

# THE IMPACT IS REAL



**LA TROBE  
UNIVERSITY**

## Sustainable Development Goals through Impact

Progress Report 2022



We support the Sustainable Development Goals

# CONTENTS

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH IMPACT	1
Acknowledgment of country	1
The Impact is REAL	2
Research impact at La Trobe	3
Alignment with La Trobe strategic goals	3
Research themes	4
Resilient environment and communities	4
Understanding and preventing disease	5
Healthy people families and communities	6
Sustainable food and agriculture	7
Social change and equity	8
University anti-poverty programmes	9
Contact	9

---



We support the Sustainable Development Goals

# Sustainable Development Goals through Impact

La Trobe is a university known for making a positive difference in the lives of our students, partners and communities. We are constantly seeking new ways to engage and conduct meaningful research that will develop solutions for the issues facing our society.

## Acknowledgment of country

Australia is home to the world’s oldest continuous culture. We acknowledge the First Nations communities of the lands on which La Trobe University campuses are situated, as well as the unique Country, waterways and animals of these landscapes. La Trobe University campuses are located amongst the largest Aboriginal populations in Victoria’s regions and in Melbourne and Elders of these communities and their Ancestors are the continuing traditional custodians; we acknowledge their living culture and their continuing roles in the life of these communities. On these lands, teaching, learning and research have taken place since time immemorial; including these knowledges as a visible and valued part of La Trobe University life and decision making is a unique privilege.

## A message from the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Industry Engagement

### Our commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Professor Susan Dodds - Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement)

La Trobe University has a proud history of conducting research to address pressing societal needs. Our vision is to be at the forefront of tackling key global issues and developing graduates with the skills and knowledge required to make a real impact towards social, environmental, and economic sustainability challenges in their chosen field.

La Trobe University is committed to embedding social, environmental and economic sustainability into both its research and academic curriculum, as well as its day-to-day operations.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underpin La Trobe University’s 2030 Strategic Plan, which is a five-year plan to consolidate and focus the strengths and efforts of La Trobe University, ensuring we develop as a more resilient, focused and efficient institution.

La Trobe University researchers pursue research focussed on five thematic areas that are closely aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:

- Production of high-quality foods and medicines for improved health, reduced environmental impact and enhanced economies
- Protection and restoration of vulnerable ecosystems and community resilience in the face of environmental and climate threat
- A healthy, safe and equitable life course for everyone
- Application of discoveries in the fundamental sciences and developments in technology to understand and prevent disease – especially at the intersection of cancer, immunity, cardiovascular and infectious disease research
- More just and equitable societies

**Reporting framework** This report covers the calendar years of 2016 to 2022 unless otherwise stated.

## The Impact is REAL

Our researchers work in partnership with community groups, industry, and government to create opportunities and address issues of local, national and international importance. Our research positively impacts the communities we serve.

Research 2030 – La Trobe’s Research and Industry Engagement strategy – articulates our research vision and objectives, as well as our measures of success. Linked to the United Nations SDG’s the plan identifies five research themes which speak to our research strengths and priorities. These research themes focus our research investment through centres, institutes and infrastructure and guide our industry, government, and international collaborations.

Our researchers work together across schools, colleges, and campuses, using their expertise and knowledge to strive for common goals.

Research 2030 guides how La Trobe will become an industry partner of choice and how we will drive international research collaborations to improve efficiency and productivity in all we do to maximise our impact in the real world.

Thanks to our multiple campuses, La Trobe is uniquely positioned to engage with regional communities, including our First Nations communities and we will continue to embed these important relationships as we work towards our goals.

La Trobe recognises the importance of establishing diverse, safe and inclusive teams in all areas of research and in research leadership. We know that socially diverse, inclusive teams are innovative and high performing; we will continue to encourage this diversity at La Trobe.

## What motivates us to generate research impact, and how can we quantify the results of this work?

La Trobe’s proud history of engagement shows that it is, and has always been, an institution of and for creating a positive impact on the communities in which it is located and serves through teaching and research activities. Impact is intrinsic to the culture of the La Trobe and is measured across all aspects of our research, teaching, outreach, and institutional actions.



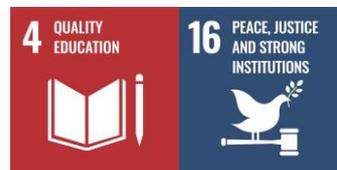
## Research Impact at La Trobe

La Trobe is committed to supporting research that contributes to addressing the United Nations SDGs. This international pledge recognises that urgent global challenges such as inequality and climate change can only be addressed by action on multiple fronts including healthcare, scientific innovation, and access to knowledge. Change begins at a local level, placing particular emphasis on our regional

partnerships and research co-designed with Indigenous stakeholders. La Trobe participates annually in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Ranking, based on the United Nations SDGs, which measures the impact of our research against these global challenges. In 2022 we ranked 19th in the world and third in Australia.

## Alignment of La Trobe strategic goals with the UN SDGs

**Research excellence:** Excellent research must be accompanied by excellence in knowledge transfer. The very definition of research excellence now recognises impact as an essential component. Our strategy will increase capacity among our researchers to embed engagement and impact in their work and will provide support to track and capture evidence of success.



**Partner of Choice:** Our reputation for delivering excellent research with high impact for end-users will be outstanding. Strategic engagement will increase our income stream from commercial and philanthropic sources. New and existing partners will actively seek out our researchers because of their proven track-record in understanding stakeholder needs, successful collaboration, and implementing research outcomes to achieve demonstrable benefit.



