



President's column by Tony Guttman

The new editors of the *Gazette* have certainly fulfilled their aim of making the journal more topical and more controversial with their series of articles on the Brain Drain and local commentaries on the mathematics scene. I hope that these columns induce a lively interchange of views in the correspondence columns, and that as a consequence readers eagerly await the arrival of the next issue, and rip off the flimsy plastic cover in their eagerness to get to the contents. By the same token, I would ask all contributors to bear in mind the impact of their contribution, and to refrain from submitting anything personally denigratory. It would also be much more effective to propose solutions, as well as highlighting problems.

In this issue we have a thoughtful article by Phil Broadbridge. Reflecting on his article, I do believe that the situation has improved since he and John Stillwell left. The University of Melbourne recently filled three lectureships in mathematics, and Monash is about to advertise a Chair in Pure Mathematics. At the most recent Heads of Department meeting in February, many departments reported filling positions in 2003. It is still true to say that the shortage of permanent academic positions is a problem, but I believe that is the end-point of a chain of causal elements.

First, the Relative Funding Model disadvantages the mathematical sciences within the university sector. We are just too poorly funded. The Society has been lobbying to effect change here, but nothing can realistically be expected before the next election. The next Science Meets Parliament session will provide an opportunity to raise awareness of this critical issue.

The other major contributor is the teaching of mathematics in schools. I have written often enough on this issue that I won't say more, except that the welcome funding of ICE-EM by the Federal Government is indicative of the fact that our profession's concerns are being taken seriously, and we are being given some resources to address the problem.

This brings me to my final point; Australian mathematics is only going to flourish if more of its practitioners, especially the younger ones, give more of their energy and enthusiasm to raising the profile of the profession in all areas. The continuing relevance of the *Gazette*, and the AustMS depends upon the support of the full spectrum of Australia's mathematicians. In particular, the input of a new generation is needed to follow up the efforts of those who edit the Society's journals and who established AMSI, MASCOS, ICE-EM and the ARC Network proposals, most of whom are now in their 60's or close to it.

I'd therefore like to encourage the younger members of the profession to make a broader contribution, within the profession, and particularly outside it—in schools, in public outreach, and engaging with government and industry. I think the time is ripe. Government and industry are increasingly aware of the need for a highly numerate workforce as a pre-condition of economic prosperity, and it is up to us to provide that leadership nationally. Heads of Departments and senior colleagues have a role to play in encouraging and facilitating broader participation, while AMSI, ICE-EM and MASCOS have funds available to support a broad range of activities. Members of the Society are urged to take advantage of these opportunities.