



Professor Elizabeth Harman
Vice-Chancellor and President
Victoria University
PO Box 14428
Melbourne VIC 8001

5 October 2009

Dear Professor Harman,

I am writing to you to express the deep concern of the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute at the planned reduction in your university's commitment to the mathematical sciences.

While strategic resourcing is a university matter, on this occasion the proposed cuts in continuing mathematics positions appear to be unwarranted in their severity, and the plans for mathematics and statistics teaching that accompany them threaten the provision of tertiary mathematics education and the training of secondary mathematics teachers in the western suburbs of Melbourne. These changes affect the broader community, and AMSI feels compelled to respond.

Students at Victoria University deserve the dedication and encouragement of continuing academic staff committed to improving mathematical outcomes for students in the west. Undue reliance on casual staff will weaken the quality of the university's mathematical program. Academics also need the opportunity for research. Without it your university will not be able to participate in any of the exciting new developments that are occurring in the modern mathematical sciences and its multidisciplinary applications, or to attract the best staff in future. The decision to abandon support for the university's Research Group in Mathematical Inequalities and Applications particularly undermines opportunities for research in these areas.

Of course your students, including those entering the teaching profession, need exposure to these developments and that won't happen unless Victoria University commits to adequate continuing positions and research opportunities.

Victoria University is an inaugural member of AMSI and has benefited significantly.

AMSI's involvement was key to the recent upward revision of the cluster funding rate for mathematics and statistics by the Commonwealth Government and in the significant reduction in HECS fees for mathematics and science students and for those pursuing teacher training in these areas. AMSI provided Victoria University with \$70,000 for the installation of its Access Grid Room, a facility

which hardwires your university into the national mathematical sciences teaching and research scene. AMSI has recently received funding from DEEWR for a major schools project which has the potential to deliver more students interested in mathematics to Victoria University.

The mathematical sciences in Australia are facing unprecedented challenges which are widely recognized as being of national strategic importance. I have attached a copy of "A National Strategy for Mathematical Sciences in Australia" prepared by Prof. Hyam Rubinstein, Chair of the Australian Academy of Science's Committee for the Mathematical Sciences, in consultation with the Australian Council of Heads of Mathematical Sciences. I hope that this document will help convince you that Victoria University has a leadership role to play in the provision of mathematical sciences courses to students in the western suburbs.

I urge you to re-engage with the university's mathematicians to guarantee the integrity of this fundamental discipline at Victoria University.

Yours sincerely,



Geoff Prince
Director
Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute

CC: Commissioner Dianne Foggo
Associate Professor Michelle Towstoles
Professor Richard Thorn
The Hon Nicola Roxon MP
The Hon Marsha Thomson MP
The Hon Julia Gillard MP