

## USING THE INTERNET TO UNLOCK THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF SPORTS CLUBS

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The contribution of local sporting clubs to national economies amounts to billions of dollars. These clubs typically rely on volunteers who use Internet platforms to support their roles, improving information access, communication, and efficiency. How sporting clubs use the Internet is an important issue.

The broader accessibility of digital technologies means that the 'digital divide' has widened to include not only possessing digital devices, but also having the knowledge and skills to be able to use them effectively.

The digital divide in local sporting clubs in Australia and the UK through their adoption of Internet applications is the subject of a scholarly article co-authored by Dr Scott Bingley, Professor Stephen Burgess and Deakin's Dr Craig Parker in the top-ranking *Journal of the American Society of Information Science and Technology*.

Drawing on their extensive experience of

examining the use of digital technologies by small businesses – including non-profit organisations like local sporting clubs – the authors confirm that medium-sized businesses adopt digital technologies at a faster rate than their small- and micro-sized counterparts.



LORDS, THE MECCA OF CRICKET, IS UNDERGOING A MAJOR REVAMP [SOURCE: INSIDE SPORTS]

Smaller businesses suffer from *resource poverty*, lacking the time, capital, and expertise to exploit digital technologies. The researchers investigated the differences in the adoption and usage of Internet applications between 'upper level' (or well-resourced local sporting clubs) and their 'lower level' counterparts across two very different sports, athletics and cricket.

The designation of upper or lower was determined by the number of members

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(athletics) or clubs playing in higher grades (cricket). From a digital divide perspective, it was expected that, in a parallel way to medium-sized businesses compared with small businesses, upper level clubs would adopt Internet applications at a higher rate than lower level clubs.

Using a content analysis approach, the researchers mapped the Internet presence of local sporting clubs across the two sports and regions onto a *local sporting club web presence model*, which was adapted from a model that Professor Burgess had previously published (in the *European Journal of Information Systems*) to map the Internet presence of small businesses.

The study found three categories of Internet applications where there were differences in adoption between upper and lower level clubs:

- Club websites (setup by the local sporting clubs) themselves;
- 'Third-party' web presence sites where club-based pages had been set up (such as business and regional directories and online shops); and
- Social media – where club-based pages had been set up.

A. Angerhn (writing in the *European Management Journal*, 1997) identified four virtual spaces that businesses could occupy on the Internet. The level of usage of each

Internet application in the study was determined by examining how the Internet presence of each local sporting clubs occupied three of these spaces:

- *information space*: where information is passed from the business to its customers, sometimes known as the provision of static information, or brochureware web presences;
- *communications space*: two-way communication occurring between the business and its customers, mostly on social media; and
- *transactions space*: where the business provides online facilities for its customers to place orders, make payments or otherwise gain access to an online database of transactions.

Internet application	ADOPTION LEVELS: significant difference?	USAGE levels: significant difference?		
		Information space	Communication space	Transactions space
Club websites	Yes	No	No usage	Yes, some features
Third party websites	No	No	No usage	Yes, some features
Social media	Yes	Yes, some features	Yes, some features	No, minimal usage levels

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**W**ith regards to adoption, a significantly higher proportion of upper level clubs adopted websites and social media than was true of lower level clubs.

**T**here were also differences in how the clubs used their Internet applications. They utilised club and third-party websites in the information space (mainly to provide information to current and potential members). There was no significant difference between upper and lower level clubs in this space as these features are relatively easy to implement and were used extensively by most clubs. The clubs also used transactions space features on these websites (for instance, providing access to 'real-time' scores and statistics and online payments of club fees and sales of club branded clothing and merchandise). Note that there was a significant difference in the usage levels of transactions between upper and lower level clubs, likely because these features are more difficult to implement, allowing only those clubs with the time and expertise to implement them. These websites did not use any communications space features.

**T**here were also usage differences between upper and lower level clubs on

social media pages. A higher proportion of upper level clubs provided news to current members (information space) and had more discourse occurring amongst members on the pages (communications space). Many of the lower level clubs had set up social media pages and were not using them. An effective social media presence requires a commitment of time by clubs that may be difficult for lower clubs to find. There was little use of transactions space features on social media pages.

**O**verall, when considering the digital divide, upper level clubs adopted club-initiated websites and social media at a higher rate than lower level clubs. Differences in levels of usage also existed for those features that require more expertise to implement and/or require constant attention to function effectively.

