



Australian Christian  
Academy

## 2008 Annual Report of

# Australian Christian Academy School of Distance Education

As required by Queensland State Government Reporting.

### **SCHOOL DETAILS**

Australian Christian Academy School of Distance Education (ACASDE) is a non-denominational, Christian school offering educational leadership, services and support at a distance.

#### **Our motto is: Education ... The Family Way!**

We believe that the parent is the best teacher of their own child. Therefore, we work in a balanced partnership of home and school, parent and teacher to find, and meet, the individual needs of each child within each unique family. To this partnership, our school and teachers bring a high standard of educational experience, knowledge of curriculum, and understanding and experience with children in general.

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>School sector</b>                | Independent   |
| <b>School's address</b>             | 14 Combarton Street, Brendale QLD 4500                          |
| <b>Total enrolments</b>             | 2008 began with 1,232 students and finished with 1,289 students |
| <b>Year levels offered</b>          | P – 12  |
| <b>Co-educational or single sex</b> | Co-educational, Distance Education                              |

#### **Distinctive curriculum offerings**

- ACASDE operates using a structured, individualized, self-paced education program flexible for all students regardless of learning style, difficulty, disability, ability, giftedness or talent.
- Distinctively Christian Curriculum.
- Conversational learning between the student and family members, particularly the home educating parent, enhances the education, the relationships and the socialization of the student.
- School staff, many of whom have home educated their children, guide and support students and parents from Preschool to Year 12 graduation and beyond.
- Our online community, courses and activities provide opportunity to interact with families, school staff, fellow students and curriculum while becoming familiar and practiced with today's technology.

#### **Extra-curricular activities**

- Students are involved in individual and group preparation, throughout the year, for the annual Student Convention drawing together ACASDE students from across the state along with students from other schools. A range of events from platform, (speech & drama, music, visual arts, crafts, manual arts) academic and sporting fields provide ample opportunity to perform and hone skills and talents, as well as make new friends. (Winning students go on to compete at the biennial South Pacific Student Convention or at the annual International Student Convention.)
- Likewise, the annual Awards Night and Graduation Ceremony celebrates and rewards the achievements of the students, particularly graduates as they move on to tertiary study and employment.
- Monthly Activity Days were continued during 2008 in five different locations. Students participate in age appropriate group activities with other ACA students from their locality. The activities included sport & fitness, art & craft, and speech & drama.
- Monthly Music Days were also continued during 2008. These days encourage students to develop a variety of musical skills and help to prepare students for events at the annual Student Convention.

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## STAFFING INFORMATION

ACASDE teachers are leaders in home-based education. Three of our senior staff members have more than a decade of experience and results in distance education learning. Over seventy percent of our teachers have educated their own children through the program and some of those have already seen them graduate and go on to tertiary study and employment.

### Qualifications

| Qualification      | Percentage of teachers and school leaders at the school |
|--------------------|---|
| Doctorate          | 0   |
| Masters            | 10  |
| Masters (underway) | 0   |
| Bachelor Degree    | 90  |
| Diploma            | 80  |
| Certificate        | 0   |

### Staff Development

Staff participated in the following Professional Development (PD) events:

| Description of PD activity  | No. of Teachers |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>SCEE:</b> South Pacific Educator's Conference - Training, information and networking in relation to the use of the school's core curriculum. * | 9               |
| <b>First Aid Course</b>   | 1               |
| <b>Brain Gym</b>  | 1               |
| <b>Save Your Sanity Learning Support Workshop</b>   | 1               |
| <b>Moodleboot:</b> Educational Virtual Campus Development Seminar   | 2               |
| <b>inDesign CS2 Training Course:</b> Publishing software course   | 1               |

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| <b>Total number of teachers participating in at least one activity in the program year</b> | 9      |
| <b>Total Number of Teachers</b>  | 9      |
| <b>Total expenditure on teacher PD ( as recorded in Financial Questionnaire)</b>           | \$1035 |
| <b>Average expenditure on PD per teacher</b>   | \$115  |

\* Denotes major professional development event.

