



President's column

Michael Cowling

The Steering Committee of the Australian Mathematical Society met in Napier, New Zealand, at the end of January, just before the ANZIAM meeting there. This was my second visit to Napier in one month, as I went there earlier in January (as a private citizen of the mathematical world) to attend the New Zealand Mathematics Research Institute meeting on groups and geometry. I was very impressed by the quality of the speakers and the lectures at the NZMRI. Building trans-Tasman links is obviously a good idea.

Raising awareness of the importance of the Mathematical Sciences is, in my view, the most important part of my brief as president. This involves action on a number of fronts. First of all, the Society must remain financially viable if it is going to continue to promote mathematics. And our financial viability depends on two things: our membership and our journals. And both these depend on our members—this means you!

We really need to increase the sales of our journals. I would ask those of you in universities which do not subscribe to all our journals to *ask your librarians to do so*. At the present time, librarians are feeling flush with funds, as the exchange rate with the US dollar is favorable, and every subscription helps. But we also need to improve the “quality” of our journals (in this day and age, librarians tend to measure this using citations, and whether this reflects real “quality” or not is a moot point), and getting more Australian authors to submit good papers to our journals would do a lot to improve our rankings on the citation lists and in the “invisible colleges” which reputedly run academia, and hence the number of subscriptions. So please *submit articles to our journals*. The Society is also working to get our journals on-line, and to

get back issues available to all. We recently bought the source files to papers typed by TeXAdel, and the American Mathematical Society gave us—free, gratis, and for nothing, and very generously too—the source files of papers they prepared for us from 1988 to 1993. This too ought to improve our visibility.

At the same time, the only component of our membership which is growing is the list of our retired members. We will shortly begin a membership drive, aimed at honours and postgraduate students, but let me now ask those of you who are supervising students at an honours level or higher to *ask them to consider joining* (or rejoining) the Society: the first year's membership is free for students, and thereafter the reduced rate is very affordable. And you might even ask your lapsed colleagues to unlapse themselves!

I hope that many members will be able to help on one or other of the points above. This will help your Society help you in the future. Ways in which we are helping include in the preparation of publicity material to attract high school students to the mathematical sciences (and we are working right now on the operational details of an agreement with AMSI and ICE-EM to avoid duplication and use our resources more effectively), and in assisting with and making submissions to reviews which may lead to better deals for the mathematical sciences inside universities or from the Commonwealth Government (I spent over an hour yesterday talking about statistics to a review of that discipline organised by the Statistical Society of Australia). I would welcome suggestions about what else we might do to promote the Mathematical Sciences in this country.