



Media Release

“Mental gymnasts medal at Mysore”

Australia’s most successful team of high school linguists have just returned from the 14th International Linguistics Olympiad in India.

Each year teams of young linguists from around the globe test their minds against the world's toughest puzzles in language.

The gold, silver and bronze medallists who represented Australia internationally came through a nation-wide program initiated by Western Sydney University (WSU) researcher, Dr Dominique Estival.

The two teams who represented Australia abroad this year were the silver and gold finalists in the Australian Computational and Linguistics Olympiad (OzCLO) - Baulkham Hills High School and Melbourne Grammar.

Dr Estival, who conducts her research through the WSU MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development, introduced the linguistics Olympiad to Australia in 2008 to challenge high-school students to develop their own strategies for solving problems in fascinating real languages.

She said more than 1500 students took part this year.

“While our athletes go to Rio, Australian high-school students have come back from Mysore with gold and silver medals in linguistics,” she said.

“This is the eighth consecutive year that Australia has been represented at the linguistic Olympiad and the first time the Australian team placed in the world’s top three.

“In spite of all the doom and gloom surrounding NAPLAN, Australian high schools pupils are doing well in language.”

Dr Estival said no special linguistic knowledge was required, and any secondary school student with a curiosity about languages and analytical skills was a potential contestant.

In addition to preparing high school students for the linguistic Olympiad, researchers from the MARCS Institute created and ran the ‘Rosita Stone’ escape room based on OzCLO puzzles for children aged 8-12 years at last month’s Way Out West Festival at the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre.