

# Annual Report 2009

With the global financial crisis impacting on the Australian economy in the latter half of 2008, the short-term future of the graduate recruitment sector remained uncertain as we moved into 2009.

Dogged by uncertainty, the first half of 2009 saw many employers put their recruitment plans on hold until the economic picture became clearer. The second half of 2009 saw many of these employers return to the marketplace as indicators showed or promised improvements. The year ended with a sense of promise both within GCA and the economy.

Sadly, 2009 saw the resignation of our Executive Director, Ms Cindy Tilbrook. But Cindy left GCA well prepared for the future and with a skilled and dedicated senior management team. I'm pleased to report that, overall, 2009 was an extremely successful and exciting year for GCA.

- In an uncertain labour market, we worked to ensure another very successful year for our *Graduate Opportunities* directories. There are now six publications in the range, covering key discipline areas across Australia and New Zealand.
- GCA staff made presentations at several conferences, including the Australasian Association for Institutional Research (AAIR) and National Association of Graduate Careers

Advisory Services (NAGCAS) events. GCA also attended the Australian Association of Graduate Employers (AAGE) conference and *Graduate Opportunities* was a silver sponsor at that event.

- We developed and conducted the first Beyond Graduation Survey (BGS), which looked at the labour market status and higher education experience of a cohort of Australian Graduate Survey (AGS) respondents three years after graduation (a report is due for release in early 2010).
- We received a record number of responses to our survey of graduate recruiters, the Graduate Outlook Survey (GOS). A snapshot report on the findings is available on our website.
- Funding was received from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to develop an historical data file based on our data collected since 1974.
- We presented the Virtual Careers Fair (VCF), Australasia's largest careers fair for higher education students in the 'virtual environment' and made plans to ensure the VCF is bigger and better than ever in 2010.

## Employer and Student Perceptions Outlook

The 2009 GOS, GCA's annual investigation into graduate recruitment practices and trends in Australia and New Zealand, was well-placed to examine the impact of the global financial crisis (GFC) on the graduate labour market. Based on the responses of a record 406 graduate employers, the survey revealed that while the GFC forced many organisations to reduce the size of their graduate intake in 2009, the majority (93.1 per cent) still chose to recruit graduates. Other key issues investigated by the GOS included graduate recruitment practices, retention of graduate employees and employers' beliefs about the most important challenges facing them now and in the years to come.

The University & Beyond survey (U&B) was 'rested' in 2009 to allow for the results of 2007 and 2008 surveys, as well as the survey methodology, to be reviewed. This valuable survey will be run again in 2010, marking the final year of its funding by DEEWR.

## Graduate Outcomes: Three Years After Study

The BGS was introduced in the second half of 2009.

Run as a pilot study in 2009, it will become an annual, ongoing project to collect outcomes and course experience-related data three and five years after graduation. As the graduates are contacted using data from their original AGS response, the results can be directly matched with that initial data, making it a minor longitudinal study of the outcomes of university graduates up to five years post-graduation. This project will contribute to the development of a powerful extended data set identifying the post-graduation activities and outcomes of Australian higher education graduates.

## Historical Data Set

In late 2009, funding was gratefully received from DEEWR to enable us to clean and formalise each of our annual data sets going back to 1974 with the objective of producing a single, harmonised data set spanning every year of collection. This will be the first time a longitudinal GDS data file has been available, and will have a significant impact on the use of AGS data.

## Graduate Opportunities (GO)

*Graduate Opportunities* maintained its position as a leading graduate directory in 2009. With support from existing advertisers, significant additional advertising from new entrants to the graduate recruitment marketplace, and an expanded and improved editorial section, the publications continue to be a resource highly sought after by students.

In February 2009, the four main directories were released:

- *Graduate Opportunities* (circulation of 50,000)
- *GO! New Zealand* (circulation of 15,000)
- *GO in Accounting and Finance* (circulation of 20,000)
- *GO in Engineering and IT* (circulation of 20,000)

Included with this release was our brochure:

- *GO for International Students* (circulation of 20,000)

CD versions (20,000 in total) of the main directory were also released at that time and e-book versions of the publications were placed on the GO website.

