

TOWARDS PROTECTING COUNTRY

Victoria University's
2021 Sustainability Report



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Victoria University (VU) acknowledges, recognises and respects the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung and Wadawurrung/Wathaurung of the Kulin on our Melbourne campuses, and the Gadigal and Guring-gai people of the Eora Nation on our Sydney campus. These groups are the custodians of University land and have been for many centuries.

We acknowledge that the land on which our campuses stand is the place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation, and renewal. The Kulin and Eora peoples' living culture continues to have a unique and important role in the life and culture of these regions.

VU is committed to Protecting Country to build better relationships and equal partnerships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. All staff, students and visitors to VU should acknowledge, understand and respect the significance of recognising and respecting Traditional Owners.



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A MESSAGE FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

Our planet is at a crossroads.

Each year, we see more severe weather impacts, loss of biodiversity and extinction. However, awareness of climate change is growing and so is the impetus for rapid action. Universities like Victoria University (VU) are crucial to that process.

In all that we do, we have a responsibility to improve the health and wellbeing of our local and global communities and the planet we share. Through our research, community engagement, advocacy, campus operations, and educating the next generation of changemakers and leaders – we are part of the movement to create a better future.

In 2021, we further strengthened our commitment by developing the new VU Strategic Plan 2022-2028. Central to the plan is a focus on Protecting Country, where we acknowledge that Indigenous

voices and standpoints will guide our way forward.

Our alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) underpins our purpose as a public institution. It is essential. It inspires our practices and aims to enhance climate outcomes in a real, trackable and traceable way.

There is much to do. We are proud to respond to the urgent call to action in the west of Melbourne and the world.

Professor Adam Shoemaker
Vice-Chancellor and President
Victoria University



**OUR SDG IMPACT
IN FOCUS**

VU
RANKED TOP 200
GLOBALLY

FOR **THE** IMPACT RANKINGS



2021
WINNER
OF THE
AUSTRALIAN
FINANCIAL
REVIEW

HIGHER
EDUCATION
AWARDS

FOR TEACHING
AND LEARNING
EXCELLENCE

FIVE
STAR
RATING

FOR FIRST
GENERATION
STUDENTS*

51% **FIRST IN**
FAMILY
STUDENTS

AND

24% **LOW SES**
STUDENTS

RANKED
=10TH

GLOBALLY FOR
SDG 16:

PEACE,
JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS

IN THE IMPACT
RANKINGS

NET ZERO

BY 2025

CLIMATE
ACTION PLAN

#1

UNIVERSITY

IN
AUSTRALIA

FOR
EMPLOYABILITY
SKILLS*

* 2021 Employer Satisfaction Survey

* Good Universities Guide 2021

FROM PLANETARY HEALTH TO PROTECTING COUNTRY

More than ever, people are conscious of their environmental impact, their cultural impact and the future of the world we share. Universities have a responsibility to formalise actions, institutionally verbalise these sentiments and provide a construct from which their staff, students and communities can see active participation in global solution making, progressive inclusivity and social progress.

The way Victoria University (VU) demonstrated and defined our commitment was a key conversation when developing a new strategic direction in 2021. It resulted in our elevation from *Planetary Health* to *Protecting Country* as our guiding principle.

“

LET'S BE UPFRONT ON HOW A RELATIONSHIP TO COUNTRY FOR THE UNIVERSITY ACTUALLY MEANS WE HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE, PLACE AND PLANET.

”

KAREN JACKSON,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MOONDANI BALLUK

DEVELOPING PROTECTING COUNTRY

The year 2020 saw the launch and strengthening of our *Planetary Health* focus, which brought our sustainability efforts across teaching, learning, research and community engagement to the fore. It kickstarted new conversations and embedded place-based planetary health in what we did daily. In the following year, as immersion deepened and understanding broadened, new – but age old – themes emerged.

While developing the new Strategic Plan in 2021, there was a significant discussion on our internal crowd-sourcing platform ‘The Workshop’ on how Planetary Health could be expanded with clear respect and acknowledgement of the First Nations cultures that have protected lands for eons.

Protecting Country became one of the five key strategic drivers of our new Strategic Plan. It underpins everything that we do, and everything that we are. Our goal is to be respected globally for excellence in Indigenous-led cultural, social and climate solutions that speak explicitly to SDGs.

“Now, I realise that a lot of people see the word Country - especially with a capital C and think it’s specifically for Aboriginal people. And yep, it is. But what it means in short is people, place and planet.

Country for Moondani Balluk and other Aboriginal people does not just mean the physical environment. Country includes all living things. It incorporates people, plants and animals. It embraces the seasons, stories and creation spirits. Country is both a place of belonging and a way of believing.

Let’s be upfront on how a relationship to Country for the University actually means we have a relationship with people, place and planet. Also, using the word Country signifies to Aboriginal people that we are serious about our commitment to participation and success, signifies to our colleagues that we are serious about planetary health, and signifies to the external community that we care deeply about marginalised communities and Country.”

Karen Jackson, Executive Director Moondani Balluk

The first VU Protecting Country webinar was held with close to 400 people attending on 7 October 2021. It centred on the stories and insights of Traditional Owners, Aboriginal climate activists and VU Aboriginal academic staff.

