“ACU National is the only university in Australia that has such a social justice Mission and I am honoured to witness the many ways our staff, students, graduates and partners continue to interpret it, reflect upon it and be agents of change, locally, nationally and internationally.”

Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Sheehan AO
It is through engaging with communities that ACU National, with the help of valued partners, shares and builds its expertise and resources to empower and enhance capacity in diverse communities.

The University’s Mission-focused commitment to community engagement was demonstrated in 2007 not just through the establishment of the Institute for Advancing Community Engagement, but in a myriad of ways.

In the quest for social justice and human dignity, through the informed and caring engagement of staff, students, graduates and partners alike, a host of individuals and communities experienced change for the better.

The University’s communication and marketing activities form an essential component of our engagement with partners and stakeholders, prospective and current students, staff and the broader community. A core strategy has been our evidence-based approach, sharing the real-life stories of successful students, graduates, staff and programs.

**Integral to the strategic plan**

Through community engagement the University truly lives its Mission, promoting the dignity of people and advancing the common good.

The University’s community engagement both is enhanced by and enhances the University’s teaching and learning and research and is acknowledged widely as an important source of optimism for people, communities and institutions.

**Key structures**

In 2007, the University endorsed the importance of community engagement through implementing key structures including the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Engagement) and the newly established Institute for Advancing Community Engagement.

Reflection is integral to the University’s sustained community engagement and has contributed to the impact of the engagement for students, staff and the institution as a whole as well as for the communities with which the University is engaged.

**Institute for Advancing Community Engagement (IACE)**

ACU National’s Institute for Advancing Community Engagement (IACE) was created to promote its Beyond Today agenda and the three priority areas of Beyond Disadvantage, Beyond Borders and Beyond Differences. In 2007, IACE extended its University-wide programs such as Clemente Australia, capacity building in East Timor, and the Beyond Today Leadership Program, while also liaising with faculties, institutes and centres.
Beyond Disadvantage

The benefits of Clemente Australia for people who are marginalised and disadvantaged are evidenced in student outcomes, and the reports of agency and University staff and learning partners. The ABC 7.30 Report presented the story of Clemente Australia in ways which captured the minds and hearts of many Australians. Collaborative inter-agency meetings at regional and local levels in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra, Campbelltown, Ballarat and the Hunter Valley provide further evidence of the value people and institutions see in this program. Disadvantaged people and community agencies seek the collaboration of ACU National in offering Clemente Australia as an important pathway for people to gain a sense of hope and re-engage with the community.

The University values the endorsement of this program through the collaborative support of the St Vincent de Paul Society, Mission Australia and Smith Family at national and local levels and in joint research ventures.

Among the 2007 Clemente Australia initiatives was a unique drama performance at the Brisbane Campus, Kin, featuring students who are homeless and marginalised sharing moving snapshots of their lives. Other Clemente Australia activities included art courses, performances of Shakespeare, theology lectures and more.

Beyond Borders

Hope for people in challenging situations is integral to the University’s mission and community engagement and, in this spirit, throughout a period of national unrest, the institute maintained its services supporting the Instituto Catolico para Formacao de Professores (ICFP), also known as the Catholic teachers’ college, in Baucau, East Timor. Original plans for reciprocal student engagement in 2007 across ICFP and ACU National have been modified from student visits to communication in Tetun and English through the internet in 2007 moving to student visits in 2008 to coincide with World Youth Day. Together with ICFP, IACE is documenting the history, processes and outcomes of the partnership in East Timor.

Beyond Differences

The University maintained its engagement with Karen refugees on the Thai Burmese border, through the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and with the Notre Dame Institute of Education (NDIE) in Karachi, Pakistan, through the Faculty of Education. The Diocese of Jaffna, Sri Lanka, and the Mountain of the Moons University, Uganda, also sought support from the University.

The Beyond Today Leadership Program for 20 young Muslim leaders from Melbourne took participants into new understandings of Beyond Differences in religious traditions, particularly through the home stay component of the program.

Based at the Strathfield Campus, hosted by IACE and La Trobe University’s Centre for Dialogue, the program was sponsored by the Islamic Council of Victoria and the Victorian Government.

Participants explored leadership issues with University students, graduates and staff from the University’s Mission Engagement Team, Yalbalinga Indigenous Unit, the Asia-Pacific Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue, and Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership as well as members of partner organisations including the Affinity Intercultural Foundation, Columban Mission Institute, Diocese of Parramatta, Edmund Rice Centre, Islamic Council of NSW, and Islamic Friendship Association of Australia.

Those involved gained new insights into different faith traditions and cultures which provided a rich basis for understanding the role of young leaders in a diverse and rapidly changing world.

