

2026 VICTORIAN STATE ELECTION PRIORITIES



PARTNERING TO DELIVER VICTORIA'S NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH

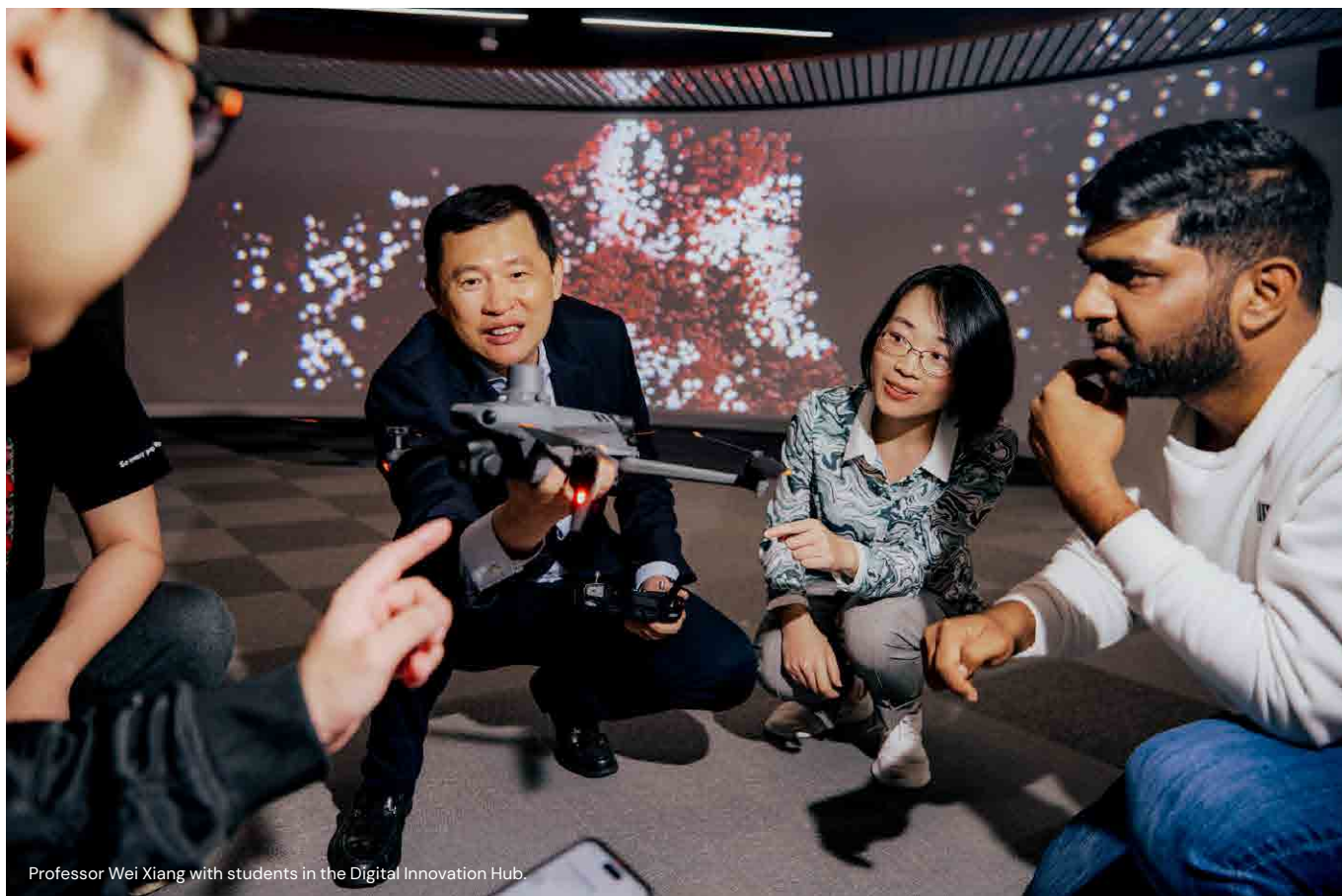
Victoria's prosperity depends on having a highly skilled workforce, world-leading research, strong regional communities, and the infrastructure that connects people to education, employment and opportunity. Meeting these challenges will require targeted investment in the education, skills, and innovation that will drive Victoria's future growth.

La Trobe University has developed a suite of practical proposals to help deliver these outcomes. Building on the University's strengths in education, health, science and regional development, these initiatives will strengthen workforce capability, accelerate innovation, expand access to education and healthcare, and create lasting benefits for communities across Victoria.

Working in partnership with La Trobe University, the next Victorian Government can deliver practical, lasting outcomes for Victorians while positioning the state for long-term economic and social success.