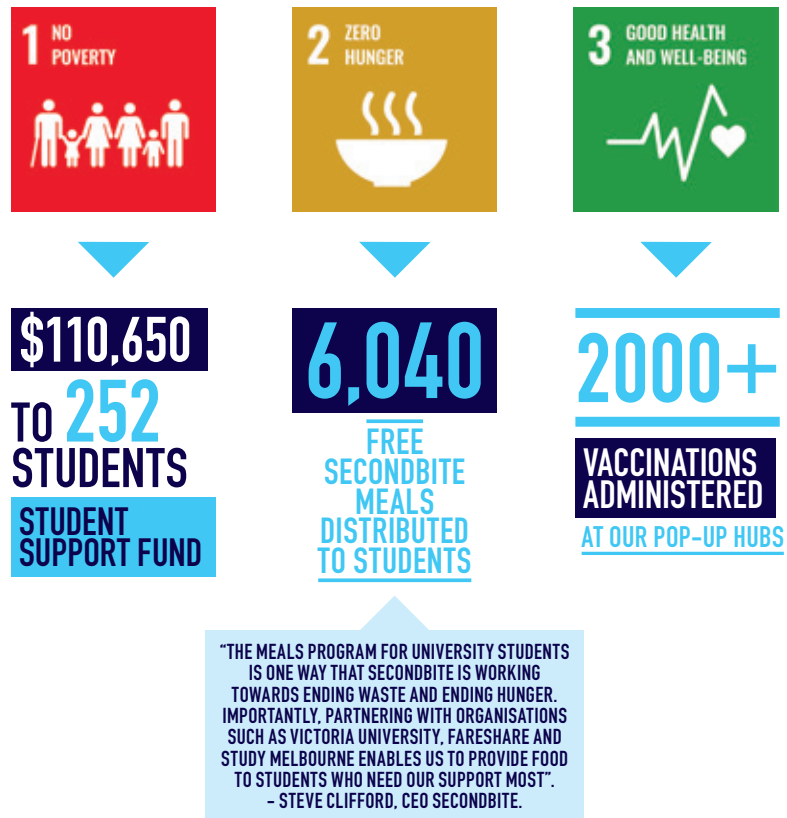
Letters from the Vice-Chancellor to Traditional Owner Registered Aboriginal Parties were distributed throughout the year.

They aimed to give recognition and emphasise the University’s commitment to ensuring Aboriginal voice, knowledge and wisdom is respected and listened to at all our campus locations.

Our renewed focus into Protecting Country started in 2021 and becomes more real in 2022 and beyond, as the University begins work under the direction of the new Strategic Plan.



HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN CHALLENGING TIMES



This year saw the state of Victoria experiencing rolling lockdowns. Victoria University (VU) is in the west of Melbourne, which – aside from being one of the fastest growing populations in Australia – was also disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

As the key education institution and a leading employer in the region, VU rolled out a number of initiatives to support our community, our students and our staff.

This included a range of prevention and awareness initiatives to enhance health, safety and wellbeing at VU – as well as programs that reached and benefited local communities.

In partnership with the community, we also undertook research to demonstrate the impact of the pandemic on the region. Real-world research is critical to our purpose and mission, and we actively seek to translate outcomes, working to influence local decision makers to support policies in preventative health.

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY-WESTERN HEALTH ALLIANCE

One of our most visible partnerships is with the major health provider in the region - Western Health. Adjacent to our Footscray Park campus, towering cranes indicate the sheer scale of the new Footscray Hospital under construction, signifying a new era of collaboration between VU and Western Health.

Underpinned by a newly formed alliance plan and co-location at Footscray and Sunshine, the relationship has deepened across teaching, research, and engagement. Significant achievements this year include:

- Increased joint research projects, such as the WaitList Project, which supports the health and wellbeing of patients on orthopaedic waiting lists, seeking to reduce their dependency on surgical outcomes.
- The Wellerly Project, which seeks to improve health care and treatment for acute and chronic conditions for older adults through exercise regimes, part of a preventative health approach.

- Western Health hired students from across the university to support their surge workforce demand, including over 50 paramedic students, approximately 250 diploma students, and countless nurses and health assistants as vaccinators or support workers.
- Working with the Western Health Foundation to roll out a range of thank you initiatives for frontline workers.
- Actively seeking to improve the Graduate Program recruitment rate for VU Nursing and Midwifery students. Graduate placements for Nursing went from 3% in 2020 to 39% in 2021 – a remarkable turnaround considering the pandemic.



PLAYING OUR PART TO REDUCE COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

In a densely populated part of Melbourne’s West, we facilitated two pop-up vaccination clinics. Located close to our Footscray Park campus, over 2,000 first dose vaccinations were administered with the support of the Department of Health, Western Health and Dr Mukesh Haikerwal.

The pop-up clinic returned three weeks later to deliver second doses and played a critical role in boosting vaccination rates in the West, during a time of lockdown and significant spread of the virus across the region.

Throughout the year, pop-up clinics were also located at our Footscray Park, Footscray Nicholson, Sunshine, St Albans and Werribee campuses, accessible to a population of over 116,000.

A testing site was also established by IPC Health at the Werribee campus car park during the 2021 lockdown.



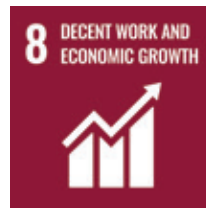
DEVELOPING MENTAL HEALTH LEADERSHIP

VU was one of five Victorian universities that participated in the hands-on, government-funded Applied Mental Health Leadership program.

Through applied training, this program equipped leaders with the practical skills required to create mentally healthy workplace environments at VU. These skills were shared with staff across the organisation, raising awareness among colleagues at all levels and empowering them to positively impact these environments.

“The Applied Mental Health Leadership program provided me with knowledge to improve my understanding of mental health issues and useful tools to work with my team to reduce psychosocial risks in the workplace.”

Program participant



PRIORITISING WELLBEING IN 15 MINUTES

In a strong example of cross-disciplinary collaboration, a team of VU experts in the fields of psychology, physical activity, and mental health worked together to develop the *VU Elevenses program*, a free, evidence-based online mental health and wellbeing program open to all.

Delivered through daily 15 minute sessions, the program targeted six lifestyle areas including physical activity, healthy relationships, improving sleep and stress management and has had over 2,300 views on YouTube.

