



THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION
OF MATHEMATICS TEACHERS INC.

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WORKPLACE MATHS DOESN'T ADD UP

High school mathematics teachers have gone into Australian businesses to see for themselves the mathematics that workers use every day.

The teachers confirmed that there is a need to improve the connections between the mathematics taught at school and the ways in which mathematics is used at work. Importantly, they discovered that not only do many people in the workforce need mathematical skills, they particularly need to know when and how to apply them to practical tasks.

The study, conducted by the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT), the Australian Industry Group (Ai Group) and the Office of the Chief Scientist, found young people often have trouble transferring the quantitative skills learned at school to workplace situations.

“This disconnect requires our attention. It has implications for individuals because mathematics is at the core of many careers. It has implications for business and industry because there is no sector which does not require its workforce to apply some level of mathematical knowledge. As the global economy becomes increasingly dependent on technology, our national competitiveness will be underwritten by our real-world capability in mathematics and science,” said Australia’s Chief Scientist Professor Ian Chubb.

“It is essential that this issue is addressed to align the school teaching of mathematics and its application to our rapidly changing workplaces to enable the Australian economy to meet our future needs,” said Australian Industry Group Chief Executive, Innes Willox.

“Clearly there are implications for the ways in which curriculum is implemented and maths is taught,” said AAMT President Dr Mary Coupland. “We need to understand how mathematics is used in workplace settings and the Australian Curriculum needs to support the transfer of skills.”

The report, ‘Identifying and Supporting Quantitative Skills of 21st Century Workers’ was released today. The full report is available at www.chiefscientist.gov.au, www.aamt.edu.au and www.aigroup.com.au.

“This is important work. It should prompt a national discussion on how best to achieve our ultimate goal – mathematics to be taught as it is practised and for mathematics taught that way offered to every Australian student,” Professor Chubb said.

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