

**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

Changing the future

Sustainability Report 2023





Acknowledgement of Country



Victoria University acknowledges, recognises and respects the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung of the Kulin who are the traditional owners of University land in Victoria, the Gadigal and Guring-gai of the Eora Nation who are the traditional owners of University land in Sydney, and the Yugara/Yugarapul people and Turrbal people living in Meanjin (Brisbane).

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Vice-Chancellor's statement



Professor Adam Shoemaker at VU's Community Tree Planting Day.

At Victoria University, our Strategic Plan has a core principle that resonates deeply as we reflect on our sustainability achievements in 2023 – we are a partnering institution, we cannot do it alone.

With this collaborative spirit, we embraced our responsibilities toward sustainability and Protecting Country, and 2023 truly exemplified the transformative power of partnership for positive change.

VU proudly became the sole university to establish a five-year strategic partnership with Our Watch, committing to a comprehensive, institution-wide approach to end gender-based violence in all its forms. This initiative holds great significance for our community and promises to create lasting impact well beyond our campuses.

We renewed and elevated our partnership with Greater Western Water to a major five-year alliance, focusing on joint community outreach programs and addressing the water challenges faced by First Nations communities. An incredibly important joint initiative that is place-based but can take our knowledge to the world.

We also saw our partnerships work in surprising and inspiring ways – our partners PEXA, a technology company, joined VU volunteers at our annual tree planting day on our Werribee Campus. Together, staff, students, and industry partners planted 5,000 trees, enhancing the tree canopy coverage in Melbourne's west, mitigating urban heat, filtering pollution, and fostering biodiversity.

These examples illustrate how partnering for good is a powerful way to tackle the biggest of challenges. I look forward to seeing what we can achieve – together.

Professor Adam Shoemaker
Vice-Chancellor and President

2023 Sustainability highlights



First generation student success:

90.2%
Higher Education

90.4%
Vocational Education



VU Skills and Jobs Centres supported:

- ◆ **2,099** individuals by providing a range of career-related services
- ◆ **75** job-readiness workshops
- ◆ Apprenticeship/Traineeship assistance to a total of **379** individuals
- ◆ Accessible services for **1,033** 'Youth' clients and **1,061** culturally diverse community members
- ◆ **211** engagements with industry representatives, primarily employers seeking employees, including Apprentices

#1 in Victoria
for Learning Engagement
– 2022 QILT Student Experience Survey



Over **250**
policy citations
of VU research across
UN Sustainable Development Goal areas



46% of VU students starting a degree are 'first generation' (first in family) to attend university



Launch of Cultural Inclusion and Racial Equality Plan 2023 – 2026 – **Brilliant Together** Co-designed by staff and students in VU's Cultural Inclusion Network



Moondani Balluk at VU designed a culturally relevant Memorandum of Understanding for research with our Aboriginal community partners



#1 in Australia for Technical Skills – 2022 QILT Employer Satisfaction Survey



VU officially opened **VU Brisbane** a new flagship campus in partnership with the Education Centre of Australia (ECA)



New partnership with **AVENU** Learning offers innovative online courses to students in India



VU recognised with **4** Platinum awards at the LearnX Summit and Awards Show

Our global Times Higher Education (THE) 2024 impact rankings



SCORE
67.4 out of 100
RANK
401-600 out of 1498 institutions



SCORE
68.0 out of 100
RANK
201-300 out of 1681 institutions



SCORE
84.6 out of 100
RANK
19 out of 867 institutions



SCORE
81.8 out of 100
RANK
38 out of 1108 institutions



SCORE
75.3 out of 100
RANK
101-200 out of 825 institutions



SCORE
71.5 out of 100
RANK
73 out of 924 institutions



SCORE
73.8 out of 100
RANK
101-200 out of 1086 institutions



SCORE
92.2 out of 100
RANK
60 out of 2031 institutions

Our strategic commitment to sustainability

Our Purpose

VU emboldens its people to design their future and has a deep commitment to protecting Country.

High-Level Objective

By 2028, VU will be respected globally for the excellence of its Indigenous-led cultural, social, and climate solutions.

Our Vision

To be a global leader in dual-sector learning and research by 2028.

Strategic Drivers

To achieve our vision, VU has identified five strategic drivers.



How will we do this?

An unwavering commitment to progressive inclusivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure every facet of the institution reflects our commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and intersectionality. Demonstrate and celebrate values-led leadership.
Indigenous achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in tandem with communities, government, and Indigenous organisations to support and challenge the Treaty and Truth process throughout Victoria.
Student-centric values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make decisions with students, for students, and informed by students.
Philanthropy goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow a thriving culture of philanthropy across staff, individual donors, social and corporate partners. Adopt an ambitious goal to considerably extend philanthropic support of our courses, offers, and research enterprises.
Sustainability practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the results of our decisions are in favour of planetary health at every opportunity.



Protecting Country

Protecting Country is about people, place, and planet.

We have a responsibility to respect and listen to First Nations voices and standpoints and, in all that we do, improve the health and wellbeing of the planet we share. Every decision we make is underpinned by a commitment to Protecting Country. Country is both a place of belonging and a way of believing, as well as contributing to the conservation of critical environmental and diverse cultural assets.

It is a community-driven movement towards long-term social, cultural, physical and economic prosperity and sustainability.

We honour our deep diversity as a foundation for collaboration and social progress. This is central to our Protecting Country commitment.

Moondani Balluk and Indigenous achievement



Pelargonium - a tuberous root plant that was used by Aboriginal people.

VicHealth & ancestral dietary practices and place-making

Victoria University (VU) researchers received a VicHealth grant to investigate Aboriginal Australian dietary practices and place-making in public health equity.

This two-year project, led by Dr Kristina Vingrys together with VU's Indigenous Academic Unit Moondani Balluk, hopes to uncover ancestral Aboriginal knowledge about the 'deadly tucker' and Aboriginal food practices that can be used by the Aboriginal community today.

"The project aims to support Aboriginal people and Country, to strengthen social and emotional wellbeing, inter-cultural understanding, skills and knowledge to support sustainable, healthy food systems, and reduce health inequities currently experienced by Aboriginal Australians in Victoria," Dr Vingrys said.

The multidisciplinary project involves Aboriginal community and researchers, with research expertise also from dietitians, community psychology, sociology, and ecology teams.

"We hope to also gather information through lived experiences – we want

to uncover the lost knowledge about traditional foods that were grown in the Kulin Nation and the practices around growing, harvesting and preparing them," Dr Vingrys explained.

"We are also really interested in identifying the potential nutritional benefits that might have been prescribed to those consuming these foods."

The first step of the project involves identifying which edible plants are significant to Kulin Nation and to search what is already known about them.

Moondani Balluk Executive Director Karen Jackson said: "Once the knowledge has been gathered, it will be protected and used by, and for, the local Aboriginal community for cultural healing and place-making to support their social and emotional wellbeing."

The project collaborators include Kolling wada-ngal Aboriginal Corporation, Djirra, Aboriginal Wellness Foundation, Nutrition Australia's Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Western Public Health Unit, The Cairnlea Conservation Reserves Committee of Management (CCRCoM), and the Community Identity and Displacement Research Network (CIDRN).