**T**he study also uncovered some other factors that influenced how local sporting clubs adopted and used different Internet applications.

**T**he study has several practical implications. In relation to resource poverty and the digital divide in clubs,

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sport governing bodies and sporting leagues/associations should understand that there can be differences with regard to Internet usage amongst their clubs and that different strategies may be needed to support volunteers in lower level clubs to use the Internet effectively. The article provides a number of suggestions for this.

**T**he results of the study were presented to the England and Wales Cricket Board (at Lords Cricket Ground, London), England Athletics (Birmingham), Cricket Victoria (Melbourne) and Athletics Victoria (Melbourne).

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY

## WHO'S LEFT? WHO'S RIGHT?

The Facebook pages of 43 far-right and 31 far-left groups in Australia were analysed by a research team including Victoria University's **Mario Peucker** and **Thomas J. Fischer** to help understand how these groups define themselves – and each other. The survey, undertaken between January and July, revealed that China was a rallying topic for the far-right and represented a key theme on their Facebook pages, with popular posts expressing hostility towards China and Chinese people. Increased discussion about China coincided with a rise in cases of COVID-19 in Europe and President Trump's description of COVID-19 as a 'foreign' and 'Chinese' virus.



TRUMP CALLED IT 'THE CHINESE VIRUS'  
[SOURCE: ABC NEWS]

Discussion about COVID-19 also led to anti-minority mobilisation on far-right pages, including anti-Muslim narratives, showing that international events were weaponised by the far-right to promote exclusionary agendas. Discussion about the left and the Black Lives Matter movement increased sharply in far-right groups at a time when protests against institutional racism spread internationally. The Australian far-right's interest in BLM protests in the US reflects a broader and increasingly studied trend of internationalisation of the far-right, whereby nationalist groups draw on international events to support their agendas and build relationships with far-right groups in other countries. Popular posts on far-right pages attempted to discredit BLM and depict the movement as violent.

*'The report does not aim to draw any equivalences between the ideologies or actions of the far-right and the far-left. Instead, it seeks to understand how they interact online, and in doing so examine how central the opposition to the "other side" is to their self-definition. This understanding is an important element of assessing the nature of far-right and far-left movements and their mobilisation. The authors of this briefing*

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*recognise that far-right and far-left ideologies and movements are radically opposed in values, ethical standpoints and goals, and are not meant to be considered as equivalents at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum.'*

The report was co-authored by **Cécile Guerin** and **Jacob Davey** from the London-based think tank Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

The collaborative project is part of the University's involvement in the Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS), an international Deakin-led consortium of eight universities and community groups. Dr **Peucker** also presented the findings of this report at the online workshop entitled 'The Online Presence of Australian Far-Right Extremism', organised by the Lowy Institute, in partnership with the Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET), the research arm of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.

([https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d48cb4d61091100011eded9/t/5fbd6e90b80a0221e87dabe2/1606250196323/The+Interplay+Between+Australia\\_Political+Fringes\\_final.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d48cb4d61091100011eded9/t/5fbd6e90b80a0221e87dabe2/1606250196323/The+Interplay+Between+Australia_Political+Fringes_final.pdf))

A related report also involving Dr Peucker, 'Dissenting citizenship? Understanding vulnerabilities to right-wing extremism on the local level', was jointly written by Professor **Ramon Spaaij**, Associate Professor **Debra Smith** and Dr **Scott Patton**. The report presents the outcomes of 14 months of work, in partnership with City of Greater Bendigo, City of Melton and City of Yarra, funded by the Victorian State Department of Justice and Community Safety. The study explores far-right dynamics at the local level, locally specific circumstances that increase community resilience and vulnerabilities to far-right mobilisation, as well as prevention and early intervention measures by local stakeholders.

As part of the project, Dr Peucker ran a series of local stakeholder workshops, hosted by the three partnering councils, to present the study findings. The main purpose of the workshops was to facilitate a discussion among local council, police, community groups and other key stakeholders on how these findings can inform future policies, programs and initiatives aimed at preventing and tackling community conflicts and polarisation. He also presented the findings of this study at a number of other occasions, including a



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Victoria Police workshop and at meetings of the Australasian Intercultural Cities Network.

