

# MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## Grow.Eat.Learn project ready for planting

With just a sniff of spring in the air four Northern Tasmanian schools will have vegetable gardens planted on **Friday 30 August** through the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture's (TIA) Grow.Eat.Learn (GEL) project.

Cressy District School, Lilydale District School, East Launceston Primary School and the UTAS School of Architecture and Design will all be involved in the project, which aims to measure the productivity of a popular urban food-production system – the square-metre vegetable garden.

There is also a fifth garden plot at the TIA Mount Pleasant laboratories at Prospect.

Radish, carrot, chard and sugar snap pea seeds, all neatly divided with borders of chive, will be sowed in each bed – just in time for UTAS' free public Research Week event at the Inveresk, Launceston campus *Waste-to-Food: in-bed worm farms and the square metre garden*, which will be held outside the Architecture building from 12 noon-1pm on Monday 2 September.

Five lucky participants will be able to take home one of the worm farms and local community groups and individuals are invited to attend by RSVPing to [Amanda.Cromer@utas.edu.au](mailto:Amanda.Cromer@utas.edu.au) .

Members of the public will be able to get involved on Monday and learn how to boost the productivity of their vegetable gardens by learning how to make an in-bed worm farm with TIA researchers Dr Anna Carew and Dr Fiona Kerslake.

Project leader and TIA Research Fellow Dr Stephen Ives said that the team is looking for a “wicked” solution to the “wicked problems” society faces when it comes to the rising incidence of childhood obesity, depletion of global phosphorus stocks, poverty-related food insecurity and urban waste generation.

“We see the GEL project as a ‘wicked solution’ because it allows us to tackle a few of these wicked problems at once, head on,” he said.

“Students will study the science of food production through waste reuse, by weighing all scraps, compost, mulch and fertiliser going into the garden beds.

“They’ll also weigh all produce (including weeds), and the senior students will help TIA out with crunching the data.

“A healthy, food-secure future for Australia requires divergent, creative perspectives on the food lifecycle, and this project will not only address social and environmental problems faced by Tasmanian communities, but will also forge links between school students and UTAS – reinforcing scientific, agricultural and urban-planning education opportunities and career pathways.”

The project, which aims to close the “food-waste loop” and experiment with methods such as comparing the use of conventional fertilisers to compost from worm farms, reflects TIA’s aim to encourage engagement in higher education by rural and urban students.

TIA team member Dr Anna Carew highlighted the connection between the GEL project and UTAS’ commitment to collaborative, problem-oriented research.

“One of the unique aspects of this project is that we have drawn together a truly diverse team comprising academics from three faculties and extra-academic participants from local council, schools and local business.

“Stakeholder engagement is so important for uptake, for change – essentially, to make a real difference in our community.”

The GEL project is co-funded by UTAS, the Northern Tasmanian Waste Management Group and NRM North and its project can be followed at [blogs.utas.edu.au/gel](https://blogs.utas.edu.au/gel)

GEL will run for three months with activity most Fridays at each site.

**Media opportunity:** The media is invited to take photos, footage and conduct interviews at any of the four sites where GEL planting is taking place tomorrow, **Friday 30 August**.

**Cressy District School from 9am (with Stephen Ives, 0400 586 163)**

**Lilydale District School from 11am (with Dr Fiona Kerslake, 0439 017 192)**

**East Launceston Primary School from 10.30am (with Dr Anna Carew)**

**UTAS School of Architecture, Inveresk from 9am (with Dr Anna Carew 0411 894 997)**

For more information please contact UTAS media officers Lana Best on 6324 5019 or Amanda Cromer (TIA) on 0404 898 444.

**For a comprehensive Research Week program, visit**  
<http://www.utas.edu.au/research/researchweek>

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