Moondani Balluk and Indigenous achievement

Regenerative City Living Lab

The Living Lab is a circular, regenerative precinct that emphasises innovation in planetary health. It leverages regenerative food systems to innovatively grow ways of belonging, nourishing, learning and thriving.

Working with award winning social enterprise, STREAT, this project includes a series of projects and initiatives that engage VU students and young people in new ways of learning to equip them with the skills to become future innovators and empowered to contribute to environmental action and change.

A significant achievement throughout 2023 was the co-design and installation of an edible and Indigenous community garden in the centre of VU's Footscray Park Campus.



Moondani Balluk Executive Director, Karen Jackson, in the new garden.



Creating a culturally safe space: the Moondani Balluk garden

Located on the unceded and contested lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples, a new garden adjoins and extends the Moondani Balluk Centre, flowing beyond the walls of the building to create a welcoming place for Aboriginal staff, students, community groups, and Traditional Owners to connect, collaborate, and host gatherings.

Previously a concrete and synthetic grass courtyard, it's now a place where ancestral knowledge can be shared and recorded, through conversations, workshops, and research projects.

Yorta Yorta woman Karen Jackson, Executive Director of Moondani Balluk, told us:

“One of the things that is really important to me is how Moondani Balluk worked collaboratively with Realm Studios to understand the landscape as it was, before the space was colonised.

I want to acknowledge the ancestral knowledge that was shared with us in good faith. This knowledge is held with the

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and also the Boon Wurrung peoples.”

The garden is scaffolded by Indigenous trees, grasses, boulders and bluestone, and features a yarning circle and fire pit at its centre. During rain events, water moves freely through the vegetation and generates an ecology that is reminiscent of ecosystems that once occurred on Country, on volcanic plains at the edge of the Maribyrnong River.

The top of the garden is lined with She-oak trees, whose needles make a whistling sound in the wind; and, as conversations and shared stories in the garden reveal, have held traditional usages for Aboriginal people for thousands of years.

Watkin McLennan, associate at Realm Studios explained that the garden, unlike many other urban landscapes, “...is not on life support; it doesn't require irrigation.”

This landscape represents escarpment, and floodplains, and the plants that were here on Country. This landscape is about relationships: relationships with the University, with students, with plants and animals. Over time we hope that those relationships will grow and become stronger and people who are interacting here can build those relationships.





Photo: First People's Assembly.

Public lecture series: Moondani Balluk and the Community, Identity and Displacement Research Network (CIDRN)

Moondani Balluk and the Community, Identity and Displacement Research Network (CIDRN) presents an annual series of seminars open to VU students and staff, and the community. The 2023 mid-year seminar 'Voice Treaty Truth' was provided by Alister Thorpe from the Gunai, Yorta Yorta, Gunditjmarra, and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung nations. Alister is the Alma Thorpe Senior Research Fellow at Moondani Balluk, VU, and an elected member of the First People's Assembly of Victoria.

Alister discussed that since the 1930s, Indigenous political activists in Australia have tirelessly campaigned for their rights. In the current political climate there is a national discussion about Indigenous

representation, treaties, and truth telling processes. In Victoria, a series of community forums, working groups, and commissions contributed to the legislative reform required to advance potential treaty discussions. In 2019 the inaugural First Peoples Assembly of Victoria (FPAV) was established to develop a treaty negotiation framework with the State Government of Victoria. This democratically elected representative body has advanced pathways for treaties between First Nations and the State of Victoria and led the establishment of the Yoorrook (truth) Justice Commission. These substantial achievements create an environment that empowers First Nations to negotiate treaties, uphold their sovereignty, recognise their inherent rights to lands and waters, and hold Governments accountable for past injustices. The outcomes in Victoria demonstrate the benefits of a rights-based approach supporting self-determination that provide important learnings for other jurisdictions.



Progressive inclusivity

Respecting & affirming identities: the Chosen Name initiative

Launched at VU in September 2023, the Chosen Name initiative means staff and students can easily update their details, including chosen name, pronouns and gender identity, and see this reflected across university information systems.

Using someone's name and their correct pronouns shows respect. A chosen name is a name that is different from a person's legal given name or legal surname.

There are many reasons why someone may use a chosen name including, but not limited to: transgender and gender diverse identity, people from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, those wishing to change their name for safety or privacy reasons, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples who are Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants, or for any other personal or professional reason.

"For many people in the transgender community, having people know and use correct and affirming pronouns is an important and a validating part of a person's gender affirmation journey. By affirming a person's gender, you can support them to feel seen, heard and welcome," Sara Austin (she/her) VU Senior Coordinator Inclusion and Engagement explained.

These details are updated across enterprise-wide student and staff systems, including email, Office 365 suite, learning management and People and Culture systems.

Phase two of the project (currently underway) will see the Chosen Name initiative extend to further applications across the student experience, including the student placement information systems so that students' chosen names and pronouns are known on placement.

There are some applications where legal names are required, for example unique student identifier (USI), tax file number details, government financial assistance, and transcripts.

However, the project team are developing an additional document for testamur and graduations to be given to the student in addition to their transcript (with their legal name), which reflects the student's chosen name.

For Fisher Ayre (they/them), who works and studies at VU, the change is about putting inclusion policy into action.

"It means that you get to come into an educational setting, and you feel welcome, and you feel safe, and you feel respected. And that's when people learn best."



Joe Bakhmoutski, VU Portfolio Analyst – Benefits Management.

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower

2023 saw the introduction of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, with VU building awareness and supporting deeper understanding about non-visible disability. Sunflower lanyards and pins were distributed across the university and individuals engaged with the Hidden Disability Sunflower learning bundle and disability inclusion sessions.





VU staff celebrate the launch of VU’s new Cultural Equity Plan. Monty Singh (Executive Sponsor), Amil Tatai (Co-Chair), Abiola Akinbiyi (Chair of Ethnic Communities Council board), Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Shoemaker, Heather Marsh (Senior Co-ordinator Inclusion and Engagement), Peter Radoll (Deputy Vice-Chancellor People and Organisation).

Victoria University launches new Cultural Equality Plan

Co-designed by staff and students in VU’s Cultural Inclusion Network, the Brilliant Together- Cultural Inclusion and Racial Equality Plan 2023-2026 builds on the existing vision and values of VU’s strategic plan - Start Well, Finish Brilliantly.

In the introduction to the plan, VU’s Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Shoemaker said, “Our words set the stage, but our actions set the agenda. Brilliant Together sets out how we do the work to create a university that values everyone and their pursuit of success.”

VU’s Chief International Officer, Monty Singh, said he was delighted to take up the inaugural role of Executive Sponsor for the VU Cultural Inclusion Network.

“Now, more than ever, we need to support people of diverse backgrounds and faiths, and First Nations Peoples, to be heard, to be elevated and have equitable representation, and to be safe. The actions under Brilliant Together speak to that by focussing on transformative organisational change, capacity building, creating welcoming places and spaces, and ensuring our whole community have opportunities to thrive and succeed,” Mr Singh said.

Brilliant Together has been created as a response to VU’s Anti-Racism policy, and aligns with federal and state legislation including the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act, the Equal Opportunity Act and the Federal Race Discrimination Act.

