

MEDIA RELEASE

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UTAS academics help out in Australian maths classrooms

High school students across Australia are learning about the statistics of Australian venomous snakes and winners of the Melbourne Cup thanks to a new classroom resource produced by six UTAS academics.

Professor Emeritus Jane Watson, Associate Professor Kim Beswick, Dr Natalie Brown, Associate Professor Rosemary Callingham and Dr Tracey Muir and Suzie Wright from the Faculty of Education have produced *Digging into Australian Data with Tinkerplots: Data analysis for middle school students*.

Professor Watson said teachers will be able to teach statistics and mathematical probability using 47 practical lesson plans and worksheets produced by the group.

“We collected data to use with the US-produced data handling software *TinkerPlots* to encourage Australian teachers to use the software in cross-curriculum activities, as suggested in the new Australian Curriculum,” she said.

Statistical literacy is one of the components of numeracy, a general capability required in the curriculum.

“Building statistical literacy requires an understanding of the concepts and tools related to data handling,” Prof. Watson said. “With *TinkerPlots* students are able to create the plots that they wish to use to tell the story in their data, rather than having to know the graph type required before they start.”

Thirteen of the lessons in the book are based on data from the ABS Census@School website allowing students to compare their class with random samples of other Australian students on height, arm span, water usage, language spoken, travel time to school, time on mobile phones, and time on homework. Other data sets are related to Australian Prime Ministers, Australian Explorers, various Australian sports introduced animals, roadkill and the First Fleet.

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