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# Survey

## The Great Reader Survey

**W**hen the last reader survey form dribbled into the office on 8 November, we found we had 492 of those yellow sheets, representing over 1,000 readers. Thanks to all those of you who spent time conscientiously filling in all those little boxes to tell us what you think of *The Australian Christian*. We then spent days meticulously keying in all your opinions into our trusty Macintosh computer, and here's what we found out.

"Although I do not agree with everything printed I would miss it if it ceased to arrive. Keep up the good work."

### You

We found out that there is an average of two readers per subscription and that 81% of copies are read by one or two people. 57% of you are women, and (naturally) 43% of you are men. Your average age is 49. (The average Australian adult is 42.) A quarter of you are under 40, and 40% are over 60.

"I read every written word."

One-third of you are pensioners or retired, nearly a quarter are full-time domestic managers, and 6% are students. Of the remainder most describe yourselves as "professional" but we also have a sizeable number of businesspersons. Almost half of you have a position of leadership in the local church.

"It would be a sad life if I had to live without it. I look forward to its inspirational messages, challenges, awareness of other people who think differently to me, what other churches do (maybe try some of their ideas) and hopefully read about so many of my friends in other church news."

### What You Read

The most read section of the magazine is "Letters to the Editor", closely followed by "Letters from Tertius". Others in the top ten are, in order, church news, the guest

editorial, news, "The Last Word", cartoons, "Growing Spiritually", comment articles and articles about people. The media review and poetry are the only sections not read often by a majority of readers. All other articles have strong readership. Of course, many of you read the Christian from cover to cover.

"'The Last Word' is embarrassingly comy."

### What You Think

We were overwhelmed by your praise—at least a third of all returns contained encouraging words. By far the most common comment was "Keep up the good work." Many liked the new format this year and the present content. But, when it comes to your opinions on various sections of the magazine we found that for every comment there was an equal and opposite

"Congratulations on conducting this survey. I hope it results in 'The Last Word' being dropped right off."

comment. For example, half a dozen people liked the photographs, but another half dozen thought they were poor. For everyone who suggested we spend more and go up market to a glossy magazine there was someone who felt any changes that increased the price would make it too expen-

"I often tell people what a good paper it is."

sive to buy. Some thought we should be more controversial, others that we should not be controversial at all. As one reader correctly put it, "You can't please everybody!"

"The present format is good—it covers a variety of individual tastes—it allows for a complete reading or a 'supermarket' selection with the 'shelves' well labelled."

### Your Comments

Cartoons and jokes are very popular with our younger readers (and with many of the oldies as well!) but a number of our readers dislike them. The Pontius' Puddle

"I am rather a one-eyed Victorian as regards church news."

"More about Sydney churches, please."

cartoon divides the readership into three almost equal groups—one of which loves it, another which hates it, and the rest. And, although "Letters to the Editor" is the most read section of the paper, nothing upsets our readers more—many found the letters too negative, too controversial, too trivial, too low a standard, too biased and in need of censorship. "Ministers' Work-

"The 'Happenings' section must stay."

shop" was liked by its target audience, "Happenings" came in for much praise (and much abuse) and the Pamphlet Club was well liked. Church news received a fair bit of comment, many saying there should be more of them, while others complained that some churches were never there. Even advertisements came in for criticism: one reader suggesting there be a new photo of a certain pest controller!

"I like it the way it is. I have been a constant reader since 1914 and have seen many changes in the format."

### Where You Live

A number of readers commented on what they saw as a Victorian-South Australian bias in the Christian. Both the returns and our mailings confirm that 6 out of 10 readers come from these two states. We received returns from readers in NSW and the ACT (18%), Qld (8%), WA (7%), Tas (3%), NT (1%) and we even had four readers reply from overseas, as well as Vic

# Survey

(41%) and SA (21%). Based on church membership we are under-represented in Queensland and WA and well represented in Victoria and Tasmania.

"It keeps me in touch with many people we have known over the years."

## Your Ideas

We received lots of ideas for the Christian. Many of you suggested more theological and more biblical articles, others suggested special sections for children and youth, and some of you want more articles on social issues. The kind of articles you want reflects your interests of course, and we are working our way through the list to see what we can introduce.

"Unfortunately you seem to lack appeal to the ordinary C of C member. I'm not sure why. Your job isn't an easy one but with our Lord's enabling I'm sure you'll continue to promote and expand the exchange of information and ideas between our churches."

And many thanks to the reader from the ACT who suggested that I deserve a raise, but the Editor hasn't agreed to this idea yet.  
—Geoff Alves

"'Letters from Tertius' seem to always hit the nail on the head and that makes it good to know concerns are shared."

"Keeps me in touch with my 'roots' and what is happening in another country than where I now live."

—Canadian reader

"Mostly the 'AC' is too 'in house'—C of C people, over 55, in the 'in Brotherhood' crowd. This does not reflect the people who attend this church."

"There is not much down-to-earth practical teaching now in the Christian, but rather controversial opinions are aired in a style confused by academic and political jargon."

"When I have time I read from cover to cover. However, most times unfortunately the next issue arrives before I've finished."

"I find it helpful, stimulating, occasionally controversial but never dull. I like the 'freshness' of opening each issue."

"Everything stops until I have read it from cover to cover. It keeps me sane."

"Keep up the good work."

# Reader Survey

To help us improve The Australian Christian would you spend a little time to complete this questionnaire?

1.

Who reads this copy of The Australian Christian?

Reader 1 (the subscriber)

Reader 2

Reader 3

| Sex | Age                      |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|     | under 10                 | 10-19                    | 20-29                    | 30-39                    | 40-49                    | 50-59                    | 60-69                    | 70-79                    |
| M   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F   | <input type="checkbox"/> |