“It’s been mind-blowing. It’s been inspiring. It’s been educational. It’s taught me strategies. It’s given me physical, mental, and different perspectives to think about how to do things better during this lockdown COVID.”

Program participant



SUPPORTING PEOPLE TO STAY ACTIVE AT HOME

The VU Sport team, who run the programs in our fitness and aquatic centres, seized the opportunity to expand their hugely successful online fitness programs in 2021, engaging with staff, students and the wider community over two year of lockdowns.

They ran up to 19 sessions per week, inviting people to join via Zoom where a personal trainer would direct the exercise and another personal trainer engaged with the group, providing progressions and regressions on the exercises to ensure everyone could participate.

Each session was as inclusive as possible, using household objects and ending with an open mic group chat. Not only did participants see physical improvements, but 80 per cent of surveyed participants reported improvement in their mental health and wellbeing and boosted energy whilst working remotely.

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY (VU) IS IN THE WEST OF MELBOURNE, WHICH – ASIDE FROM BEING ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING POPULATIONS IN AUSTRALIA – WAS ALSO DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED BY THE PANDEMIC.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

The future of our planet depends on the actions of many. Our infrastructure, campus operations, policy decisions and research projects influence our sustainability effort - creating meaningful impact for people, place and planet.

This year, Australia was on the world stage, with global leaders at COP26 in Glasgow calling on our federal government to commit to net-zero emissions targets.

As an Australian university, Victoria University (VU) aligned with the national higher education sector, in seeking to publicly demonstrate a commitment to global sustainability through people, research, policy, and practice.

While our output directly addresses challenges of Melbourne's west, our research can be applied to issues facing the world, actively generating solutions, advancing the circular economy, and reducing waste and carbon emissions.

INNOVATION THAT IS DRIVING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

In 2021, our Innovation Hubs program, with \$22 million funding from the Victorian Government's Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund (VHESIF) have been the centrepiece in the University's SDG effort.

Led by VU Research, this program is delivering research and engagement activities using expertise from all academic areas of VU from VU Polytechnic to our First Year College through to our research institutes, the Institute of Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities, and the Institute for Health and Sport.

The Innovation Hubs are activating opportunities through partnership development, acceleration and incubation programs to develop innovation and entrepreneurial capabilities in Melbourne's West.

THIS YEAR, AUSTRALIA WAS ON THE WORLD STAGE, WITH GLOBAL LEADERS AT COP26 IN GLASGOW CALLING ON OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO COMMIT TO NET-ZERO EMISSIONS TARGETS.



90%
OF THE VU CITY TOWER'S
CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL WAS
RECYCLED



CARBON EMISSIONS REDUCED BY 62%*

*2021 compared with 2019, including electricity offsets



4 INNOVATION HUBS
◆ SUSTAINABLE FUTURES
◆ JOBS AND SKILLS
◆ EDUCATION STRONGER COMMUNITIES



9TH GLOBALLY FOR SPORT SCIENCE*

* Shanghai Ranking 2021 Global Ranking of Sport Science Schools and Departments



RECYCLING THE EVERYDAY INTO NEW MATERIAL

Everyday waste can be repurposed and given a new life. Part of the VU Innovations Hub, our researchers are rethinking the ways we use waste, and at the same time revolutionising material-use in a range of sectors.

“Translating our research findings into commercially viable applications has the potential to reduce the volume of plastic waste going to landfill, while also lessening the building sector’s reliance on extracted natural resources.”

Associate Professor Zora Vrcelj

Powder made from recycled takeaway coffee cups and other plastic waste may soon become a standard ingredient in some composite building materials.

Experimental research by the University’s College of Engineering and Science has identified potential commercial uses for eco-bricks and panels containing significant quantities of processed plastic waste.

Partnering with Wyndham City Council, the research team replaced 10 per cent of the aggregate (sand) usually used in composite mix with polyethylene (PE) powder made from used plastic coffee cups.

They measured the compressive strength, and the thermal and fire-hazard properties of bricks and panels containing PE powder.

While compression testing showed a drop in strength, it was found the material could be suitable for low-stress applications such as concrete footpaths.

Importantly, the composite material’s insulation properties improved, meaning it could potentially be beneficial for producing lightweight insulating panels.

TURNING RECYCLED GLASS INTO THE ROADS OF THE FUTURE

VU researchers are developing both a cost effective and sustainable substitute to existing aggregates used in pavements and roads.

Until now, there has been insufficient real-life field testing on how roads made from recycled aggregates would perform in the long term.

VU’s Dr Ehsan Yaghoubi, Dr Rudi van Staden, Professor Sam Fragomeni have been investigating combining demolition wastes and recycled glass to make asphalt roads, preserving natural resources. While there are many projects around the world working towards the same goal, the VU team is the first to create a product with around 80 per cent recycled aggregates, followed by a full-scale trial.

After extensive simulation testing in VU’s Footscray Asphalt Laboratory, the team partnered up with Wyndham City Council, Boral, Sustainability Victoria, and Asphaltech to lay a stretch of road at the Werribee Campus for a four-year performance test.

“How much longer can we go by cutting through mountains and using natural resources to produce aggregates? At some point everything will be depleted, so all we are trying to do is recycle and reuse what’s already out there so we can keep the resources available for future generations.”

Dr Ehsan Yaghoubi, Senior Lecturer in Civil Engineering, College of Engineering and Science.

Undertaken in collaboration with industry and community partners, the research projects are helping deliver the skills and support required for the long-term sustainable economic and social growth in Melbourne’s West. Our partners include Western Health, Western Bulldogs, Greater Western Water, John Holland, and Victorian Tourism Industry Council, to name a few.

