



Editorial

This is the fourth issue of the *Gazette* edited by Sid Morris and me. By now, we seem to be getting into the swing of things.

With another ERA exercise on the horizon, thoughts turn to the measurement of research quality. The presidential column discusses this topic, and compares it with a similar exercise nearly 30 years ago. *Plus ça change . . .*

By the time you read this, the federal election will be over, with almost no discussion of the shortage of mathematically qualified professionals, and the effect this has on the economy. Like it or not, the relevance of mathematics to society does not have a high profile, with declining numbers of students taking advanced mathematics in the final years of high school.

Nevertheless we are heartened by some positive news. We must mention the performance of the Australian team at the recent International Mathematical Olympiad in Colombia. In particular, Alex Gunning from Melbourne not only won a gold medal, but achieved a nearly perfect score, coming eighth in the world in this competition. Our congratulations to Alex. A full report on the IMO will appear in the next issue of the *Gazette*.

Congratulations also to Rodney Baxter, for the award of a Royal Medal for his life-time achievements. As promised in the last issue, we now include a report about this.

The NCMS column includes some suggestions about improving the vitality of mathematics and related topics. Read it and see what you think. The Mathematics of Planet Earth conference did something to raise the profile of mathematics, and highlight its importance to topical matters of practical concern. A detailed report is included in the AMSI news.

We continue to publish reports of conferences supported in part by AustMS and AMSI. Four such reports appear in this issue.

Sadly, a regular feature is the publication of obituaries of those who have made a significant contribution to Australian mathematical landscape. This time, it is Cheryl Praeger's tribute to Ákos Seress, who passed away in February, aged only 54.

Last but not least, we hope you continue to enjoy our other regular features, the Book Reviews and Puzzle Corner.

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David Yost studied at Melbourne University (BSc), ANU (MSc) and Edinburgh (PhD). He has worked full time at La Trobe, ANU, FU Berlin, the University of Extremadura and King Saud University, and been a long-term visitor and sessional lecturer at several other institutions. He has recently notched up ten years at the University of Ballarat, including a three-year stint as Deputy Head of School. Most of his research is in functional analysis, but he has lately been interested in combinatorial geometry.