In mid-year, *Undergraduate Opportunities* was released, with its focus on internship and vacation programs. This publication had a hard copy print run of 20,000 and, again, was available in e-book format via the website.

As in previous years, the main directory was distributed via careers fairs and careers services and the industry books were distributed via relevant faculties, careers services and select professional association events.

### GO website

The GO website has continued to play a critical role in raising GO's profile. Traffic statistics confirm that the website is a major medium through which students gain information about graduate employment opportunities.

Traffic measure	Average per month (2009)
Total Page Views	176,526
Visitors	44,540
Career Searches	15,798

### Sponsorships and Promotion

During the year, GCA continued to actively sponsor, or exhibit at, various conferences and events, including: the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) National Convention; the Herald Sun Careers Expo; the NAGCAS conference; and the AAGE conference under the *Graduate Opportunities* brand.

### Careers Resources and Newsletters

The enhancement and upgrade of the GCA Career Information booklets continued in 2009. Several new titles and updated versions of existing books were introduced to our range as part of our ongoing project to keep these publications current and maximise their value to students and careers advisory services.

Two full rounds of GCA publications were distributed to careers services in all subscribing universities throughout the country, once in each semester, and resources were sent to subscribing GCA Professional and Corporate members.

Production of GCA's various regular titles continued throughout the year:

- *Graduate Grapevine* newsletter (three editions)
- *Survey News* (for institutional survey managers)
- *Guide to Campus Recruiting: a Directory of University Careers Services* (printed and distributed in December following a publication review in collaboration with NAGCAS that resulted in several key improvements to the directory).

### Events and Websites

2009 was another successful year for the *Virtual Careers Fair*, which provides the opportunity for professional interaction between students, employers and careers services. Over the nine days of the 2009 Fair, the site received over 13,000 visits resulting in over 137,000 page views. The event demonstrates GCA's continued commitment to promoting positive outcomes for students and graduates, and shows the importance students and graduate recruiters place on these events.

The GCA website continued to be popular over the year, with over 603,000 total user sessions and over 1.9 million page views registered in 2009. The most downloaded file on the website, with over 14,700 downloads, was *GradStats*.

### Local and International Representation

During 2009, GCA continued its involvement in a wide range of external activities.

The immediate past Executive Director, Cindy Tilbrook, and other staff members, represented GCA on committees within various organisations, such as NAGCAS, AAIR and the Careers Industry Council of Australia (CICA). Cindy and the GCA team delivered a number of presentations and workshops to various bodies during 2009. Media coverage of our research findings intensified in the latter half of the year, when public interest in the future for graduates heightened as the recovery from the economic downturn became evident.

GCA staff also attended a number of conferences, networking functions and professional development activities, including the NAGCAS, Universities Australia (UA), AAGE and AAIR conferences, and the Australian Universities Quality Forum. Staff also visited universities, a number of government departments, various professional organisations and graduate employers throughout the year. Cindy attended the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conference in Las Vegas in the United States, followed by the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) conference in Vancouver.

GCA continued to host a number of local and interstate visitors during 2009.

# Surveys & Research Portfolio 2009

## Graduate Employment Outcomes

Following a strong year for graduate employment outcomes in 2008, the preliminary results of the national 2009 AGS conducted by GCA reflected a fall in employment prospects for new bachelor degree graduates:

- 79.2 per cent were in full-time employment within four months of completing their degrees (85.2 per cent in 2008)
- 13.4 per cent were working on a part-time or casual basis while continuing to seek full-time employment (9.6 per cent in 2008)
- 7.4 per cent were not working and still looking for full-time employment at the time of the survey (5.2 per cent in 2008).

These figures represent the late 2008/early 2009 labour market for new university graduates, and show a six percentage point decline in full-time graduate employment from the previous AGS.

However, while the overall proportion of graduates seeking full-time employment was up, most of those graduates seeking full-time employment were in part-time work. The proportion of unemployed graduates seeking full-time employment was just 2.2 percentage points higher in 2009, up from 5.2 per cent in 2008.

