

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S STATEMENT

In 2006, ACU National has demonstrated more strongly than ever, its cohesion and unique identity as a force for the common good. Our University, the only Australian university with a social justice Mission, consolidated its reputation for engaging effectively with the community to support and help the disadvantaged, to promote equity and fairness, and to give assistance where it is urgently needed.

I am immensely proud of the achievements of our graduates and our students, and I am constantly humbled by their absolute embodiment of our Mission. They are a credit to our staff, who also continued to build strong and mutually productive relationships with our supporters and friends in the professions and in business, industry, the Church, and government.

Celebrating our heritage

During 2006, I was enormously pleased to pay tribute to the unique heritage of our University, the heritage which forged our Mission. In ceremonies throughout

Australia, I was honoured to present The Emergence of Australian Catholic University poster to those Catholic brothers and sisters whose religious Orders established the institutions which prepared educators and healers for our communities. Many of these institutions, some dating back to the 1850s, amalgamated to become our University in 1991, a rich history also retold and celebrated in 2006 through the *Living Heritage* issue of the University's *acunique* magazine.

It is this unique history which continued to differentiate ACU National within Australia's higher education sector



in 2006, and to influence our University's responses to the challenges of change.

As our University continued to mature and expand, we joined together to seek fresh and imaginative ways in which to energise our Mission.

Quality teaching and learning

I am pleased to report that excellence in teaching and learning at ACU National was rewarded in very many ways in 2006. Again, I congratulate our many academic staff whose outstanding work was recognised by the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, which awarded a number of Citations for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning and Awards for Teaching Excellence to our University.

The University was also awarded a top band ranking by the Commonwealth Government from its Learning and Teaching Performance Fund during 2006, along with a \$2.110 million funding allocation which has now been spent on multiple projects that will develop and enhance our teaching quality. Our University was ranked 13 among 38 universities for our teaching competency, ahead of many larger, more comprehensive universities. This is an exceptional achievement.

Quality was also recognised by our graduates, who, in the *Good Universities Guide 2007*, once again gave our staff five-star ratings for their qualifications, five stars for Indigenous participation, and high ratings for student demand. Our graduates in education, health, social sciences, human services, business and the arts are clearly highly valued, and enjoying strong rates of employment.

Welcoming the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Science and Training

ACU National was especially pleased to host a visit from the Commonwealth Education, Science and Training Minister the Honourable Julie Bishop MP.

The Minister visited ACU National's Brisbane Campus in September to view the University's state-of-the-art nursing laboratories, tour the Weemala Indigenous Support Unit and Indigenous Reflection Space sponsored by the Pratt Foundation, and meet students and staff to learn more about our Mission.

Excellence in research

We were positive about the Minister's announcement late in 2006 that the Commonwealth Government would proceed with its Research Quality Framework (RQF) which will guide the research funding of Australian universities. Although the introduction of the RQF will be a very complex process, it will allow us to argue more cogently for our strengths.

Research funding will be determined by a new variable, called impact, which formally defines the public benefit or significance of research. With our well-established Research Flagships, Centres and Institutes focused on meeting the needs of others in diverse communities, we are well placed to take advantage of the Commonwealth Government's wanting to recognise not only the quality of research, but also the impact or significance of the research that is judged to be sound.



Advancing community engagement

Through the University's Mission, and with the valued support of donors and community engagement partners, we continued to reach out to meet the needs of others, locally, nationally and internationally, in a multitude of ways.

I am delighted to report that in 2006 we formalised our commitment to community engagement, and established an Institute for Advancing of Community Engagement.

At our Brisbane Campus, the University hosted a Community Engagement Forum, bringing together representatives from government, non-government organisations and the education sector to explore how partnerships benefit communities. A Social Justice Youth Forum reached out to high school students interested in social justice, gathering them together to learn from inspirational speakers who were highly committed to a range of very worthy causes.