### Staff Attendance

**Average staff attendance for the school, based on unplanned absences of sick and emergency leave periods of up to 5 days:**

| Number of Staff | Number of School Days | Total Days Staff Absences | Average Staff Attendance Rate |
|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 9               | 254                   | 74                        | 246                           |

For permanent and temporary staff and school leaders the staff attendance rate was 96.8 % in 2008.

### Proportion of teaching staff retained from the previous year:

| Number of permanent teaching staff at end of program year (Head Count) | Number of these staff retained in the following year | % retention rate |
|--|--|------------------|
| 9  | 8  | 88%              |

## KEY STUDENT OUTCOMES

### Average Student Attendance Rate:

| Total number of students | Number of school days in program year | Total number of student absences | Average Attendance Rate % |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1289                     | 200                                   | 16782                            | 91.6%                     |

### Years 3, 5 and 7 Testing

Years 3, 5, and 7 testing is not compulsory for independent schools. ACASDE did not participate in Years 3, 5, and 7 testing in 2008.

State Government Years 3, 5, and 7 testing procedures stipulate that a registered teacher must administer the tests. ACASDE has not been able to provide this due to the obvious fact that its students are spread over the entire state of Queensland. The financial burden on the school to outreach for testing or parents to in-reach for testing has been proven to be too great. Other methods of implementing the Years 3, 5, and 7 testing have also been found to be unsuitable at this time.

ACASDE is committed to a high standard of education and so is keen to prove this through testing. We are investigating other alternative sources of testing which meet the State government requirements, yet is more appropriate for our flexible delivery style.

### Apparent Retention Rate:

| Year | Base Year           | Year 12      | Retention rate % |
|------|---------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 2005 | Year 11 in 2004: 57 | 72 (in 2005) | 126.3 %          |
| 2006 | Year 10 in 2004: 66 | 96 (in 2006) | 145.5 %          |
| 2007 | Year 9 in 2004: 58  | 87 (in 2007) | 150.0 %          |
| 2008 | Year 8 in 2004: 67  | 78 (in 2008) | 116.4 %          |

ACASDE received provisional accreditation mid-2003. The Base Year figures are, therefore, taken from the State Government census in February 2004, the first full year of operation. Students are recorded in year levels according to their age at Census and not necessarily their level of work. Therefore, although 78 students are recorded in Year 12 in 2008, not all of these students may have graduated in that year.

### Year 12 Outcomes

The school recognizes the individuality of students and tailors education programs suited to ability levels. The flexible nature of the education program also permits students to work at a rate of completion commensurate with their ability. A student may complete a 'grade' level of work in less than a year, in a year, or more than a year. Twenty-seven students graduated from Year 12 in 2008. Students may also finish their Year 12 studies at different times throughout the year.

A flexible education program like ACASDE's also requires a flexible entry method into tertiary study and has necessitated that ACASDE students not be involved with the OP system offered by QSA. Instead we use the internationally recognized, USA-based SAT1 Tertiary Entrance Examination along with the Student's Academic Transcript for tertiary entrance.

| <b>Year 12 Outcomes 2008</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Total no. of students Completing Year 12</b>  | 27  |
| <b>Senior Certificates awarded</b>   | Not applicable (NA) See above paragraphs. |
| <b>Percentage of OP- eligible students with OP 1-15</b>  | NA  |
| <b>Percentage of students awarded Senior Certificate and awarded a VET qualification</b>                     | NA  |
| <b>Percentage of students awarded Senior Certificate with OP- eligibility or awarded a VET qualification</b> | NA  |

In 2006, ACA conducted a survey of graduates. This is the largest survey of home educated graduates in Australia, to date. Some of the preliminary results of this survey are as follows:

The total number of past students (alumni) surveyed is 438. Our researchers were not able to contact all ACA graduates.

**Qualifications**

The qualifications system in Australia is as follows.

Apprenticeship – This is the pathway for students who wish to become professional tradespersons. There were 38 graduates who had gained apprenticeships. This was 9% of the total group who have been contacted.