The plan also supports the new ‘Welcoming Universities’ benchmark for which VU is one of five pilot universities nationally. The initiative encourages universities to measure cultural diversity and inclusion practices to ensure objectives are not just achieved but maintained.



Net zero

VU published a Climate Action Plan ‘Our VU Net Zero Plan’ in 2021 with the aim of expanding VU’s influence for Climate Action and challenging VU’s partner organisations, which includes the region’s local governments with whom VU has MOU’s, to achieve the goal of net zero.

A crucial milestone was also achieved in February 2023, when the Infrastructure Planning Committee officially endorsed VU’s ambitious goal of achieving carbon net zero by 2024. The progress made in 2023 underscores our dedication to sustainable practices and sets the stage for continued advancements in the years to come.

In year two of VU’s four-year plan to be carbon neutral, areas of considerable progress have included:

- Decommissioned gas appliances in retail spaces, replacing them with electric alternatives.
- Adopted sustainable solutions from new suppliers, including reusable stands for Open Day and solar panels for laundry service providers.
- Implemented paper usage monitoring across departments.
- Upgraded the Sunshine Data Centre with more efficient chillers.
- Reduced the number of Information Technology Services (ITS) servers to enhance operational efficiency.
- Adjusted heating and cooling temperatures across buildings to minimise emissions.



Environmental data

Gross carbon emissions for 2023 are estimated at 22,006 tonnes, 465 tonnes less than the target. After factoring in electricity offsets, the net carbon emissions are estimated to be 6,386 tonnes.

Several factors contributed to the variance in emissions forecasts, including electricity consumption, energy efficient infrastructure upgrades, but also noting increased travel and water reductions falling short of initial estimates and adjustments in calculating carbon emissions from electricity. As part of our commitment to transparency, we acknowledge these challenges and remain dedicated to refining our measurement and forecasting methods.

Waste generation (landfill & recycling) increased in 2023 compared to 2022 due to the rise in campus activity. The University will finalise its waste management strategy in 2024, which will aim to improve waste

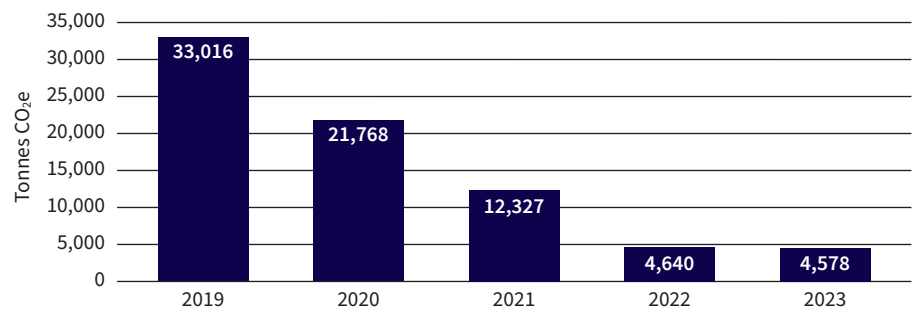
stream management and reporting capabilities.

Initiatives to reduce paper consumption and waste have delivered successful outcomes, with a 42% reduction compared with 2019. These included reviewing volumes of printed collateral, reviewing Course Guide content and size, promoting sustainable office printing, and reporting on consumption across the business.

The VU Environment Policy details strategies that are adopted by the university to minimise consumption, including:

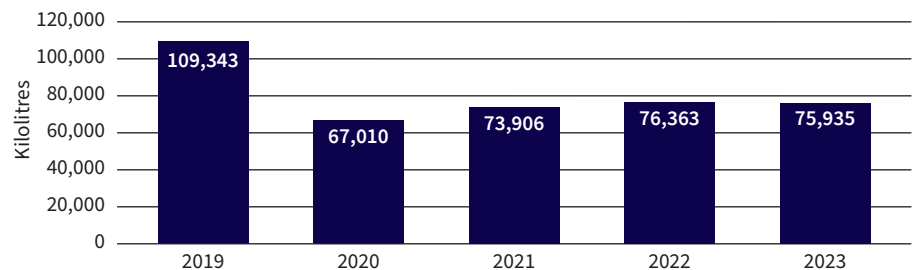
- ensuring water sensitive campus landscapes, gardens, building and urban design
- adopting water efficient practices and technologies for reducing water consumption and for recycling, harvesting and reuse

Total Net greenhouse gas emissions*



*Note that VU purchased 100% green electricity from July 1, 2021.

Water consumption**



**There was a significant reduction in recycled water production in 2023, when compared with 2022, due to the Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant experiencing major breakdowns. Repairs to the RO plant are planned to be completed early 2024.





Participants in VU's Community Tree Planting Day.

VU and Greater Western Water work together to protect, heal, and care for Country

Greater Western Water (GWW) proudly serves one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia. They provide drinking water, recycled water, sewerage, and trade waste services to more than 550,000 residential customers and 46,000 business customers.

Leveraging our operational strengths and position in the west of Melbourne, GWW and VU work together to create value and impact for the diverse communities we serve, and to protect, heal, and care for Country.

Over 20 years, VU and GWW have developed a strong and far-reaching partnership. In 2023, the partnership was elevated to a multi-year Major Alliance. This Major Alliance encompasses research collaborations, scholarship programs, capstone projects and internship opportunities for VU students across a range of disciplines. So far, it has achieved:

- working groups that unite key staff from both organisations in several areas of collaboration

- cooperative planning that involves up to 100 staff from VU and GWW at any one time
- tree planting activities that in 2022–23 alone have contributed more than 10,000 trees to the area
- student experience, engagement, and learning through guest lectures, industry tours of treatment plants, and orientation activities
- STEM and water-science activities for school students through GWW-branded interactive activities at VU's Wyndham Tech School.

Eight collaborative projects have been identified within 15 topic areas that are aimed at achieving circular economy, environmental remediation, and mitigated impacts from climate change, focussing on Melbourne's western urban and rural regions.

Example projects include accessing excess pressure in pipe networks to create energy, using recycled materials for trench backfill, Indigenous water management, stormwater harvesting case studies, community values of water, desalination

and pre-treatment of recycled water using polymeric and ceramic membranes, the use of solar energy in water treatment, a computer based screening tool for locating and assessing storm water harvesting sites in urban Melbourne, and low-energy nitrogen recovery from trade waste.





Climate change, energy policy & practice

VU's Victoria Energy Policy Centre (VEPC) has been actively involved in research on the energy transition in Australia. In 2023, its prior research pointing to the importance of a policy to rapidly expand electricity storage, contributed to the Australian Government's decision to establish a massive capacity investment scheme to underwrite 9GW of storage and 23GW of new variable electricity production. VEPC has also been intensively involved in critique of the VNI-West interconnector between New South Wales and Victoria, recommending an independent review of the Australian Energy Market Operator's proposals for this new interconnector. The Victorian Government accepted the main recommendation from VEPC's research, and this review is currently under way.



Reducing energy usage

VU's renewable energy use reached almost 60% of total energy usage in 2023 with 68,617 GJ out of the total 118,142.6 GJ from renewable sources, including solar panel installations on our campuses.