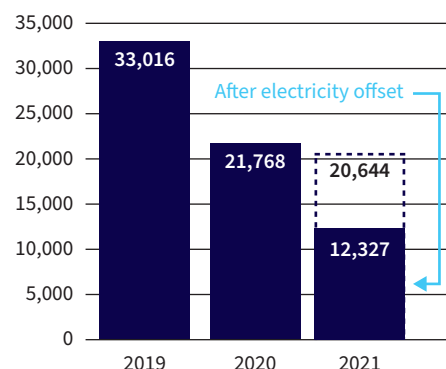
This holistic approach is only possible due to the unique dual-sector nature of Victoria University and over 100 years of education in the West of Melbourne. Leveraging strengths from vocational education, higher education, teaching, students and our deep, long-established relationships ensured the projects are truly innovative, developing from idea to testing to execution, unconstrained by traditional research frameworks.





TOWARDS NET ZERO – VICTORIA UNIVERSITY'S FRAMEWORK TO CREATE A SUSTAINABLE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

In 2021, VU, as a member of the Climate Ambition Alliance, adopted a 2025 Net Zero commitment. Our *Net Zero Plan*, developed in consultation with our students, staff and suppliers, outlines how we will get there — and we have already made great progress.



NEXT GENERATION WATER MANAGEMENT

The region of the Werribee River catchment is seeing immense residential growth, while also serving as a critical agricultural and manufacturing region for Australia. Water management, value to the community and history of use by Traditional Owners, is critical to this growth.

Professor Mikel Duke, a wastewater and environmental engineering researcher at VU and his team are working on four distinct projects for the conservation of Werribee catchment.

The first project is looking at how stormwater could be rerouted into drinking water catchments. The second project is looking at the community's relationship with the Werribee River.

The third project focuses on improving water efficiency. Having been built on the ever-shifting clay of Melbourne's basaltic plain, the water pipes of the area are particularly prone to springing leaks.

The final project learns from the history and cultural values of the area's traditional owners.

"The catchment has a rich cultural history that goes back tens of thousands of years and is still to this day an important site for First Nations peoples. We want to understand what the river and the catchment area means to these communities and learn how they've managed the water over all these centuries."

Professor Mikel Duke, Professorial Research Fellow, Membrane Science.

"We are living on the driest continent on earth, and conventional practices (e.g. desalination and recycling) are failing to overcome water resource management problems. Climate change and rapid population increase are putting water security at risk. My research addresses one of the main issues Australia must address in the near future."

Zoreh Rajabi, Engineering student

The Plan is being implemented through a range of initiatives across teaching and learning, research, information technology, facilities, behavioural changes and procurement.

Our people, policies, infrastructure, engagement with community and everyday operations are actively being revised to shape a more sustainable future.



RENEWABLE ENERGY PURCHASE

VU entered into a power purchase agreement to procure 100 per cent renewable electricity on 1 July 2021. The agreement with Cherry Tree Wind Farm of Iberdrola Australia was supported and negotiated through Schneider Electric. It will reduce carbon emissions by an average of 23,305 tonnes of CO₂-e per annum and has already reduced carbon emissions by more than 62 per cent when compared to 2019.



SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS CONSTRUCTION: VU CITY CAMPUS TOWER

The University's newest and most ambitious campus building, VU City Campus Tower completed construction in 2021. Located in the heart of Melbourne's central business district and legal precinct, the 32-level building has a 5-star green rating.

Building and construction was developed through the lens of sustainability, where 90 per cent of construction waste was recycled and environmentally sustainable finishes and fittings were incorporated in the design.

Creating a new campus from the ground up allowed us to review our procurement processes, marking a new way forward for our cafes and retail outlets, including gas free operation and the removal of single use plastic.



GREENING THE WEST AND IRAMOO GRASSLANDS

VU is helping revive native wildflowers in Melbourne's west by planting more than 2000 seedlings at its St Albans Campus – one for every Year 12 student accepted into its early-entry VU Guaranteed program.

The project brings together VU's Future Students team with the Iramoo Grassland Centre and Nursery based at VU's St Albans Campus, and VU's Moondani Balluk centre for Indigenous staff and students.

A seed library, also part of the project, will assist Iramoo Nursery to propagate and preserve these native wildflower species that go by an array of charming common names including Gold Billy Buttons, Lemon Beauty-heads and Drumsticks.

The wildflowers grow in grasslands that once covered vast amounts of Victoria's basalt plains until the destructive forces of urbanisation reduced their coverage to less than 1 per cent of their original size.

VU Future Students Program Manager Emily Bodey said the project celebrates VU's commitment to planetary health and caring for country while acknowledging the contribution VU Guaranteed students make to the wider VU community.

"Like many other students, this project feels personal. Being able to see your University encapsulate a shared vision for change in our climate condition and promote a better future for my generation of students and the world is inspiring."

Isabelle Day, former project participant

SEEDS TO SUCCESS

Seeds to Success is a volunteering program at VU's Iramoo Native Plant Nursery for students to learn about the preservation and restoration of the Indigenous grasslands adjacent to the St Albans campus and native plant propagation.



LEARNING AND TEACHING



VU'S BLOCK MODEL
WON THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW HIGHER EDUCATION AWARDS 2021
IN THE CATEGORY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING EXCELLENCE



57% STUDENT EQUITY PARTICIPATION IN TAFE
34% STUDENT EQUITY PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION (FAR EXCEEDING THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 17% AND THE NATIONAL TARGET OF 20%)
52.7% OF OUR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS ARE FIRST GENERATION, RANKING US 3RD HIGHEST IN AUSTRALIA

WE EMPOWER STUDENTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD.

As students prepare to enter the world of work, employers increasingly require skills, knowledge and a mind-set attuned to sustainability.

We empower our students to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable world by having a focus on sustainability, diversity and inclusion, and transforming lives in our courses and programs in higher and vocational education.

We are committed to being a university without borders. As a dual-sector university, we provide pathways from foundation programs right through to PhD's for people from all backgrounds to fulfil their educational and life aspirations.