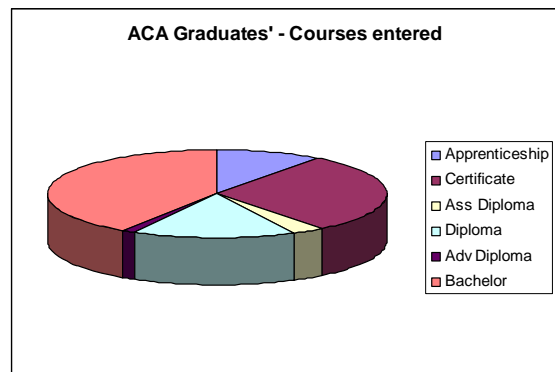
Certificate – The hierarchy is: Certificate 1, Certificate 2, Certificate 3 and Certificate 4.

Certificates 3 and 4 lead into professional occupations.

There were 147 ACA graduates who entered certificate courses. This was 34% of the total group contacted.

Diploma – The hierarchy is: Associate Diploma, Diploma, Advanced Diploma. There were 7 Associate Diplomas, 74 Diplomas and 10 Advanced Diplomas. A total of 21% of ACA graduates contacted, had entered diploma courses of some kind.

Degree – The hierarchy is: Bachelor, Master, Doctor. There were 162 or 36% of ACA graduates who were contacted, who had entered into Bachelor Degree courses.



We only recorded the graduates' *first qualification* after graduating from ACA. Many had entered and completed several qualifications.

**Value Added**

In 2008, ACA continued its program of in-home pastoral care visits to students enrolled in the school. Primarily aimed at assisting families new to the school, it also provided support for those experiencing other difficulties.

As a family-based education program there are no concerns about bullying, and child protection is at its highest. Regular contact by teachers with students and parents provides the necessary interaction and oversight to ensure children are receiving appropriate education and care.

ACASDE has taken a cutting-edge role in the care of students in the online virtual Campus. All users are required to supply ACASDE with evidence of identification (parent photo ID, child's birth certificate, Medicare card) before access is granted to the site. All forum posts, chats and messages are logged and emailed to the parent at the end of each day. This enables parents to monitor and be

alerted to any communication between their child and another Campus user that could be dangerous to the child.

ACA also continued regional activity and music days where students and families participate in sporting, art & craft, speech & drama and musical activities. They also provide further opportunities for students to interact with other students, and for parents to make contacts with other parents and build support networks within their regions.

### **Parental involvement**

ACASDE is a family-based education program. Parents are vital to the implementation of the program and are, therefore, heavily involved. ACASDE recognizes and commends parents who make such sacrifices for the education of their children, like: being on a single income, being with their children 24x7, and conversing with children about their learning on a daily basis.

### **HOW COMPUTERS ARE USED TO ASSIST LEARNING**

The main use of computers and internet technologies is through ACASDE's virtual Campus. The purpose of the vCampus website is to assist ACA students, families and staff in their interactions. Campus presents users with the following advantages:

- Improved interaction and relationships,
- Greater access to academic assistance and guidance,
- Broadened learning style alternatives and curriculum choices, and
- A reduction in isolation.

Two of the main focal points of Campus in 2008 were:

- Building community, and
- Delivering online activities complementary to the core education program.

### **Building Community**

With so many students operating "at distance", we are separated from each other. Sometimes families may even feel somewhat isolated. Building an online community brings us together on our commonalities. It helps parents and children know that they 'are not alone'. The Campus community brings home educating students, families and school staff together through forum and regular chat sessions.

### **Online Activities**

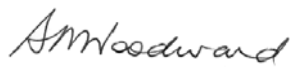
ACA has spent a lot of time reviewing Learning Objects and other resources from the Learning Federation and other sources. These are connected to the core education program. Accessed through vCampus, these online activities have done much to reinforce the learning and also provided a stimulus to motivate students and discovery.

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## **DECLARATION**

This information is a true and accurate record, to the best of my knowledge, of the students and life of the Australian Christian Academy School of Distance Education in 2008.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Woodward  
Principal