

### University Community

## Culturally Inclusive Social Events

Part of providing a positive experience for La Trobe University students is organising social events. While it is not always possible to cater for the whole range of cultural preferences, maintaining an awareness of cultural diversities, and providing what is practically possible at social events contributes to a culturally inclusive University.

A culturally inclusive university is one where staff and students value and explore diversity, and where staff and students actively seek to learn from other cultures. **See the La Trobe University Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice (CDIP) web page: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cdip>**

Creating and providing a culturally inclusive social environment encourages students to attend social events where they can develop contacts, make friends and enhance communication skills. Initial experiences at social events can leave students from some cultural backgrounds with a negative impression of such events. This might discourage them from attending other such events and activities. It is therefore important to 'get it right' from the beginning.

### TIPS for Planning a Social Event

- Consider diverse cultural interests when planning e.g. try to avoid dates that will coincide with religious festivals. Refer to the Cultural Calendar on the Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cdip>
- Find caterers that provide for special dietary requirements.
- Plan specific cultural events in their own right (not always as part of overall 'multicultural' events).
- For student events, include students from diverse cultural groups in the planning. They will be able to offer valuable advice as well as use their own social networks to encourage greater participation.

### Indigenous Australian peoples

- Encourage staff and volunteers providing services such as shops, clubs and committees to use appropriate Indigenous Australian terminology. **See General Information Folio 5 Appropriate Terminology, Indigenous Australian Peoples <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cdip>**
- Stating that La Trobe University is on indigenous land acknowledges the Australian social and political context.

### Suggested wording

As is the practice of La Trobe University we acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of this country.

As an institution we may acknowledge 'country' a number of ways. At significant events, a recognised local elder representing the traditional owners may be invited to perform a 'Welcome to Country'. This ceremony may be differ between groups. If the event includes a 'Welcome to Country' it should take place at the beginning of proceedings.

University staff and students may also acknowledge country. This is done by inserting the group name of the traditional owners for the location on which the event is taking place. It may be read at the beginning of proceedings. Correct pronunciation is very important. If in doubt, check with Indigenous Australian members of staff.

A culturally inclusive university is one where staff and students value and explore diversity, and where staff and students actively seek to learn from other cultures.



A simple example of an acknowledgement of country is provided below:

La Trobe University acknowledges the (insert name of the traditional owners) as the traditional owners of the land upon which the (insert name of campus) is located.

Our campuses are located in the country of the following peoples.

**Bundoora** Wurrundjeri  
**City** Wurrundjeri

<b>Bendigo</b>	Dja Dja Wurrung
<b>Shepparton</b>	Banerang or Panerang and Yorta Yorta
<b>Mildura</b>	Latji Latji and Muthi Muthi
<b>Wodonga</b>	Dudhuroa and Way Warru
<b>Beechworth</b>	Dudhuroa

If the university is hosting an event off campus organisers should seek clarification of the traditional owners from Indigenous Australian members of staff.

## Venues for Social Events

Venues play an important role in attracting students to social events. For example social functions or meetings held in hotels or similar venues can exclude students from some cultural backgrounds where entering such places is prohibited. On-campus venues are more neutral and therefore preferable. Venues should also be accessible to students with mobility impairments, older people, people with medical needs and wheelchair or scooter users.

The physical setup of an event can be crucial to its success. Many students are concerned, that should alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks be served together, it may appear as though they are accessing alcohol, therefore not respecting their

religion. So, separate the areas serving alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks, with the main gathering area in the middle.

### TIPS for choosing a venue

- Consider the needs of students from culturally diverse groups when choosing venues.
- Opt for on-campus venues where possible.
- Choose a venue with toilets that can be accessed by those with mobility impairments.
- Create meeting places for diverse cultures, including Indigenous Australian people, throughout the campus. You could start by displaying various flags, signs, brochures or posters in your area.
- Engage students from a variety of cultures to assist with creating a suitable layout at the chosen venue.