In October 2020, Dr Peucker wrote an opinion piece on ABC Religion and Ethics on the terminology around far-right extremism in Australia, ‘Should we stop referring to some extremists as “right-wing”?’ , and an article for the Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) with the title: ‘Alternative Epistemologies of the Radical Right: How Grand Narratives and the Quest for Truth offer Recognition and a Sense of Belonging.’

Also in October, Dr Peucker was invited by **Alaa Elzokm**, the Imam of Heidelberg Mosque and executive member of the Board of Imams Victoria, to participate in the online event ‘A Dialogue with the Imam: Understanding Islamophobia’, sharing the panel with vice-president of the Islamic Council of Victoria, **Adel Salman**, and

**Inaz Janif**, a teacher and active community activist. The online event was attended by around 70 people and live-streamed on Facebook.

## PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE AMONG MUSLIM COUPLES

A program to develop and pilot Islamically sensitive, family violence primary prevention pre-marriage counselling resources and training for Muslim couples has been developed by the Sir Zelman Cowen Centre (SZCC), in partnership with Benevolence Australia.

The program is entitled *Good Beginnings: Pre-marriage counselling resources for Muslim Couples*.



SZCC ASSISTANT PROJECT MANAGER, AYA EL KADY, RUNNING A WORKSHOP [SOURCE: VICTORIA UNIVERSITY]

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The program aims to pre-empt later marital difficulties by providing faith-based strategies for building equitable and respectful partnerships. It is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services as part of their Community led projects to prevent violence against women and their children.

Currently conducting public consultations with Victoria's diverse Muslim communities, the program's research team will use this feedback and to adapt and refine existing pre-marriage counselling resources to the needs of Muslim couples.

Next year, the resources will be piloted via a train-the-trainer program for Imams and marriage celebrants, who will use the resources to provide couples with faith-informed pre-marriage guidance.

Feedback from the pilot will then be used to adapt and refine the resources, which will be made publicly available to Muslim communities in Victoria and Australia in 2022.

As **Meriem Abida**, CEO of Benevolence, explains: 'the resources will provide community and religious leaders with engaging interactive exercises, based in faith that will help couples manage common stress points in relationships such as parenting and financial decision-making.'

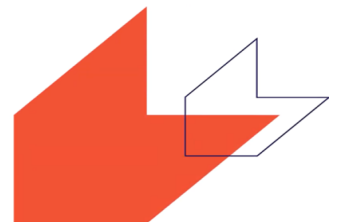
Director of SZCC, Professor **Kathy Laster**, adds: 'the program is a Victorian first and will provide "just in time" guidance to couples by tying primary prevention strategies to marriage – a milestone in the personal journeys of couples'.

The program builds on the shared expertise of SZCC and Benevolence Australia. A recognised leader in innovative strengths-based programs and intercultural community development, the Centre partners with culturally diverse communities to undertake research and community outreach to increase access to justice and address the drivers of violence against women and their children. Since 2015, it has worked in partnership with Victoria's Muslim communities to deliver tailored community capacity build programs in the areas of family violence, family law, leadership and governance.

Watch the video about 'Good Beginnings' here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgjYswfvP70>

## Good Beginnings:

Pre-marriage counselling  
resources for Muslim couples



SIR ZELMAN  
COWEN CENTRE



VICTORIA  
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'GOOD BEGINNINGS' LOGO [SOURCE: SIR ZELMAN COWEN CENTRE]



# SCHOOL FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY

## MELBOURNE IS HOSPITABLE ONCE MORE

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This is a short greeting and update from the School for the Visitor Economy as we come to the end of a long, strange and challenging year.

The visitor economy was the sector most seriously impacted by the pandemic, but after a year of some of the biggest challenges ever faced, we come to the end of the year with cause for celebration. With the control of the spread of covid-19, we are seeing travel restrictions removed and we are seeing most parts of the tourism and hospitality industries opening again within restrictions.

