



# President's column

**Nalini Joshi\***

The Society has embarked on an exciting new scheme, called the *AustMS Lift-Off Fellowships*, to provide support for early career mathematicians. Our society has several medals that recognise research excellence<sup>1</sup> and distinguished service<sup>2</sup>. For our student members, we have prizes for the best talk by a student at the annual AustMS and ANZIAM meetings<sup>3</sup>. The Lift-Off Fellowships will be the first to provide recognition and support for research excellence by our members at that crucial time of metamorphosis between submission of a PhD thesis and the start of a new career.

The AustMS Lift-Off Fellowships will provide fellowships on a competitive basis for students who have recently submitted a PhD thesis in the mathematical sciences. Each successful candidate will receive up to \$5000. The Society expects to award up to seven such fellowships each year for the next three years. This fellowship can be taken as short-term living expenses or travel support. Eligible candidates must have submitted their PhD thesis for examination within the previous three months and awards will be based on academic excellence. Further details on the application process can be found elsewhere in this issue of the *Gazette*.

Many of us have been presenting the case for the support of the mathematical sciences in Australia to an external audience composed of decision makers, leaders of public opinion and businesses, and to teachers and parents. Embedded in these conversations is an assumption that the mathematical sciences can only get healthier by getting support from government. While this is true on a larger scale, I came to a very different realisation on an individual scale by talking to many of our members, particularly our younger members. To remain healthy, our profession also needs support from within. While we do not have the capacity of the government to invest in the sweeping changes that may shape the mathematical literacy of this country, we can be looking for ways to ensure that our budding mathematicians get the support they need to germinate their careers.

The financial support for this scheme comes from our reserves. We are a non-profit organisation that has prudently managed our finances for a very long time. This conservative management has been very ably carried out by our Honorary Treasurers who built up a healthy reserve to meet the potential liability we carried

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<sup>1</sup>The AustMS awards the Australian Mathematical Society Medal for excellent research by a member no older than 40 at the beginning of the year of award, while ANZIAM awards the JH Michell Medal for excellent research by a member within ten years of the award of a PhD. Both allow adjustments to the rules for career interruptions.

<sup>2</sup>The George Szekeres Medal and the ANZIAM Medal.

<sup>3</sup>Respectively, the B.H. Neumann Prize and the T.M. Cherry Prize.

for our journal publishing business. With our new publishing arrangements with Cambridge University Press, the prognosis has changed and we can now consider spending a modest percentage of our reserves.

Many of our members who have just submitted PhD theses are embarking on mathematical or quantitative careers, whether it be within academia or outside it. The period between submission and completion is a time of limbo, when a postgraduate scholarship is no longer available. Yet it is a crucial time to consolidate ideas, to publish papers and possibly create a new path or career. It is a time to advertise what they have accomplished, by attending conferences and contributing talks. By providing a competitive fellowship, we are providing recognition of excellence, a mechanism for support and encouragement for the cohort of students who are at this stage of their lives. I cannot think of a better way for our Society to support our profession than to support these brand new, eager mathematicians.



Nalini Joshi has held the Chair of Applied Mathematics at the University of Sydney since 2002. In 2008, she was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science. Her research focuses on longstanding problems concerning the asymptotic and analytic structure of solutions to nonlinear integrable equations.