



AMSI news

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AMSI's advocacy role is often applauded even by those using indefinite metrics to gauge our successes. Over the last month we've led engagement with government on a couple of major issues.

Research Workforce Strategy (RWS). This is a particularly important exercise by the federal Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research involving a study of the effectiveness of the quality and volume of research training. The mathematical sciences were chosen as a case study after our early engagement with the project. The result is, for the first time, a definitive statement by government that our discipline is simultaneously experiencing galloping demand and at best zero growth. At a recent forum on the RWS I presented a synopsis of our contradictory state to Australia's DVC(R)s, research managers and bureaucrats and I'm pleased to say that I captured their attention. You can see the case study at <http://www.innovation.gov.au/Research/ResearchWorkforceIssues/Documents/DisciplineSpecificCaseStudies.pdf>. Much to my disappointment, however, the extensive research performance data contained in drafts of the case study were dropped in the last version and replaced by a one paragraph summary of the ERA results. The ERA outcomes say nothing about our performance or resourcing relative to other Australian disciplines. Previously there was a clear statement that the discipline is one of Australia's best performing by international impact and yet one of the most poorly funded.

Base Level Funding submission. By far the largest component of Commonwealth university funding is based on student enrolments. This so-called cluster funding model contains weightings for various disciplines which results in the relative funding of students according to their subject enrolments. This model has a rather long and organic history and is currently being comprehensively reviewed. AMSI was invited to be part of this process and so I convened a working party comprising Peter Taylor (AustMS), Kerrie Mengerson (Statistical Society of Australia Inc.), Nalini Joshi (National Committee for Mathematical Sciences) and Hyam Rubinstein (2006 Strategic Review) to put together a submission. We asked Heads from around the country for input and came up with a comprehensive document that can be found at <http://www.amsi.org.au/index.php/publications>.

We particularly stressed our role as a service discipline without peer, the burden of remediation that comes with decreasing Year 12 enrolments in intermediate and advanced mathematics, the need to treat honours (and equivalent) enrolments

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separately and the strategic virtues of a national scholarship scheme to boost mathematics and statistics enrolments.

Jan Thomas retires. Jan has made an extraordinary contribution to the mathematical sciences in Australia. She is a past president of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Council, and has been involved with mathematics curriculum and policy development with the education departments. Jan was a senior lecturer in mathematics education at Victoria University before she became involved with the establishment and operation of AMSI. She held an executive position with the AustMS for many years and more recently has been executive officer of the Australian Council of Heads of Mathematical Sciences. We wish her all the very best for her retirement. You can find an in-depth interview with Jan in the latest AMSI Bulletin at <http://www.amsi.org.au/index.php/publications/amsi-ice-em-bulletin>.

AMSI events. This year's AMSI Industry Event was hosted by Greenhouse 2011 in Cairns. Scott Power of the Bureau of Meteorology was the AMSI (plenary) Lecturer and AMSI's one-day session on Risk and Uncertainty was very popular with keynote talks by Peter Hayman (SARDI) and Kevin Hennessy (CSIRO). We also sponsored the attendance of a number of prospective AMSI interns on the lookout for challenges in the environmental sector. Thanks to our events manager, Simi Henderson, for handling the whole show. A full report will be available soon on our website.

The AMSI Graduate School will be held at the University of Queensland again this July with the working title of Global Optimisation: Theory and Applications. See our ad elsewhere in this issue.

The 2012 AMSI Summer School will return to UNSW, where a very successful event was held back in 2004. Details will be available later in the year.

Following last year's very successful revival, BioInfoSummer will be held again this year at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne from 5 to 9 December. See <http://www.amsi.org.au/index.php/events/652-bioinfosummer-2011>.



I was a Monash undergraduate and took out a La Trobe PhD in 1981 in geometric mechanics and Lie groups. This was followed by a postdoc at the Institute for Advanced Study in Dublin. I've enjoyed teaching at RMIT, UNE and La Trobe. My research interests lie mainly in differential equations, differential geometry and the calculus of variations. I'm a proud Fellow of the Society, currently a Council and Steering Committee Member. I became AMSI director in September 2009.