Victoria University (VU) produces future-ready graduates, citizens and leaders.

LEARNING THAT CHANGES LIVES

In 2021, VU extended learning for the UN SDGs to new courses and specialisations to ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (GLOBAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusses on global supply chains for business and managing the challenges, opportunities and risks in an increasing complex and volatile world • Has a core subject Business Ethics and Sustainability, instilling the principles of corporate responsibility and sustainability.
BACHELOR OF NURSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed to offer a greater focus on mental health for contemporary nursing practice and an emphasis on cultural inclusiveness, as expressed in the learning outcome to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Exemplify cultural responsiveness, sensitivity and inclusive practice and promote the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally diverse communities.
BACHELOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends the early childhood education program with a fourth year of learning for professional leadership skills and knowledge • Includes the subject <i>Early childhood in a global context</i> for evaluating different cultural contexts and ethical frameworks for practice.

BACHELOR OF CYBER SECURITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures students are equipped to protect digital information from breaches The subject <i>Cyber law policy and professional ethics</i> provides the legal and ethical frameworks to evaluate national and global cyber security challenges.
MASTER OF NURSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialisations in Chronic Disease and Aging or Nursing Leadership The program includes a core subject or <i>Promoting Cultural Competence and Community Health</i> to work ethically for health promotion in diverse communities.
MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialisations in Health Promotion and Global Health Leadership offers the skills to effect positive change in community health and wellbeing A core subject <i>Culture and Society in Public Health</i> ensures students understand inequalities in access to health care and develop the cultural competence to address health inequalities in diverse populations.
CERTIFICATE IV IN SCHOOL BASED EDUCATION SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the skills to support children's learning for students with disabilities, on the autism spectrum disorder or who are at risk.
CERTIFICATE IV IN INDUSTRIAL AUTOMATION AND CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides the skills to select, install, set up, test, fault find, repair and maintain automated equipment associated with circuits and systems The course learning outcomes includes the skills and knowledge to implement environmental and sustainable procedures.
CERTIFICATE III IN ELECTROTECHNOLOGY ELECTRICIAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An apprenticeship course to fabricate and install electrical equipment. A specific learning outcome of the course is to implement measures for environmental sustainability.
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepares teachers and learning designers to design and develop effective online learning activities and content The course shows students how to use learning analytics to inform their approach and how to encompass individual learning needs in an online context.
INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN LEARNING AND TEACHING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new subject introduced to the postgraduate teaching, education and community development course suite Provides insight into Indigenous practices and understandings and strategies to support Indigenous perspectives and to promote reconciliation in schools.
WORKING WITH DIVERSITY IN COUNSELLING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A subject in the Master of Counselling that aims to develop competency in working with people from diverse backgrounds and to develop cultural competence to work with Indigenous communities.
CRIME AND INEQUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A subject introduced to the Bachelor of Criminology that examines the relationship of crime, inequality and disadvantage in criminal behaviour and responses to crime The subject explores why some social groups are over-represented as offenders and in rates of imprisonment.

APPLIED SUSTAINABILITY IN HEALTHCARE

The College of Health and Biomedicine, working with Western Health, has developed the Applied Sustainability in Health Care unit for all health students. The three-hour online module aims to create awareness of and commitment to sustainable health care practice with a focus on:

- Identifying the pathways that connect the environment, health, and healthcare delivery.**
- Applying a framework for sustainability in healthcare to health settings and workplaces.**
- Outlining key factors for success in place-based initiatives for sustainability in healthcare.**

Upon completion, students are empowered to start their journey as an environmental sustainability agent for change – in their studies and as a future health professional.

The unit forms part of our effort to explicitly develop graduate capability in addressing the UN SDGs in all our students, across all our courses.



CHANGE MAKERS

Change Makers evolved from a successful classroom-based experiment in social inclusion to a community-based program, widening community participation in sports clubs.

Students undertaking social analysis subjects in the School of Sports and Exercise Sciences are trained as mentors and in social research methods.



TAFE CYBER CHALLENGE

VU Polytechnic’s cyber security students battled with other TAFE teams from around Australia to defend systems from attacks. The VU Polytechnic students in the Certificate IV in Cyber Security came second in Australia and first in Victoria in the TAFE Cyber challenge.

“The challenge gave students a taste of a real working environment where they’ll need to defend systems from attacks. It was not only educational, but also fun.”

Jo Cave, Head of Cyber and Digital Transformation at VU Polytechnic

PLANETARY HEALTH HUDDLE

Around 250 staff and students participated in the 2021 Huddle, with forty different presenters and panellists. Ten sessions were organised over 20 days to identify solutions to challenges to sustainability and social justice.

The sessions covered ethical procurement and student life, student theses and VU RISE projects, community partnerships, engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals (including in courses), zero emission plans and living with COVID.



THE MENU PROJECT

VU Bachelor of Human Nutrition students helped National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) workers create healthy meals for people in supported disability accommodation. The Menu Project is a collaboration between VU and Co-Health, and supported disability accommodation providers in Melbourne’s west.

The four-week volunteer project by students provided NDIS support workers a better understanding of how to plan nutritious meals for the good health of the residents. The program is in line with recommendations of the recent federal commission for NDIS providers to have training in nutrition and menu planning.

GUIDE FOR AFL VANUATU

Students undertaking the Building and Sustaining Participation subject in the Youth Work and Sport Management degree worked with the AFL Vanuatu program to design a guide to recruit and retain girls and women in AFL.

The guide aims to improve and build the program the AFL already has in place with assistance provided by community organisations, which helps women improve their health, fitness and social engagement. The students learn to identify culturally specific strategies and good practice case studies to strengthen the enablers and to overcome the challenges to sport participation for different groups.



