

# WHY

AUSTRALIA NEEDS A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY.



# INFLUENCE

NOUN / VERB

*The capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behaviour & opinions of others.*

PAGE FIVE

*The Purpose  
of  
Education*

PAGE SIX

*The Influence  
of the Christian  
Church on  
Australian Society  
& Education*

PAGE EIGHT

*The Influence of  
Universities in  
Australia*

PAGE TEN

*The Opportunity  
to Help  
Strengthen Values*

PAGE  
THIRTEEN

*Conclusion*

# WHY A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY IN AUSTRALIA

The leadership of Alphacrucis College has a vision to see the College transition to become a global Christian university in Australia that transforms neighbourhoods and nations. Its Christian values and Penetcostal heritage uniquely positions it to produce leaders with strong Christian values who will influence the social, political, legal, religious and economic landscape of the future.

Since 1948 Alphacrucis College has been training men and women for effective Christian ministry. That calling has not diminished but has been augmented by our vision to be a university. AC's mission is to equip Christian leaders to influence all spheres of society, including business, education, politics, media, and the arts and entertainment. This is reflected in the College's growing array of Vocational and Higher Education awards.

The vision to transition from college to university is primarily based on the rationale that universities exert powerful influence on culture and society and that a distinctively Christian university would contribute to the church's mission to influence all spheres therein. It would offer a quality alternative for students seeking an education that incorporates Christian worldview and values.

This paper seeks to elaborate on the rationale for such a Christian university in Australia.



# THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

Many writers on the purpose of education have expanded on Mortimer Adler's "the Paideia Program" that education has a threefold purpose:

- the development of citizenship;
- personal growth or self-improvement;
- occupational preparation.<sup>1</sup>

In essence, education is a social good that contributes to the development of the whole person and to the influence of that person on society. A key part of the educational process is the "socialising" of the student to a set of societal norms that reflect the explicit and implicit values of the educator and of the educational institution. Australian universities typically endorse secular humanism and are ambivalent or antagonistic towards the incorporation of Christian faith in curriculum and university life. One consequence of this is that many students from church backgrounds repress or abandon their faith upon entering university and students from other or non-faith based backgrounds are not given the freedom to encounter Christian approaches to life and meaning. These students deserve the opportunity to choose a university education that incorporates the development of citizenship, personal growth, and occupational preparation with Christian worldview and values.

Miroslav Volf writes, "the central educational mission of the university should be to teach students, not just to understand the world and achieve their goals in it, but to make wise judgements about what those goals should be and how to pursue them in intellectually and morally responsible ways."<sup>2</sup> The secular universities in Australia have concentrated on the former but neglected the latter. By its very nature a Christian university will bring the meaning of life back into the curriculum and classroom.

A Christian university would be firmly rooted in the Christian tradition and would seek to incorporate the philosophical and moral assumptions of that tradition into the design and development of its curriculum, learning environment, and intentional community. It would be committed to "Christian intellectual engagement"<sup>3</sup> with scholarship and with other faith traditions. It would base its approach to education on the understanding that faith in Christ stimulates believers to study God's created universe and inspires them to seek to enable others to achieve their full potential as God's creation. It would embrace all truth as belonging to God<sup>4</sup> and pursue a dialogue with all society to heal the artificial gap between sacred and secular thought.

The enrolment policy does not require students to be Christian. The image of God is found in each individual, including those who are not confessional Christians. All students would be provided with the opportunity to encounter Christ in a learning environment committed to the integration of faith and scholarship.

<sup>1</sup>Adler, M.J. (1998). *The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto*. New York: Touchstone

<sup>2</sup> Volf, M (2015) *Lower Education: Why Universities Must Not Ignore the Meaning of Life* ABC Religion ad Ethics 14 April.

<sup>3</sup>Millis, B.D. (2004) *Faith, Learning and Christian Higher Education* page 10. D.Ed. thesis, Griffith University, Brisbane, QLD.