The median annual starting salary for new Australian resident bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in their first full-time employment in Australia was \$48,000 (\$45,000 in 2008).

*GCA acknowledges the ongoing support of the Federal Government and the institutions of higher education through the funding of these surveys, the institutional Survey Managers for their vital work in 'front line' data collection and, of course, the graduates who make the time and effort to complete the AGS questionnaires.*

This was 83.0 per cent of the annual rate of male average weekly earnings (\$57,785 at the time of the AGS), and up from 80.9 per cent in 2008.

- Males started work on a median salary of \$50,000 (up from \$47,000 in 2008) and females earned \$47,000 (up from \$45,000 in 2008).
- At \$70,000, dentistry graduates again earned the highest median starting salary of all aggregated fields of education.
- The top ranked fields in terms of graduate starting salaries were dentistry, optometry, engineering, earth sciences and medicine.
- Between 2008 and 2009, the starting salaries for some fields of education increased notably. The median starting salary for veterinary science graduates increased by \$5,000 to \$45,000 in 2009; optometry by \$4,500 to \$64,500; and medicine, education and earth sciences all increased by \$4,000 (to reach \$54,000, \$51,000 and \$54,000 respectively).
- Fields of education with the highest proportions in full-time employment at the time of the AGS included pharmacy, nursing, medicine, civil engineering and dentistry.

Additional funding was received in 2009 from DEEWR and universities across Australia to further develop a standardised model for the conduct of the AGS. This new model is being phased in over a number of years, with a desired outcome of enhancing the authority, validity and reliability of the survey.

## Links between research projects

It is part of the broad scope of GCA's research plans to articulate, where possible, the findings of our various research projects. In 2009 we linked major findings from each of GCA's major research projects – the AGS, GOS, U&B survey and the BGS<sup>1</sup>. Presenting the link between university student perceptions, employer perceptions and graduate outcomes has allowed for new insights into graduate recruitment, while also confirming some existing perceptions. A continuation of these projects in future years will allow such analyses to be further developed.

Linking these major research projects yielded some notable findings:

- At the time of the 2006 AGS, 82.4 per cent of domestic bachelor degree graduates were in full-time employment with 17.6 per cent seeking full-time employment. When these graduates were resurveyed as part of the 2009 BGS, 95.0 per cent were in full-time employment and only 5.0 per cent were seeking full-time employment.
- The median starting salary of bachelor degree graduates aged less than 25 and in first full-time employment at the time of the

2006 AGS increased by 52.0 per cent by the time of the 2009 BGS – far exceeding the rate of inflation over the same period (7.4 per cent).

- When resurveyed for the 2009 BGS, the percentage of 2006 graduates who agreed that they were satisfied with their higher education experience had increased by around 10 percentage points, suggesting a more mature reflection of their original study experience.
- The 2009 GOS predicted a decrease in graduate recruitment due to the GFC which was subsequently confirmed by the 2009 AGS (the proportion of new bachelor degree graduates in full-time employment fell 6.0 percentage points between 2008 and 2009).
- The vast majority of employers surveyed for the 2009 GOS promoted their graduate recruitment program using their organisational website (86.6 per cent). They appear to be wise to do so, as around three quarters (75.5 per cent) of current university students surveyed as part of the 2008 U&B survey indicated that they used an organisation's website to find out more about that organisation.

1. At the time of writing, the findings from the 2009 BGS were still preliminary. These figures may be revised slightly as more detailed analysis is undertaken.

# Mission statement

To be recognised as Australia's leading authority on graduate issues.

*This mission will be achieved by:*

- providing expert information on graduate outcomes and the student experience, obtained through the conduct of national surveys, high quality research projects and data analysis
- promoting and optimising career opportunities for graduates
- supplying high quality careers education products and services for graduates and those who recruit graduates
- creating and facilitating networks for all parties involved in graduate employment and training including government, employers, industry bodies, professional associations, universities and graduates.