La Trobe University Shepparton Campus Library, opened February 2025.



Professor Wei Xiang with students in the Digital Innovation Hub.

WHY LA TROBE?

Founded to serve the growing communities of Melbourne's north and later across regional Victoria, La Trobe University has always been driven by a commitment to improving opportunity through education and achieving impact through our research. Today, with a statewide footprint and deep partnerships across education, health, industry and government, La Trobe is a trusted partner in delivering Victoria's priorities.

With campuses and partnerships spanning metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, La Trobe educates the teachers, nurses, allied health professionals, researchers, and innovators who power Victoria's future. Our strengths in education, health, biotechnology, artificial intelligence and regional engagement enable us to translate research into real-world economic and social impact.

These proposals build on existing capability, established partnerships, and proven models that can be scaled to deliver benefits across Victoria.

SUPPORTING VICTORIA'S PRIORITIES

Working in partnership with La Trobe University, the next Victorian Government can:

- **Improve educational outcomes** by establishing the Australian Institute for Education Impact, helping ensure evidence-informed teaching reaches more Victorian classrooms.
- **Build the skilled workforce Victoria needs while improving access to healthcare** by creating seamless pathways between TAFE and university, expanding nursing education and clinical training partnerships, and increasing access to qualifications in areas of workforce demand.
- **Strengthen regional Victoria** by investing in education, skills, innovation, and connectivity across the state, including a long-term vision for Bendigo as a leading regional education and innovation hub.
- **Improve connectivity and reduce cost-of-living pressures** by enhancing public transport access across Melbourne's north while supporting better connections to education, employment and essential services across regional Victoria.
- **Accelerate innovation and industry growth** through the Research and Applied Innovation Districts (RAPID), helping Victoria translate world-leading research into jobs, investment and new industries.

Together, these proposals represent targeted investments that will strengthen Victoria's economy, build the workforce of the future, support thriving communities, and cement the state's leadership in education, innovation and research.

BUILDING ON LA TROBE'S REGIONAL INVESTMENT

Between 2021 and 2025, La Trobe University invested close to \$78 million in its regional campuses, supported by an additional \$7.5 million from the Australian Government. A further \$68 million has already been committed to projects currently under construction or in delivery. Together, these investments are transforming regional education, expanding clinical training capacity, strengthening local workforces and creating new opportunities for regional communities.

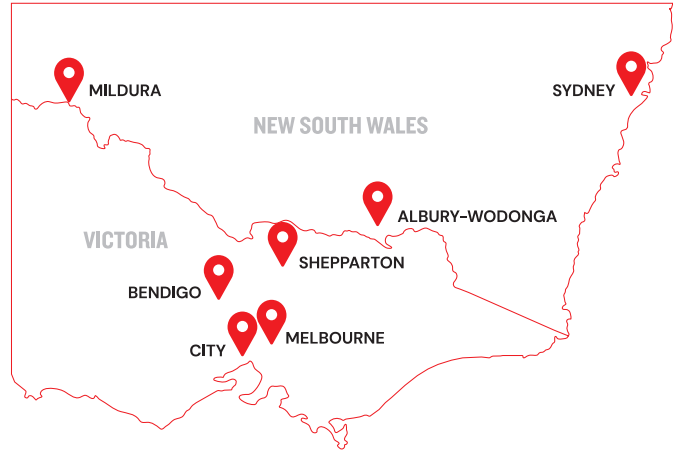
This investment reflects La Trobe's long-term commitment to regional Victoria. Our campuses in Bendigo, Albury-Wodonga, Mildura and Shepparton are deeply embedded in their communities, working alongside local industry, health services and TAFEs to develop the skilled workforce regional Victoria needs. Today, around 80% of graduates from our regional campuses remain employed in regional Victoria.

Recent investments include:

- Bendigo: \$50 million Engineering and Technology Centre, \$21 million Dentistry and Oral Health School, upgraded nursing, midwifery and allied health facilities, and a new 220-bed student accommodation precinct.
- Shepparton: \$20 million redevelopment that doubled clinical training capacity and created modern facilities for students, industry and the wider community.
- Mildura and Albury-Wodonga: More than \$5 million invested at each campus to expand health training infrastructure and strengthen regional education and workforce capability.

The next four years present an opportunity to maximise the value of these investments. With major infrastructure now in place, and more projects still to come, the priority is activating these assets to their full potential: educating more students, training more health professionals, delivering more applied research, and generating greater economic and social returns for regional Victoria.

The proposals outlined in this election platform build on this strong foundation. Together with La Trobe's substantial investment in regional infrastructure, they will ensure these facilities operate at full capacity, address critical workforce shortages, strengthen regional industries, expand educational opportunity and accelerate research translation. Working in partnership, La Trobe University and the next Victorian Government can maximise the return on existing investment and deliver lasting economic and social benefits for regional Victoria.



