



Letter to the editors

John Stillwell painted an interesting and perhaps refreshing picture of life as a mathematician in a small teaching university in California (Gazette **31**, March 2004). His satisfaction after two or three semesters at the University of San Francisco is contrasted with his image of universities in Australia and in particular Monash. It is certainly the case that mathematics in Australian universities has had a very difficult time for a decade or more; and this led to the departure of many good people like John. However, the world moves on and at Monash in particular the climate for mathematics has greatly improved.

Increased enrolments in mathematics, a new budget model which assists mathematics and a new Vice-chancellor wanting a strong Faculty of Science are just some of the positives. And the Dean of Science is very supportive of mathematics. He has contributed significantly in dollar terms to Monash's full membership of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI). There are four major areas in our School of Mathematical Sciences: Astrophysics, Atmospheric Science, Statistics and Pure Mathematics. The first three have each had a professor appointed in the past two years and we are currently advertising for a professor to fill the chair of pure mathematics. The ad, approved by the dean of course, appeared on the same day that I read John Stillwell's article; it can be found at our web site: <http://www.maths.monash.edu.au>

On top of these professorial appointments we expect to appoint two new lecturers, including a pure mathematician, within the next few weeks. A third new lecturer will begin in January and further appointments are possible.

Our School has significant research grant income, growing numbers of postdocs, and strong enrolments at honours and graduate level. Our students were among the high-achievers at the recent AMSI summer school. And the honours topology class that John wrote about is even larger this year.

Alan Pryde,
Head, School of Mathematical Sciences, Monash University, VIC 3800
E-mail: alan.pryde@sci.monash.edu.au