It would be impossible to begin this foreword without firstly acknowledging the inspirational vision and compelling leadership of Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Sheehan AO, whose decade at the helm of an ever stronger ACU National has come to a close.

Professor Sheehan’s personal passion for justice ensured that his time as Vice-Chancellor has served to vitally enhance the values, ethos and Mission expressed by our University in all its teaching, learning and research, and in all its valued partnerships.

ACU National has come to maturity under Professor Sheehan. In 2007, as in the past, he continued to engage the expertise and energies of his executive and staff, and to catalyse them into constructive and collaborative action.

In all his years with ACU National, working tirelessly, imaginatively and constructively, Professor Sheehan created opportunities for challenging and satisfying projects in which the whole university community has been able to engage.

Building on a string of such initiatives, in 2007, Professor Sheehan presided over the establishment of the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement, along with the Allan Myers Chair of Law, and the Fethullah Gülen Chair in the Study of Islam and Muslim-Catholic Relations, a first for Australia. Interfaith dialogue is a reality at ACU National, where we focus on what we share, rather than on what divides us.

Professor Sheehan’s charismatic leadership continued to encompass support for the student body with the launch in 2007 of ACU National Wired radio, along with a strengthening of graduate relations.

Under Professor Sheehan’s leadership, the reputation and distinctive ethos of ACU National has grown nationally and internationally in 2007.
A Catholic university by definition does not exist in isolation. It is part of the Church and wider human communities and a member of a worldwide network of Catholic tertiary education providers. As such, it has obligations to the communities from which it draws its students and to the communities in which its graduates find employment, and to all people as it lives out its Mission.

As our Mission states, the ideal graduates of ACU National are ‘highly competent in their chosen fields, ethical in their behaviour, with a developed critical habit of mind, an appreciation of the sacred in life, and a commitment to serving the common good’.

At our Catholic University, community engagement is a highly valued vehicle for expressing and achieving our Mission, through partnerships in which equality is respected and shared goals articulated.

Our students and staff approach engagement with the expectation that they will have something to learn from the community groups and individuals with whom they collaborate on a particular project or activity, together achieving a more just society.

As in the past, throughout 2007, educational opportunities have been provided to refugees on the Thai-Burmese border in collaboration with the Jesuits. Engagement with the Catholic teachers’ college in East Timor in collaboration with the Marist Brothers continued, along with other valuable programs. These activities have been applauded jointly by the Congregation for Justice and Peace and the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome.

Closer to home, the Clemente Australia program, providing tertiary education opportunities for people who are marginalised in collaboration with Mission Australia and the St Vincent de Paul Society and others, has continued to grow during 2007, spreading to Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne, attracting the imagination and support of businesses, and earning a string of prestigious awards.

These advances in the life of the University have lifted up minds and hearts and raised the morale of staff, students and partners immeasurably. We celebrate our unique strengths.

The partnerships, professionalism, academic achievement, and staff loyalty Professor Sheehan has fostered in 2007 and the preceding years leave ACU National in exceptionally good health, enjoying well-deserved respect in the world of tertiary education and beyond.

The activities and reach of ACU National, as a public institution in a resources-rich nation, are indeed of critical importance, for our Catholic heritage recognises that education is the right of all people, and liberation for many deprived people will come only through education. The expertise we share and foster, for the common good, is vital.

In farewelling Professor Sheehan, we now address the future of our public, Catholic university. In 2007, from a strong field of extremely high quality candidates, Professor Greg Craven was selected as new Vice-Chancellor, to take up his position in early 2008.

Professor Craven has enjoyed a distinguished career in academia, the law and public life. In addition to his two years as Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Curtin University of Technology, Professor Craven was the foundation Dean and Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame Australia. Prior to this he held academic positions at the University of Melbourne, and has also served as Crown Counsel for the State of Victoria.

Importantly, Professor Craven identifies strongly with the academic, social and spiritual ethos of ACU National. He is ideally placed to take this important University into an exciting future and we welcome him.

In closing, may I extend my personal thanks to Professor Sheehan and indeed to all our staff, students and partners, for their mutual contributions to ACU National during 2007 and for all that our University has achieved.

Brother Julian McDonald CFC AO
Chancellor