



President's column

Michael Cowling

The last week of last September saw the Annual Meeting of the Society at the University of Western Australia. This was an excellent meeting: over two hundred people registered, the plenary speakers and the public lecturers were very well chosen, and I believe that anyone working in any corner of the Mathematical Sciences would have derived pleasure from all the lectures and the social activities. Next year, the Society will hold its fiftieth Annual Meeting at Macquarie University, and we hope that this will be even bigger and better. Put the last week of September in your diaries for next year!

I spent much of October travelling, in the USA and Canada, where I met John Ewing from the American Mathematical Society, and talked about the future of scholarly publishing, and attended a meeting in Banff, Canada, with mathematical scientists from a number of Pacific Rim countries, to discuss possible interactions around the Pacific Rim. The Banff meeting, under the auspices of the Pacific Institute of Mathematical Sciences, was very successful, in as much as it was agreed to constitute a Pacific RIm Mathematical Association (PRIMA). This organisation will need a constitution, of course, and a Steering Committee, which includes Tony Guttmann, our previous president, is working on this. The immediate aim is to open up the various summer schools which are run around the Pacific Rim to students from other Pacific Rim countries, and to try to facilitate international exchanges of students between these. In the longer term, there is interest

in exchange of students and staff, and in a Pacific Rim Mathematical Congress. More anon . . .

As I write, the announcement of results of the current round of Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Grants is imminent, and some of you will already be planning a submission for next year. Let me try to convince more of you to do so. The main point is that the amount of money awarded in any discipline is influenced by the number of applications: the more applications, the more will be successful. So every application, whether successful or not, helps the Mathematical Sciences in Australia. Further, while the ARC and the panel chairs claim that everything is decided purely on merit, I suspect strongly that the more applications come from an institution, the more likely it is that that institution will appear in the list of successes. So putting in an application will, very probably, improve the funding in your own institution. The School of Mathematics at UNSW makes a point of rewarding everyone who puts in an application, both financially (via our internal grant scheme) and in allocating workloads: the hours spent on a grant application lead to a reduction in the hours spent in the classroom. I would encourage all Heads of Departments to try to do the same, as more research funding for mathematics would surely be a good thing!

At the same time, while I hope that many of you will spend some of your summer applying for research funding, I hope that all of you enjoy the forthcoming festive season and the holidays.