Students walking to class at the Albury-Wodonga Campus.

THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION IMPACT

A NATIONAL INSTITUTE, DRIVEN AND LED BY VICTORIA, FOR NATIONAL IMPACT

Translating evidence into practice at scale to improve student outcomes, strengthen Australia's future workforce, and establish Victoria as the home of Australia's most significant education reform institute.

Context

- One in three Australian students are not meeting national literacy and numeracy benchmarks, equating to approximately 420,000 children each year falling behind on foundational skills.
- The lifetime economic cost for today's student cohort is estimated to exceed \$40 billion, with impacts felt most sharply in low socioeconomic, regional, remote and Indigenous communities.
- Australia has identified what works. Recent reforms, including the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, reflect a national consensus on evidence-based teaching practices. What Australia now lacks is the national capability to ensure proven practice reaches every classroom consistently at scale.
- Victoria is uniquely positioned to lead the national response through La Trobe University's nationally recognised capability in evidence-informed education – including literacy (SOLAR Lab), mathematics (SOME Lab), implementation of explicit instruction (Momentum Schools), teacher workforce development (Nexus) and our emerging response in the evidence-informed use of artificial intelligence (AI). With state government co-investment, Victoria can anchor and lead this institution on behalf of the nation.

La Trobe University is seeking a **\$15 million co-investment over three years** to support the establishment of the Australian Institute for Education Impact (AIEI), a permanent national institution, hosted by La Trobe University, which aims to be a transformative hub for educational innovation in Australia.

This investment will unlock a further \$20 million in philanthropic support and catalyse engagement with additional investors, building toward a sustainable \$115–120 million national institution over five years.

The AIEI will provide the missing national capability to support the sustained implementation of evidence-informed practice, improving student outcomes and ensuring reforms deliver lasting impact at scale.

Benefits

- Supporting Victorian schools through a certified coaching workforce embedding evidence-informed teaching in classrooms – with priority focus on regional, rural and low socioeconomic status (SES) communities.
- Improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for Victorian students, particularly those most at risk of falling behind.
- Strengthening Victorian teaching workforce through structured coaching and professional support, reducing attrition and lifting practice.
- Establishing Victoria as the national home of Australia's education implementation capability, attracting talent, federal investment and industry partnership to the state.
- Building on La Trobe's nation-leading work through the SOLAR Lab, SOME Lab, Momentum Schools and NEXUS program, aligning directly with the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model 2.0 and strengthening Victoria's national leadership in significant reform.
- Significant long-term economic return through improving educational outcomes, workforce productivity and reduced lifetime costs of educational disadvantage.



Student teacher at Charles La Trobe Primary School.

CLINICAL SCHOOL EXPANSION

DELIVERING WORKFORCE-READY NURSES THROUGH EXPANDED CLINICAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS

Establishing clinical schools with Eastern Health and Western Health to expand La Trobe's capacity to train nurses, delivering increased workforce supply in high-demand areas.

Context

- La Trobe has a proven track record of partnering with major Victorian health services to deliver integrated clinical schools that combine education, placements and research, creating workforce-ready graduates and strengthening the health workforce pipeline at scale.
- Growing workforce shortages in metropolitan growth areas are increasing demand for nurses, but limited clinical placement capacity is constraining supply.
- Clinical schools embedded within major health services provide a proven model to integrate education, training and workforce development.
- Analysis of regional demand indicates large numbers of prospective students who apply for health courses but do not receive offers, highlighting a potential unmet education pipeline.

