

Celebrating
25 YEARS
of Open Access College





Message from Principal **Julie Taylor**

Welcome. I'd like to briefly introduce our college. We've been going strong for 25 years in 2016 and I think our model is not only proven but is the vanguard for the direction education is heading. I'm delighted to lead a fantastic group of teachers who care deeply about their students.

What we do

Open Access College (OAC) provides learning experiences and a complete education to a range of students who – for a variety of reasons – cannot attend a traditional school.

Our key difference

We're sometimes labelled as 'distance education' but that doesn't really accurately describe us. Our main difference is that we offer flexible online learning. That means we offer both full-time and part-time education to students, as well as flexible delivery via online classes.

Our students

Some of our students want to study a course that isn't offered at their school, so they study it through OAC – we call these curriculum-choice students. Students from independent, public and Catholic schools can enrol. Students who do their whole study with us are our college-based students.

Our students have unique needs

Our college-based students could be with us for all kinds of unique reasons – from living overseas to travelling extensively for sport or the arts, to being in hospital or having personal issues. There are many reasons and each student is unique.

It's about learning, not technology

Our predecessors in the Correspondence School used to send out lessons by mail. As technology improved, mail gave way to the use of HF radio with School of the Air (SOTA). Now OAC uses online tools for teaching. Who knows what lies ahead? It could be holograms or virtual reality. The technology will inevitably change, but our focus will always be on student learning.

Building independent learning skills

Every one of our students develops independent learning skills, due the very nature of our teaching model. These skills are highly relevant to tertiary study and valued by employers who want workers who embrace continual learning on the job.

A first-class education

There are some doubters who think traditional schools offer a better education, but the proof is in the evidence – OAC's academic results are equal to the best education available in Australia. We have a long list of high achievers and students who have gone on to bright futures.

I warmly welcome you to enquire further about OAC.

Julie Taylor
Principal, OAC





A Personal Message
from Governing Council
Chairperson and son

A parent's perspective – Lynn Kelly

We've been at OAC since 2013, Harley started in Grade 4 and he's now in Grade 7.

We didn't fit the traditional mainstream education model. Harley's well being wasn't thriving. We needed the flexibility, the opportunity for one-on-one with the teachers, to have things explained better without classroom distractions.

Now I get to work with Harley, help him learn and see how he learns. It's been a great journey to go on together.

We're so happy with the staff and teachers. It's such a beautiful experience for us. I love that there's a very family atmosphere here. We made a lot of connections. It's the kind of atmosphere he couldn't get before at a school.

As a parent, I'm extremely pleased with OAC. It's been a very rewarding experience. I think the best word I can pick would be amazing.

The flexibility has been the best – the fact that we can have one-on-one with Harley. He gets the direct attention he needs without having to compete with a classroom of other kids, and it's about him feeling comfortable,

and the teachers and the staff help him feel comfortable.

When he is engaged and comfortable, learning flows, and that's what has been the most wonderful thing to see.

I really enjoy the times where we have Come In Days and opportunities to meet the other parents and the staff. They're amazing – there's always someone who wants to help out or give a hand.

I'm currently the Chairperson of the Governing Council. It's my way of giving back and being part of something much bigger. I enjoy it a lot, because I think OAC is unique. It has the ability to do something different, to provide opportunities for people they wouldn't otherwise have.

OAC is a wonderful, welcoming environment. We're a community – I can't think of anywhere else that would give you the support we've got here.

The teachers really know Harley, and it works so much better for him because he feels at home. For me as a parent, I see him coming out of his shell, and like any parent I really want to see my child flourish. This is the perfect environment – I love what OAC has done for both of us.

A student's perspective – Harley Kelly

OAC is fun. Bullying is quite common at regular schools, but not in this one. You don't get bullied at all, not even once. You work hard. You get to meet new people. Maybe they're in another state or country, but you still get to meet them online.

The teachers are good and kind. They don't push you too hard, but hard enough to learn.

My classmates are nice people. They're not mean or nasty – they're just kids that have gone through some of the same things I've gone through.

OAC's a very supportive school. If you need help, they'll give it to you.