<sup>4</sup>Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* II

# THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH ON AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY & EDUCATION

The Christian church was the original and sole provider of education in Australia from settlement until the colonial government instituted “government funded” schools in the 1830’s.<sup>5</sup> In 1872 the Victorian government withdrew funding to church schools with the other States following its example. Funding for church schools was not reintroduced in Australia until the 1960’s by Prime Minister Robert Menzies.<sup>6</sup> Since that time there have periodically been attempts to remove the influence of Christianity from government funded education.<sup>7</sup> This desire, by some groups, to maintain a firm separation between church and state, in the provision of education, continues in contemporary Australian society.

Section 116<sup>8</sup> of the Australian Constitution precludes the Australian parliament from establishing a “State” religion. The rationale for this constitutional inclusion was to

remove the possibility of one branch of Christianity being declared the religion of Australia (e.g., the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church). The constitution does not mandate a separation of church and state. Culture and society are significantly shaped by the realms of politics, media, business, arts and entertainment, education, and family, as well as religion. Any agenda to separate church and state and relegate the influence of the church to the realm of private religion is an attempt to minimise the heritage and legitimate presence of the Christian church across all sectors of society.

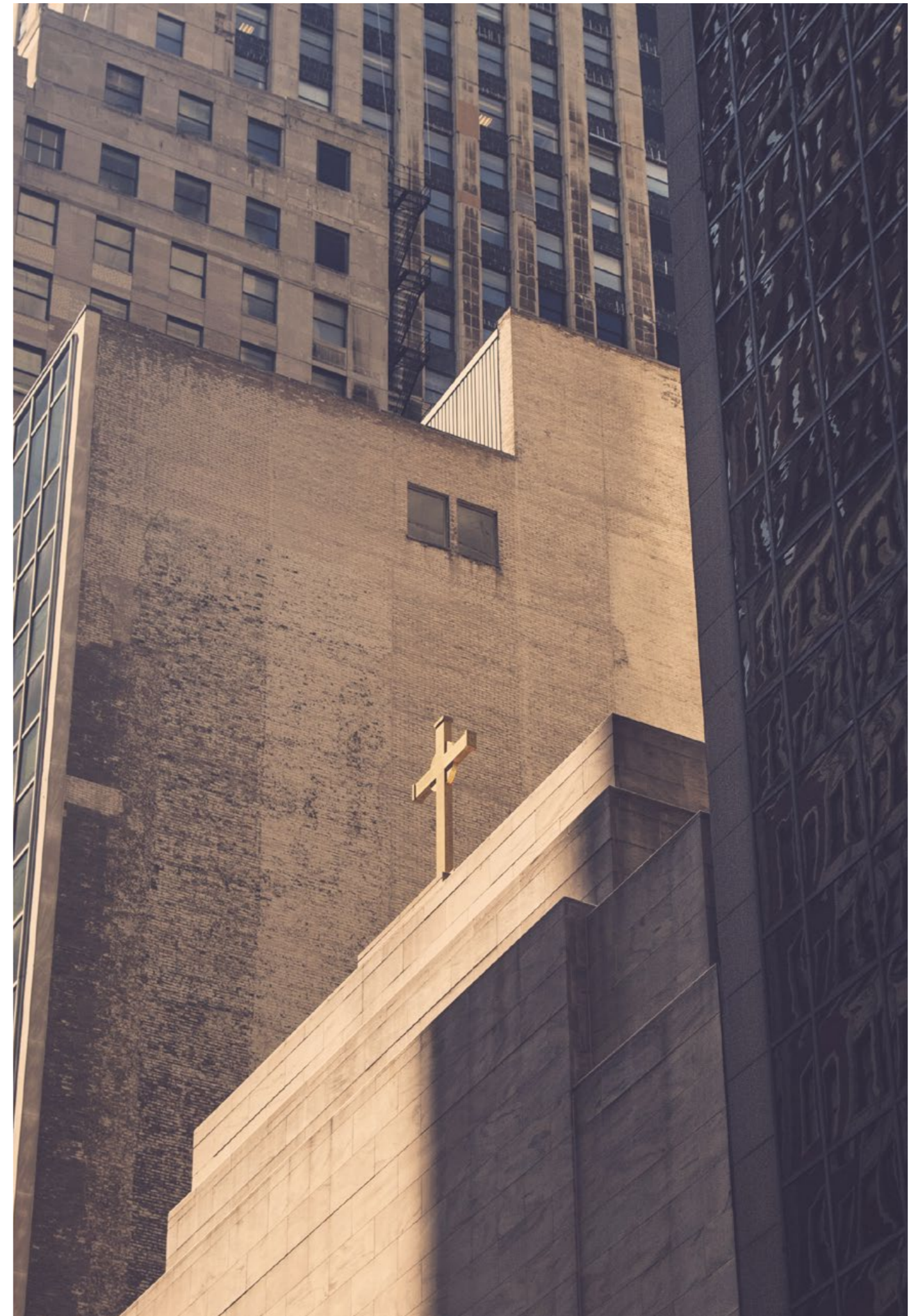
Christian churches should seek to continue to enjoy the ongoing right to contribute and affect Australian society in all sectors of society. In particular, they should continue to operate within the long established tradition of offering church based education and this includes a Christian university.