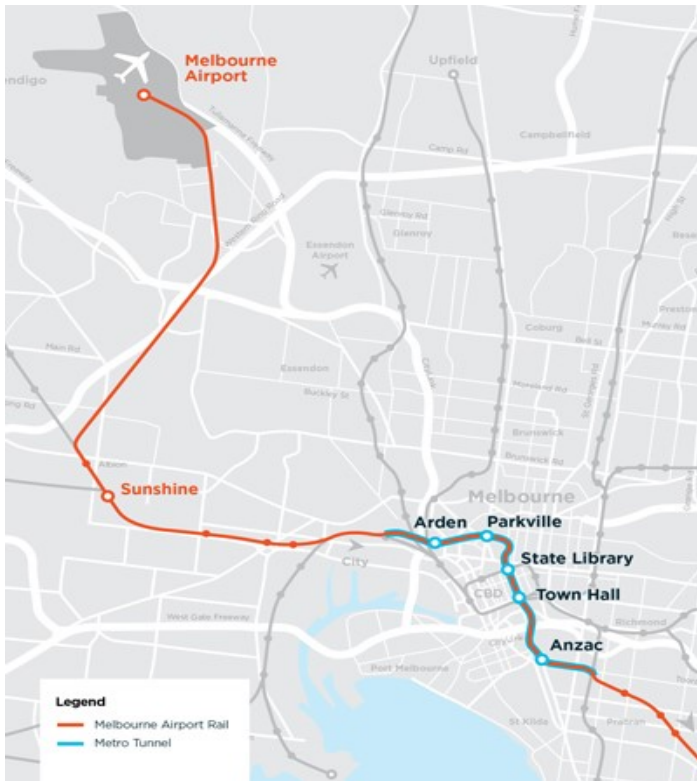
We are also seeing considerable support for industry recovery from the Victorian government with the recent announcement of a \$465 million 'Tourism Recovery Package' (<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/visit-victoria-experiencing-best-home>) that includes incentives for people to travel locally, infrastructure funding and support

for marketing of Victoria. Importantly for our region, part of this package includes an \$84 million commitment for the Masterplan Redevelopment of the Werribee Open Range Zoo. This will be a major boost to the region that will significantly increase visitation and jobs in Melbourne's West. If you want to hear more about this, please join us at our next 'Recovery Conversation' that we are co-hosting with Western Melbourne Tourism (WMT) on 2 December where will hear more about the plans from **Glen Holland**, Executive Officer of the Zoo.

The other major announcement is the Melbourne Airport Rail Link with the interchange lines at Footscray and Sunshine. (<https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/melbourne-airport-rail>) This connection will generate enormous opportunities for direct and indirect visitor services. But we still have a way to go until we see full recovery in the industry.

It will be some time before we see a return to international leisure and business travel, or the staging of the major events that are so central to Victoria's reputation as the 'events capital' of Australia. So those sectors that rely on international, business and events travel, will take time to reactivate at full capacity.

# SCHOOL FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY



THE MELBOURNE AIRPORT RAIL LINK [SOURCE: <https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/>]

The focus of efforts through the School for the Visitor Economy has been to work with industry on recovery planning with a focus on identifying education, training and research needs going forward. With our partners at the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC), we are soon to complete our state-wide study of the impacts of bushfire and the pandemic on the visitor economy and to map how we might build resilience to shocks going forward. We look forward to reporting on the outcomes of that project at Visit Victoria's annual update

at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in February.

We have also been working with our industry advisory group on defining skills needs for the industry in the future. Ironically, the skills and labour shortages that were such a problem prior to the pandemic are re-appearing with the absence of much of the temporary labour that has been so important to the sector. But the priority is very much on enhancing digital capability, leadership, innovation and data analytics across the industry.

As we plan for 2021, the aim will be on how to develop and deliver this training so that it is accessible, effective and aligned with the goals of building resilience and sustainability. But please see our webpage for more details of our activities and plans and I wish everyone the best over the holiday season. (<https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/our-teaching-colleges-schools/visitor-economy>) We all deserve a rest!



SOURCE: DR JOANNE PYKE, DIRECTOR, SCHOOL FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY

# FROM THE DESK OF THE ACTING DIRECTOR

## NEW CEO AND HEAD OF CURATION AT THE HELLENIC MUSEUM

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**S**arah Craig has been appointed the new CEO and Head of Curation at the Hellenic Museum. We thank outgoing CEO **John Tatoulis** for his strong support of the Museum's partnership with Victoria University, and wish him well in the next stage of his career.

**P**rofessor **Mikel Duke** has been appointed the President of the World Association of Membrane Societies.

**A**ssociate Professor **Christopher Sonn** has been elected a Fellow of the Society for Community Research and Action, awarded for 'unusual and outstanding contributions or performance in community research and/or action'. His contributions have focused on the lived experience of migrant populations, racialised people, and other marginalised groups in Australia and South Africa. Among his publications is *Social Psychology and Everyday Life* (2/e, 2020).