## Catering for Social Events

### Halal and kosher foods

Diet is an important aspect of life for all students, but many students experience difficulties obtaining appropriate food. There is considerable uncertainty about these foods. For example people from Islamic or Jewish faiths do not eat pork and are usually hesitant to eat at functions that serve pork because of the fear that pork dishes may have come into contact with pork during preparation.

Some elements of Jewish and Islamic dietary laws are common, while some are not. See <http://www.straightdope.com/mailbag/mjewishislamdiet.html> for major differences. It is not only the ingredients that make food/s halal or kosher, but also the way it is prepared and how it is served.

The basic elements of Muslim 'halal' food excludes any form of pork while other meats must have been slaughtered in a particular way. Halal food also includes:

- milk (from cows, sheep, camels and goats);
- honey;
- fish;
- plants which are not intoxicant;
- fresh or naturally frozen vegetables;
- fresh or dried fruits;
- legumes and nuts like peanuts, cashew nuts, hazelnuts, walnuts, etc;
- grains such as wheat, rice, rye, barley, oats etc.

### The basic elements of Jewish 'kosher' food are

- no mixing of dairy and meat;
- no pork or pork products;
- no shellfish.

For more information about kosher food, see [http://www.kosher.org.au/docs/an\\_overview\\_of\\_kosher.pdf](http://www.kosher.org.au/docs/an_overview_of_kosher.pdf)

It must be noted that if a product is kosher certified, it does not mean that it is automatically halal. While it is true that kosher certification can be used as a tool for identifying halal food, one must be very careful. There are kosher certification agencies that certify products and ingredients that are not considered kosher by many Jewish people.

### TIPS on Halal and Kosher Foods

- Serve halal and kosher food separately from the non-halal and non-kosher food.
- Provide separate serving utensils. The mixing of utensils may be an issue for a number of cultures.

### Vegetarian and vegan foods

Serving vegetarian and vegan food will cater for people from most religious and cultural backgrounds. Muslim and Jewish students are more likely to be comfortable with vegetarian food than with pork-free dishes among dishes with pork and many students from South Asia, South-East and East Asia do not eat beef so they will feel comfortable with vegetarian foods also.

Vegetarians generally will not eat anything that has to do with the slaughter of animals, including gelatine, animal-based stocks or rennet, while vegans in addition to these restrictions, do not eat any animal products, including eggs, milk, milk products or honey.

You need to provide varied and interesting vegan/vegetarian food. Simply providing salad, rice or bread is not really acceptable. A good caterer should be able to advise you.

In addition to addressing the requirements of diverse cultures, the needs of students with particular health-related dietary requirements may need to be addressed.

Food sensitivities such as lactose and gluten intolerance are surprisingly common, while some people are allergic or sensitive to particular foods, such as nuts, shellfish or egg protein.

Providing a detailed list of ingredients can allow people to select appropriate food and avoid the unpleasant and potentially dangerous consequences of eating foods containing known allergens.



## Encouraging Student Participation at Social Events

Many students are under immense pressure to perform well academically and are hesitant about participating in any activity that they see as unrelated to their academic work. Frequently, social events are seen as a distraction from study and a 'frivolous activity'. Some students can be unaware of the direct academic and professional advantages of socialising with fellow students. However, one student has encapsulated the importance of socialising:

*"The skills learnt from socialising with Australian and other international students were a key factor in my employment success. These skills include introducing myself, listening, asking questions, maintaining a conversation and discussing contentious topics with someone with a different cultural perspective. Another important aspect of socialising is the network of friends and contacts one establishes on a worldwide scale."* An international student.

The marketing strategies for many social activities on campus often focus on the easy availability of alcohol, food (usually meat) as well as a party atmosphere. Students from alternate cultures can be uncomfortable with this form of entertainment and for some it is strictly against their religious beliefs and therefore 'not negotiable'. Advertising which focuses on 'free beer, sausage sizzles and lots of fun' actively discourages attendance by some groups. So when you plan social events consider a range of different styles that appeal to people with different interests and needs.