In other programs hosted by IACE, Buddhist and Muslim visitors from southern Thailand met to discuss common concerns, while a visit by Bethlehem Mayor Dr Victor Batarseh provided an opportunity for people from many varied institutions to reflect upon the importance of sacred places and the implications for Australians and people in Bethlehem.
2007 Outstanding Community Engagement Awards

**Staff**
School of Arts and Sciences Head of School Dr Lindsay Farrell received the 2007 staff award in recognition of his genuine commitment to community engagement through a range of areas involving art over many years, including work with the Prison Fellowship Queensland, Indigenous art exhibitions, international aid development programs and refugees.

**Student**
Melbourne Campus first-year social science student Coni Forcey received the 2007 student award in recognition of her passionate concern with the environment, forming the Bayside Climate Change Action Group and engaging with government, business, local council, community groups and residents.

**Community**
The Clemente Australia program received the inaugural Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Outstanding Community Engagement.

“The program is outstanding and provides an example of what is possible through long-term community engagement, mutual respect and relationships.”

Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Sheehan AO

Faculty contributions
Community engagement is part of the student experience at ACU National, with opportunities for engagement woven into the academic and social fabric of the University.

Education students from the Brisbane Campus worked as voluntary English teaching assistants at the Catholic University of Daegu’s English Village in South Korea.

The Faculty of Education engaged with schools through the Australian Schools Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics (ASISTM) Critical Friend Program, enhancing the teaching and learning of science, technology and mathematics in schools.

Sudanese students were given opportunities to extend their literacy skills by working with Brisbane Campus education students in homework clubs, literacy blocks and other literacy activities. The project is supported by Brisbane Catholic Education and the Brisbane Campus Mission Engagement team.

The Faculty of Education continued to work for improved outcomes for rural, remote and Indigenous communities through creating an online professional learning community for rural and remote teachers, *The way forward for teachers in rural and regional schools* project.
A further project, Using Indigenous students’ oral language as the foundation for literacy and numeracy learning, supports Indigenous students’ learning as they transition from home to school. Both projects involve partnerships with Catholic Education Office (Cairns), Independent Schools Queensland, and primary schools in North Queensland and remote areas of NSW.

The School of Religious Education hosted the highly successful 2007 Fifth National Symposium on Religious Education and Ministry.

ACU National, IBM, Sydney University’s Science Foundation for Physics and the NSW Department of Education and Training began collaborating in a ground-breaking science education program for Sydney primary schools. The MyScience pilot project aimed to improve the delivery of science, engineering and technology education in schools and to ignite students’ interest.

The Faculty of Health Sciences established linkages with 21 universities and institutions in countries which include China, Korea, USA, Vanuatu, Sweden, Japan, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Finland and Philippines, creating opportunities for student and staff exchanges, study abroad and study tours.

The University helped fund a clinic in East Timor through providing the salary of a local registered nurse, and staff and students travelled to Vanuatu for two weeks to work with community health nurses. Students were billeted with local families in rural villages to provide them with experience of cultural immersion and to enable them to participate in family and community activities such as play groups, health promotion and school and community health programs. The School of Nursing (NSW & ACT) raised funds for scholarships, equipment for the hospital and clinics; and textbooks for the School of Nursing in Vanuatu.

Academic staff took part in the KAIROS Prison Ministry, providing ministry support to prisoners in Sydney, while, in conjunction with the Consul-General of Solomon Islands, an academic staff member assisted in transport and support of patients from the Solomon Islands who received medical treatment at St Vincent’s Hospital in Sydney.

In a joint project between the School of Nursing and Midwifery (NSW and ACT) and Broken Hill Department of Rural Health, students received scholarships from the University of Sydney Indigenous Unit to spend two weeks in Broken Hill to participate in health promotion activities as well as experience the way of life of Australian Indigenous communities.

Health sciences staff took part in the Aged Care Channel on-air video and talk back question and answer sessions on dementia, delirium and depression in residential facilities, broadcast to staff working in 800 nursing homes throughout Australia.
Other key events in brief

Social Justice Youth Forum

ACU National held its third annual forum for secondary school students at the Brisbane Campus to encourage and inspire young Australians to become involved in social justice and make a difference in their local communities. The keynote address was delivered by the Governor of Queensland, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce.

Depression expert

ACU National hosted renowned US depression expert Dr Michael Yapko who delivered a range of lectures to professionals and the public during the year.

Global citizens

Australia’s responsibilities were discussed at a social justice forum at the Strathfield Campus, hosted by the IACE and featuring ACU National Professor of Law Father Frank Brennan SJ AO and retired Secretary General of global aid agency Caritas Internationalis and Visiting Professor Duncan Maclaren from Glasgow. They discussed the Catholic Bishops of Australia’s latest Social Justice Sunday Statement, *Who is my neighbour? Australia’s role as a global citizen*.

The University’s Melbourne Campus hosted the International Council of Universities of St Thomas Aquinas (ICUSTA) conference, involving more than 30 Catholic universities from around the world. It was the first time the conference has been held in Australia.

