

## The Smooth Path to the Rocky Road

By Scott Adamson, Cam Fletcher, and Heather Fletcher

One of the goals of Student Life's recent strategic plan in Australia is for established campus teams to be adopting one or two other campuses, with the goal of resourcing them catalytically. It's easy to see how this can help us in reaching our scope of having a movement on every campus in Australia, but what benefit does it have for the campus that does the adopting?

We think it is really important to be giving students a vision broader than their own campus. Even though a movement may be a long way from reaching every student on their own campus, it's not always easy for students in a happening movement to see that. However, if they can take a trip to a new campus, where Student Life doesn't have a presence, it's immediately obvious that there is a need.

### A Case Study: Rocky and Toowoomba

Student Life launched on the Rockhampton campus of Central Queensland University (CQU) at the start of 2008, after two guys came to MYC the year before. The plan was that Cam would be phone coaching their first Key Volunteer (KV), Dan. Rockhampton, affectionately known as "Rocky", is



nine hours drive north of Cam who is in Toowoomba. Cam hoped to be able to visit a couple of times a year, but as it has turned out, due to his health limitations and other commitments, has never made it up there yet.

But it is Cam's students at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) in Toowoomba who have taken on the challenge of supporting the fledgling movement at Rocky. They got to know Dan at a summer project at the end of 2007, and

committed to coming on a road trip to provide people-power for the start of semester 2 of 2008. And while Cam has continued as their official phone coach, it's been those USQ students, especially KVs such as Aaron, who've provided so much more – through chatting on MSN long into the night, phone calls, Facebook, and prayer. They've continued to meet at Connexions and Mid-Year Conference, and then at the end of the year on the Byron Bay summer project. Then in 2008, instead of Dan being the lone Rocky representative, there were four others with him! The relationship just keeps getting stronger.

### Benefits to USQ

The lurking fear was that adoption would drain resources or somehow detract from the adopting campus. The USQ/Rocky experiment has shown that the opposite is true.

The outstanding benefit to USQ was that adoption promoted outward focus. This will hopefully have a knock-on affect in promoting evangelism. Outward focus turns out to be crucial in the fight against the "shadow mission" of becoming just a fellowship group.

*"USQ prides itself on its community. But we were becoming inward focused and didn't spend time getting to know other people. We were in danger of becoming a holy huddle. Some people from other campuses were scared that we were too closed. Adoption showed us that we don't want to be stuck in on our own. It built relationships, which helped us be more outward focused."*

- Aaron, KV at USQ

The other great benefit is the formation of friendships. Aaron and Dan have a blossoming bro-mance (close, non-sexual, man-to-man bond). Their mateship has sustained them through relationship's and life's ups and downs. They refer to themselves as the *Northern Knights*, as they are both seeking to join Student Life as full-time missionaries, with the aim of forming a north Queensland team. A couple of sweet, Christ-centred, cross-campus romances have sprung up as well.

## Benefits to Rocky

Rocky received vital prayer, encouragement, coaching, support, resources, people power and friendship. Dan will be quick to tell you that the warmth and acceptance of the USQ community got him through some tough times when he was tempted to give up. For a long time, he was the only KV, and had great difficulty finding any other Potential Key Volunteers to join him.

*“I felt a lot less alone and like maybe it wasn’t all worthless ‘cos someone besides me believed it was a work of God. USQ’s inclusiveness, friendship, and Christian community was the best thing they offered to us. Their advice and prayers were awesome and irreplaceable.*

*The official adoption process never really took place...it was more a concept that Aaron and I thrashed out during our long talks late into the night and that only came after we had become good friends through sharing our experiences and helping each other through life crap. Eventually it grew into something almost...alive!”*

- Dan, KV at Rocky

It pours sunshine into missionaries’ hearts to hear that Dan and Aaron believe that adoption was their idea – that’s ownership!

There has been some touching reciprocity between Rocky and USQ. When Summer Projects (SP) time came around in 2008, some of the USQ students had trouble raising all the finances to go. The Rocky team raised all theirs and more. They gave over \$600 to help the USQ students get to SP.



**Can you spot the difference? Nor can they. USQ and Rocky students blend beautifully at a Summer Project.**

## Adoption Catches On

Perhaps not surprisingly, the adoption idea is catching on catalytically. Rocky has visited CQU Bundaberg (about 4 hours south) and is praying and continuing to look for a potential Key Volunteer there. In an unusual twist, Rocky has also just decided to adopt the Melbourne campus of CQU which is 2000 kilometres or 17 days walk south! This came about from USQ’s road trip when they set about trying to unearth interested Christians for the Rocky group. The very first person the USQers spoke to was an international student called Frederic. He was very excited and got connected in to the Student Life group straight away. Then the university axed his degree and he had to transfer to Melbourne to complete his studies. He went with the blessing and encouragement of Rocky to start a Student Life group way down south.

Other USQers have caught the vision too and have made forays towards adopting Gatton (45 mins east) and two campuses in Brisbane which is two hours east. (There are even the first signs of more cross campus bro-mances.)

Where will it all end?

