



# Letter to the editors

Readers of the *Gazette* may be disappointed to hear of the recent demise of mathematics at Charles Darwin University. The situation until now has been that students could complete a BSc with a major in mathematics or a joint major in mathematics and computer science. The elective units offered locally reflected the research interests of the current staff in discrete mathematics and covered such topics as number theory, cryptography, coding theory, logic, computability, graph theory and combinatorics. If desired, students could choose to augment these with units offered with a local unit code but taught externally through Central Queensland University. Takers were drawn mostly from the pool of IT and education students. After building for more than a decade student numbers had recently dipped (largely due to a (temporary?) collapse in numbers in IT) but there remained a healthy conversion rate to honours and postgraduate level.

Now the axe has fallen. As part of a uni

versity wide ‘rationalisation’ all of the later year mathematics units have been withdrawn, effective immediately. The possibility of doing external units has also gone, despite their cost to CDU being negligible. While a few service units in calculus (I wouldn’t use the name ‘analysis’) remain for the benefit of the engineers, it is now impossible to study mathematics in its own right.

CDU is comparatively both new and small, so that mathematics was struggling to become established. Now, having being sent back to square zero will make it much harder for the discipline to evolve as the institution does. It is also a salutary warning that bean counters do not make any automatic assumptions that a university should have a mathematics programme or that graduates of related disciplines should be versed in the language and methods of mathematics which underpins their subjects as mature disciplines.

Ian Wanless

Formerly Charles Darwin University, but soon to be at Monash University

*E-mail:* [Ian.Wanless@cdu.edu.au](mailto:Ian.Wanless@cdu.edu.au)