Internationally, I was very pleased to witness first hand in East Timor the initial round of graduations from the Catholic Teachers College, Baucau, now called Instituto Catholico Para Formacao de Professores, Timor-Leste. In receiving their teacher education awards, accredited by ACU National, these graduates were the first locally qualified teachers for the new nation. ACU National recognises the enormous value of education in building a prosperous future for East Timor and is delighted to be able to offer its assistance. It was also enormously pleasing to see refugees on the Thai-Burmese border gain their Diplomas in Business from ACU National during 2006, with the support of the Refugee Tertiary Education Committee.

Nationally, it was very gratifying to see homeless and marginalised men and women attend lectures delivered by our academics through the Clemente/Catalyst Education for Homeless programs. They are run in collaboration with St Vincent de Paul Society, Mission Australia and voluntary learning partners from the business community.

Students and staff engaged with the community in a myriad of ways. By way of example, staff, students and friends from the Melbourne Campus cycled 520 kilometre from Murray to Moyne to raise money for the Bone Marrow Donor Institute. At the Brisbane Campus, others personally raised money for the Leukaemia Foundation, while at the Canberra Campus, staff and students raised money and increased awareness of homelessness in a Winter Sleepout.

For many more inspiring examples of community engagement in action at ACU National, I commend to you *Serving the Common Good* in this Annual Report.

National focus on faith and Catholic identity

Throughout the year, activities on all campuses reflected our University's distinctive respect for, and encouragement of, the spiritual and religious dimension of our lives.

In April, the North Sydney Campus hosted a forum on mission and identity in Catholic organisations, which brought together people working in health, welfare, education, aid and other service organisations, to explore how their Christian identity is informed and expressed by their everyday work.

In other examples, the University was also pleased to join forces with the Council for Australian Catholic Women (CACW), hosting the free public lecture series *People in dialogue: living in a multifaith society* at our Canberra Campus, and to co-host an interfaith peace dinner for more than 200 women in Melbourne.

This theme was formally taken up in the launching of the University's Asia-Pacific Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue (APCID) at the Melbourne Campus, and at the Brisbane Campus, at our Aquinas lecture there, where the ethicist, theologian and social commentator, Professor Noel Preston, focused on the challenge of forging a socially just and environmentally sustainable global community. More examples may be seen in *Serving the Common Good* in this Annual Report.

It is indeed a strength of our University that in so many ways, the focus on our faith and Catholicity has been given national, and international, prominence.

Employer of choice

With a Mission empowering staff, students and graduates to heed the needs of others, it was very pleasing to launch the University's Pathways to Retirement program. This is a further strategy, adding to our previous accomplishments, that is aimed at recognising the need to balance work and life commitments.

As with the University's generous maternity leave provisions, introduced in 2001, this groundbreaking and generous policy leads the way in Australia, setting a new standard by offering our staff greater flexibility and financial security in the transition to retirement. The program gives staff more freedom to plan for the next phase of their lives, including the option to reduce their work responsibilities or partially retire from full-time work, while maintaining their links to the University and enhancing their retirement income. The benefits are mutual, as the University will continue to access these valued employees' skills, knowledge and experience.

