

**LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES
FACULTY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The organisational antecedents of the Faculty of Health Sciences at La Trobe University

The Faculty of Health Sciences at La Trobe University is the historical successor of a number of independent training schools established for the allied health professions in Victoria. This history of autonomous operation of separate disciplinary preparation is an important influence on the way in which the Faculty operates today.

Health sciences education in Victoria was originally conducted by separate profession-specific schools: the Victorian School of Speech Therapy (known in its final form as the Victorian School of Speech Science), the Victorian School of Occupational Therapy and an educational program for physiotherapists eventually known as the Victorian School of Physiotherapy. These programs had emerged in the first half of the 20th century (eg. physiotherapy in 1908; speech pathology in 1945; occupational therapy in 1948). They were established under the auspices of the relevant professional association and/or registration board, based in hospitals and supported financially by the then Victorian hospital funding authority, the Hospitals and Charities Commission. In the late 1950s and early 1960s there was increasing recognition of both the emerging capital requirements for these schools and the merit of co-location for the programs. In 1966 the three schools were co-located at "Lincoln House", the former Davies Co-op building near Lincoln Square in Carlton, purchased for this purpose by the Victorian Department of Health.

Contemporaneously with this relocation, a Commonwealth Government inquiry (known as the Martin Committee) which reported in 1964, recommended a major reshaping of Commonwealth interest in higher education including financial support for non-university tertiary education institutions, known generically as "Colleges of Advanced Education" (Davies, 1989). Colleges of advanced education were to be more "vocational" than universities, with a greater focus on teaching (and correspondingly less focus on research) than universities. The Martin Committee's conception of colleges of advanced education was based on the then-existing technical colleges, which had a strong basis in engineering – a recognised tertiary discipline. The colleges of advanced education were the second part (with universities) of the "binary" system of education. Much of the discussion about colleges of advanced education focussed on technical colleges and institutes of technology, but subsequently teachers' colleges were absorbed within the college of advanced education system. Following the Martin Committee's report, the Commonwealth Government commenced funding colleges of advanced education.

In 1967 the three health sciences schools located at Lincoln House, were recognised as colleges of advanced education in the new system, even though they did not fit the traditional technological mould. Organisationally they each became affiliated with the Victoria Institute of Colleges, the State umbrella body which was responsible for accrediting degree and diploma programs in Victorian colleges of advanced education. In addition to the three therapy schools, a School of Medical Record Librarianship was also located at Lincoln House from 1972, although this program was not initially recognised as an Associate Diploma by the Victoria Institute of Colleges until 1973 (Ell, 1984).

The Victoria Institute of Colleges was keen to rationalise colleges of advanced education throughout Victoria, including the specialist therapy colleges, and advocated a merger of those colleges. In its annual report in 1974 it acknowledged that "because of the tradition and independence that each college proudly carried and because of interprofessional rivalries, this was not an easy task". However the merger did occur in December 1972 by Order in Council of

the Government of Victoria, with the creation of a new college of advanced education, Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences. A similar development had occurred in New South Wales with the creation of a specialist health professional college, Cumberland College of Health Sciences.

The leadership of the new Lincoln Institute was keen to expand the scope of the Institute, but this was opposed internally, at least in part because proposed new courses in medical records, prosthetics and orthotics, and orthoptics were seen as having “a status lower” than existing programs (Radford, 1993), possibly as they were to be classified as Associate Diplomas rather than the fledgling degree status of the original disciplines.

Internal restructure of Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences consolidated the teaching of biological sciences and behavioural sciences in two “departments” servicing the three professional schools. These two departments were the predecessors of the Faculty of Health Sciences’ Schools of Human Biosciences and of Public Health, the latter being a merger of *gi-devant* Schools of Behavioural Health Sciences and of Health Systems Sciences.

Lincoln Institute grew by subsuming other distinct health professional programs: the Victorian Training School for Medical Record Librarians in 1974 and the School of Orthoptics of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital in 1975. Following discussions with the Repatriation Commission, the Lincoln Institute established a diploma program in prosthetics and orthotics in 1976 which replaced a course provided by the Commission.

