In this, my 2007 and final Annual Report, I will begin by putting on record my immense pride in the achievements of our graduates, our students and the staff of Australian Catholic University (ACU National). Now, as in the past decade, I can express only admiration for their tremendous commitment to our unique University and to its vital Mission.

Most organisations survive on the common sense of the people who are working in them. ACU National survives and thrives through the extraordinary commitment and dedication of the people who work for and with this University which dares to be different.

The University has experienced enormous growth in the past 10 years. Student numbers have grown by 36 per cent, from 10,577 students in 1988 to 14,362 students in 2007.

Our research revenues have tripled in that same time. Our Professoriate has doubled from 16 to 32, and our infrastructure has increased significantly to support the growth.

However, for institutions to be healthy and to thrive, growth alone is insufficient. What matters to me is what that growth achieves, and I am proud to report that I believe we have achieved a wonderful level of quality as a unique Australian university.

Quality has been in evidence throughout the decade and no less so during 2007, when academic staff have achieved public recognition for their quality at unprecedented levels.

In 2007, a record 13 members of staff from across all our faculties were awarded citations from the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education for outstanding contributions to student learning.
Quality has been in evidence throughout the decade and no less so during 2007, when academic staff have achieved public recognition for their quality at unprecedented levels.

These and many other members of staff, at every campus, have led by example, engaging with students, Australian and international colleagues and communities, sharing their views and expertise, incrementally adding to the depth and breadth of our University’s influence and standing. Their commitment, experience and generous work continue to build credibility and respect for the quality and distinctiveness of ACU National and for all that it does and achieves.

In 2007, the quality of the tertiary education we provide once again received high praise in *The Good Universities Guide 2008*. This time, graduates recognised in particular ‘positive graduate outcomes’, ‘entry flexibility’, ‘getting a job’, ‘Indigenous participation’ and ‘staff qualifications’.

Not all achievements can be measured in such public ways. I strongly believe that the true measure of a Catholic university, or for that matter any university, is how it relates in a quality way to people, and especially to its students and graduates.

I am proud of the fact that at ACU National, the study of ethics, theology and philosophy is integrated well into all subject areas. Staff and students are actively encouraged to interpret and reflect on Mission values in original, personal and authentic ways, ways which we believe help them ‘qualify for life’.

At the conclusion of 10 years with this University, I have come to learn that through our values and through all that we do, there is a genuine institutional soul that is reflected in the core values that this University communicates.

These values have come to be captured very meaningfully for me by the University’s Mission-related community engagement. Community engagement provides a focus that is critical for gathering students, staff and others around shared purposes and meaning. Our Mission values give the institution in turn its integrity, its sense of maturity and feelings of self-worth.
It remains for me to express gratitude to all my colleagues for their inspirational and energetic support in 2007 as in the past.

I would like to single out Cardinal Edward Clancy AC, our Foundation Chancellor, who appointed me to this University and has guided me with much valued wisdom and affection, and I have been much honoured to have worked with Brother Julian McDonald CFC AO, our current Chancellor. Over the past seven years, I have benefitted enormously from his support, friendship, personal graciousness, warmth, wisdom and insight.

For the future, may this unique, public, Catholic University continue to reflect its distinctive ethos in all that it does. I pray that it will be always open to the needs of others and always ready to work intelligently, through hope energised by imagination, for the common good.

Professor Peter W Sheehan AO
Vice-Chancellor

We are all participants in a community where we attempt to relate to each other in a moral, spiritual and socially responsible way. It is these values which bring us together in diversity, and their synergies which in turn express the vitality of our institution’s ethos.

For me, the Mission values of social responsibility and community engagement are integrally intertwined. Ethical practice, respect for others, openness, inclusiveness and genuine tolerance matter. All encourage the quest for meaning and purpose, in community with others.

In the many contributions the University makes to both Church and state, I remain proud that we have a well-deserved and enviable international reputation for producing contributing, caring and ethical members of society.

As I prepare to step away from leading this great University, it is indeed gratifying to be able to report a depth and breadth of influence and excellence in all we do, and to recognise a wonderful sense of maturity in our operations, partnerships and many relationships.

As witness to the challenges of the past, I see ACU National being a force that moves us forward, one that is embracing the pressures, challenges and changes of the future with nothing less than a healthy momentum, borne of the care, talent and combined efforts of so many very good people. Their common quest, through our Mission, to honour individual human dignity and the sacredness of life, is a quest that truly matters. We are delivering social justice imperatives as a vital Catholic institution of higher learning.

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