Several initiatives aimed at decreasing energy usage were completed in 2023:

- consolidation of the city campuses from four to one site
- solar installations and energy production
- installation of energy-efficient LED lighting, which will significantly decrease energy and maintenance but also improve lighting quality and campus safety for our students, staff and the public

- replacement and upgrade of building services to more energy efficient systems including the electrification of Footscray Park building L space and swimming pool heating, which is expected to reduce natural gas consumption by 8%
- programming of digital communication signage to sleep mode outside of business hours.





Maximising research with impact

VU researchers are connected with the community

Research with impact requires an experienced and dedicated research community. The VU Real-World Researcher is fundamental to creating a research environment that empowers our people. The VU Real-World Researcher is authentically connected, creative, adaptable, passionate, and ethical.

The heightened levels of conflict and crisis around the world during the year emphasised the importance of research. From social justice and gender equity to sustainability, sport, education and health, our researchers continue to focus on maximising research with impact to address the challenges of people, place, and planet.

Addressing the challenges of people, place, and planet



Source: Youth Affairs Council Victoria.

Engaging youth to 'Future Proof' communities

VU and the Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic) is establishing the country's first National Centre of Excellence in Young People and Disasters to empower young Australians as active agents of change in emergency management. The Centre, with funding from the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund, will be a collaborative hub for research, expertise, and programs for young people. It will undertake crucial research to inform policy and advocacy and build the capacity and resilience of the youth sector, communities and emergency management agencies. The Centre of Excellence in Young People and Disasters is the culmination of three and a half years of active and expert work in these areas and continues a strong partnership between YACVic and VU.

Incorporated in this work is the Future Proof project funded under the Australian Government's Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants program. VU is leading the research component of Future Proof. It brings together VU, 10 Local Councils, NGOs, ACCOs, and Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), is place-based, and applies youth work principles to support young people in youth-led recovery projects and community decision

making. The project began in 2022 and has been extended through to March 2025. By year end 2023, 163 young people had driven locally-led, place-based programs, 6,549 had engaged in local community projects, and 1,183 young people have been supported to attain locally useful qualifications in youth work, mental health and emergency services.





Bush-dyeing workshops as part of Blak women's healing study.

Anti-racism roadmap for Melbourne's southeast

A report released in 2023 recommended effective ways for residents in Melbourne's southeast to speak out against racism and find support services in their local areas. The study was conducted in partnership with the rapidly growing Cities of Casey and Greater Dandenong – where nearly two-thirds of residents are born overseas and more than 200 languages are spoken. VU researchers Associate Professor Mario Peucker and Professor Tom Clark collaborated with community organisations and residents to develop a local 'roadmap' of practical ways that reporting and support services could be tailored to the specific needs of local communities.

Associate Professor Peucker said underreporting racism was common, and the reasons behind it needed to be addressed systematically, without expecting people who experienced racism to navigate difficult reporting processes. "If we want more people to speak out against racism, we must ensure those who face racism have clear and effective ways to connect to the support they desire."



Creating spaces for Blak women's healing

A VU Indigenous-led study has found access to a safe space for traditional Cultural practice can assist in healing from ongoing trauma, dispossession, and displacement for Indigenous women.

Building on existing knowledge of the powerful healing impact connecting with culture, Country and kinship can have, researchers from VU's Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit, hosted Wayapa and bush-dyeing workshops for a group of Indigenous women in Melbourne's west.

Wayapa Wuurrk uses mindfulness, storytelling, and movement meditation to foster connectedness and belonging while supporting holistic well-being. Traditional bush-dyeing uses indigenous flora to make healing cloths.

Moondani Balluk Executive Director Karen Jackson said this project had a profound impact on the women who participated.

"Some of the women were part of the Stolen Generation, had an unknown connection to Country or language group identity and were at different stages of their identity journey," Ms Jackson said.

"And what we saw over the 12 weeks is that not only did the women establish a connection to the local landscape and environment, they also now have this cultural practice which can be shared with

children or other family, or when they need it to strengthen the soul."

The project's success has resulted in plans to expand the workshops into correctional and playgroup settings.

"We have drawn on First Nation's needs, aspirations and knowledge systems, and shown with community-engaged and participatory research, we can have a real-world impact with and in communities," Ms Jackson said.



Carbon footprint of Artificial Intelligence

The growing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) has raised concerns about its increasing carbon footprint and environmental impact. The funded Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project, “Distributed Evolutionary Computation for Green AI,” aims to address these concerns by developing a computation framework to optimise AI’s carbon footprint while maintaining or improving its performance.

The team of VU researchers, Professor Hua Wang, Dr Yongfeng Ge, and Dr Jiao Yin are collaborating with industry partner Nexus Online to achieve this goal in the next three years. Expected outcomes include precise measurement of AI-linked carbon emissions and the development of new algorithms and strategies for mitigating these emissions.

By addressing the carbon footprint of AI, this project will have significant advantages in tackling climate change, conserving energy resources, protecting the environment, and advancing Australia’s goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.



Needs-based funding: Lessons from the school sector

VU’s Mitchell Institute is one of Australia’s leading policy research think tanks. Their focus is on improving our education and health systems so more Australians can engage with, and benefit from these services, supporting a healthier, fairer, and more productive society.

In 2023, the Australian Universities Accord undertook a review of Australia’s higher education system. The Mitchell Institute proposed a needs-based funding model that directs greater funding to institutions with high enrolments of regional, remote, and lower socioeconomic students. In their interim report, the Australian Universities Accord recommended this approach.

The research paper produced by VU’s Mitchell Institute detailed findings that a needs-based funding model, using the same parameters as the Schooling Resource Standard, would see an overall 11% increase in base funding amounts to universities for government funded students. This extra funding would specifically help universities counter disadvantage by meeting extra learning needs and providing extra support to

help students finish their courses. VU advocated this so-called “Gonski” for universities funding model to the Australian Universities Accord consultation process, with the final Accord report including it in its recommendations.

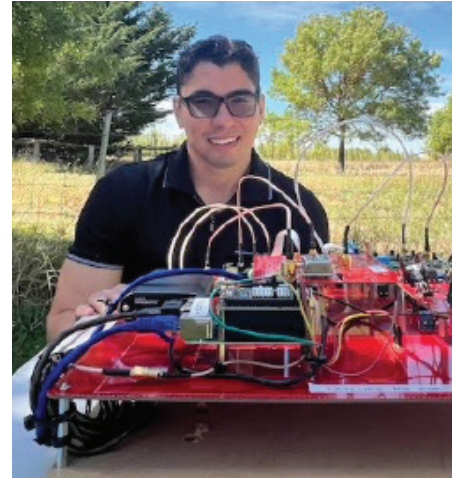
Education policy expert and Mitchell Institute Director, Associate Professor Peter Hurley who led the research said, “extra funding to institutions with higher concentrations of student disadvantage means resources will go where they are needed most. Resources matter. Disadvantage does not stop when students leave high school – a needs-based funding model marks a major shift in how universities are funded,” Associate Professor Hurley said.



Addressing the challenges of people, place, and planet



VU researchers are working on recycled material road onsite.



Dr Douglas Gomes. Source: ABC News.

Advancing sustainability in road development

Funded by the Victorian State Government, VU researchers conducted research on advancing Sustainability in Transportation Infrastructure through applied, experimental research, featuring a variety of specialised testing on asphalt.

