Martin George, is a former President of the International Planetarium Society and is well known for his communication in astronomy.

The Launceston Mayor Albert van Zetten says the Planetarium's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a significant milestone in the city's history.

"The Launceston Planetarium has played a role in the education of children and entertainment of visitors for a remarkable length of time and will continue to do so as a valued feature of QVMAG."

"I am sure there are countless locals with fond memories of visiting the Planetarium and discovering the stars when they were young."

To celebrate the anniversary, QVMAG is hosting a range of activities this week including solar observations in the courtyard, and space talks by prominent science professionals including Astrophysicist Alan Duffy and Mars One Candidate Josh Richards.

The following people will be available for comment today at 10am at the Planetarium at Inveresk: Launceston Mayor Albert van Zetten, QVMAG Director Richard Mulvaney and Launceston Planetarium Manager Martin George.

Also joining us are Simon, Phillip and Michael Dilger, who were at the 1968 opening of the Planetarium.