WOMEN BUILDING SURVEYORS PROGRAM

Forty women commenced training at VU to become building surveyors with local councils in a Victorian government program to assist women to gain professional qualifications, gain work experience and attend development opportunities. They are completing the Advanced Diploma of Building Surveying or the Bachelor of Building Surveying.

FUTURE FEMALE

Future Female 2021-22 launch event was co-sponsored by Victoria University. Future Female conduct events involving women leaders who share their experience and advice with international students to encourage them to aspire to leadership roles after graduation.

SDGS AND THE VU LIBRARY

VU Library published a new library guide, *SDGs and the VU Library*, in December 2020 and distributed to students and staff in early 2021.

The guide illustrates how VU Library is working towards making a difference to the health of the planet by contributing to the whole-of-university commitment to place-based Planetary Health. Over 1000 people have accessed it since it was launched.

VU Library provides resources to facilitate learning and teaching across the broad range of VU courses in planetary and community health, and sustainability and to support research about the health and wellbeing of people, place and planet.

OPPORTUNITY AND SUCCESS FOR ALL

Through our VU Block Model and First Year College (FYC), VU has established itself as a university with break-through solutions to growing education participation and success.

Everything starts with our admissions approach. Programs like VU Guaranteed provide VCE students certainty about their future with a guaranteed place at VU. While we consider an ATAR for some courses, it is not required for the majority.

Our one-of-a-kind VU First Year College™ (combines all discipline areas, providing the highest level of support for first year students as they successfully transition to university. Their journey continues with the VU Block Model™, a revolutionary way of learning all undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Students study one subject at a time, over four weeks, in small learner-centred classes with no lectures – accommodating work and life commitments.

Since it was established in 2018, our VU Block Model™ has closed the gap between traditional and non-traditional students, and improved academic grades across the board:

- Success rates for equity group students are at 90.4% for HE
- In particular, we have a 91.1% success rate for first generation students.

VU Polytechnic, the University's TAFE division, also ensures success for all students through award-winning interactive eLearning models with smaller class sizes and innovative, flexible, hands-on learning.

Our teaching design and delivery is recognised as gold standard: we received eight awards at the 2021 LearnX Awards, including Diamond for Best Pandemic Response in Learning and Development, and Technical Skills Training.

FIRST NATIONS PEDAGOGY

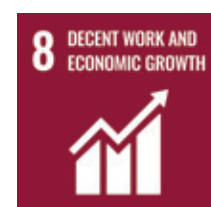
Moondani Balluk academic staff continue to deliver critical contemporary Aboriginal units in the VU Block Model to many students in varied disciplines.

In 2021, further work in Aboriginal pedagogy and praxis was enabled through a Moondani Balluk team teaching approach. This is important not only to student experience but to ensuring cultural safety for Aboriginal academic staff in our classrooms.

IDENTIFYING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

The VU's Centre for International Research on Education Systems collaborated with Charles Sturt University to release a report, funded by Collier Charitable Foundation, entitled *Supporting care-experienced young people into higher education*.

It highlighted the systemic barriers to higher education for the estimated 45,000 young people raised in out-of-home care, providing recommendations to universities, career advisors and others on how to best support their transition to higher education.



RESEARCH WITH IMPACT

**OUR RESEARCH STRENGTH
AND REPUTATION PROVIDE
A STRONG FOUNDATION
FOR LIFE-CHANGING
AND WORLD-CHANGING
RESEARCH OUTCOMES.**



We are committed to Protecting Country with high-impact social-justice and translational research. We recognise First Nations People and Indigenous knowledges and embed these within the practices of the University. Our research strength and reputation provide a strong foundation for life-changing and world-changing research outcomes.

Our researchers work together, across disciplines, and in partnership with industry to solve real-world problems.

Planetary Health is an important focus of our research, and we hold sustainable development at the centre of our identity and moral purpose.

A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL: RETELLING HISTORY THROUGH CABARET

Centring the Indigenous voice is a driving principle informing research activity in the Protecting Country space.

190 NEWLY FUNDED
RESEARCH PROJECTS
WERE CONTRACTED

\$34.6 MILLION
TOTAL VALUE

936
PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS
(UP 7% FROM 2020)

30.69
CITATIONS PER RESEARCHER FTE
(UP 5.9% FROM 2020)*

*Source: DET and SCOPUS

The Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit and the Aboriginal History Archive, a nationally significant infrastructure housed at VU, leads this research using creative expression and public engagement to retell Australian history through an Indigenous lens.

In 2021, research supported through an ARC Discovery grant was translated into a theatre performance for public accessibility. 'A Fight for Survival' features untold stories of community and cultural resistance to the closure of Northland Secondary School.

This largely untold story brings to life the true meaning of community, justice and resistance and spotlights the tenacity of First Nations children and community members such as Professor Gary Foley's son, Bruce, and Muthama Sinnappan, as they fought to save their school Northlands Secondary College nearly 30 years ago.

Excerpt from the 'A Fight for Survival' media release

GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN SPORT INFLUENCED BY UNIFORMS

VU's Women in Sport program received a \$20,000 Change Our Game Victorian Government research grant to investigate the intersection between uniforms and the confidence levels of girls and young women to participate in sport.

The national study pointed to simple change strategies to support more inclusive participation. The findings were translated into practical action to assist school and sport sectors develop policies and practices focused on making girls feel comfortable and confident in their sports uniforms.

"This research will help guide decision-makers at community clubs and schools, providing valuable insight into what aspects of sports uniforms are important to girls and how some uniform options could be a barrier to participation."

Victorian Minister for Community Sport, Ros Spence

WYNDHAM ANTI-RACISM SUPPORT NETWORK

The Wyndham Anti-Racism Support Network, coordinated by the Wyndham Community and Education Centre, was established as a result of a successful pilot project between Wyndham City Council and VU researchers (2019-2021). It is the first anti-racism support network of its kind in Australia.

