**Interview with Jim Thomas – International Conservationist**

My current position is Director of the Tenkile Conversation Alliance. It’s a non-government organisation established in Papua New Guinea. And I live in a remote area called Lumi in the Sanduan Provence. There I take the lead of the organisation which involves a lot of employment, education, development and research.

The projects I’m working on at the moment are water and sanitation – so more water tanks to our fifty villages, camera trapping – so trying to find out more about biodiversity in the Torricelli Mountain Range. It’s very exciting times because we’ve found a new species of small wallaby. We’ve also put together a documentary to give an overview of the project from the last ten years – so my son growing up for the first five years – the first five years of his life. And then trying to get that out and to try to attract more attention and support for the program.

Well my career path – it started a La Trobe University as an undergraduates in my Bachelor of Science here – that really gave me the confidence to - or I guess the boost to then have the confidence to take on conservation in the field. So from University I then went to Zoos Victoria and worked there as a zoo keeper and project officer for endangered species and from there I took the big leap of leaving the comforts of suburban Melbourne and full time job to go to Papua New Guinea. But having the confidence and the history of accomplishing things such as my science degree at La Trobe really was I guess a stepping point – or a stepping stone for me to take that big decision to move to Papua New Guinea. And to tackle the wilderness of the Torrecellis and definitely the number of challenges of preserving the tree kangaroos from becoming extinct and helping the villagers – dealing with all the politics up there – and of course the rough terrain and the difficult things you have to go through there.

The impact that La Trobe had on my life and career was that it provided a huge stepping stone for me to go forward and take on other challenges. I had the degree behind me - that gave me confidence to take on new things. If I didn’t have that I may not be where I am today.

My greatest career highlight would be without question is that I saved the Tenkile Scott’s tree kangaroo from extinction.

Where to from her? Nice questions. I would like to think I have a few more years in me in Papua New Guinea – I’ve still got a lot of work to do – more people to help – more species to be saved. After Papua New Guinea I’d like to think I would be able to take the lead in conservation, somewhere in Australia – that’s what I’m hoping to do.