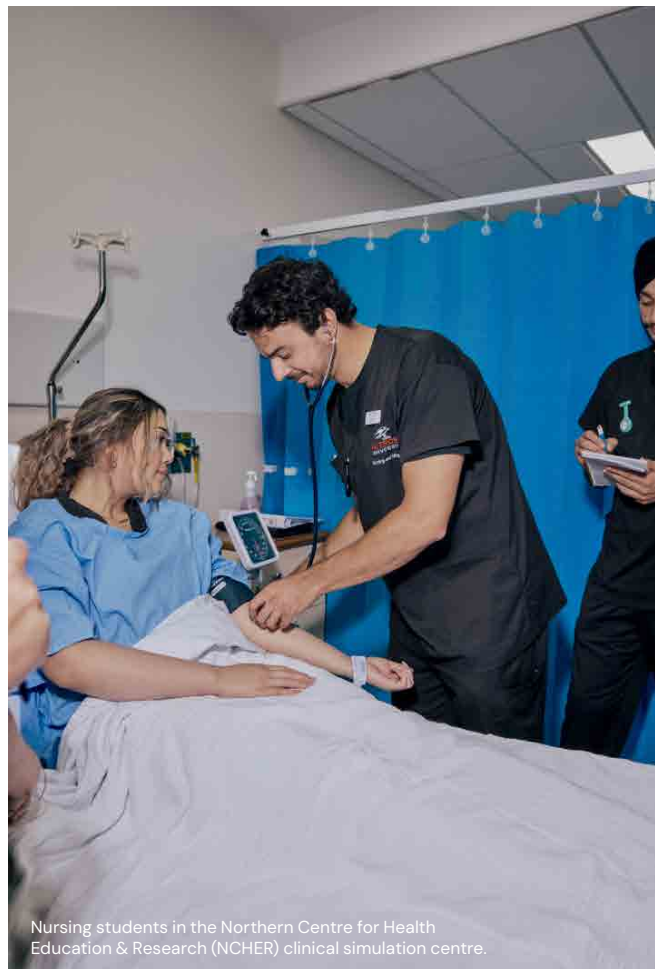
La Trobe is seeking **\$12 million in funding** to establish clinical education partnerships with Western and Eastern Health. Investment will see the addition of:

- 100 new Registered Nurses per year for Box Hill Hospital (Eastern Health)
- 210 new Registered Nurses per year for Melton Hospital (Western Health)

The proposal includes refurbishment and fit-out works to create contemporary teaching, simulation, student, and collaborative learning spaces, as well as strengthened research and workforce links through co-located academic and administrative space.

Benefits

- Expanding clinical placement capacity across Western Health and Eastern Health, enabling more students to complete their training locally. This reduces travel time and costs, allowing students to dedicate more time to their studies.
- Supporting objectives from recent health workforce and higher education policy reforms focused on participation and interprofessional training.
- Creating contemporary, flexible and technology-enabled teaching and learning environments that offer strengthened research and workforce links through co-location, positioning clinical schools not simply as sites for student placement, but as integrated hubs of learning, research, workforce development and service contribution, aligned with a more holistic partnership vision.



Nursing students in the Northern Centre for Health Education & Research (NCHER) clinical simulation centre.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT EXPANSION

DELIVERING BETTER BUS CONNECTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Providing faster, more direct public transport to La Trobe University while improving local connectivity.

Context

- Growth in Melbourne’s north has not been matched by improved services, and public transport access to Bundoora remains poor compared to other metropolitan universities, leaving many reliant on lengthy multi-modal commutes or cars.
- La Trobe’s regional campuses operate within a regional infrastructure environment where limited public transport connectivity is a critical constraint on growth, access and student success, reducing the attractiveness and accessibility of the regions as a study destination.
- In a cost-of-living crisis, having access to fast and reliable public transport can considerably reduce financial burdens on students, increase engagement and reduce students dropping out.
- A recent survey found public transport travel times to Bundoora are uncompetitive with driving. Around 69.3% of trips are made by private vehicle, compared to 19.6% by public transport. Most public transport journeys require 2–3 connections and take 45–90 minutes.
- 75% of survey respondents said they would switch to public transport if services were faster, more frequent, or more direct.

La Trobe is seeking Government support to improve bus connections to our campuses, including by **establishing a rapid East to West bus service** from Box Hill to Melbourne Airport. This service could utilise the soon-to-be-opened North East Link to improve travel times and reliability.

Improving east-west connectivity and access to the Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus is a priority shared by La Trobe University and local government partners, including the Northern Councils Alliance, and reflects the transport needs of one of Melbourne’s fastest-growing regions.

Immediate improvements to the Route 301 express bus service announced in May 2026 will improve connections to the campus, **but more improvements are required**:

- More frequent connections between key railway stations and the campus e.g. Heidelberg Station.
- More direct bus routes to Mill Park, South Morang, Donnybrook, Epping, Mernda, Diamond Creek and Hurstbridge.
- Establish a rapid East to West bus that will connect Box Hill to Melbourne Airport and connect to all metropolitan trainlines in between.
- Improved local connections to Viewbank, Greensborough, Watsonia and Yallambie.
- Improve public transport connections to regional campuses in Shepparton, Bendigo, Albury-Wodonga, and Mildura, including increased service frequency, expanded route coverage, and improved connectivity between accommodation areas, the CBD, and local health precincts.

Benefits

- Improving connections between the three busiest rail lines in Melbourne’s north – Craigieburn, Mernda and Hurstbridge – and the Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus would help almost 8,500 students access the campus more efficiently via public transport.
- Increasing economic benefits for Melbourne’s north and beyond by allowing people to travel more efficiently to work and study, stimulating employment, innovation, and industry development.
- Reducing cost-of-living pressures by lowering reliance on private vehicles, such as cutting fuel, parking and maintenance costs for students currently forced into car-based commuting due to limited public transport options.
- Increasing public transport use and reducing traffic congestion in Melbourne’s north.