25 WAYS

OAC Supports Learning

- 1 SA students living anywhere in the world are guaranteed their learning can continue with high quality programs
- 2 Players of club sports can have their learning accredited as part of the SACE
- 3 Innovative teachers connect with groups of students on-line in real time
- 4 Supporting students to continue study while pursuing their passions such as dance, drama and sport
- 5 Simultaneous pathways to work and SACE completion in vocational programs provided by our RTO

6 Rural and remote families stay together while students access the full curriculum R-12

7 Itinerant Teacher Service provides regular teacher visits to remote families

8 Access to broad SACE curriculum options enables learners to stay in their local schools

9 Access for all learners regardless of circumstance and situation – health, learning needs, distance, sexuality or bullying

10 Intercultural Language learning for over 4000 primary students across the state

11 Partnerships with schools provides a broader range of SACE and vocational options

12 Personalised learning – teachers know their students and work with them to create a safe environment for rigorous, challenging learning

13 Adults can return to complete their SACE

14 The Library is accessible from wherever students are, with resources sent to their door

15 Re-engaging young people who have left education by connecting with a significant adult who values their skills and interests



- 16 Our teachers are learners alongside of students
- 17 Middle Years community of learners creates a positive, collaborative learning environment
- 18 Alternative programs provide positive transition and learning programs for students at risk
- 19 Targeted Numeracy and Literacy programs develop skills fundamental to learning and self-confidence, with extended support for young people in need
- 20 Our youth worker connects families, students, teachers and services in support of learning transitions
- 21 Aboriginal students living anywhere can choose OAC and be supported by our Aboriginal Community Educational Officer and a personalised learning program



- 22 Counselling services for students ensure smooth transitions and appropriate learning choices
- 23 Beginning teachers work with mentors to identify and target the development of specific skills while getting ongoing feedback
- 24 Students graduate with independent learning and problem-solving skills, in demand by employers and tertiary study
- 25 International and national contributions in distance learning through the Commonwealth of Learning and the Australasian Association of Distance Education Schools.

Alumni



I'm Benjamin Maio Mackay
Graduated 2015

I completed both Year 11 and 12 at OAC, giving me a chance to work on my arts career, record interviews for my podcast, Benjamin Maio Mackay's Talk 2 Me, and produce a Fringe show. OAC's flexibility enabled me to graduate without compromising my job in the performing arts. I learned many valuable skills and there is no other schooling model where I could achieve what I did in that time.



I'm Heidi Thiel
Graduated 2010

I studied Years 11 and 12 at OAC while living in Vanuatu. I ended up getting Dux, and it hugely prepared me for university. I thought the teachers all gave 100%. They were really well prepared, passionate about their courses, and amazingly supportive, even though I was in a foreign country. I went to uni to study Paramedics, and now I have an internship with the SA Ambulance Service.



I'm Elspeth Domin
Graduated 2001

I was a student at Marryatville High School, and since they didn't have photography as a subject, I enrolled at OAC. It was fantastic. They embraced me as a student, and everyone treated you like an adult. I loved the independence. After graduating I went to RMIT to study photography, worked on my own for three years and I now run the family business.



I'm Dudley Afford
Graduated 2009

At OAC, I received a lot of help to improve my skills in communication, problem solving and appreciation of ongoing learning throughout life. I'm so appreciative of the support I got. I graduated from Flinders University's Up The Hill Project Disability Studies in 2011. In 2013 my book, *My Life on Wheels*, was published and over 1,000 copies were sold. My focus continues to be improving access for people with disabilities.

Inaugural Staff



Marg Beagley 1991 – 2007

I was appointed the founding Principal of OAC in 1991 and was Principal for 16 years. It was the most fabulous experience I ever had and I never worked so hard. We achieved a lot in terms of learning and outcomes for many students, and we earned the reputation of being the best distance education school in Australia, winning many awards. I'm very proud of what we achieved.



Darren Jones 1991 – now

I began as a teacher at OAC in 1991 – post and fax only! – and started my first senior years counselling role in 1993. Working as a counsellor at OAC has been incredibly rewarding, particularly seeing the achievements of our students, while they study with us and afterwards. Many of our students are dealing with significant personal and health issues. OAC really is an exceptional school community.



Cheryl Eden 1991 – now

When I started teaching at SOTA, for the first two weeks, I couldn't understand a thing the children were saying on the HF radio! The home visits were extraordinary – to really remote places – it was very exciting. Moving to OAC was a true privilege, and it gave me a more complete picture of distance education. It's been 25 years for me, which makes this anniversary year even more special.