It also saw the production of the *Wyndham Roadmap* which outlines practical ways reporting and support services could be tailored to the specific needs of the city's diverse communities.

This work is now being extended to develop similar anti-racism support networks in close collaboration with local communities, including a project in Melbourne's north in partnership with Whittlesea Community Connections, and a twin-project in the south-east with the City of Casey and Greater Dandenong City Councils.

At the time, the school was one of the only Victorian schools with an approach to learning that drew on Aboriginal knowledge systems and cultures, nurturing disadvantaged students and Koori students in particular.





PATHWAYS IN PLACE: CO-CREATING COMMUNITY CAPABILITIES

In partnership with Griffith University, the Mitchell Institute at VU established an innovative program of research and action that supports the flourishing of children and young people in two communities: Brimbank in Victoria and Logan in Queensland.

The Mitchell Institute is leading the program stream focused on pathways through to education and employment (in young people aged 15 to 24), working closely with the Brimbank community, to co-create evidence-informed responses to local challenges and build capacity for lasting systemic change.

The Pathways in Place-Victoria University team have developed methods and/or processes for situation analysis, problem identification, and monitoring and evaluation that are scalable and can be applied by researchers, practitioners, decision-makers, and policy-makers to address different problems across different communities.

POLICY IMPACT FOR BETTER SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

In recognition of the significant work done regarding the energy sector, the Victorian Government awarded Victorian Energy Policy Centre (VEPC) \$1.7 million to continue exploring the future of energy in Victoria and Australia.

This was particularly evident in the research VEPC conducted in the lead up to the Australian Energy Market Commission’s (AEMC) Final Determination on 9 August 2021 on energy market rule changes that could allow distributors to charge customers a tariff to export their excess solar power to the grid.

In a report published June 2021 and revised 3 August 2021 with updated ABS data, *Is solar power a plaything of the well to do?*, authors Professor Bruce Mountain and Kelly Burns critiqued three equity assumptions that underpinned the Draft Determination from the AEMC, finding that there was a failure to segment rates of solar installation by whether a home was owned or rented.

The paper also found that “solar is being installed in less well-off households at a much greater rate than in better-off households,” concluding that “export charges lack a rationale in economics”.

On the basis of that research, the Victorian and Queensland governments rejected the proposal and the policy implementation by other state governments remains doubtful.

“After properly accounting for the difference between rented homes/ apartments and owned homes, the claim of a positive relationship between wealth and solar uptake evaporates.”

Professor Bruce Mountain, Director, Victoria Energy Policy Centre, Victoria University

“Realising our vision to promote the flourishing of children, young people and families is at the heart of Pathways in Place. We strive to achieve this by working with communities to co-create evidence-informed responses to local challenges and build capacity for lasting systemic change.”

Professor Melinda Craike, Director, Pathways in Place

Throughout 2021, the Mitchell Institute continued to strengthen its position as a leading policy institute — highlighting the inequalities of opportunity of access and equity of outcomes in both health and education for all Australians.



COVID-19 AND THE IMPACT ON AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

The Centre of Policy Studies (CoPS) investigated the significant economic opportunities and challenges facing our society, particularly in a COVID-19 environment.

Economic modelling of the work from home phenomena showed there will be costs alongside the personal benefits, with more urban sprawl, job flight to the biggest cities and greater economic disparities between regions.

Their *Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2050: What it means for the Australian Economy, Industries and Regions report*, compared two scenarios: business as usual and a transition to net-zero emissions by 2050, using currently available technology.

It highlighted that Australia's economy would double by 2050 if it transitioned to net-zero emissions.

The release of the report was timely as the Federal Government released its own modelling where it outlined a 75 per cent reduction in emissions with a further 25 per cent to be met by yet to be developed technological innovation.

The Centre of Policy Studies collaborated with China's University of International Business and Economics, to model the energy and economic changes flowing from carbon neutrality. To achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 China will need to substantially change its energy consumption structure, but the cost of the reduction on China's macro economy is limited, with an expected 1.36 per cent reduction in GDP.



IMPROVING MOVEMENT AND ACCESSIBILITY WITH WEARABLE DEVICES

Professor Rezaul Begg is working with the University of Tsukuba and CyberDyne in Japan to optimise the HAL Exoskeleton Joint Control. The HAL (Hybrid Assistive Limb) exoskeleton, developed by CyberDyne, uses an impaired person's residual muscle activation signals to control the motor-driven exoskeleton for limb movement.

Professor Begg will contribute his innovative 'smart' joint-controls to tailor HAL to individual patients, drawing on VU's expertise in machine learning and gait biomechanics.

The research team are developing wearable devices for single-joint or whole-limb function, and to minimise injuries due to falls. In addition, the technology could be applied to people who have experienced restricted movement due to spinal cord injury or stroke.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: BUILDING STRENGTH AND CAPABILITY

A three-year, high-impact project looking at how practitioners can achieve diversity and inclusion in emergency management organisations finished in 2021.

Led by Celeste Young in the Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities, the team partnered with the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC) to develop a process-based framework that builds upon and leverages current strengths and expertise with emergency management organisations, to support better management and measurement in this area.

It culminated in a *Male Champions of Change and National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (AFAC)* report exploring the benefits of addressing health and safety, reputational and political risk and community engagement, through improving gender and other diversity.

The project has contributed to the repositioning of the diversity and inclusion agenda as a risk-based business imperative and has developed and provided materials to support the integration of diversity and inclusion into resilience, risk and workforce planning frameworks.

"You want people to feel valued for who they are and what they can contribute to the organisation, but there are so many factors that need to come together to enable this."

Celeste Young, Research Fellow, Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities



ENGAGEMENT

Collaboration is key to advancing change. Through long-established partnerships and place-based programs run by VU in the Community, we are increasing access to educational opportunity and skills pathways while contributing to community wellbeing and sustainable economic development in the region.