Students arriving at the Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus by public transport.



STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN MILDURA

ACCOMMODATION TO SUPPORT MILDURA'S ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Funding to kick start new student accommodation in Mildura.

Context

- Mildura has limited short-stay and rental accommodation, with peak demand from visiting health and essential service workers placing further pressure on supply.
- This creates a practical and financial barrier for students who need to study in Mildura or undertake local placements, particularly when they must rely on higher-cost commercial accommodation.
- Purpose-built student accommodation would provide a more affordable and reliable option, helping students manage cost-of-living pressures by reducing accommodation costs.
- Access to suitable accommodation supports workforce development in priority sectors including health and education, where student placements are a critical pathway into employment.

La Trobe is seeking **\$1 million** to develop a business case and concept designs for purpose-built student accommodation of up to 75 beds in Mildura. The funding would support feasibility analysis, stakeholder engagement, site identification, concept design and cost planning, ensuring the project is ready for future capital funding opportunities.

Benefits

- Developing a plan for additional student accommodation to support the Mildura region.
- Reducing cost-of-living pressure for students by providing a lower-cost, reliable alternative to commercial accommodation.
- Removing a practical barrier to regional study and supporting students undertaking local health, education and other placements.
- Strengthening Mildura's regional workforce pipeline by supporting the attraction and retention of students in priority sectors, including health and education.
- Ensuring better use of scarce resources by opening up the business case to other education providers, such as universities, SuniTAFE, Mildura Base Public Hospital and local organisations, to ensure student and key worker accommodation needs are met.



EDUCATION BENDIGO 2050

BUILDING BENDIGO AS A UNIVERSITY CITY

Advancing a vibrant university town model in Bendigo, with La Trobe at its core to drive innovation, opportunity, and inclusion across Central Victoria.

Context

- Bendigo is a growing regional capital with increasing demand for higher education, skills development and industry collaboration. Investment is needed to ensure education and innovation infrastructure keeps pace with the future growth of the region.
- La Trobe's Bendigo Campus supports close to 4,000 students and is a major regional hub for education and research, with strong industry partnerships focused on meeting community priorities such as health, education and creative industries.
- The campus plays a key role in building local workforce pipelines, combining practical, work integrated learning with close connections to schools, employers and the broader Bendigo community.
- Strengthening the future workforce pipeline requires greater access to STEM and technology education across regional Victoria. Bendigo Tech School currently serves almost 10,000 students, but an expansion would allow it to offer this world-leading experience to more secondary students, opening their eyes to the opportunities that a post-secondary education will offer.

La Trobe University is seeking **\$1 million in funding** to support the development of a comprehensive masterplan for La Trobe University Bendigo, including assessment of future campus uses, industry partnerships, student accommodation opportunities, expansion of the Bendigo Tech School, and the University's distributed presence across Bendigo.

La Trobe University would contribute staff resources and project support. Opportunities for co-investment and partnerships with government, industry and other stakeholders would be explored through the masterplanning and feasibility processes.

Benefits

- Creating stronger pathways for local secondary students to explore higher education, STEM and future careers close to home, while opening university, industry and community assets to support aspiration, skills development and regional opportunity.
- Building on existing university infrastructure through investment in La Trobe's CBD presence and developing a plan for the education requirements for Bendigo through to 2050.
- Activating underutilised facilities to create new opportunities for learning, industry engagement, and community participation while contributing to CBD revitalisation.
- Expanding the Bendigo Tech School to more than double student capacity, improving access for schools across the region and strengthening pathways into higher education, training and employment, while increasing participation in STEM and future skills programs across regional Victoria.

VICTORIAN PSYCHOSOCIAL ONCOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE

ESTABLISHING A WORLD-LEADING CENTRE TO TRANSFORM PSYCHOSOCIAL ONCOLOGY IN VICTORIA

Partnering with Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre to improve the wellbeing of people with cancer and their families through world-leading psychosocial research.

Context

- Demand for integrated mental health and psychosocial support is increasing as more Victorians are diagnosed with, treated for, and living beyond cancer.
- Research indicates around one in two people with cancer experience significant psychological distress, highlighting the importance of psychosocial support as part of comprehensive cancer care.
- Access to specialist psychosocial oncology services remains uneven across Victoria, with regional and rural patients facing additional barriers due to workforce shortages and distance from providers.
- Cancer survivorship care has traditionally focused on physical health outcomes, with psychosocial support often receiving less attention despite its significant impact on patient wellbeing.

