

# Rising stocks. With a lift in student numbers and the purchase of its Gold Coast site, Bond University is enjoying its best outlook in years.

By LISA KEARNS

**B**OND University, has finally shaken off years of financial uncertainty with the freehold purchase last month of its Gold Coast buildings, student residences, playing fields and a parcel of land, thanks to a \$60 million loan guaranteed by the University of Queensland.

On top of that more stable framework comes growth in student numbers, and in courses, and a good result in the annual national graduate course satisfaction survey.

It also tickles Bond staffers to see a growth in user-pays tertiary study generally around Australia — putting offerings by the country's first private university in a much different light than when it began.

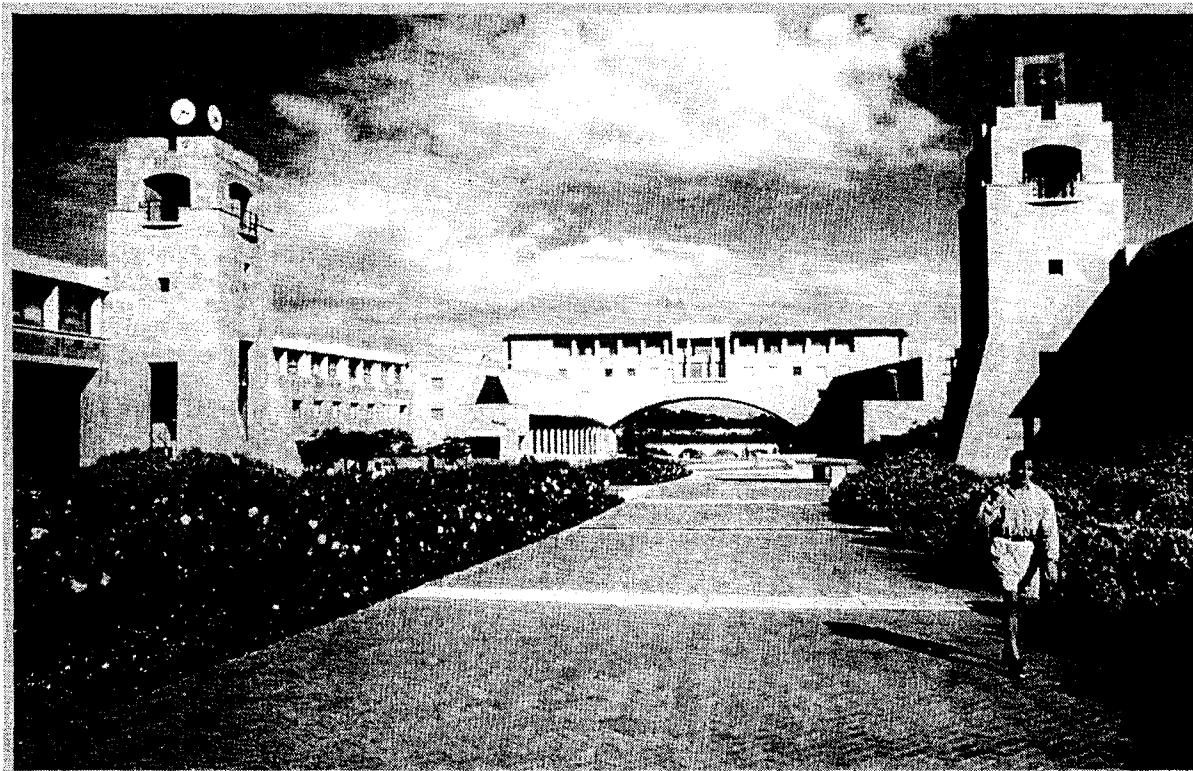
Vice-chancellor Professor Ken Moores tells *Educ@tion* the university's future is now settled, for the first time in its 10-year history.

"Bond University's future is assured now we own our Gold Coast campus and have been named in the recent national survey of graduates as Australia's best teaching university, as well as having the highest graduate employment rate of any Australian university," he said.

The university is now owned by Bond University Ltd, a non-profit public company limited by guarantee. Its board of between 13 and 15 directors are also members of the company and include Professor Moores.

The University of Queensland will retain 350 hectares of university land, but has no plans as yet to set up a rival campus on the land.

A university spokesman said student enrolments had been "going up constantly" since late



**On the road: its future assured, Bond University is planning a new range of marketing initiatives.**

1997, following a sizeable drop brought on by the placing into receivership of its former owners — two companies controlled by the Long Term Credit Bank of Japan. The university has a physical capacity of about 3000 students.

Almost half of the 1640 students currently enrolled at the main Robina campus are from overseas. Another 300 are expected to enrol for the third semester, starting this week. (The university holds classes all year round.)

Bond's educational philosophy, which centres on small class sizes, students working in small groups

together and doing frequent class presentations, has attracted praise from graduates. The university has a student to staff ratio of 10:1.

Survey results from the 1998 course experience questionnaire, an annual poll of university graduates conducted by the Graduate Careers Council of Australia, put Bond University at number one in terms of "good teaching" and "overall student satisfaction" in all its four schools — business, information technology, humanities and social sciences and law.

With more and more universities now forced, or electing, to move

towards self-funding, Professor Moores said Bond University's vanguard "user pays" strategy had been vindicated.

"It could take some time for the market to sort out price and value," he said. "There could well be movements in (course) prices over the next few years. It is a bit inaccurate to say the user pays principle will lead to price-cutting wars. There are other ways to differentiate the universities."

An undergraduate law degree from Bond University costs about \$68,500 as against about \$72,000 for a similar degree from the University

of Melbourne, which will begin offering a full fee-paying option with an intake of 24 postgraduate (not law) students next January. The Melbourne University degree takes two years to complete full-time and entry requirements are similar to those for an MBA, namely that applicants must be graduates and have work experience.

Professor Moores said that the university was looking closely at new marketing initiatives and expected to make some announcements concerning new courses in the next couple of months.

Last week, Bond University announced it would begin offering a bachelor of finance degree and is believed also to be about to add health sciences to its range of undergraduate degree courses.

The dean of the university's business school, Professor Ray Byron, said the new finance degree had been devised after staff noticed that students enrolled in accounting or economics majors were transferring to finance part-way through their degree.

"The finance industry has grown dramatically in the past decade, partly as a result of the emergence of the global marketplace, partly as a result of improved communication technology and partly because the English language has become a medium for global trading and communications," he said.

"Our students do well in the job market and we claim, with considerable justification, that graduates with pass degrees from Bond University typically beat graduates from elsewhere with honors degrees, as a result of the emphasis we place on communication and team skills."