Tim McLeod 1991 – 1994, 2006 – 2013

I was Principal of SOTA when we amalgamated with the Correspondence School and became OAC, and then later on I was Principal of the R-10 school. It was fantastic and a very exciting time. The strength of the community is remarkable. It was a real highlight for me to see how the families work together and I felt very supported in my role. The staff was fantastic. All round it was a great experience.



Staff 2005

Innovation in education

Teaching students from a distance has always been challenging. For this reason, there has been a strong focus at Open Access College on investigating and testing new technologies that improve the interaction and degree of feedback between teacher and student.



From Left: Students in lesson, late 1990's; Net Meeting, 2000; Students at Year 10 Curriculum Day, 2014

1991

OAC was founded. Telephone conferencing was the primary means of communication from the Marden campus.

1994

Within three years the college was trialling numerous Internet-based technologies. This raised equity issues, as not all students had access to a computer and the Internet. However with time, initiative and the provision of government funding, the college constantly improved methods of delivery and communication.

- A remote access server enabled teachers and students to share learning materials
- Email software was introduced

1997

- Initial trials of internet conferencing software (Microsoft NetMeeting) proved successful

2000

- The first OAC website was developed
- The interactive whiteboard (Microsoft NetMeeting) was regularly used in teleconferences for secondary Maths, Chemistry and Physics
- Increasing use of email to exchange assessment material with secondary students



2001

- School of the Air use of HF radio was superseded by Internet delivery of lessons through Centra Symposium—a virtual classroom providing a whiteboard and breakout rooms for student group work
- R-10 students became involved in global on-line projects
- Materials for teaching Indonesian, ESL, Science, Legal Studies and Information Processing were produced on CD-ROM by the Materials Unit

2002 – 2003

- Teachers in the Senior Secondary School began using an Internet-based learner management system (WebCT followed by Janison) to provide students with additional resources and online activities
- OAC became the first distance education school in Australia to dispense with HF radio

2009

- All senior level subject websites were moved into the Learner Management System, Moodle

2010

- The first year students were provided with computers and where needed subsidised broadband access
- The iPad program was introduced

2012

- WebEx video conferencing proved successful and became the principle synchronous teaching platform
- Daymap went live to parents, providing access to student tasks and assessment results as well as absences

2013

- All course materials now available online

2014 to 2016

- The introduction of teacher professional learning communities has shifted the focus from technology as innovation to technology as the tool for innovation in teaching.
- A strong focus on Flipping the Learning, by using technology to provide students with the content before the lessons and opportunities in lesson to deepen their understanding through using their new knowledge collaboratively in new contexts. Technology, such as Google Drive and WebEx creates an environment where feedback is immediate, relevant and specific; teacher to student; student to teacher, and student to student.

2016 and beyond

Open Access students connecting with their teachers and co-learners in real time. Will they be able to teleport themselves for learning to the place and the time of the learning at hand? Will it be as if they are all in the same room at the same time even when they are 1000's of kilometres away in different time zones. Will they see, hear and feel each other's creations that they then share with the world?



Equitable Access for All

The vision of the South Australian Open Access Education Plan – to achieve a future in which all students, regardless of their location, can choose from the full range of subjects – is still as relevant in 2016 as it was in 1991.

In 1991, the key mandate of Open Access College was equitable access to education for all. There were specific references to students who were geographically isolated or who could not access the full range of subjects, including languages and students with special needs.

The Department was committed to harnessing the best of new technologies to bring maximum benefits for students. Open access education combined new approaches to learning with traditional face-to-face teaching, correspondence and School of the Air methods of teaching.





This gave all students, whether in the city or the country, complete flexibility in their studies.

In the years since its founding in 1991, OAC has continued to expand and enhance equitable learning options.

OAC established partnerships with secondary schools to ensure that senior years students had access to the full range of SACE subjects. While most students would access only one or two subjects, there were many others who undertook their entire SACE online.

Access to language learning for primary age students has been an entitlement with limited access. In 2012, the Language Partnership Program made it possible for whole class groups of students in schools to access language learning online in real time – in Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Spanish.

Equitable access to affordable and efficient technologies has been enabled through strategies including satellite communication and providing laptops for all full time students. Teaching groups of students in real time has been enabled by improved internet services.

Aboriginal students are able to select from the full range of college programs and are supported by an Aboriginal Community Education Officer who works with families in supporting student learning.