**H**onorary Research Fellow in Ecology, Dr **Megan O'Shea** appeared in a major

article on the Western Grasslands (*The Age*, 25 July, pp. 15-27).



DR MEGAN O'SHEA WANTS THE GRASSLANDS SAVED [PHOTOGRAPHER: JUSTIN McMANUS; SOURCE: THE AGE]

**E**conomist **Janine Dixon** is cited for her research into how women have been faring in the paid labour force during the pandemic (*The Age*, 1 November, p. 19) With her colleague **Philip Adams**, she has also been quoted for their research into some of the productivity costs of the lockdown (*Australian Financial Review*, 19 August, p.9).

**T**wo of our alumni, **Marcus Brown** and **Jarrold Milani**, have successfully launched a new company, Forbidden Foods, on the stock exchange (*The Age*, 4 September, p. 2)

# FROM THE DESK OF THE ACTING DIRECTOR

Second-year early childhood education student, **Phoebe Wong**, was interviewed talking about the difficulties of practicum experience during the lockdown. (*The Age*, 31 August, p. 15)

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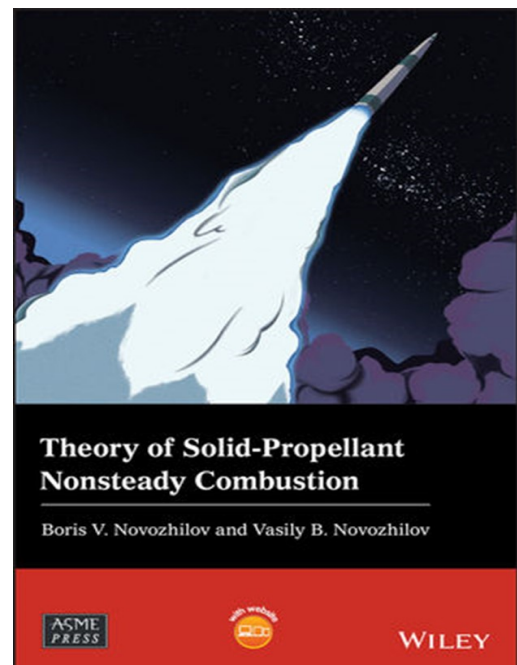
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY EDUCATION STUDENT  
PHOEBE WONG [PHOTOGRAPHER: JASON SOUTH;  
SOURCE: THE AGE]

**Bill Swannie**, legal academic in the College of Law and Justice, has recently had an article published in the *Adelaide Law Review* on the relationship between law prohibiting racial vilification, on one hand, and laws prohibiting racial discrimination, on the other.

The article examines the speech/conduct distinction, and asks whether racially offensive speech should be treated simply as harmful conduct. Therefore, courts should focus on the effects of such conduct on victims, rather than the public interest in free speech.

Fellow of the Sir Zelman Cowen Centre, **David Thomson**, has attacked ‘the government’s plan to drive students away from arts and commerce degrees by inflating the cost and pushing them into cheaper teaching degrees’ as ‘wrong-headed’. (Letters, *The Age*, 23 June, p. 18)

**Robert Pascoe** has been appointed to the editorial board of the new journal, *Diasporic Italy: Journal of the Italian American Studies Association*. Anyone with an interest in publishing their work in Italian migration studies should write to him.



# FROM THE DESK OF THE ACTING DIRECTOR

## NEW BOOKS

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**M**athematics Professor **Vasily Novozhilov** has co-authored a book with his late father, Professor **Boris V. Novozhilov** (1930-2017), who was a Chief Researcher, The Semenov Institute of Chemical Physics, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow. Their book, *Theory of Solid-Propellant Nonsteady Combustion*, summarises theoretical approaches to the problem within the framework of the Zeldovich-Novozhilov (ZN-) theory. This book contains equations governing unsteady combustion and applies them systematically to a wide range of problems of practical interest.

**D**r **Jean Hopman's** new book, *Surviving Emotional Work for Teachers* was launched in late November.

**C**onstructing Pragmatist Knowledge, the latest book from Dr **Neil Hooley**, reintroduces an explicit and systematic philosophical approach to education through American Pragmatism, expanding and detailing the practice of pragmatism itself for practitioners across various fields of social action.

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A/Prof Randall Robinson

Acting Director, Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities

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