Thai delegation

IACE welcomed a delegation of Thai visitors, from the Province of Pattani, to the Strathfield Campus. In a country that is predominantly Buddhist, differences in history, culture and religion have all contributed to the recent violence and instability in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, the three southern most provinces of Thailand, where the majority of the population is Muslim.

The visitors engaged with students and staff from the University, members of the Columban Mission Institute team and representatives of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation.

Supporting IACE initiatives in East Timor

More than 70 people from diverse organisations and many parliamentarians attended an event at NSW Parliament House, raising $5,000 for the Catholic teachers’ college in Baucau, East Timor. All learnt more about teacher education initiatives in East Timor supported by the Marist Brothers, ACU National and others, and heard from the Founding Director of the College Brother Mark Paul FMS, the Consul-General of East Timor Abel Gutterres and the Deputy Speaker of the House The Hon Tony Stewart MP.

Honour for Chancellor

In 2007, ACU National Chancellor Brother Julian McDonald CFC AO was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Divine Word University (DWU) in Papua New Guinea, in recognition of Br McDonald’s long years of advocacy for the rights of children in Australia and his contribution to higher education.

DWU President Father Jan Czuba said Br McDonald had also been instrumental in forming strong links between ACU National and DWU, helping the latter to develop its academic credentials, infrastructure and information services in its early years.

Visual arts

The visual arts assist in projecting the Mission of the University, both through works of arts in the University’s collection displayed on its campuses and exhibitions in its public galleries. Overseen by the University Galleries Committee, exhibitions enhance community engagement.

Exhibitions included the 2007 Clancy Prize for Religious Art (Strathfield); artwork from past and present students of the Academy of Mary Immaculate to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in Victoria (Melbourne); an exhibition of major Indigenous work from Torres Strait Island artist Dennis Nona entitled Sesserae. Mr Nona was awarded the Telstra Indigenous Art Prize in 2007 (Brisbane).

Art from Inside, curated by Prison Fellowship Australia, appeared at the Brisbane and Strathfield campuses; the Canon World Photo exhibition at Strathfield; and Child-life on the Station, a series of art pieces from children from remote stations of Central and Southwest Queensland.

Visit www.acu.edu.au for information on a host of other events, such as book launches, art exhibitions, conferences and public lectures in which the University engaged with diverse communities in 2007.
Keeping communities informed

The University’s communication and marketing activities form an essential component of our engagement with partners and stakeholders, prospective and current students, staff, media and the broader community. A core strategy has been our evidence-based approach, sharing the real-life stories of successful students, graduates, staff and programs. In 2007, University Relations proudly related ACU National’s Mission and achievements to prospective students, current students and staff, graduates, friends and benefactors of the University, as well as to employers and the broader community.

Strategies were informed by regular consultations, focus groups and market research which included measuring responses to marketing campaigns. This information was made available to intranet users, along with access to media coverage, via a new media hub.

ACU National’s major stakeholder communications in 2007 included the Annual Report and three strategically-focused editions of the University’s flagship publication acunique.

The themes of acunique in 2007 were philanthropy, which explored how ACU National’s supporters are helping us to deliver on our Mission; quality learning outcomes and the nurturing of excellence in our staff, students and programs; and the impact and value of the University’s community engagement initiatives.

University Relations kept staff, students and friends of the University informed through the fortnightly online newsletter ACU National Update, web news and an online calendar of events. Campus and course guides and other publications were also produced, including support for the communication activities for faculties, schools and directorates across the University.

Visit www.acu.edu.au/publications to view online versions of acunique, annual reports and other key documents.

University Relations provided media relations support for ACU National events, initiatives and achievements, and integrated key messages and activities through reinvigorated faculty marketing and communications committee meetings and smaller working groups.

Communications staff worked with academics and general staff, students, graduates and partners of the University to promote their research, teaching innovations and expertise to the media and public. Strong coverage occurred in national and international radio, opinion columns in daily and community newspapers and specialist magazines, with staff achievements, community engagement activities and the Mission of the University gaining particular prominence.
Reaching out to prospective students

Student recruitment team members visited more than 460 schools and 70 major career markets, and hosted open days and similar events. We were the only university with representatives at the Gold Coast Schoolies’ Week, where great interest was created not only by the helpful information but by the branded merchandise. Such initiatives reached over 100,000 school students during the year.

Profiling graduates and students through online video testimonials, University Relations further developed its undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment campaign websites and change of preference website. Student recruitment advertising campaigns were extended into new areas such as outdoor media in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Ballarat and Melbourne. The annual mid-year entry campaign was developed in response to University priorities.

University Relations developed information management systems and reports enabling the University to monitor, review and refine its marketing activities. The University’s advertising campaigns were creatively expanded following careful monitoring of growing interest in courses through applications, demographic and geographic statistical data analysis.

The University’s public relations exercises are aimed at strengthening our branding and enhancing recognition of ACU National’s unique Mission, teaching, research and engagement.