“At OAC our Aboriginal students come from all over South Australia. We have a lot of families who move, and OAC works very well for indigenous families while they are travelling,” said Mic Bradshaw, Aboriginal Community Education Officer.

The college provides learning and transition programs for students with special learning needs.

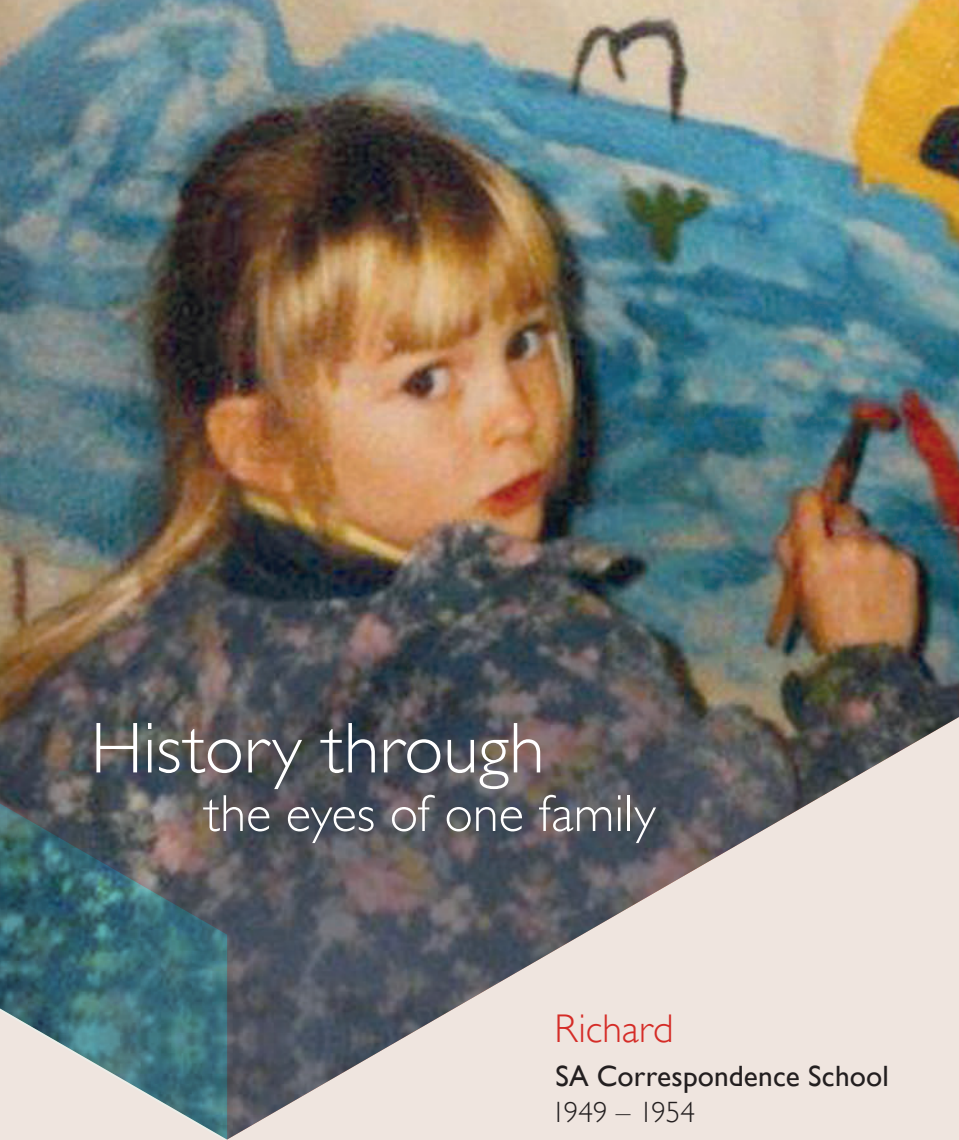
The Community Studies Access in Adelaide project that Dudley Afford completed as part of his SACE in 2009 led to big things. It saw him awarded the National Disability Rights Young Leader Award in Parliament House. Dudley identified areas across Adelaide where mobility was limited and access needed improving for people like himself who use a wheelchair for mobility.

Dudley went on to study at Flinders University and graduated in 2011. In 2013, his book, *My Life on Wheels*, was published and sold over 1,000 copies. It is now a recommended text for students in Disability Studies at Flinders.

“My focus continues to be improving access for people with disabilities. I have initiated the installation of ramps at the local shopping centre and improvements in the surrounding footpaths,” Dudley said.