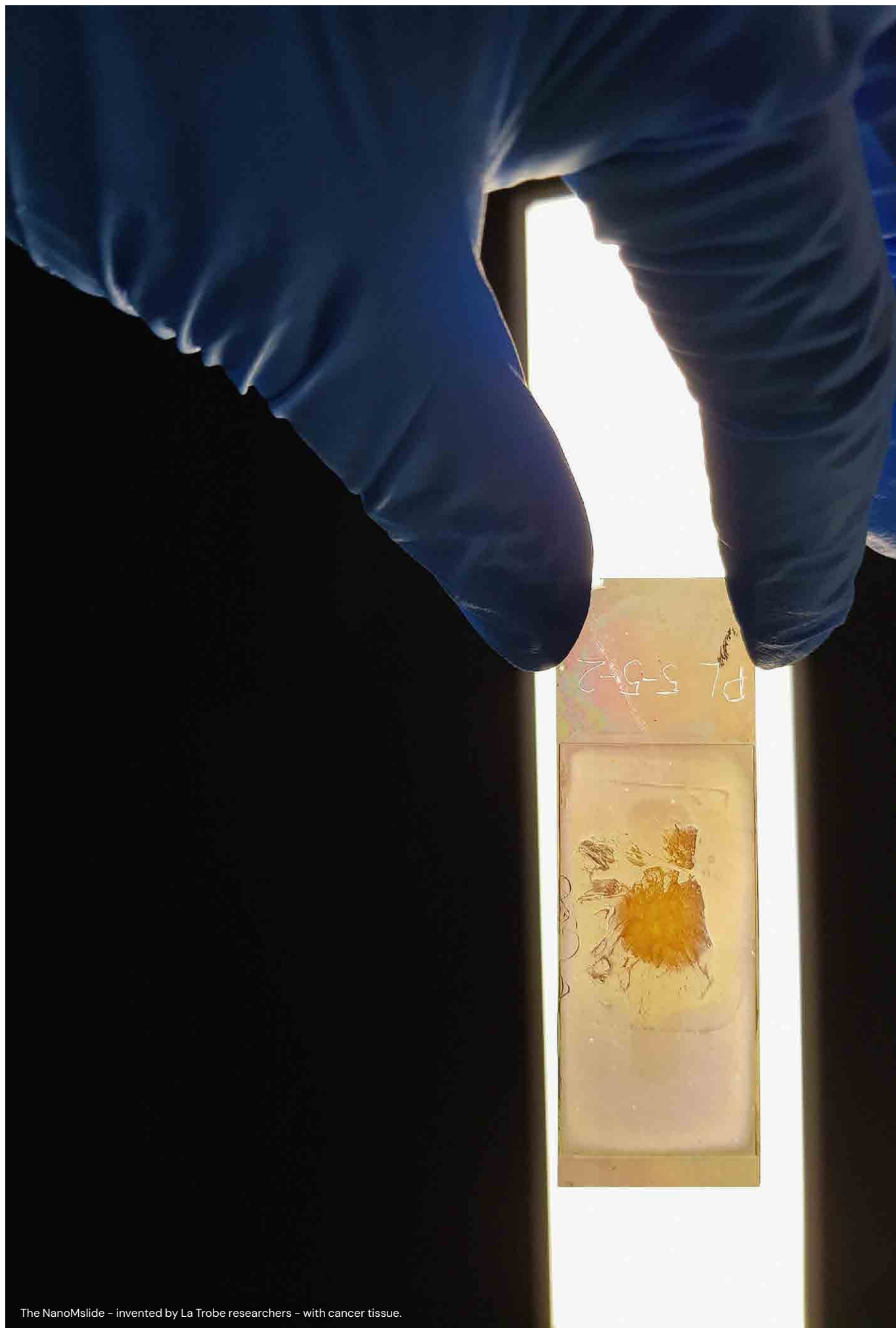
La Trobe is seeking **\$20 million in funding** to establish the Victorian Psychosocial Oncology Partnership between Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and La Trobe University's School of Psychology and Public Health to position Victoria as a global leader in psychosocial oncology, improving cancer outcomes and wellbeing through innovative, equitable, person-centred care across the full cancer journey. This work is structured around three pillars — regional reach, research and innovation, and workforce development — delivered through a new psychosocial oncology research centre.

This opportunity includes:

- Establishment of the Victorian Psychosocial Oncology Research Centre to develop an evidence base for psychosocial oncology interventions and train the future workforce across Victoria.
- Establishment of the Victorian Psychosocial Oncology Student Clinic at Bendigo Health (in collaboration with Peter Mac) staffed by La Trobe postgraduate clinical and/or neuro psychology students, and overseen by experienced Bendigo Health, Peter Mac and La Trobe supervising psychologists.
- Development of virtual and digital technologies to extend psychosocial services across all Victorian regions, removing geography as a barrier to care.

