

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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University leads national effort to improve maths and science education

A Commonwealth-funded project will see the University of Tasmania's Faculty of Education play a crucial role in improving the quality of maths and science education throughout the country.

The project, Towards Educating Mathematics Professionals Encompassing Science and Technology (TEMPEST), will be led by Kim Beswick, Professor of Mathematics Education at the University's Newnham campus.

Professor Beswick said the project, worth more than \$2.5 million in Commonwealth and in-kind support, would deliver consistent, effective professional learning programs for mathematics teachers throughout Australia.

"Mathematics is a crucial educational building block that underpins so much of what students will go on to do in both study and their careers," Professor Beswick said.

"We need to get mathematics education right to prepare young Australians for their futures and to help build the highly skilled, science-literate population so necessary for the country.

"Professional learning is the key because it is the teachers who are engaging our students and inspiring them to grab hold of mathematics and pursue it. How are we keeping our teachers up to speed and supporting them in the teaching of mathematics and how can we do it better?"

TEMPEST, which received \$1.74 million through the Australian Maths and Science Partnership Program, will survey the existing mathematics professional learning programs and resources, their effectiveness and where the gaps are.

New programs will be developed by the University of Tasmania and trialed in Tasmanian schools before being rolled out nationally with implementation officers assisting on the ground. An online portal will be built to be hosted by the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers.

The programs and resources will be evaluated throughout the three years of the project, resulting in a professional learning framework, program guidelines, resources and evaluation tools – all available beyond the life of the project and supported through the online portal.

The Dean of Education, Professor John Williamson, said the funding of this project confirmed the University's reputation as a national leader in education research and thinking.

"This is a major success for Professor Beswick and her colleagues and provides an opportunity for our faculty to really drive improvement in an area of national importance - mathematics education," he said.

"We can identify the professional learning programs that work well and roll them out nationally, we can identify gaps and find the programs to fill them and we can put in place the structure to ensure schools around the country can benefit from this work for years to come."

Professor Williamson also congratulated Professor Beswick, currently in Sydney for the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia's (MERGA) annual conference, for winning a prestigious research award.

"Professor Beswick was awarded the 2014 MERGA Research Award for a significant recent contribution to mathematics education research and it is well deserved.

"Coupled with her position as one of eight experts on the national Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, this highlights the quality of the academic staff we have in the Faculty of Education right here in Launceston."

The TEMPEST project will be run by the University of Tasmania with cooperation from Swinburne University of Technology, the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers, the Tasmanian Department of Education, TasTAFE and the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office.

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