Through its commitment to equitable access to education, OAC is a strong supporter of social justice, building a better community for us all.

Opposite: School of the Air student at home; This page: cover of Dudley Afford’s book *My Life on Wheels*



History through the eyes of one family

Clockwise from left: Frances doing school work, 1986; Todd in his schoolroom at Holowiliena, 2015; SOTA School Camp, 1980s.

Richard

SA Correspondence School

1949 – 1954

School was pretty different for us back then. We didn't have a telephone until 1949, and lots of stations didn't have HF radio reception at times.

There were no visits or get-togethers that I recall, but I felt we were well taught, entirely by correspondence. It was an all-mail service in those days.

This family's association with distance education in South Australia goes back to the original Correspondence School and spans 68 years across three generations.

Living on Holowiliena Station in the beautiful Flinders Ranges, Richard's lessons were posted out to him. His daughter, Frances became a School of the Air student using HF radio, and her son Todd is the latest generation, now studying online with SOTA at OAC.

There have been many changes since then, and thank heavens for that. Computers and modern technology are making a big difference, and I've got to admit the modern generation are not as frightened of computers as me. If I have to reply to an email, I'll ring the person up instead. My grandson Todd knows a hell of a lot more about computers than I'll ever know!

Frances

School of the Air /
Open Access College

1986 – 1991

My fondest memory was my privilege to be one of the students who got to trial the radio and the computer side by side. That was the start of where we are today and how we got here.

When we were looking at the screen, we saw a whole lot of dots and dashes while the modem was 'dialling up' with that unmistakable electronic sound. We'd say on the radio, "Here you go, Mrs Eden, I'm typing you a message, you wait for it," and then she would hear that sound and then finally she would say, "Great, Frances, I've just seen it, it's coming through now."

It used to take an hour and half to send and receive an email. It was very slow compared to today!

Over the years I also worked as a governess, and I've seen Centra evolve to where the children can build a pile of blocks on the floor and show the teacher on the webcam. It's amazing that the kids can now see each other across the outback. There's a lot to be excited about for the future.

Todd

School of the Air /
Open Access College

2015 – (age 6)

One of the things I like about Centra is being able to cooperate with my classmate, Mason. We both wanted to do the same thing my teacher, Miss Riddiford asked us to do, which was to draw a spider, and I got my hand up first to do it, but Mason wanted to do it, and he was cross.

So I said, "You draw the spider, Mason, and I'll draw the habitat." I drew some spider webs in a tree on Centra, and Mason drew the spider's body.

We got to work on it together, and I liked that.



In another 25 years...

“

I see OAC as being the future of education. I think more and more students will want to be learning independently. Collaborating online is already happening in the workforce. I think there's a lot of scope for OAC to lead the way with a blend of face-to-face and virtual online learning.

Julie Taylor, Principal

I think OAC will be fully digital, in the sky (literally), able to be used without internet, taught by cyborg teachers and linked with a chip in our brains.

Riley Duffield, student

In the future OAC could improve their technology even further so that lessons could all be delivered off an iPad or an iPhone.

Courtney Dolphin, ex-student

I'd like to think that the internet in rural areas would be ten-fold on what it is now – two-way satellite would be fantastic to see.

Sarah Parker, parent

The technology would be much more advanced. Who knows? We might be doing WebEx over holograms!

Amina, student

I'd like to see the numbers of students boosted, and get the message out there that they can get the best education there is through the OAC community. The advances in technology are huge, just in my time.

Petey Moore, ex-student / parent

Students having a live lesson anywhere and on any device where they can physically raise their hands and the teacher notices.

Duncan Kipngetich, student

Who really knows what future technologies might be – we might have a virtual classroom space, a virtual reality that we do our lessons in.

Patrick Morgan, ex-student

In the future I reckon it's going to be all video cameras, so everyone can see each other in every class all the time, and the internet will allow us to be more interactive.

Charlie Oldfield, student

Our processes will continue to take advantage of the technology as it evolves. I can't see us ever going back to posting out books in a box again.

Dennis Shriner, teacher

In 25 years OAC will be accessed on Mars using a space Wi-Fi system. There will be colonies on mars from Russia, China and USA.