A major expansion of Lincoln Institute occurred in 1977 when it merged with the College of Nursing (Australia), also a college of advanced education affiliated with the Victoria Institute of Colleges. The College of Nursing had been established in 1949 to conduct diploma programs for registered nurses and over time developed a range of post graduate programs. In 1974 it became one of the first colleges of advanced education in Australia to offer a diploma for general nurse registration. Lincoln Institute also established training programs for podiatry in the late 1970s. The growth in size of Lincoln Institute meant that it soon outgrew Lincoln House and it acquired additional buildings in the surrounding area. It also established a second campus in Abbotsford which at one stage was planned to accommodate all of the Institute’s programs.

The binary divide in education where colleges of advanced education were not funded to perform research and were not allowed to offer doctoral programs was under increasing pressure during the 1980s as the major institutes of technology sought university status. Many of the institutes of technology wanted (and eventually achieved) university recognition essentially in their contemporary form. Lincoln Institute pursued an alternative strategy, seeking to merge with existing universities. A formal “statement of intent” to merge was negotiated with La Trobe University in 1981 (Gamage, 1992). However, the merger process was long and protracted and negotiations were not consistently carried out after signing the statement of intent; Lincoln Institute also flirted with merger with RMIT at this time. La Trobe’s interest in the merger was to complement its liberal arts and sciences focus with a strong professional school, Lincoln to achieve university status on favourable terms (in advance of a possible forced merger) and to improve its physical facilities. In 1988 Lincoln Institute was successful in reaching agreement to merge with La Trobe University, becoming the tenth School of that University as the Lincoln School of Health Sciences.

Shortly after the merger, several Lincoln School departments were relocated to the Bundoora campus of the University. The School continued significant teaching operations on three sites (Bundoora, Carlton and Abbotsford) until additional facilities were completed on the Bundoora campus in 1997. A near-city presence was retained through lease of a building at the Victoria Market.

The Lincoln Institute/La Trobe merger occurred prior to a national program of rationalisation of tertiary education led by the Commonwealth Education Minister, John Dawkins. As part of these national mergers, nursing programs conducted at Dookie and the Wodonga Institute of Tertiary Education were absorbed into the Lincoln School in 1991. Bendigo College of Advanced Education also merged with La Trobe University at this time (initially as the La Trobe University College of Northern Victoria) but the health sciences programs conducted in Bendigo remained organisationally separate from those administered through the then Lincoln School of Health Sciences.

A University restructure in 1996 led to the creation of the Faculty of Health Sciences, essentially based on the Lincoln School of Health Sciences but with the addition of the University's social work program, which eventually became the School of Social Work and Social Policy of the Faculty. On 1st January 2005 the Faculty absorbed the Nursing, Social Work, Public Health and Physiology and Anatomy staff from the former Faculty for Regional Development (based at Bendigo) as part of a further University restructure.

Figure 1 summarises this historical evolution.

La Trobe University

La Trobe University was the third university established in Melbourne, following the University of Melbourne and Monash University. La Trobe was founded in response to an Australia-wide recognition of the need to expand significantly provision of university education. It was formally established by Act of the Victorian Parliament in 1964 and admitted its first students in 1967. In common with the other 1960s universities in Australia, it was influenced by post-War English universities, in particular Keele University, which in turn influenced the English universities founded in the 1960s (Green, 1969).

The Australian 1960s universities (La Trobe, Macquarie University in Sydney and Flinders University of South Australia) all attempted to challenge the established orthodoxy of university structure and function. At La Trobe the initial plans for the university followed Keele in proposing a residential university, with an organisational structure based on interdisciplinary schools rather than traditional faculties and departments. Eschewing the faculty-department structure was supposed to lead to greater flexibility and interdisciplinarity (Marshall, 1979, 1981). However, early in the University's career both the residential nature and the emphasis on a flexible, non-departmental structure broke down and departments evolved within schools and non-residential students dominated the attendance (Gregory, 1989).

A significant proportion of the students in the early years were students bonded to teach in the Victorian Education Department and the early University had a strong emphasis on humanities and the social sciences. La Trobe University was a centre of student radicalism in the late 1960s (York, 1984) and established a reputation as a radical, liberal arts University.

When Lincoln School of Health Sciences became the tenth school of La Trobe, this significantly changed the balance of the University and provided the first expansion into professional courses for the University.

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Figure 1: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

