



Editorial

Welcome to the second issue of the *Gazette* in 2007.

As most of our readers would be aware, the media have picked up the crisis that the mathematical sciences face in Australia. However, despite their interest in the National Strategic Review of Mathematical Sciences Research in Australia, the Government has not reacted and the decimation of mathematical sciences departments continues. Gia Underwood, NTEU representative at RMIT, wrote to us to point out the situation at RMIT, asking for support from the mathematical community. The international mathematical and statistical community is standing by their Australian colleagues. You can read the Open Letter sent to the Prime Minister, prepared by a sub-group of the Review Working Party, urging the Government to take action in response to the Review. The letter was signed by more than 100 international and nearly 400 Australian mathematicians and statisticians.

There are also opportunities for Australian mathematicians to provide support for the international community. Kevin Burrage reports on his time at the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences, an initiative that aims to contribute to the development of Africa by providing their graduates access to excellent mathematics training. It is an inspiring project and mathematicians from around the world can become involved.

This issue features the first of what we hope will be many interesting and thought-provoking contributions in the new column Classroom Notes. We hope the column will present innovative and elegant approaches to teaching mathematics, and invite contributions from all our readers. In our first Classroom Notes, Steve Sugden describes how he uses spreadsheets to teach mathematics, and how this tool provides an avenue for teaching classes of mixed mathematical levels. In an era where students may bring very few mathematical skills to their university study, innovative approaches such as Steve's are urgently needed. Many of our readers will identify with Steve's description of his students' skills and his frustration. The aim of the Classroom Notes is to share experiences and successful approaches in teaching mathematics. If you think your current teaching practice is novel and of interest to others, we would like to hear about it.

Also inside this issue are our regular contributions including the Style Files from Tony Roberts, and the second Puzzle Corner from Norman Do. We are sure that Norman's first Puzzle Corner (from last issue) got you thinking, and this issue's Corner is sure to give you more to mull over. But don't forget to send in your solutions; there is a \$50 book token on offer for best submission. The deadline for submission for solutions to Puzzle Corner 1 (last issue) is fast approaching on 1 May, while solutions to Puzzle Corner 2 (from this issue) must be in by 1 July. See page 75 for more information.

Happy reading.

Birgit, Rachel and Eileen