Mackenzie Gow, student

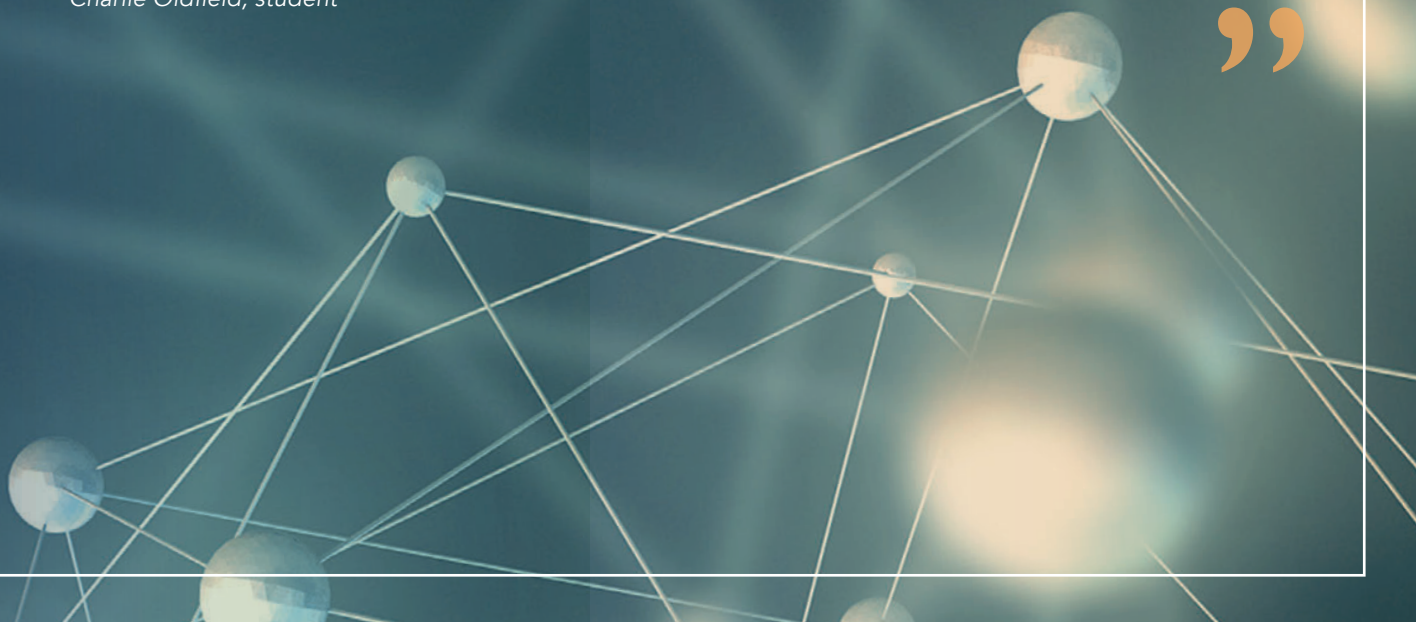
Who knows, anything's possible – in the future teachers might be able to 'pop up' in classrooms across the outback to see how things are going.

Virginia Chambers, teacher

In 25 years face-to-face school will be phased out and everyone will be learning through OAC with even more advanced technology!