Benefits

- Improving quality of life, mental health and wellbeing outcomes for people with cancer and their families.
- Increasing access to specialist psychosocial oncology services across regional Victoria through a combination of face-to-face, virtual and digitally enabled care.
- Expanding access for priority populations, including rural and remote communities, Indigenous Australians, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, LGBTIQ+ Victorians and families navigating cancer together.
- Strengthening the regional workforce pipeline, anchored in Bendigo and connected to Mildura, Albury-Wodonga and Shepparton, helping address specialist workforce shortages.
- Enhancing research translation and innovation through a partnership that combines Peter Mac's global leadership in cancer care with La Trobe's strengths in psychology, public health and regional engagement, positioning Victoria as a global leader in psychosocial oncology.



The NanoMslide – invented by La Trobe researchers – with cancer tissue.

RAPID

RESEARCH AND APPLIED INNOVATION DISTRICTS (RAPID)

Establishing in Australia a leading platform for translating advanced therapies into real-world outcomes, attracting investment and growing the state's biotechnology sector.

Context

- Victoria is well placed to capitalise on growing investment and commercial opportunities in advanced therapies, including a potential over \$1 billion annual RNA therapeutics market in Melbourne.
- La Trobe University is home to an established concentration of biomedical, AI, biosecurity and advanced manufacturing capability, including BioNTech, Australian Centre for AI in Medical Innovation, AgriBio and the Bio Innovation Hub.
- While Australia produces strong early-stage research, gaps in scale-up infrastructure, capital and commercial capability mean ventures often relocate overseas to progress development and access larger markets.
- Market consultation indicates strong demand for modular, flexible lab space and a lab-as-a-service model that provides shared facilities, specialist equipment, and supporting infrastructure.

La Trobe is seeking **\$30 million** to fund RAPID Phase One, which will provide immediate support for around four to six scale-ups, with a translational platform that builds on the existing pipeline.

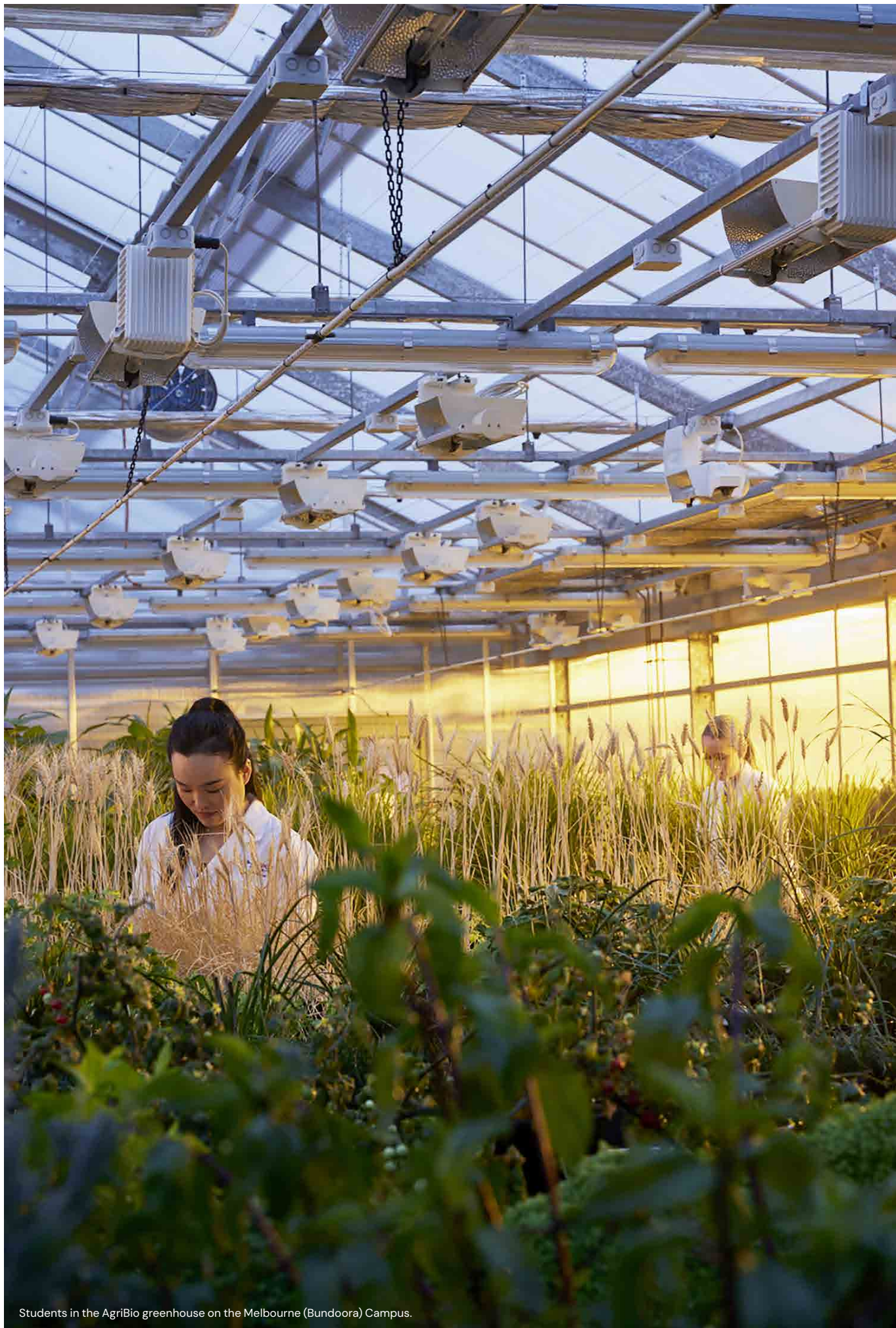
RAPID Phase One will build the support and demonstrate the opportunity that RAPID Phase Two would deliver.

