



# Editorial

Sid and I welcome you to another issue of the *Gazette*.

Most *Gazette* readers will believe in the relevance of mathematical sciences, and consequently of mathematical education, to national prosperity. How do we persuade the general public of this, or our leaders to make decisions which recognise it? The economic contribution of mathematical and physical sciences was recently estimated at about \$145 billion annually, in a report commissioned by the Australian Academy of Science and the Office of the Chief Scientist. Rather than provide more details here, I can do no better than refer you to Nalini Joshi's NCMS column on this important topic.

Some in the private sector are also concerned about the declining pipeline of young people who choose to study advanced mathematics subjects, and the effects of this on work readiness of the next generation. Putting their money where their mouth is, the BHP Billiton Foundation is contributing \$22 million over five years, to fund AMSI's *Choose Maths* program, which aims to turn around the commonly held misconception that mathematics and cognate areas are unsuitable study and career choices for the half of our population who happen to be female. I was privileged to attend the launch of *Choose Maths* in Melbourne on April 28.

Speaking at the launch, Andrew McKenzie, CEO of BHP Billiton, said

Australian industry knows that STEM professionals are vital to our future prosperity, national productivity and global competitiveness.

Any increase in STEM participation is good news but an increase in female representation is especially valuable because of the undeniable benefits of diversity.

Also speaking at the launch were Geoff Prince, Director of AMSI, Senator Scott Ryan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training, who significantly encouraged us not to use acronyms like STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) in discussions with the general public, and Lily Serna, a member of the AMSI Board and former host of the SBS program Letters and Numbers.

While AMSI has long been concerned with the issues of secondary mathematics education, it is also keen to promote research. Geoff outlines some plans to realise the vision of a National Research Centre in the AMSI report.

Tim Marchant discusses some other international research collaborations in the President's column, along with the perennial issue of funding for education and research.

It remains our sad duty to note the passing of Australian mathematicians. This issue contains obituaries of Gordon Preston and Ken Smith, while the News section records the deaths of Emanuel Strzelecki and Ken Pearson.

Five book reviews appear in these pages, possibly a record for us. We are indebted to all reviewers, in this and previous issues, for their time and effort in preparing them.

As always, our other regular features include the Puzzle Corner and news from the AustMS. We hope that all this provides some interesting reading.

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David Yost is a graduate of the University of Melbourne, the Australian National University and the University of Edinburgh. He has lived in eight countries and ten cities, returning to Australia in 2003, where he has now completed eleven years at Federation University Australia and its predecessor institution, the University of Ballarat, including a three-year period as Deputy Head of School. While most of his research is in functional analysis, he has lately been interested in convex geometry.