

**REMARKS AT A RECEPTION TO MARK THE START OF  
NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK 2012 BY THE HONOURABLE  
PETER UNDERWOOD AC, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA,  
THURSDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012**

It is a great pleasure for me and my wife to welcome you all to Government House this evening to mark the start of Science week the day after tomorrow. As you all know this initiative of the Federal Government is an annual celebration of science in Australia, and an opportunity to join together to enjoy and explore the wonders and benefits of science. It's now been running for 15 years and is designed to promote and encourage interest in the areas of science, engineering, technology and/or innovation; and to communicate the relevance of these areas in everyday life. So I gather that there are loads of exciting science things happening right around the State during next week.

Why do we have Science Week and why do we want to stimulate and interest in science. Well I would just like to read you a few words written by Richard Wintle, a geneticist and molecular biologist who is the Assistant Director at the Centre for Applied Genomics at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada.

He said:

“There are many theoretical and academic arguments for science that have been articulated much more clearly by others - the

pushing back of boundaries constraining our knowledge, the thrill of discovering things that nobody has ever known before, the potential for long-term benefit worldwide. If nobody had ever discovered the properties of semiconducting materials, where would global telecommunications be now?

However, [he said] I'd like to focus on another aspect, because science, quite apart from making interesting discoveries, is also about benefiting society in other ways. And one of the most important is that science trains people to think critically. One of my own PhD committee members told me that "getting a PhD is not about learning a particular field, or writing really good papers, or learning techniques - it's about learning to be a scientist." That means learning to examine a problem, consider many alternatives, and devise a robust strategy for finding out what the "real" answer is, in a properly controlled way that leaves as little as possible to chance. People who are formally trained in scientific discovery, at any level, by and large should ... be better equipped to make sense of all kinds of data in the world around them, including scientific data itself, but also the latest opinion poll, or information presented in the many forms of news media surrounding us today."

He concluded, "In my view, the benefit of this cannot be understated. We live in an information-rich age, and I'd argue that critical thinking skills are more important now than they have ever

been in human history. Yes, other disciplines can teach these skills, but they are clearly part and parcel of the discipline we call “science”, in its broadest definition.”

I am in complete agreement with Dr Wintle. That is what Science is all about. It’s exciting. It’s stimulating. It broadens your general education. It pushes the barriers. It’s not just for nerds. I say go for it and have a great National Science week.