

## Ms Jan Thomas Order of Australia Medal

I am honoured to be the recipient of an OAM for services to the mathematical sciences. It would never have happened without the support of the mathematical sciences community. In particular I single out my friend and colleague, the late Professor Garth Gaudry, and Professor Ken Clements who gave me the initial opportunity to be involved in the politics and policy of the mathematical sciences. And the AustMS for employing me as the Executive Officer and generously supporting me financially.

In the late 1980s Ken asked me to chair a Politics of Mathematics Education special interest group for the Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia (MERGA). Shortly after this the former Australian Mathematical Sciences Council (AMSC) was formed under the Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies (FASTS, now Science Technology Australia, STA) umbrella. Ken had me participate as MERGA representative and this opened doors for me in quite unexpected ways.



A year or so into the AMSC, the then secretary resigned and I became secretary. The inaugural President of AMSC was Garth Gaudry, and this began a long-standing collaboration and friendship that continued until his death in October 2012. We achieved a lot together. To Ken, and especially Garth, I owe much.

I subsequently became President of AMSC and member of the Australian Academy of Sciences committee for mathematics. Through that I was involved in the 1996 review of advanced mathematical sciences.

As President of AMSC I was on the FASTS Board and as my period on the Executive of AMSC ended, I became Vice-President of FASTS. During this time the

AustMS decided that I would be useful as Executive Officer and gave me generous financial support to do so. I remember a meeting with the AustMS President at the time, the late Alf van der Poorten, where it was clear he was unsure what I would be doing. He, and subsequent Presidents, left me to use the support as I saw fit. This trust in me was greatly appreciated as it gave me freedom to respond to issues as they arose and in the political arena that is crucial.

I travelled regularly for meetings of the Management Committee for the International Congress on Industrial and Applied Mathematics (ICIAM) held in Sydney in July 2003. I also reinstated annual Heads of Mathematical Sciences meetings.

In 2000 I published a FASTS occasional paper on the state of the mathematical sciences in Australia. An update followed in 2002. It relied on data gathered from the Heads of Departments of Mathematical Sciences from around Australia who were prepared to trust me to handle it in a way that did not identify their departments. It was quoted in the Parliament and footnote suggesting that 40% of junior secondary mathematics teachers may be teaching out of field was widely quoted, even making it into policy documents during elections.

Then in 2002 the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) was established with an initial \$1.0M grant from the Victorian Government's Science, Technology and Innovation infrastructure grants program. The initial suggestion came from Professor Lynn Batten of Deakin University, a Canadian who was familiar with the mathematical institutes there. Professor Tony Guttman and I wrote the proposal.

As convenor of the Heads of Mathematical Sciences group I emailed them concerning the Victorian proposal. There was an immediate reply from Garth Gaudry at UNSW saying that UNSW Mathematics would be a full member. This led to others and so AMSI came into being as a national institute. In all of these activities it was the financial support of AustMS that gave me the resources to contribute in ways that would not otherwise have been possible.

Tony, Garth and I worked tirelessly getting AMSI established. Tony became Director of a Centre of Excellence and Garth became inaugural AMSI Director. In its early years AMSI was fortunate to have the support of the then Minister, Dr Brendan Nelson and his science advisor, Dr Thomas Barlow. I was Executive Officer at AMSI until March 2011. It was a privilege to work with the wonderful staff, the two subsequent Directors, Professors Phil Broadbridge and Geoff Prince, the inaugural chair of the AMSI Board, Dr Jim Lewis and many others.

Along the way a number of other people deserve my thanks. A string of Presidents of the AustMS and the Academy's National Committee for Mathematical Sciences, especially Professor Hyam Rubinstein who chaired the Working Party for the 2006 Review of Mathematical Sciences. Also Professor Ian Sloan and Dr Noel Barton who both played key roles in the 1996 Review of mathematical sciences and in the very successful ICIAM in Sydney in 2003. These events were important to mathematical sciences and I appreciated being able to contribute.

Heads of mathematical sciences departments across the country were always supportive and I thank them all. They work tirelessly for the mathematical sciences in an often less than encouraging or supportive environment.

Many MERGA colleagues have given encouragement and support including John Malone, Gilah Leder, Peter Galbraith, Judy Mousley, Helen Forgasz and many others.

FASTS was very good to me. I would single out Dr Bob Anderssen who was FASTS first Treasurer, and the inaugural Director, the late David Widdup. Both contributed greatly to the involvement of mathematical sciences in FASTS.

The OAM belongs to you all because without your support I could have not have achieved the attention to the mathematical sciences that I have. Thank you.

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