



THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF MATHEMATICS TEACHERS INC.  
supporting and promoting mathematics education

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 12 December 2012

## **Better maths teaching = better student results**

Greater numbers of appropriately qualified and supported teachers of mathematics are necessary if Australia is to overcome its “disappointing” results in the latest Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), released today.

Although an increase in the number of graduate teachers with mathematics qualifications is both desirable and necessary, the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT) sees this as a long term goal, and is calling for greater immediate support for current teachers, especially for those teaching ‘out of area’.

The Association advocates that while most current teachers are doing a good job, like all professionals, they need the time and opportunities to remain up to date and adapt to changes, including the new Australian Curriculum.

The current shortage of qualified teachers of mathematics sees many educators now having to teach the subject to grades outside of their experience—some even beyond the level of their own learning.

“In addition to strong content knowledge, all teachers, including those teaching out of field, need to know how to make lessons meaningful and interesting,” said AAMT President Assoc. Prof. Kim Beswick. “They need to set high academic standards and have the knowledge and teaching skills to enable their students to meet these.”

The AAMT is calling for education authorities, universities, and the teaching profession to work together to develop and implement the policies and programs that are now urgently needed.

“AAMT will use the findings from TIMSS 2011 to help us take a careful look at the work we do to support quality teaching of mathematics in our schools. We challenge

governments and universities to do the same and to work with the profession to improve student outcomes,” said Assoc. Prof. Beswick.

Although the AAMT President was pleased by the improvement shown in the TIMSS results since 1995 in Year 4 mathematics and believes it reflects the effort that has been put into mathematics in primary schools, she notes that since then, many more countries now perform significantly better than Australia.

Assoc. Prof. Beswick sees a particular challenge with the lack of progress shown in the report by Year 8 students.

“A number of studies, including this year’s report by the Chief Scientist, have identified needed reforms in the early secondary years, and yet we still see only limited responses from governments,” said Assoc. Prof. Beswick.

The AAMT believes the large numbers of Australian students falling below international benchmarks, as demonstrated in the newly released findings from TIMSS 2011, is yet another ‘wake up call’ that confirms the need for policy and programs to address issues in school mathematics as a matter of urgency.

The Chief Executive of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Professor Geoff Masters said, “To say the results are disappointing is an understatement,”—a view with which Assoc. Prof. Beswick agrees. She cautions, however, against uncritical adoption of strategies used in other countries. “Cultural and other contextual differences can limit transferability of strategies that work elsewhere. We also need to examine the TIMSS results at a level of detail beyond the reported means,” she said.

“Reports and studies the world over, all show the same thing: good student results are the direct result of good teaching,” said Assoc. Prof. Beswick. “We need to start with the teachers, it has to be a concerted effort, and Australia can’t afford to delay any longer.”

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