The objective was to develop an optimised asphalt mix design using recycled materials. Following the comprehensive testing phase, the developed asphalt mixture was employed to pave a 60-meter section of a road in Melbourne, Australia. This road section has been under monitoring for more than 2.5 years to evaluate its performance over time.

This project hopes to demonstrate practical applications of waste or recycled materials to promote sustainable construction practices and materials. VU's industry partners in this project were Asphalttech, Wyndham City Council, and Boral.

Improving Teenager Wellbeing

For the past two years, a team led by Professor Bruce Rasmussen has been undertaking a major program for the World Health Organisation (WHO), on the evaluation of large-scale investments to improve adolescent wellbeing around the world.

The report focuses on the importance of investing holistically in adolescents and their wellbeing. It shows that such investments can reduce inequalities, protect the human rights of adolescents and generate strong economic and social returns from a wide range of investments. It is to be used as an advocacy document by the WHO, Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), and others for investing in adolescents. While entirely written within VU, the report was reviewed by some 30 leading academics and policy officials from around the world.

Vital bushfire conductor research

VU researcher and ARC Industry Fellowship recipient, Dr Douglas Gomes, is developing a device that aims to detect a broken conductor and take the power out of the line before it has time to touch the ground. The device will trip circuit reclosers on single-wire earth return (SWER) networks to shut down power if it detects a broken power line.

The technology is still in a testing phase, with ambitions for market-readiness within the next three years. Dr Gomes says the results so far are promising. "We simulated a real conductor breakage and we could clearly see that our device could detect that conductor breakage in less than a second," he said. Dr Gomes and his team hope their device will be able to help power crews locate conductor breakages faster. The researchers are also planning a further study about whether their device can help mitigate other bushfire hazards, like when vegetation touches a power line.



Change Makers: Preventing gender-based violence through community football (soccer)

In partnership with Football Victoria and Regional Sport Victoria, VU researchers Associate Professor Fiona McLachlan, Professor Brent McDonald, and Dr Jeffrey Bishara were funded through the Victorian State Government’s Preventing Violence through Sport scheme to design and deliver a primary prevention program to embed gender equity and facilitate cultural change within soccer clubs.

The research team’s model takes a unique approach by working directly with club leaders and providing them with tools and hands-on support to critically reflect on their culture and environment before guiding them to design actions for change. In 2023, they facilitated 16 workshops and supported 31 clubs from metropolitan and regional Victoria through the process. Clubs have found the process confronting but valuable.

“Through the delivery of Change Makers, we are learning a lot about the processes of change and resistance in community sport. We have found that the clubs that are more critical tend to have safer and more inclusive cultures. This is a significant finding because gender equity and safety training generally skips this crucial step of critical reflection. We look forward to being able to share these findings at the conclusion of the project”, said lead researcher, Associate Professor Fiona McLachlan.



Professor Clare Hanlon at PUMA uniform event.



PUMA and VU join forces on gaining global insights on sport uniforms, what girls want

Led by VU’s Professor Clare Hanlon, this research shows despite 95% of active girls being happy to wear whatever uniforms are required to play sport, 43% believed their uniforms make them feel conscious about how they look, and 60% indicated that wearing their preferred sports uniform would help them continue playing sport.

With VU’s research increasing the global awareness and action raised on ‘why’ the need to move from white shorts and/or enable choice, PUMA is one of

the organisations now educating their sponsored sports on the need to provide choice.





A thriving place to study and work

A place where people have a sense of belonging, and feel immense pride

We have already taken bold moves to be proudly different and productively radical. Our staff and students need to be celebrated, valued and rewarded. We will be a new generation destination university – redefining the role and value of a university.

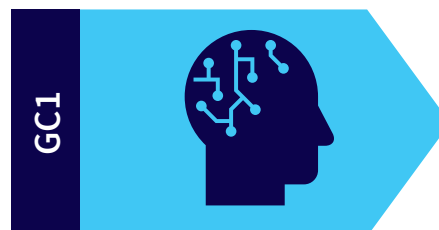
Meaningful education around SDGs

Achieving the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 global goals is critical for protecting the future health and wellbeing of humanity and the planet that we share. Efforts to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) towards the UN 2030 targets are underway across VU's teaching and research activities, in our campus operations, and in our external partnerships.

VU's graduate capabilities are reflected in the learnings for all courses, to equip students with the skills and attributes for lifelong success, to instil a commitment to sustainability, and to support bold innovative solutions to critical global issues.

VU's Graduate Capabilities Guidelines, which are part of the Learning and Teaching Standards Policy, have three overarching graduate capabilities.

Graduate capabilities (GC)



Adaptable and capable 21st century citizens who can communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically and solve complex problems.



Confident, creative lifelong learners who can use their understanding of themselves, and others to achieve their goals in work and learning.



Responsible and ethical citizens who use their inter-cultural understanding to contribute to their local and global communities.

Learning that changes lives

VU extended education for the UN SDGs to new courses and specialisations, for learners to acquire the knowledge and skills to contribute to sustainable development.

- **Graduate Certificate in Crime Prevention:** Supported by external scholarships from the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety, this new course provides students with a deep understanding of key prevention strategies and the ability to critically evaluate prevention policy and practice through a lens of social justice and inclusion.
- **Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) Preparation Program:** VU has successfully developed a non-award course to assist Internationally Qualified Registered Nurses to prepare for their OSCE. This examination forms an important part of the compulsory assessment requirements for registration with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. VU is the only university to provide such training, further strengthening our position in supporting the health workforce needs of Melbourne's west.
- **Allied Health:** The west of Melbourne has a severe shortage of allied health workers. To meet this need VU launched a suite of new flexible physiotherapy, speech pathology, and dietetics

courses that address school leaver, mature student, and graduate needs. In 2023, the first successful intake for postgraduate offerings of these courses occurred. These new graduate professional entry students join the students who are progressing from the Bachelor into the Masters components of their studies.

- **VU Industry Scholarship Partnering for Innovative Research Delivery (INSPIRED) program:** The VU INSPIRED Program was launched in late 2023 by the Graduate Research School. The program co-funds PhD student scholarships on collaborative projects that are designed to solve industry challenges, connect industry partners with VU's research capabilities, and enable deeper industry engagement. The program will provide a pathway for innovative training in applied research, be executed within an industry setting, and structured around an industry-focused research question. PhD students will be supervised by selected VU and industry partner supervisors and will undertake a portion of their research on-site with the industry-partner alongside specific industry enhancement training programs. The program aims to create an industry-ready workforce and increase the scale and depth of VU's industry connections.



Amanda and Ravidner in the Pre/Transition class, teaching young Numbulwar students' numeracy through play

Cultural exchange building First Nations understanding

The Story Writing in Remote Locations (SWiRL) program has been funded for the last two years by Anglicare Northern Territory as part of the East Arnhem Communities for Children initiative. SWiRL began in 1996 and was developed by former VU education lecturer Lawry Mahon. The unique initiative provides preservice teachers with a culturally immersive experience in remote and rural First Nations communities in the NT.

The SWiRL Program is committed to teaching and learning approaches that support and engage First Nations communities in culturally appropriate ways. The program is not only innovative, but it also enhances preservice teachers' knowledge of First Nations standpoints and First Nations cultural traditions in remote communities. The SWiRL Program seeks to critique, question and interrogate the impact of colonisation on First Nations communities and their land.



