

SMH Letters, June 11, 2012

All this maths talk fails to add up

I think John Mack ([Letters, June 8](#)) is being fairly naive if he believes NSW will take a stand against the dropping of 3 unit mathematics (extension 1) from the national curriculum. It's not called a national curriculum for nothing.

Pressure, including financial pressure, will be brought to bear if we go out on a limb. But what is far worse is the scrapping of what is left of the great courses that were introduced in the Scottish tradition a century and more back (I'm thinking of Carslaw here) and continued by T. G. Room into the late 1960s, and which currently have their echo in the mathematics, extension 1 and extension 2 courses today, in favour of a course which is half statistics.

Statistics is only a small part of what constitutes mathematics. Statistics, only a small part of which can reasonably be taught at school level, is a young upstart in the great tradition of mathematics, which has its roots in the ancient world, a flowering in geometry around 2000 years ago, algebra (Persia) 1000 years ago, calculus (Europe) 400 years ago, all of which have played an important role in modern society.

Where do you think you would be without mathematics? You wouldn't have a smartphone!

The putative curriculum would sweep some parts of this great cultural tradition completely out of our talented pupils' experience. What a travesty. What a disaster for the "clever country".

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