<sup>5</sup>McLennan, G. (1989) Understanding our Christian Heritage Volume 2. Christian Heritage Research Institute Woy Woy NSW

<sup>6</sup>Jan Gray, Funding and Secondary School Choice in Australia: A Historical Consideration. Australian Journal of Teacher Education Vol 35, 1, February 2010.

<sup>7</sup>The Australian Council for the Defence of Government Schools (DOGS) was established just after the Menzies government instituted funding for church schools. Its mandate is to protect public education and to oppose the public funding of private religious schools.

<sup>8</sup>Section 116: “The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.”



# THE INFLUENCE OF UNIVERSITIES IN AUSTRALIA

Australia has currently 43 universities.<sup>10</sup> They exert a powerful influence on culture and society as they educate and train leaders today for tomorrow. The majority of these institutions are influencing students towards secular humanism which marginalises the Christian church and its values. Alphacrucis College, as a Christian university, would be an alternative voice to the secular universities.<sup>11</sup> In the absence of such a voice, secular humanism and other ideologies remain unchallenged.

A university based on Christian worldview and values would bring faith back into the public sphere and counter the prevailing intolerance towards the church. Today, society's view of religion as private and irrational has been prevalent for some time and for many 'a given'. This prevailing thought has pushed religion out of the public sphere leaving it bereft of a living moral compass. Faith in the public sphere is not for the purpose of establishing a theocracy this side of eternity but instead to speak to matters of conscience, liberty, freedom, mercy, justice etc.

Christianity is more than a private and personal practice. It is a public faith that seeks to influence society.<sup>12</sup> A significant component of the church's influence on society is its involvement in education which can be enhanced and expanded through the establishment of a university. A Christian university which integrates faith with all truth will produce a graduate that is better equipped to influence thought and practice in the public sphere.

<sup>10</sup><http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au/global/australian-education/universities-and-higher-education/list-of-australian-universities>

<sup>11</sup>Patterson, N. Do we need a Christian university? <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/do-we-need-a-christian-university-by-nigel-paterson-2/>

<sup>12</sup>Monsma S.V. The Supreme court, societal elites, and Calvin College: Christian higher education in a secular age. In Keeping faith: Embracing the tensions in Christian higher education, ed. Ronald A. Wells, 67-84. Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company.



**“CHRISTIANITY IS MORE  
THAN A PRIVATE AND  
PERSONAL PRACTICE.  
IT IS A PUBLIC  
FAITH THAT SEEKS TO  
BENEFIT SOCIETY”**

## THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP STRENGTHEN VALUES

*The process  
of learning  
involves  
“looking beyond  
the information  
to see the  
**connections**  
to life”.*

It is claimed that in the USA “over 52 percent of all incoming freshman students who attend a secular college or university and identify themselves as born-again Christian will no longer identify themselves as born-again four years later”.<sup>12</sup> General surveys conducted on university campuses in Australia indicate that while 80% of first year students surveyed admit to a belief in a god only 15% of second year students answered in an affirmative manner to the same question.<sup>13</sup> This indicates that after being exposed to one year of study at an Australian university a person’s belief in a deity is significantly eroded.