Together, we are developing creative solutions for the benefit of Melbourne's West and building healthier, stronger and more resilient communities.

REGENERATIVE CITY LIVING LAB

There has never been a more critical time to work towards planetary health in a way that empowers and provides hope to young people.

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

Working with STREAT, a social enterprise which offers training and support to marginalised young people, a VU team established five key areas – Open Sauce, Urban Agriculture, Regreening and Edible Gardens, Community Tables and Planetary Health – and invited students to start developing their own projects and concepts.

One of the projects included in the initiative was an edible garden in planter boxes situated in a courtyard at the Footscray Park campus.



EVERYONE IN OUR COMMUNITY SHOULD FEEL THAT HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING ARE NOT ONLY EXCELLENT ASPIRATIONS, BUT ABSOLUTELY ACHIEVABLE.



MELTON MAYOR,
CR KATHY MAJDLIK



“With the Living Lab we wanted to create a space of regeneration. A place of social, psychological and environmental regenerative action. We wanted to put people back in touch with things that they could actually have some agency over, to connect them into those broader structural problems but in a way that helped them feel like they were taking concrete action.”

Dr Alison Baker, Senior Lecturer in Social Pedagogy



COUNCIL CONNECTIONS

VU entered a Memorandum of Understanding with Melton City Council in October.

“Everyone in our community should feel that higher education and skills training are not only excellent aspirations, but absolutely achievable.”

Melton Mayor, Cr Kathy Majdlik

This agreement sits alongside VU’s existing partnerships which focus on increasing access to education and jobs for local communities and undertaking applied research to address local challenges in the municipalities of Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Hume.



SKILLS AND CAREERS: YOUR WAY

Hume City Council and VU Polytechnic delivered an online iteration of their successful *Skills and Careers: Your Way* employability program to a group of vulnerable women in Hume.

The program is designed for the cohorts most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on women, looking to get back into the workforce or change their careers.

“The program is very helpful to us especially [as] it was designed for women attendees. It also [gave] us the chance to know that there is an organisation that [can] help us through with our career choices. The partnership of Hume and Victoria University is really good and I hope for more programs like this in Hume.”

Program participant

Participants were connected with industry specialists such as WomenCan Australia, Victorian Rail Advocate, Q1 Medical and Metricon Homes. The program included mentoring sessions and workshops with leaders, to further their skills and job readiness. Over 30 women have successfully completed the program to date.

It was also expanded to at-risk residents within the Mooney Valley municipality in partnership with Moonee Valley City Council and Belgravia Leisure and has more programs on the horizon.



MINI MADDERN

Over 12 weeks, Footscray’s Maddern Square was transformed into a dedicated play environment for children known as *Mini Maddern*. The innovative community program activated Footscray as it emerged from COVID-19 lockdown – visibly connecting VU into the local community and providing work placement for over 150 VU Early Childhood students.

“When children play they collaborate, share, talk, listen, experiment and practice developing skills. The role of our Early Childhood students is to participate in this learning, and to guide the children as they develop their thinking. They ask questions, share experiences, and wonder along with the children.

It’s so exciting for our students to be playing with young children and their families again. This is something our students missed – no amount of remote placement can replace this experience.”

Associate Professor Mary-Rose McLaren, Bachelor of Early Childhood course chair



WESTERN BULLDOGS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

VU worked with the Foundation throughout 2021 evaluating the programs and supporting their co-design to make the program delivery relevant to today’s challenges.

Over the course of the year, 93 students – from the areas of exercise science, psychology, community development, youth work and sports science – participated in placement opportunities across the Foundation, some even doing so remotely.

Evaluation of the Foundation and its programs highlighted significant improvements in the health and wellbeing of participants and making significant impact on the lives of those in the west.



NGARNGA NANGGIT

VU’s Sir Zelman Cowen Centre (SZCC) is documenting the experiences of key players who helped establish Victoria’s Koori Court nearly 20 years ago for an Australian Research Council oral history project.

Launched at the 2021 SZCC Oration on 23 June with Professor Larissa Behrendt, the three-year study will provide an intergenerational learning opportunity for Indigenous Elders to pass on their knowledge and experience to future Indigenous leaders.

The study involves Court Services Victoria and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and will result in a touring exhibition and several academic journal articles.





PROTECTING COUNTRY: LOOKING FORWARD

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES,
THE FIRST PEOPLES OF THIS
LAND, HAVE CARED FOR
COUNTRY FOR GENERATIONS.
COUNTRY IS THE LAND,
WATER, SKY AND ALL THE
LIVING THINGS THAT OCCUPY
THOSE SPACES AND EXIST
BETWEEN THEM.**

Victoria University (VU) is committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). In all that we do – our teaching and research, on our campuses and in our communities – we have a responsibility to improve the health and wellbeing of our local and global communities and the planet we share.

This commitment is now further strengthened in our new *Strategic Plan 2022-2028* through the strategic driver *Protecting Country*, where we will be guided by Indigenous voices and standpoints on these very important matters.

Protecting Country is an action-oriented pillar. It will link people, place and planet to the entire institution by focusing on First Nations' knowledge and listening to Indigenous voices and standpoints. Through this approach, we can fulfil our ambition: by 2028, Victoria University will be respected globally for the excellence of our Indigenous-led cultural, social and climate solutions.



At the heart of our commitment to Protecting Country is an unwavering focus on progressive inclusivity. As an institution founded on deep diversity, we have long been driven by collaboration and social progress. By respecting diversity, inclusivity and intersectionality, we continually add creativity and innovation.

As we look forward, we are working with our staff to define what the Protecting Country driver means to them, further shaping our plans, priorities and actions as we implement our strategy.



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Phone +61 3 9919 4000

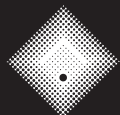
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