VU awarded grant to enhance Chinese students' experience in Australia

VU has been awarded a grant from the National Foundation for Australia-China Relations through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to develop innovative ways to enhance the experiences of Chinese students studying at Australian universities.

VU project lead Dr Catherine Lou said the *Embrace* program provides workshops and immersive experiences for international students that focus on Australian excellence in the areas of First Nations knowledge, elite sporting organisations, and leading businesses.

Australia's education sector has strong ties to China, with roughly 130,000 nationals currently enrolled in universities across Australia. We have always strived to provide opportunities for Chinese students that will not only progress their careers, but also build lasting bridges with Australia.

The *Embrace* program will be conducted over 18 months until the end of 2024, providing hundreds of Chinese students with hands-on experiences in Australian culture, sport, and business. Thousands more across Australia will have access to the program through virtual and social media outreach. The *Embrace* program is also envisaged to help inform Australia's tertiary sector about ways to enhance the experiences of all international students.



Participants in the *Embrace* program.

Learning that changes lives



Students learning through block model teaching.

Block Model in spotlight at Victoria University-hosted international conference

VU hosted the world's first conference focusing on block model teaching as universities and academics seek better ways to engage with students.

International Block and Intensive Learning Association (IBILTA) President Dr John Weldon says interest in block learning and teaching – where students complete one subject at a time over a few weeks instead of juggling multiple subjects over a semester – is exploding worldwide.

While the model of teaching has been around for 50 years, VU was the first Australian university to offer all its courses this way starting in 2018, leading to improved student satisfaction, retention and pass rates.

Dr Weldon said the inaugural IBILTA Conference in 2023 emerged from “a higher education zeitgeist” and engaged participants from around the world.

“The interest in block model was sparked, partly by the pandemic, but more substantially, by institutions and academics the world over that were driven by a genuine desire to find better ways to engage with students and provide improved outcomes for them,” he said.

VU's Block Model system includes a dedicated and award-winning First Year College for commencing students, steered by a multidisciplinary team of specialist educators who design and implement curricula that is engaging, authentic, and focussed on future success.

First Year College Dean Professor Andrew Smallridge said the College helps students transition into university life from what is usually their most difficult year. “They enter a supportive community and we provide them with a range of support programs to guide them to develop the skills they need to become well-rounded university students and independent learners,” he said.

The IBILTA conference provides a forum for academics from Australia, the UK, Europe, Asia and the Americas to come together to share ideas, experiences, and research, with conference themes ranging from future trends in block learning to student welfare.



Werribee Children's Centre.

Addressing workforce shortages by increasing the number of Early Childhood facilitators

VU is helping to increase the number of Early Childhood Education facilitators in Victoria by providing support and assistance to people in the west of Melbourne. This program is known as Diversity and Innovation in Early Childhood Education (DICE). As part of the program, students receive extra support and opportunities to kick start their careers in Early Childhood Education.

The VU DICE Program is dedicated to empowering individuals to pursue a career in Early Childhood Education. The program provides comprehensive support services throughout the course to ensure students are fully prepared for the job market upon graduation.





Doing dual differently

Enabling our students around the world to ‘start well and finish brilliantly’

We are uniquely positioned to offer flexible, concurrent, and complementary studies – bringing together offerings from Vocational Education and Higher Education in the same space and time.

Learning matched to lives



VU's St Alban's campus.

Pioneering a new model: Australia's first on-campus autism centre at VU

Australia's first on-campus community centre for Autistic adults has officially opened, following a collaboration between Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) and VU. The alliance pioneers a new model at VU's St Albans Campus, providing positive outcomes for both adult participants and students.

The new centre offers much-needed services for autistic adults in the western Melbourne locale of Brimbank and facilitates opportunities for participants to enrol in VU Polytechnic courses and gain recognised qualifications. Participants can also acquire valuable job and independent living skills by engaging in programs and activities across the University's state-of-the-art facilities.

Adults diagnosed as autistic represent approximately one-third of the 3,800 people on the autism spectrum in the Brimbank local government area, according to the NDIS.

The innovative model will also provide a unique opportunity for VU students who are training in areas such as speech pathology, social work, and community services to participate in placements, internships and potentially, formal employment with Aspect.

Jacqui Borland, CEO of Aspect, said the number of adults diagnosed as autistic is increasing, leading to an elevated demand for support services.

"Aspect's partnership with Victoria University is ground-breaking because it achieves many critical outcomes for autistic adults, while investing in the future of our disability services workforce," said Ms Borland.

"Furthermore, the skills shortage in social services is extensive with a current shortfall of more than 128,000 nationwide and approximately 1500-2000 staff required locally across specific therapies and support services. By having a dedicated autism-specific hub on the University campus, Aspect can provide students looking to embark on a career in therapy or the disability and community services with on-the-job training and experience, ideally leading to employment with us or in the broader sector."

VU's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adam Shoemaker, said the alliance with Aspect dramatically increases accessible learning experiences and employment opportunities for both students and community members.

"For VU students, partnering with Australia's largest provider of specialised autistic services means they will have the best possible training and hands-on experience, which is as timely as it is industry-relevant", said Professor Shoemaker.



Renewed agreement between VU & the Dili Institute of Technology

More than 20 years after VU first partnered with the Dili Institute of Technology (DIT), the two institutions have strengthened their relationship by entering a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

DIT is a private, not-for-profit institution established in 2002, offering higher education and vocational training for young people, veterans of the independence struggle and their children.

VU Chancellor, the Honourable Steve Bracks AC, was in Timor-Leste to sign the MoU which includes a number of potential opportunities for collaboration, including:

- TAFE education for Timorese students in areas of skills shortages
- English language training
- encouraging cooperation in any discipline which is studied in both institutions
- exchanging digital information and training material including university policies
- staff exchanges and professional development opportunities
- training equipment and facilities
- access to digital library resources.

“I am very proud of Victoria University’s long connection with DIT. We are pleased to partner with DIT to help further the capacity and skills of the Timorese people,” Mr Bracks said.

VU has provided significant assistance to DIT over the years, including introducing a Workplace Trainer Certificate (now known as Certificate IV in Training and Assessment) in 2005. The University has also supported local access to library resources, provision of equipment, staff training, planning advice, and direct assistance to deliver training programs resulting in Australian-equivalent qualifications.



VU is thrilled to announce a new partnership with AVENU Learning, offering innovative online courses to students in India

Supported through a grant from the Victorian Government’s International Education Resilience Fund, the VU Advantage programs to be offered with AVENU Learning will see the development of a suite of affordable, vocationally oriented online award and non-award courses focused on information technology and business. AVENU Learning will be VU’s delivery partner for these courses in India.

This is VU’s first venture into fully-online education delivery in an offshore market – an innovative time as we continue to do dual differently, and be the pioneer in this space in the Australian university sector.

Ms Jade Roth, CEO, AVENU Learning said partnering with VU signalled a new chapter for the leading global provider of educational services.

“AVENU is honoured to launch a strategic partnership with VU and further expand opportunities for learners in India to access high quality higher education. VU’s focus on the link between excellence in education and career readiness, demonstrated by its ranking as the top school for employability skills in Australia, is in full alignment with the needs and desires of learners in India. We look forward to supporting the first cohort of VU learners later this year,” said Ms Roth.