Why would exposure to a university education have such a detrimental effect on the faith of young people? Recent research shows that in the developing brain the “human brain circuitry is not mature until the early 20’s. Among the last connections to be fully established are the links between the prefrontal cortex, seat of judgement and problem solving, and the emotional centres in the limbic system, especially the amygdala. These links are critical for emotional learning and high level self-regulation.”<sup>14</sup> Research on the development of values in children and young adults concludes that the value termed ‘universalism’<sup>15</sup> arises in the latter years of secondary school.<sup>16</sup> If, in the formative years of a person’s worldview, they are exposed to ideologies that are anti-Christian, then it is understandable why dissonance is happening in the minds of Christians at secular universities.

The process of learning involves “looking beyond the information to see the connections to life.”<sup>17</sup> The education offered by secular universities gives students “the ability to develop critical thinking skills, but seldom provides them with a way of relating one thing to another.”<sup>18</sup> Education that does not include an appreciation of the relationship between Creator and creation provides an inadequate foundation for being human and existence. “Christian education is not a means of self-help but the exact opposite. It teaches that we find ourselves in finding our Creator and in placing our lives in his providential care.”<sup>19</sup> Faith and information must be integrated if the learning process is to be complete. When this integration occurs it will have a positive effect upon the student’s “values, choices, decision making, and ethics.”<sup>20</sup>

An increasing number of Australian families send their children to Christian schools because they wish to have values incorporated into their children’s education<sup>21</sup>. It is likely that these same families would value the opportunity to continue Christian value-based education at the tertiary level.

A Christian university will equip students to be leaders in the influential sectors of society and will reinforce their Christian values while they are learning. It will also provide a healthy environment for the development of those critical circuitry links which form the final stages of values development and emotional maturation.

<sup>12</sup> Henderson S.J. (2007) Is the Lower Cost Worth the High Price? Springfield Mo: Assemblies of God Higher Education

<sup>13</sup> These figures are quoted by Students for Christ but they do not claim the survey was scientifically based.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog-extra/the-adolescent-brain-beyond-raging-hormones>

<sup>15</sup> The value termed ‘Universalism’ relates to the welfare of people and welfare of the planet. Early definitions included spirituality, faith and benevolence.

<sup>16</sup> Schwartz, S.H. (nd). Basic Human Values: An Overview. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

<sup>17</sup> Morton, D. (2004). Embracing Faith-Learning Integration in Christian Higher Education. *Ashland Theological Journal*, 36(1), 63-72.

<sup>18</sup> Matties, G. (n.d.) Integration: My pursuit of coherence and conviction in Christian higher education. Canadian Mennonite University. Retrieved 7 November 2014 from <http://www.cmu.ca/faculty/gmatties/Integration.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Estep, J.R., Anthony, M., Allison, G. (2008). *A Theology of Christian Education*. Nashville: B&H Academic.

<sup>20</sup> Harris, R. (2014) The integration of faith and learning. Retrieved 7 November 2014 from <http://www.virtualsalt.com/integrat.htm>

<sup>21</sup> According to Mark McCrindle 35% of primary and secondary students in Australia are enrolled in non-government schools. See [http://mccrindle.com.au/resources/Snapshot-of-Schools-in-Australia-2013\\_McCrindle-Research.pdf](http://mccrindle.com.au/resources/Snapshot-of-Schools-in-Australia-2013_McCrindle-Research.pdf)



## CONCLUSION

The church is the instrument Jesus has instituted to bring redemption to our world. Redemption is not only the saving of the individual human soul but also the redemption of society through the church's influence on social flourishing. An opportunity exists to enter into one of the darkest and yet most strategic areas of society - the hallway of Higher Education. A beacon of light in Australia and beyond can be created with the development of a Christian university owned and operated by Australian Christian Churches.

*We would encourage you to appreciate “**the why**”, to embrace the vision, and to partner with us in seeing a Christian university established in Australia.*

# WE NEED YOU

Be part of Australia's future. AC's vision to become a Christian university is all about shaping the leaders of our nation and the world. With your help, we can train generations of leaders for lives of influence and significance in every sphere of society.

To find out more about how you can partner with us contact:

Ps Neil Scott

PH: 0413 599 557

EMAIL: [neil.scott@ac.edu.au](mailto:neil.scott@ac.edu.au)



1300 228 355

[AC.EDU.AU](http://AC.EDU.AU)

SYDNEY | BRISBANE | PERTH | HOBART  
ADELAIDE | AUCKLAND | MELBOURNE | ONLINE