## TIPS for Encouraging Student Participation at Social Events

- Use publicity signs that emphasise La Trobe community is multicultural and acknowledges alternate histories, events and cultural elements.
- Advertise that non-alcoholic drinks will be available.
- Advertise when vegan/vegetarian/halal/kosher food will be served.
- Consider using a number of languages in the advertising (to emphasise all students are welcome). While it would not be practical (or possible) to use ALL languages, choosing those that are known to be widely used on campus or in your area can contribute to creating an inclusive environment.
- Provide a reply slip, telephone, or e-mail contact to include an option for special dietary requirements.
- Try not to have an event with a ticket price that includes "all you can drink" that is good value only if you partake of a lot of alcoholic beverages.

### TIPS for inclusive catering

- Ensure halal, kosher and vegetarian food is on a separate table to meat dishes.
- Where possible, use a separate BBQ plate for vegetarian/vegan foods. Many people find it unacceptable to have meat cooking alongside veggie burgers.
- Label food e.g. halal, pork-free, beef-free, vegetarian, vegan, kosher.
- Provide a list of ingredients whenever possible.
- Engage students from a variety of cultures to be on hand to advise students who have questions about the food on offer.
- Serve food such as fresh fruit and vegetables, foods that are low in fat, gluten-free and dairy-free.

### Alcohol and culturally inclusive events

La Trobe University has a policy on the serving and consumption of alcohol at university events. A permit must be obtained if alcohol is to be included at any event held on campus. Contact the University Occupational Health and Safety Section in Human Resources to obtain further information.

Many international and local students feel uncomfortable with the focus on alcohol at university social functions. Many students have negative preconceptions of student alcohol consumption habits even before they start study at university. Some students make the conscious decision to avoid social activities where alcohol is served.

Celebrating diversity can also be achieved by serving drinks that are popular in different countries e.g. cooling herbal teas from China, yoghurt mixes from India (e.g. lassi), sweet syrups from Malaysia.

### TIPS about serving alcohol at events

- Be familiar with the University's policy on Alcohol and Other Drugs: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hr/ohs/ohs-manual/alcohol-and-other-drugs.pdf>
- Ensure non-alcoholic options are available and make this clear in any advertising.
- Separate the areas for serving alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

When you plan social events consider a range of different styles that appeal to people with different interests and needs.

## Checklist for Inclusive Events

### Consultation

- Consult with people who have knowledge of various cultures, including Indigenous Australian and/or International Programs Office staff.
- Check the Cultural Calendar <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/cdip/> for events and festivities around your intended function – to avoid leaving particular groups out.
- Include their advice in the planning and evaluation of your event.
- Ensure that the event adheres to La Trobe University policies.

### Venue

- Choose a venue that is likely to be comfortable for all students.
- Display signs, posters or flags acknowledging that the La Trobe University community is diverse.
- Identify cultural meeting places throughout the campus.
- Ensure that the venue is accessible and that accessible toilet facilities are nearby.

### Catering

- Ensure that a separate BBQ plate is used for cooking vegan/vegetarian foods.
- Separate pork-free, beef-free and vegetarian dishes from the other dishes.
- Provide separate serving utensils for each dish.
- Label food correctly, listing ingredients where possible.
- Invite student volunteers to reassure students who may not feel confident that the food served is halal or otherwise appropriate for them.
- Follow the University's policy on serving alcohol at events.
- Use separate areas for serving alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks, halal and non-halal food, and vegetarian and meat dishes.

### Encouraging participation

- Stress the importance of attending social events by emphasising the skills to be gained, and the opportunities provided.
- Incorporate Indigenous Australian perspectives into La Trobe community diversity celebrations
- Emphasise that non-alcoholic drinks will be provided, appropriate food will be served and that the function is for all students of the department, faculty etc.
- Include student representatives from a variety of different cultural backgrounds in the planning and marketing efforts, to benefit from their knowledge and network of friends.
- Use multilingual posters to encourage multilingual students to feel welcome and respected.

## References

FAQ: Kosher Food  
<http://www.cyber-kitchen.com/rfcj/kosherfaq.htm>