DIT Rector Dr Salustiano dos Reis Piedade with VU Chancellor Steve Bracks.



Participants in the Western Melbourne English Program.

VU's English language programs empowering residents of Melbourne's west

VU Polytechnic's Western Melbourne English Program (WMEP), has welcomed hundreds of students a year from around the world to its classrooms in Footscray, Sunshine, St Albans and Werribee for more than 30 years.

WMEP manager Gabriella Zibell says while other organisations offer English programs in Melbourne's west, WMEP is the only one that consistently delivers a full suite of courses and specialised streams that support students to strengthen their reading, writing, speaking, listening and numeracy skills.

"We offer more than 20 courses for students wanting to improve their English, whether it be for work, or just to help them with day-to-day activities," she said.

The program's unique youth courses, aimed at 16-24 year olds, are the most popular, and include valuable partnerships with external organisations.

WMEP students range from age 16 to over 65, and come from around the world, in particular Vietnam, Horn of Africa (Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea), as well as Syria and Afghanistan.

Students are eligible for funding if they are citizens or permanent residents, and do not have a recognised higher qualification, however anyone seeking to learn English as an Additional Language (EAL) is welcome.

Aye Aye Si Ccun Sah Boi came to Australia as a refugee from Myanmar with her family and began studying EAL toward a career in community services.

"I've met people from a lot of countries – we work together in class and I also play basketball and volleyball at lunch. In future I want to work with lots of different communities."





Smart Farm at VU's Wyndham Tech School.

State of the art Smart Farm

VU's Wyndham Tech School continues to distinguish itself as a leader in hightech, innovative teaching and learning, fostering partnerships between the school, VU and industry, and promoting digital enablement. In 2023, the Agritech Innovators program in collaboration with Velisha Farms, The Gaia Project, and Modular Farms was launched. This involved installation of the state-of-the-art Smart Farm, through the Secondary Schools Agricultural Fund. Though the Argitech program students explore solutions to global food security using systems engineering, entrepreneurship, and hands on experience with the Smart Farm.



VU Tax Clinic.



Addressing disadvantage – VU Tax Clinic

A total of 20 VU students, from both Vocational Education and Higher Education, actively participated in the tax clinic, as part of the National Tax Clinic Program overseen by the Australian Taxation Office. The VU Tax Clinic successfully assisted 300 clients in completing their tax returns or addressing tax-related matters. Initially operating from the Footscray Nicholson Campus, the clinic expanded its services to the City Campus in November 2023. This expansion aims to further broaden the clinic's reach and impact in providing complimentary tax services to disadvantaged taxpayers.





Partnering with principle

The 'Flipped Campus' is the campus of the future

We have strong industry partners co-located on each of our campuses – we call this the 'flipped campus'. By doing this, we provide outstanding synergies and opportunities for students, staff and industry in education, internships, and research.

Ethical collaborations with lasting impact



Our Watch CEO, Patty Kinnersly, and VU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adam Shoemaker.

VU & Our Watch collaborate on a five-year strategic plan to tackle gender-based violence

VU has signed a five-year strategic partnership with Our Watch and adopted a whole-of-institution approach to end gender-based violence in all its forms.

The partnership aims to:

- Implement both 'Educating for Equality in Higher Education' and 'Respect and Equality in Vocational Education', specifically integrating both approaches within VU as a dual sector institution.
- Strengthen the intersectional approach VU applies to progressing gender equity with women and non-binary/gender diverse people.
- Fund a monitoring and developmental evaluation approach throughout the partnership.
- Engage in structural, material, and cultural decolonising practices parallel with, informed by, and accountable to First Nations students, staff, and community.

- Share evidence and learning across the higher education and vocational education sector and beyond where relevant for example, but not limited, to support and promote an increase in intersectional gender equity across Australia.

Action taken so far to establish and embed this program of work include:

- VU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adam Shoemaker, and Our Watch CEO, Patty Kinnersly, 'live' People of VU podcast recording during the 16 Days of Activism to eliminate Gender Based Violence campaign.
- Two leading experts from Our Watch were appointed as adjunct fellows for the life of the partnership.
- Development of an Upskilling Pre-Service Professionals program of work, initiated by the criminology discipline team.



Pathways in Place – a partnership addressing disadvantage in Melbourne’s west

VU’s Mitchell Institute was awarded a grant in 2020 from the Paul Ramsay Foundation to fund a community-based research program, aimed at improving the education opportunities and health of children and young people in lower socioeconomic communities.

The Pathways in Place initiative is part of a broader project with Griffith University in Queensland. It focusses on boosting outcomes in early learning as children transition to school, and later as students finish school and seek further education, training or employment.

The five-year project aims to equalise the playing field and overcome the disastrous reality that by the age of 15, young people from low socioeconomic communities are 2-3 years behind in reading and maths compared to children from wealthy families. This limits their economic and health opportunities throughout their lives.

The project includes working with local community partners in the Brimbank area and builds on the success of existing programs, such as Growing Brimbank.



VU’s Footscray Park campus.



New collaborative centre for mental health a step closer

The Victorian Government announced the lead partners for the new Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System.

VU is one of 20 support partners in the consortium which will be led by The Royal Melbourne Hospital and the University of Melbourne.

The centre is the first of its kind in Australia and will bring together people with lived experience, researchers, and health professionals to lead critical improvements in the mental health system. The centre will provide treatment, care and support to adults, lead cutting-edge research, and serve as the ‘engine room’ for reform across the mental health sector and its workforce.

VU joins seven other academic partners who will help provide world-leading translational research into mental health and wellbeing to drive change in Victoria.

“This is an important and significant initiative which Victoria University is proud to be part of,” Institute for Health and Sport Executive Director, Professor Alex Parker said.

VU has strong research expertise in demonstrating the benefit of exercise and diet on mental health and wellness, and we are well-placed to provide an evidence base to improve Victoria’s mental health system.

The Victorian Collaborative Centre’s board includes at least four members with lived experience and a dedicated Lived Experience Advisory Panel, ensuring lived experience is at the heart of all the centre’s work.





VU's Michelle Gillespie (Chief Student Officer), Wade Noonan (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Prof. Alex Parker, Clare Carter (Major Partnerships) with Kashif Bouns (General Manager, WB Community Foundation) launch the WBCF's School Workshops.

Victoria University partners with Western Bulldogs Community Foundation on new initiative

Two iconic organisations based in Footscray - VU and the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation (WB Community Foundation) – have formally partnered to roll-out an impactful and engaging new initiative: The WB Community Foundation School Workshops, with VU as the Presenting Partner.

This partnership marks a commitment by both organisations to support, nurture, and improve communities across Melbourne's west. VU and the WB Community Foundation have a history of collaborating successfully on programs focusing on youth leadership, diversity, social inclusion, and social advocacy.

As with all targeted VU and WB Community Foundation programs, the aim is to provide at least 600 secondary school students a year with the tools to succeed and thrive.

Each school selects the number of co-designed sessions and topics best suited to the needs of the students, which are presented by experienced professionals from WB Community Foundation and VU.

The workshops will focus on mental health and resilience, leadership skills development, education pathways, employment pathways, social responsibility, gender equity, and goal setting.