Graduates and honorary doctorates

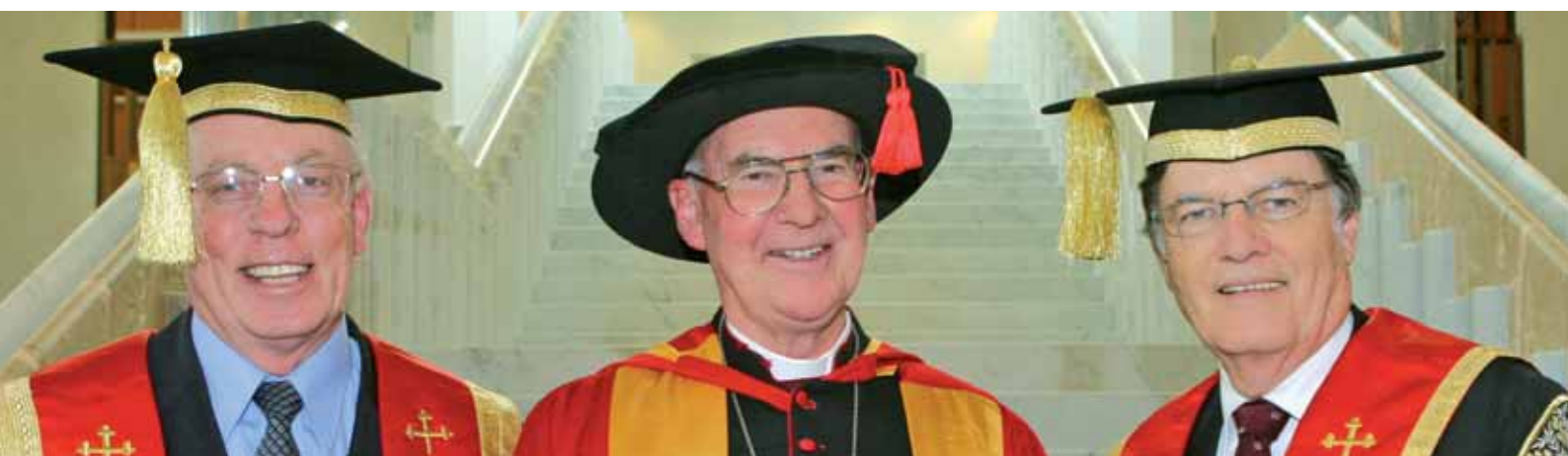
Among the growing numbers of our valued graduates are those who hold honorary doctorates from ACU National. For further details about honorary doctorate recipients and graduates, please see *The Ties that Bind* in this Annual Report.

Sponsorships

The University was again pleased to sponsor the prestigious ACU National Eureka Prize for Research in Ethics, yet another expression of our Mission at work, receiving prominence in the media. I congratulate the 2006 winner, University of Melbourne ARC Special

Reflection

It remains for me to mention my own decision to depart my position in January 2008, at the end of my second five-year contract. Since being appointed in 1998, I have found the role of Vice-Chancellor richly rewarding – spiritually, personally and professionally. I have profoundly enjoyed my time at this University, witnessing ACU National mature as a quality institution, both imaginative and determined in its teaching and research and at all times embracing its unique Mission. I thank the University for allowing me to be a part of that growth.



Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics Associate Professor Janna Thompson, for her research into historical injustices and ways they may be repaired.

Executive positions

In 2006, we finalised a number of important appointments to the Executive of ACU National. We welcome them warmly to the following senior roles: Professor Peter Wilson BA (Hons), PhD (UNSW), joined us as the incoming Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and International); Dr Gail Crossley BSc, PhD (Melb), DipEd (SydCAE) took up the role of Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Professor Pauline Nugent CCCert, RN, BAppSc (Adv. Nursing), (Lincoln Institute), MEd (Monash), will join the University in March 2007 as the incoming Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences; Dr Adam Steen BEc (Hons), DipEd (LaT), MComm (Melb), PhD (Swinburne), has taken up the role of Professor of Accounting and Head of the University's new Institute of Business and Informatics; Dr Peta Goldberg rsm, GradDipR E (McAuleyCollQld), BAMusEd (QldConservMus), MASTheol (UQ), MEd (ACU), PhD (N'castle), to the University's position of Professor of Religious Education; Mr Paul Campbell MBT (NSW) is the University's new Director of Information Technology and Communication Services.

I have announced my decision at this early stage to allow ample time for ACU National to find an appropriate successor and to ensure a smooth transition.

In appreciation

In closing, I wish to congratulate all associated with ACU National for their dedicated service to our Mission and University and all that these encompass.

I look forward to continuing to work with our students, staff and partner organisations throughout 2007. It is indeed gratifying to witness the continued strengthening of our reputation as a truly distinctive provider of tertiary education in Australia, and, beyond this, an exciting force for good in Catholic higher education.

Professor Peter W Sheehan AO
Vice-Chancellor