



Alta-1 Principal Dave Stevens

What does your school offer students and their parents?

Alta-1 is a multi-sited school, with five metropolitan campuses and growing, that provides an alternative education to students 15-19 years old who are marginalised by mainstream education and at educational and emotional risk.

What are the school's main features?

Each Alta-1 site comes under the management of a teacher-in-charge who, reporting to the principal, is responsible for the daily management and implementation of the curriculum and program. A chaplain, teacher's aides and community volunteers support the teacher.

As a multi-sited school, we offer small pockets of education and care for "at risk students". With a high staff - student ratio, engaging students in strong yet appropriate relationships, allows students to start to address the issues that have previously restricted their school engagement.

Students work through a curriculum that leads towards secondary graduation but are encouraged to engage in the "Process of Change". They also have access to further professional support via the organisation's psychologists, counsellors and mentors.

Are there any particular success stories you recall?

We have hundreds of personal stories of success and heartbreak - sometimes in the same breath about the same student. The following account is taken from a chaplain's report and shows the progress students can make.

August 2010: "H" was hiding his face with his hair and would not look up. He avoided sitting down and speaking. When he spoke he mumbled and rarely could I understand what he said.

October 2010: "H" has come a long way. He now sits with me and puts his hair behind his ear but still won't look at me and his speech is better although he still uses shrugs of the shoulder to answer some questions.

December 2010: Amazing changes during this month. "H" now looks at me when he speaks and his speech is audible and reasonably clear.

February 2011: "H" is now making jokes and volunteering, and initiating, small talk! He has a brilliant mathematical mind, loves computer games and looks forward to seeing me each week. He even said he missed me during the summer break!

What are the advantages of attending an independent school?

By being able to recruit specific staff and develop programs which respond to needs of students, independent schools give parents and students options which larger schooling systems may not be able to offer.

Each school can develop an ethos and values that are unique to themselves, whether religious or values based. This range of flavours of education is vital to the fabric of our society and the individual needs of families throughout Australia.

How would you sum up the experience of a student at your school?

Time, space and a caring team that allow the individual to address social and emotional issues that lead to change in their personal and academic life.





Alta-1

Students are typically enrolled into Alta-1 because they have been unsuccessful in mainstream schooling, where personal issues have impacted their learning and engagement.

Many have been excluded from their former schools and some are referred by agencies. Most students take two years to complete a year 11 equivalent after which they are able to access employment, an apprenticeship, further training at TAFE or re-integrate into mainstream schooling. Some opt to complete a further twelve month Year 12 equivalent with Alta-1.

As part of the Alta-1 recovery model of education, students complete activities designed to lead them through a socio-emotional developmental.

The student is initially integrated into a caring community, allowing him/her to become connected and needs are assessed to face the issues that are impeding his/her personal development.

The student has the opportunity to re-build his/her life and become a better person, developing a new understanding of self-worth and relationship to family, church and the wider community.

Perhaps the best way to witness the school's purpose and success is by some of the excellent outcomes it has produced.

A young man, who enrolled due to a medical condition which had hospitalised him for half a year and could not maintain a stable school placement, engaged in the process of change through Alta-1.

Although he could not control his medical issues he did change his academic circumstances and progressed sufficiently to gain access to a bridging course at Murdoch University, where he is currently in his second year.

Another example is a 14-year old girl who travelled long distances to attend classes because she was safe and connected to the staff. When life at home became untenable and she became a "couch surfer" (teenage homelessness), the class chaplain and his wife found space within their own home (with guardians approval).

Two years on and she is now a confident young lady who has finished her Year 11 studies, is enrolled in a Cert 4 Youth and Ministry course through a small RTO and is still living with the chaplains family. Last year she was the first Alta-1 student to pilot an overseas social justice trip and worked with a rescue house for sexually abused girls in East Timor.

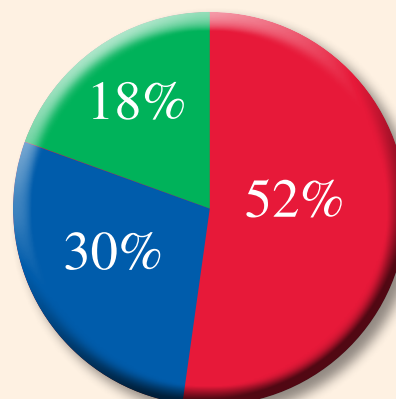
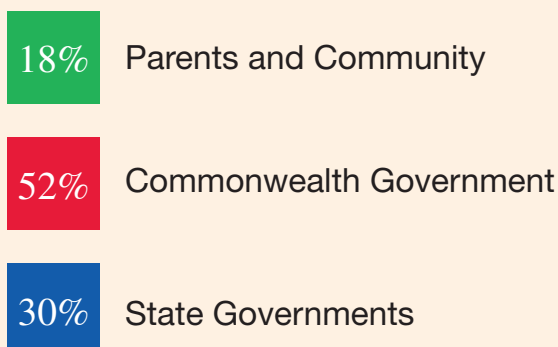
Alta-1 enrolls habitual non-attenders; last year we had attendance rates of 62% average across all sites (classes).

The school has also developed a teacher-rich online version of its curriculum to help students who cannot leave their home due to medical conditions. For two hours a week a chaplain visits the home to help the student.

Their schoolwork may be discussed but the primary purpose of the visit is to engage the student in a "Personal Development course" which helps them work through some of their social/emotional issues with a view to moving them to a more social form of education.



Services of Funding to Educate Children at Alta-1



Percentages are rounded and may not add up to 100.

School finances - ACARA My School website

Changing lives one at a time