## Constitution and Board

The Board met on six occasions:

**March** – GCA offices, Melbourne

**May** – by teleconference

**May** – extraordinary and Annual General Meetings (by teleconference)

**July** – University of Southern Queensland, Brisbane Springfield campus

**September** – Bond University, Gold Coast

**December** – University of NSW, Sydney

Professors Jim Barber and Robert Stable joined the Board at the March 2009 meeting. Ms Michele Wijetunge was appointed as a Director in May, 2009, replacing Mr Andrew Millett who became her alternate. Mr Alan Bevan resigned as a full Director in July 2009, becoming an alternate to Ms Suzanne Curyer.

Ms Cindy Tilbrook resigned from the Board and as Company Secretary in July 2009. Bruce Guthrie was appointed as a new Director and as Company Secretary in July 2009. Ms Catherine Vandermark and Ms Helen Nolan left the Board in September 2009 and Mr Jason Coutts became a Director. Professors Richard Johnstone and Jim Barber, and Ms Dawn White and Mr Malcolm McKenzie left the Board in December 2009.

The Survey Reference Group (SRG) saw a number of membership changes during 2009:

**Resignations:** Professor Jim Barber (Convenor), Ms Julie Birmingham (DEEWR Representative), Professor Sid Nair (Survey Manager representative), Ms Sue Mikilewicz (Survey Manager representative).

**Appointments:** Mr David DeBellis, Ms Justine Fritsch, Ms Helen Jacob, Ms Tanya Tietze (Survey Manager representatives).

**The GCA Board at the end 2009 was constituted by:**

**Chair – Universities Australia Chair: Bill Lovegrove**

Vice-Chancellor & President, *The University of Southern Queensland*

**Universities Australia Nominee: Professor Robert Stable**

Vice-Chancellor & President, *Bond University*

**Corporate Member Nominee: Suzanne Curyer**

Manager, *Career Services Education.au*

**Corporate Member Nominee: Michele Wijetunge**

Manager, *Agency Agreement Team Australian Taxation Office*

**DEEWR Nominee: Jason Coutts**

Branch Manager, *Equity, Performance and Indigenous Branch, Higher Education Group, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*

**NAGCAS Nominee: Alan McAlpine**

Head of Service, *Careers & Employment, Queensland University of Technology*

**NAGCAS Nominee: Tony Lyons**

Head of Service, *Careers & Employment Service, Griffith University*

**Ivan Neville**

Branch Manager, *Labour Supply and Skills Branch, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*

**Graduate Careers Australia: Bruce Guthrie**

Acting Executive Director, *Graduate Careers Australia*

## Personnel, Resources and Administration

Personnel roles at the conclusion of 2009. The significant contribution of these staff members to the ongoing success of the organisation is acknowledged and appreciated.

**Acting Executive Director:** Bruce Guthrie

*Management Team:*

**Senior Research Associate/Business Operations Manager:** Graeme Bryant

**Publications & Communications Manager:** Jesse Gerner

**Research Manager:** *This role is a contracted service provided by Dainville Pty Ltd, managed by Bruce Guthrie.*

**Research Associate/Business Development:** Marlien Lourens

**Sales & Marketing Manager:** Kathy Unger

*Staff:*

**Executive Assistant:** Colette Keech

**Print & Web Designer:** Hina Khan

**Research Assistant:** Diana Kirkovska

**Sales & Marketing Executives:** Ian Burke, Joanne Kilbourne

**Senior Administration Officer:** Hannah Merrigan

**Surveys/Research Associates:** David Carroll, Anton Griffith, Darren Matthews

*Casual & contract staff:*

We continue to utilise various contractors for short-term projects, and casual staff for GDS coding and bulk mail outs.

## Legal and Accounting Resources

**Auditors:** GMK Centric

**Lawyer:** Kligers and Piers Warner

**Acknowledgments:** *As in previous years, GCA would not have achieved the success it had without the support and assistance of many external individuals and organisations: our volunteer Board and committee members; the Federal Government; Universities Australia; university staff throughout the Australian and New Zealand higher education sector; our alliance partners; our key suppliers; and many others. We acknowledge their contribution, thank them for their support and look forward to our continued relationship with them as we move into the future.*

**Bruce Guthrie, Acting Executive Director**