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Media Statement

# ANTARCTIC SCIENCE SCHOLARS ANNOUNCED

Four of New Zealand's emerging science minds have today been announced as the recipients of Antarctica New Zealand's 2006 Postgraduate Research Scholarship Programme. The 4 winners were chosen from eleven applicants and their research scholarships will contribute to one of three prescribed scientific themes: Antarctic Physical Environments Research; Southern Ocean Research or Antarctic Ecosystems Research.

"Antarctica New Zealand recognises the value of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean as a unique environment for scientific research. Our Postgraduate Research Scholarship Programme is designed to encourage researchers to pursue interests in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean," said Antarctica New Zealand CEO, Lou Sanson. "By offering these scholarships, Antarctica New Zealand is facilitating understanding of the global environment and enhancing New Zealand's internationally significant role in Antarctic science."

The total annual value of the Postgraduate Research Scholarship Programme exceeds $60,000 as scholarship winners are also provided with logistical support to and from Antarctica (if needed), as well as being supported in the field during their research camp. The programme was initiated in 1994. Since then, 35 masters and doctorial students have investigated subjects as diverse as Antarctic silverfish, McMurdo Sound beaches, sea ice properties, lice on penguins, mosses and lichens, geological formations and Antarctic bacteria.

Tracey Jones (University of Waikato) is the recipient of the inaugural two-year Helicopters New Zealand Antarctic Doctoral Scholarship. The focus of her research is to understand the origins and partner choices of Antarctic lichens. This study will ultimately contribute to a better understanding of the structure of existing vegetation, its likely origins, its relationships to floras outside Antarctica and likely changes if proposed climate change occurs.

Nita Smith (University of Canterbury) is the recipient of the New Zealand Post Antarctic Scholarship. Smith will study the Darwin-Hatherton glacial system and its response to climate change. Her proposal forms part of a wider research programme - *Dynamics and Change of the Darwin-Hatherton Glacial System* - being run through Gateway Antarctica at the University of Canterbury.

Angela McGaughran (Massey University) and Ed Abdool (Victoria University of Wellington) are the joint recipients of Kelly Tarlton's Underwater World Antarctic Scholarship. McGaughran's research is centred around deciphering the unique evolutionary patterns that prevail in polar environments. This research will contribute to a more comprehensive interpretation of

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evolutionary history, particularly in extreme environments where unique constraints on life evoke distinctive adaptive mechanisms.

Abdool will undertake the mathematical modelling of productivity and biomass along a latitudinal gradient in the Ross Sea. According to his abstract, an area of sea ice more than twice the size of Australia forms annually in Antarctica during winter and melts in summer - a process that is perhaps the most dramatic seasonal change on Earth.

In addition to these scholarships, Tim Hay (University of Canterbury) is the recipient of the inaugural Christchurch City Council Antarctic Scholarship which is administered by Gateway Antarctica at the University of Canterbury. Hay's proposal is to investigate bromine explosion events and their relationship to ozone depletion in the coastal Antarctic boundary layer.

***Ends***

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