Benefits

- Capitalising on Victoria being a global destination for mRNA capability (including BioNTech's pilot manufacturing at our Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus) by supporting start-ups in lab-validated (TRL4+) RNA and related therapeutics, translating cutting-edge science into market-ready solutions and strengthening Victoria's position as a global leader in biotechnology and advanced health technologies.
- Proximity to the La Trobe Private Hospital, Austin Hospital, the University of Melbourne, the Parkville Health district, and the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute strengthens RAPID's potential for future collaboration across research, clinical trials and translational healthcare, enabling more integrated development pathways for scaleups.
- Providing a missing link on the growth chain and connecting Melbourne's network of districts and incubators to strengthen and accelerate scaleup commercialisation and translation through to deployment.
- Investing in Victoria's ability to develop and commercialise world-leading medical technologies, enabling Victorians to access life-saving innovations sooner.



Artist's rendering of RAPID



Students in the AgriBio greenhouse on the Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus.

TERTIARY VET AND UNIVERSITY HARMONISATION

SKILLS-TO-DEGREE PATHWAYS PROGRAM: GIVING GRADUATES FLEXIBILITY WHILE GROWING THE WORKFORCE WE NEED

Investing in measures to support a more connected tertiary education system.

Context

- Fewer students are completing VCE with an ATAR or using it for university entry.
- The tertiary system is fragmented, with unclear pathways between VET and university.
- A growing share of students enter via alternative pathways, however they face barriers in transitioning, such as credit recognition, enrolment processes and course mapping.
- Growing demand for health professionals, particularly in Melbourne's north and regional areas, creates an opportunity to expand local higher education pathways in outer metropolitan growth corridors and strengthen the pipeline of future health workers.
- Infrastructure and partnerships across TAFE and university sectors could be shared, creating greater efficiency and making transition between the sectors more seamless for students.
- La Trobe's regional campus model already includes established co-location partnerships with GOTAFE (Shepparton), Wodonga TAFE (Albury-Wodonga) and SuniTAFE (Mildura).

La Trobe University is seeking a Victorian Government investment of approximately **\$23 million over four years** to create seamless pathways from TAFE into university degrees in areas of critical regional workforce need. This includes:

- \$8 million for approx. 800 transition scholarships of \$2,500 for TAFE graduates entering priority workforce degrees over four years.
- \$10 million to upgrade and expand existing shared training infrastructure and facilities.
- \$3 million to map TAFE diplomas to degree pathways.
- \$2 million for monitoring participation, progression, outcomes and regional workforce impact.
- Work with TAFEs and Victorian Universities to explore the establishment of Regional Skills Hubs.

Benefits

- Increasing community access to nurses, allied health professionals, teachers, community service workers and digital specialists, helping address persistent workforce shortages and improving access to essential services.
- Supporting more students to study and work locally, helping reduce travel times and meet the cost-of-living challenges.
- Expanding the pool of graduates available to industry and employers, with qualifications aligned to workforce demand.
- Increasing collaboration between TAFEs, La Trobe University and employers will help align training with regional workforce needs, ensuring students can progress seamlessly from vocational education into higher-level qualifications and employment.
- Developing and testing new study pathway models, which are fit-for-purpose for local communities and geared to better student outcomes.



Students at the Mildura Campus.

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