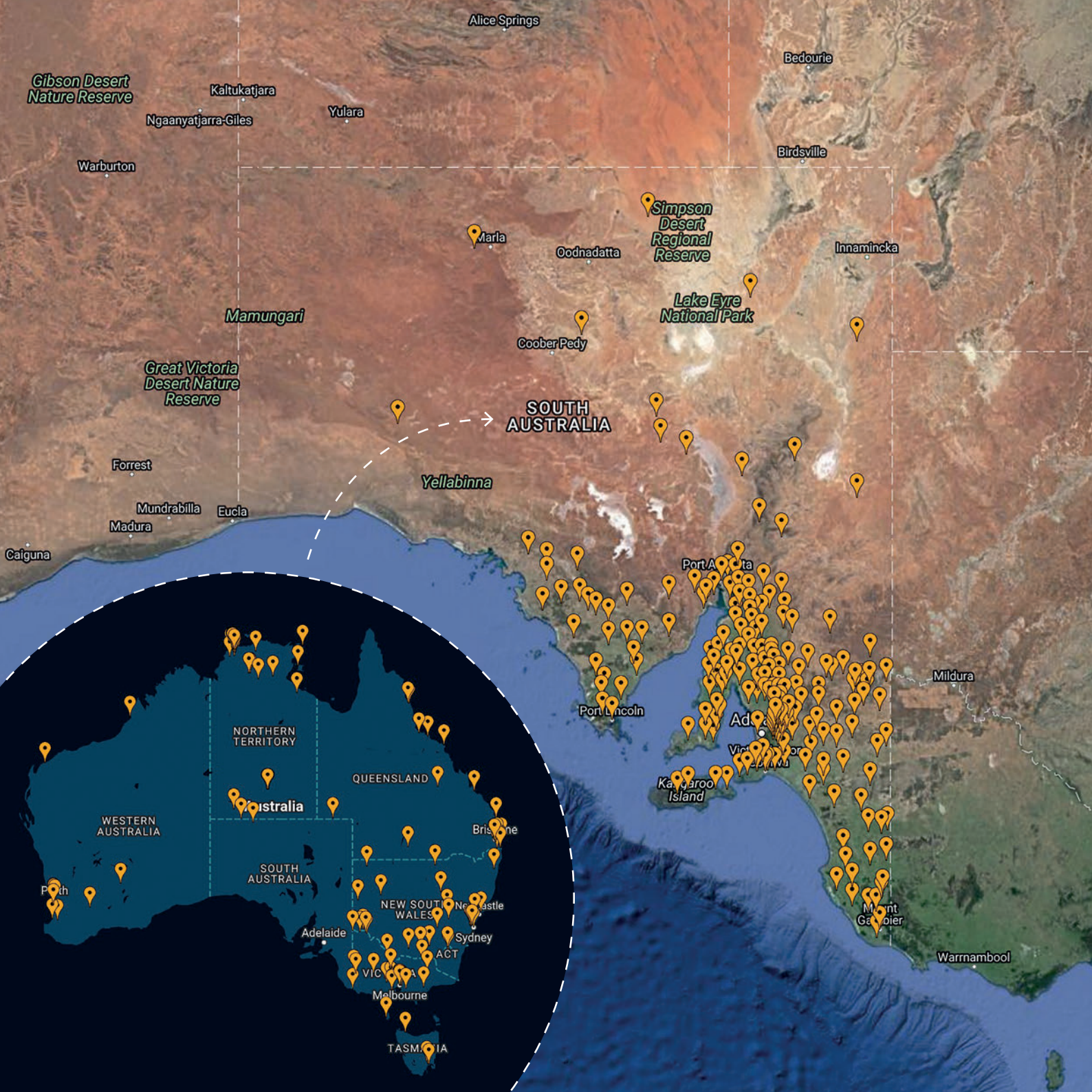
Tahlia, student

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Our Students
Access Learning...



Timeline

of Open Access College

1920 to 1991

In 1920 the Correspondence School was established in Adelaide to provide education to students living in remote South Australia.

Lessons were posted out to families and work was returned to teachers via mail. It could take weeks for a student to have their work returned.

South Australian Correspondence School communicated with students via mail and person-to-person interaction through radio or telephone.

In 1958 the first School of the Air lessons were officially broadcast on UHF radio from the newly established Port Augusta School of the Air.



1991 to 1996

Open Access College (OAC) was established in 1991 through the amalgamation of the Correspondence School and Port Augusta School of the Air (SOTA).

The College opened a new campus at Marden in Adelaide incorporating the R-10 school of Distance Education, a new Senior Secondary School of Distance Education, Access Media Materials Unit, Outreach Education Services and the Anangu and Aboriginal Schools Unit. Marg Beagley was appointed inaugural Principal of the College.

With the opening of the new College came a new vision that ensured all South Australian students regardless of circumstance would have access to quality education.

Improving technologies created new opportunities. Telephone conferencing remained the primary means of communication from the Marden campus, although trials began with a number of computer technologies, including synchronous internet delivery.



1996 to 2001

In 1997 the College received a number of awards recognising excellent practice in the use of technology in Distance Education.

In 1999 several events highlighted the equity role of the College. Two SOTA students appeared on Sesame Street, showing the world what life is like in the remote outback. A group of teachers visited the Anangu lands, working with students and community.

OAC, in partnership with Marden Senior College, became one of only four school-based Registered Training Organisations (RTO), providing flexible access to vocational education and training.

The interactive whiteboard (Microsoft NetMeeting) was regularly used in teleconferences for secondary Maths, Chemistry and Physics. There was also increasing use of email.

