RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

The Australian Catholic University has identified in its Strategic Plan 2009-2011, an ambitious agenda to meet the challenges for a sustainable future. The ambitious agenda includes, embedding our essential character as Australia’s leading Catholic University, securing a dramatic increase in our research quality and productivity, establishment of a comprehensive planning and high performance culture, improving levels of student satisfaction and life, and successfully establishing new faculties and major degree programmes. One of the key result areas of the Strategic Plan is for the University to establish an appropriate staff profile and ensure staff are productive, valued and satisfied.

The University acknowledges that it has, for some time, not proactively addressed the issue of the University’s ageing academic profile. The academic age profile in 2008 for the Faculty of Education indicates that 76.6% of staff are over 50 years of age with 57.8% of staff in the over 55 years of age cohort. Comparatively across the University, the academic age profile shows that 65.3% of staff are over 50 years of age with 45% of staff in the over 55 years of age cohort. Data indicates a more immediate challenge for the University in the Faculty of Education. Significantly the ageing of the University academic workforce was recently and significantly highlighted in the AUQA 2008 report and in the 2008 Institutional Assessment Framework meeting with Government.

The University also acknowledges that there are significant challenges in attracting (recruiting) staff into academic roles and that this has been a challenge for some time. Whilst some researchers suggest that retention rather than separation is needed at this time, those same researchers identify that there is a need to manage age heaping, to develop pipelines of staff, to retain good staff (through ongoing performance management), and, to understand the retirement intentions of staff to support more effective planning.

Taking all of this information into account, the University must be proactive in addressing the staffing challenges. The Faculty of Education Workforce Renewal Program is one strategy the University is using to reposition and reprofile itself for a sustainable future.

The purpose of the Workforce Renewal Program is to facilitate the re-structure of the academic staff profile of the Faculty of Education. In doing so achieve significant improvement in the structure, the mix of skills and expertise of staff, the pipeline of staff generally and for leadership roles, and consequently the operations of the Faculty, consistent with the University’s strategic objectives.

The Faculty of Education Workforce Renewal Program commences and embeds communication and discussion around the significant issues facing the Faculty of Education and the cultural and operational change required in the Faculty of Education. It draws upon the University’s existing policy and procedures framework with the addition of a Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme. The following summarises the Faculty of Education Workforce Renewal Program:

1. Ongoing implementation of effective performance management in line with University policy and procedures - updated individual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are consistent with the University’s goals and key result areas and the Faculty’s 2009 Strategic Plan.
2. Increased utilisation of Pre-retirement and Transition to Retirement contracts – to be achieved through discussions with staff about their retirement intentions and options available.
3. Declaring certain positions to be redundant where an individual staff member’s area of academic specialisation is no longer required by the University and there are either limited or no options for redeployment.
4. A Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme (VERS) as gazetted by the Australian Taxation Office on 25 February 2009 – eligible employees to self-select.

5. A multi-faceted recruitment and induction strategy to support the re-structuring of the profile of academic staff within the Faculty of Education.

The Faculty of Education Workforce Renewal Program is not about job loss, rather the opposite. It is about job renewal and organisational realignment. The program enables eligible academic staff to transition to retirement in a planned, dignified, mutually beneficial process, and to transfer important knowledge, experience and lessons learned to current and new academic staff. It calls upon Faculty academic staff to enter into discussion with their Head of School about their performance, working intentions and retirement intentions. The Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme is, however, a one-off offer for eligible academic employees subject to the Australian Taxation Office Class Ruling CR2009/6.