



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

### **Wednesday, May 14, 2008**

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### Kindred spirits unite to protect our environment

Kyron is concerned about the State's waterways, Sharon is "always saving something", Josh wants to grow trees instead of knocking them down, Kristina loves getting her hands dirty and Jacqueline thinks seahorses and jellyfish are "cool".

Together they provide a tasty mix of ideals, backgrounds and ages, but the Australian Agricultural College Corporation (AACC) students have one common goal – to help make a better world through a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management (CALM).

This diverse quintet makes up just a slice of the many enthusiastic enrolments at the AACC Mareeba Campus where 50-year-old Sharon Lavis says age is left at the door and passion is the only prerequisite for educational success.

Originally from Gordonvale and keen to say goodbye to her admin days, Sharon said she wanted to get outdoors, to utilise her life experience and found the lure of helping animals as a career was too hard to pass up.

"In a dream world, I'd love to be in charge of a park or reserve," she admits. "And I'm very keen to educate indigenous teenagers about the land and the animals in it."

Having recently completed high school, 18-year-old Jacqueline Gould has moved from Cairns to Mareeba to learn more about protecting our marine environment and what she can do to save fragile ecosystems like the Great Barrier Reef.

She hopes to turn her training into a Bachelor of Science or Zoology degree and says the course's focus on responding to animal emergencies has been a highlight.

Kyron Richardson reckons living "in the middle of nowhere" as a young lad has forged his appreciation for the land and despite seemingly "thousands of different rural employment options" available, he knows his days in the bush have given him some clear career directions.

"The areas around my hometown still hold on to a pioneering culture," the 21-year-old said. "That's something (as an industry) we can still continue to do, but it has to be in a more sustainable way without wrecking the environment.

"Some farmers are stuck in their ways, so I hope I can enter a career where I can help influence and better educate them and I'd love to see courses like ours take a state-wide approach, so the message spreads even further."

After 20 years administering finance in the hospitality industry, Kristina Blatt was looking for a change and she's the first to admit that culling feral pigs is as far removed from accounting as she could get.

"I find the program fascinating and until starting the course I had no idea just how rampant and destructive they were," she said.

The 37-year-old says she can't get enough of the physical side of the training and said she was confident her practical experience and nationally recognised qualifications would open doors to an exciting new career in an environmentally conscious industry.

Similarly, Josh Keane says he has two very good reasons for entering a career in land management – both his brothers are already in the role.

At 23 years of age, Josh has already decided to be a part of the revegetation industry and sees his current training at the AACC as the perfect stepping-stone to one day becoming an environmental officer for the mines.

"It's something I've always wanted to do because I know we can all make a difference," he said. "There's huge satisfaction in going back to a site that was barren 10 years ago and seeing the difference revegetation has made."

For more information about conservation and land management courses or to obtain a free 2009 course guide, DVD and TASTE school holiday brochure contact the Mareeba Campus on 07 4086 3300 or visit [www.aacc.edu.au](http://www.aacc.edu.au)

**Photo Caption:**

**[Australian Agricultural College Corporation Mareeba Campus provides students with skills to care for the environment: (Left) Sharon Lavis, Kristina Blatt, Korey Richardson, Josh Keane. Jacqueline Gould absent.]**

**AACC media contact:**

**Brett Hoefler, Marketing Coordinator, Corporate Office, Australian Agricultural College Corporation 4672 3126 or 0417 717 507, email: [brett.hoefler@aacc.edu.au](mailto:brett.hoefler@aacc.edu.au)**