Top left: School of the Air, 1986;
Above: Home schoolroom, 1994.





Synchronous Lesson, 2001

2001 to 2006

The advent of the new century was marked by significant changes to how the College operated, with an uptake of innovations in technology, the world-wide-web and email. There was a gradual move to make learning materials available on-line using a learner management system.

Synchronous on-line lessons were gradually replacing teleconferences in the Senior school.

UHF radio was turned off for the last time in 2003, and was replaced with Centra Symposium.

The Learning Assistance program was introduced, having volunteers support student learning with a phone call each week.

National and international partnerships were strengthened with conferences and study tours.

2006 to 2011

Julie Taylor was appointed Principal in 2007 at a time of significant reform.

The Education Department closed the materials unit, Access Media in 2008. Teachers were now in control of the learning materials for their specific students and all secondary resources were available online in 2009.

Open Access College became one school with two campuses by merging the organisation, resources and staffing of R-10, Senior Secondary and School of the Air.

Middle Years programs were introduced in 2010 with groups of students taught by teams of teachers.

School of the Air celebrated its 50th anniversary and marked the 30th anniversary of the Itinerant Teacher Service.

2011 to now

2011 saw the introduction of a whole class Asian language teaching model, which was gradually expanded to R-7 language programs in Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Spanish. The program provided access to language learning for students in rural and small schools, and by 2016 included over 50 schools and 4000 students.

OAC was recognised as a Flexible Learning Options service provider in partnership with DECD.

OAC became a Music Focus School in 2016.

The college introduced a number of alternative programs to support students who have gaps in their learning, specific learning needs or are disconnected from learning.

The future holds great promise...



From top: Japanese, 2015;
Music, 2016.

Current Students

talk about studying with OAC

Joel Paschke

I've lived most of my life in Vanuatu in the South Pacific. I like playing sports, spending time with friends, reading novels and watching movies. I enrolled in OAC in Year 6 so I could be a part of the Australian curriculum and go on to achieve my SACE. All of my teachers at OAC have been extremely helpful and also very accommodating with any problems from being overseas.

McKeely Kuhl

I've suffered from extremely bad anxiety for the last three years and I've never felt better since enrolling at OAC. The teachers are amazing and will always make sure you know what you are doing. They're always there to help and make you feel very welcome. I'm hoping after I've graduated I'll be able to have my dream job and complete all my life goals.

Max Hunt

I grew up on a sheep and cattle station north of Port Augusta. I'm a member of Port Pirie Youth Theatre and the Southern Flinders Players. I play trumpet in the Port Augusta Concert Band and I love archery. I've been with OAC since I was five, starting at School of the Air. I've had some really great teachers who took the trouble to get to know me and inspired me to learn. Studying through Open Access College has allowed my family and me the flexibility to be able to travel overseas and for me to engage in music, science and art activities outside of weekly lessons and course work.

Emily Robson

I'm a cheerleader and have been for four years. Being with OAC has been very good for me, my grades have boosted up and I'm doing much better now. Next year I'm thinking of staying with OAC.

Fil Kowalski

Since enrolling I have been allowed to make greater use of computers, to overcome my problems with handwriting and other issues. Because of my advancement during my time in OAC, I've been looking towards a career in the IT Industry.

Brandon Kent

I originate from a home-schooling environment and actively serve my local community. I enjoy learning new things and strive to achieve the best results possible. OAC has provided a comfortable learning environment for me as well as helping me to achieve my goals. My future ambition is to become a cardiovascular surgeon and help society.

Evolution of the Open Access College logo

1991 – 2001



2001 – 2012



2012 – present



Open Access College welcomes all enquiries. Please call 8309 3500.

www.openaccess.edu.au

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For My Friends of School of the Air

Across the wide and sunlit land
With frosty mornings glistening
The air is full of happy talk.
Are wedgetail eagles listening?

For me it's such a pleasant time,
The very best of choices,
Enjoying every word and rhyme
And all your lively voices.

For words are such important things,
They laugh and leap and cry.
They scold, they plead, they shout, they sing
They're always asking why.

When using words you'll often find
As you invent your themes,
That words paint pictures in your mind
And lead you to your dreams.

So let them fly across the land
And not a moment spare
And many things we'll understand
Dear children of the air.

Though we seem far, yet we are near.
It's such fun to be meeting,
To you up there, from me down here
Here comes a happy greeting.

Max Fatchen
Book Week 1997