“We are so proud to formally confirm this invaluable partnership with the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation. Beyond our deep, shared history of delivering accessible programs tailored to the needs of the west, we have a united vision for the future – one that is committed to addressing inequity in all its forms,” VU Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Shoemaker said.

WB Community Foundation and Government Relations General Manager Mr Kashif Bouns, said the partnership could not have arrived at a better time.

“At the WB Community Foundation, we take pride in delivering evidence-based programs co-designed in consultation with our community. This has been made possible through our long-standing partnership with VU. It's truly wonderful to deepen this collaboration, creating more opportunities for young people in Melbourne's west through customised school workshops.”



Ethical collaborations with lasting impact



headspace staff with VU students.

Orygen & Victoria University join forces in Melbourne's west

Mental health care and training will be streamlined for young people in Melbourne's west in an exciting new partnership between Orygen and VU.

Plans include headspace Werribee relocating its existing services to a new facility at VU's Werribee Campus, unlocking more accessible, integrated, and comprehensive mental health care and wellbeing services for young people.

In addition, both Orygen Specialist Program and headspace Werribee will provide mental health education and training for VU staff and students, as well as employment pathways that are critical to growing the state's strained mental health care workforce.

As part of the initiative, Orygen Specialist Program and headspace Werribee will provide 70 VU student placements per year across the disciplines of nursing, psychology, social work, youth work,

dietetics and nutrition, with the potential to employ new graduates. Lara, who is studying a Master of Applied Psychology (Clinical) at VU and is currently undertaking her student placement at headspace Werribee, reinforced the importance of practical learning at Orygen: "I enjoy being part of a very skilled team, and it is an opportunity to rapidly develop my skills in working with young people. You feel you are intervening at a crucial time in their lives."

The partnership will see a boost to clinical support for VU wellbeing teams, providing workshops and training, in addition to access to regular secondary consultation to support high risk and at-risk students at VU.

Developing a future workforce is one of the most important tasks for the mental health system; it will ensure young people seeking mental health care in the west can access a wider range of services and superior facilities when they need them.

Dr Karen Hart, the Operations Director for Clinical Transformation at Orygen said: "The collaboration with Victoria University

will be a driving force in shaping Victoria's future mental health workforce as we leverage Victoria University's expertise in education along with our expertise in youth mental health."

VU, Lifeline and community representatives welcome the opening of new crisis call centre on St Albans Campus with Lifeline Western Melbourne





VU, Lifeline and community representatives welcome the opening of new crisis call centre on St Albans Campus with Lifeline Western Melbourne.

Lifeline opens first crisis call centre in Melbourne’s west on VU campus

Lifeline will be taking calls at its first crisis support and suicide prevention centre in Melbourne’s west, located on VU’s St Albans Campus.

Lifeline and VU recently signed a five-year partnership to establish Lifeline Western Melbourne, the first Lifeline Crisis Call Centre in the state to operate from a university campus.

General Manager Jason Doherty said there is an identified need for a support service in the region. Since COVID, Melbourne’s west and north have experienced a 35% surge in demand from residents facing emotional distress or battling cost-of-living pressures. Mr Doherty emphasised the importance that Lifeline crisis supporters come from all walks-of-life, age groups, and cultural

backgrounds – and included students and young people.

Several volunteers have completed their initial training and are ready to take live supervised calls on 13 11 14 as part of a 12-month internship to become an accredited crisis supporter. The service aims to have 40 crisis support volunteers answering calls at the centre by the end of its first year.

The partnership between VU and Lifeline will provide real-life learning opportunities for students. Longer term, the partnership will provide real-world placements and other opportunities for VU students taking courses in areas such as youth work, psychology, counselling, community services or social work to train as Lifeline crisis support volunteers. VU researchers will also be able to collaborate with the Lifeline Research Foundation.

The new centre on VU’s St Albans Campus will add to the other 41 Lifeline centres nationally, from where more than 4000 crisis supporters respond to around one million calls annually – equalling one call every 30 seconds.

As an additional part of its Lifeline partnership, VU is also proud to offer its students access to University Crisis Line, a specialised Lifeline mental health service for students that is available when VU’s other support services are closed.





Participants in the 'Women's Careers and Leadership Program.'

VU proud to support leadership program for Moonee Valley migrant women

VU is collaborating with Moonee Valley City Council on a unique program that builds the career and leadership skills of migrant and refugee women in a culturally-supportive environment.

The Women's Careers and Leadership Program, funded by the Australian Government's National Careers Institute Partnership Grants Program, develops the skills and confidence of local women so they can build their own businesses, and become leaders in their communities.

Working closely with women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds – many residents of public housing estates in Flemington and Ascot Vale – the program has achieved:

- all 80 participants completing 30 training modules
- about one-third of participants getting jobs, several with Moonee Valley City Council
- 19 participants completing an eight-week leadership course at Wingate Avenue Community Centre.

VU in the Community, and VU Polytechnic's Skills and Jobs Centre, played an important role developing and implementing career guidance activities.

VU in the Community Manager, Fatih Tuncer, recently accepted a certificate of thanks from the Council for VU's role in making the program a success.

"As the University of the West, VU proudly works closely with many local councils across Melbourne's inner and outer western suburbs to support community and economic development.

It has particularly been special to see so many participants grow through the program and discover pathways to realise their potential," he said.



VU & Melbourne Airport partnership – a pathway to generating employment opportunities

Jobs and internships for students alongside significant research projects are at the heart of a new partnership between VU and Melbourne Airport.

In the first-ever university partnership for the airport, students of the west will have the chance to contribute to one of the biggest economic drivers in the state.

VU Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Shoemaker acknowledged the opportunities expected to stem from the partnership.

“Airports are where global ideas intersect, acting as a vibrant crossroads where diverse cultures, perspectives and innovations converge. This partnership sets a new standard by aligning Victoria University’s research expertise and education programs with Melbourne Airport’s vision for the region.”

Melbourne Airport CEO Lorie Argus said the partnership with VU would enable student placements, as well as job and tertiary-learning opportunities each year.



WESTERN CHANCES

Our enduring partnership with Western Chances – now a Major Alliance agreement – provides study and career opportunities to young people who are facing financial barriers

Western Chances’ vision is to enable young people facing financial barriers to reach their potential. Providing scholarships, life-changing opportunities and ongoing support, their mission is to enable these young people to thrive.

We believe that access and equal opportunities for all people in Melbourne’s west is critical. VU and Western Chances share a commitment to promoting long term outcomes for Melbourne’s western region and believe that talented and motivated young people facing financial barriers should be given an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential.

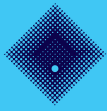
The Western Chances model is simple – they provide students with scholarships to pay for essential items that have a big impact in helping them stay in school. This includes textbooks, laptops, home internet, public transport and specialist subject equipment.

Through our Major Alliance agreement, VU and Western Chances work together to support students through a range of initiatives, including:

- collaborating to create greater access to scholarships for VU students
- developing programs to link Western Chances alumni with career and industry networks
- expanding opportunities for recipients to do meaningful internships and gain work experience.

Since 2006, Western Chances have offered 35 Access Scholarships per year which provides \$1,000 to Western Chances recipients studying at VU.





**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

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