

La Trobe University Council Report of Outcome – 10 August 2026

La Trobe's founding mission was, and remains, to serve the community of Victoria for the purposes of higher education, for the education, economic, social and cultural benefit of Victorians and for wider Australian and international communities.

La Trobe University Council is the formally constituted governing body of the University that oversees and is accountable for all of the University's operations, including that the institution meets, and continues to meet, the requirements of the Higher Education Standards Framework.

[La Trobe University Act 2009](#).

The Council met for this meeting on Monday 10 August 2026 in Meeting Room 3.04 at the City Campus, Level 3, 360 Collins Street.

Staff and student engagement

Council supported strengthening its understanding of staff and student perspectives and agreed that existing insights should be brought together into a single governance resource, complemented by further opportunities for direct engagement with staff and students. Members emphasised the importance of transparency and of demonstrating how staff and student perspectives inform Council deliberations, as well as strengthening feedback loops and trust in university governance. The matter will be discussed again at the October Council meeting.

AI Strategy and Enablement

Council received an update on La Trobe's AI transformation journey, including the shift in 2026 from selected use cases to broader adoption across education, research and operations. Members discussed the importance of strengthening internal capability, data sovereignty, transparency, trust and feedback loops. Council noted the need to contain costs, identify efficiencies, track the use of AI and assure data quality, while maintaining a strong focus on responsible use and the University's social licence.

University learning in an Age of AI

Council endorsed the proposed direction for the University's future approach to learning, teaching and assurance of learning in an AI-enabled world. Members supported a broader transformation of learning and teaching that extends beyond assessment redesign and focuses on preparing graduates to thrive in an AI-enabled world while maintaining confidence in the quality and integrity of their qualifications.

University performance

Council discussed the University Performance mid-year update, members congratulated the improved performance in student outcomes, retention and teaching quality, while noting continued work required for the online cohort. Council noted that the three-year growth and competitive positioning goals are at risk, with progress dependent, in part, on external factors.

Academic governance

Council considered a report from the Chair of the Academic Board from its meeting on the 22 July 2026, which covered many issues including the students at risk retention framework, the 2025 annual appeals report, 2025 learning resources report, 2025 professional development report, human research ethics processes, approval of new policies and conferrals of honorary doctorates.

Financial Update

Council noted that despite the strong and positive overall performance of the University in recent years, financial sustainability remained a core issue with cost increases continuing to exceed revenue growth. Council noted the critical importance of the university returning to an operating surplus position, given recent operating deficits and growth in net borrowings. Members discussed the University's financial sustainability, the range of options being considered, and the importance of preserving flexibility while decisions remain under consideration. The significant challenges in returning to a surplus position were noted, particularly in the context of continuing cost pressures and highly constrained international student visa approvals. Discussions focused on the financial situation for 2027, noting that further consideration will be given to medium- and longer-term issues at the next meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee and the Council meeting in September. Council approved a range of measures to reduce costs and achieve financial sustainability, including hiring controls, position growth controls, and salary controls which could include voluntary redundancies. Members discussed the focus on AI and automation to remediate pressures on staff workloads, as well as the importance of vigilance to remediate any impact on the student experience.

Report from the People and Culture Committee

Council noted the strong participation in the Leadership Redefined program, with more than 1,000 staff having taken part. The program will move online for new leaders joining the organisation and will continue to support culture and clarity of work across the University.

University sector governance issues

The Government has amended the Higher Education Standards Framework to strengthen university governance, accountability and transparency, including oversight of performance and risk, executive remuneration, governing body reviews, and protections for academic freedom and freedom of speech. A new standard on preventing and responding to racism has also been introduced, with TEQSA to provide guidance on implementation. Members noted that La Trobe has already implemented several governance reforms aligned with the new principles, including increased staff and student representation on Council and greater transparency of Council skills and decisions. Further work is expected to address the new racism standard and emerging recommendations relating to antisemitism and social cohesion.

Membership of Council

Council approved the re-appointment of Alexandra Gartmann as a Council-appointed member for a second three-year term commencing 1 January 2027. Council also noted the proposed Ombudsman recruitment process.

Other Matters

Council also considered:

- New disability Governance Committee to be established
- Student Appeals Update
- WEGA Action based targets revision
- Regular Occupational Health & Safety Report
- Regular update on the enforceable Undertaking
- Updated Council Charter
- Site guidelines and building program design guidelines

Disclaimer

This Report is intended to communicate key outcomes from the Council meeting, not to be official record of the meeting. It does not cover all matters discussed or the full detail of decisions or discussions.

Further information

Further information regarding the La Trobe University Council can be found here:

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/council>.