**An outstanding student experience:** Being taught by academics whose research is grounded in collaboration with industry, government and community organisations provides unique learning experiences and opportunities for bridging the theory-practice gap. Stories of successful real-world application of research also have the potential to attract both undergraduate and graduate research students to La Trobe.



**Student and graduate employability:** Our Industry PhD program already provides a unique, deeply engaged experience for graduate researchers. Moreover, successful implementation of this strategy will also see La Trobe's 'traditional' PhD graduates sought out for their potential to achieve impact, whether their chosen career path lies within or beyond the higher education sector.



## Research themes

Our research is focussed on five themes which are linked to the United Nations SDGs:

- The protection & restoration of vulnerable ecosystems
- The production of quality foods & medicines
- A healthy, safe and equitable life course for everyone
- Understanding & preventing disease
- More just and equitable societies

## Resilient environment and communities

The protection and restoration of ecosystems is critical to combating climate change, pollution, desertification and loss of biodiversity. La Trobe researchers work in partnership with environment and community groups, government, industry and First Peoples to develop new approaches to ensure our ecosystems and natural resources are resilient, sustainable, biodiverse and protected. La Trobe is uniquely positioned to engage with regional communities to achieve this goal.



## Goal: Protection and restoration of vulnerable ecosystems and community resilience in the face of environmental and climate threat



### CASE STUDY: SPECIES DISTRIBUTIONS IN FIRE-PRONE ECOSYSTEMS

Fire-prone ecosystems have regeneration traits that help them survive and reproduce after a fire. In many regions however, climate change has increased the frequency of spontaneous and severe wildfires in forests and woodlands. This can affect the composition and structure of surrounding vegetation and the availability of habitat for native wildlife. There is an urgent need to better understand how species respond to fire, and to develop fire management strategies to achieve conservation goals. By developing a framework that can predict the impact of fire regimes on plants and animal species, this

research is helping to protect biodiversity in Australian flammable landscapes.



### CENTRE FOR FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS

Healthy freshwater ecosystems support immense biodiversity and provide highly valued goods and services that support human wellbeing and economic prosperity.

We seek to provide the critical knowledge to support the sustainable management of these important ecosystems across several key themes:

- Measuring and conserving freshwater biodiversity throughout river networks
- Balancing water allocations between communities, production systems and nature
- Addressing the effects of catchment management and chemical pollutants on water quality
- Understanding the influences of hydro-climatic variability and climate change on refuges and ecosystem resilience.

In striving to deliver world-leading research, we perform a role beyond the Murray–Darling Basin, with research links nationally in the wet tropics of Northern Australia, and internationally in Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas.

We also play a key role in training the next generation of water scientists through contribution to both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching within the University

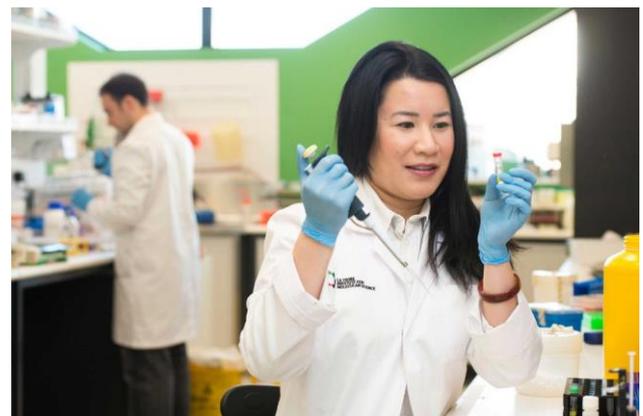


### Understanding and preventing disease

Research underpins our knowledge of disease. Understanding history, sociology, ethics, biology, chemistry and physics is critical to the management and prevention of disease.

La Trobe researchers work in partnership with bioscience institutes, health providers, industry and government to make discoveries in fundamental sciences that improve diagnostics, therapeutics and clinical outcomes across a range of diseases.

**Goal: Application of discoveries in the fundamental sciences and developments in technology to understand and prevent disease – especially at the intersection of cancer, immunity, cardiovascular and infectious disease research**



**CASE STUDY: NanoMslide**

NanoMslide is a fast, and cost-effective technology that is revolutionising the way we detect early-stage breast cancer. Currently, 30% of women in Australia who undergo lumpectomy to remove breast cancer return within 90 days for further surgery. This is due to inaccurate detection of tumours during surgery. Research published in Nature demonstrated how the NanoMslide can distinguish cancer cells from normal cells under any microscope. This allows time for early interventions and ultimately better patient outcomes. While this research has only been

conducted in breast cancer, the scope for NanoMslide extends far beyond, with applications in other cancers as an early diagnostic tool.



**Healthy people families and communities**

Promoting physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing for all individuals and across all stages of life is key to the creation of inclusive, equitable and prosperous societies.

La Trobe researchers build clinical capability and policy expertise to enhance individual and

community wellbeing, reduce disease, and create equitable health solutions for all. Our researchers partner with health research networks, non-profit organisations, industry and government.

**Goal: A healthy, safe and equitable life course for everyone**



**CASE STUDY: REDUCING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN TIMOR-LESTE**

It is estimated that 58% of women in Timor-Leste have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partner. La Trobe University researchers have worked with women survivors of violence and first responders to develop educational resources and pilot the World Health Organisation's first curriculum for health providers to support women experiencing violence, with a new emphasis on including children and people with disability. As a result, the Ministry of Higher Education has now made responding to gender-based violence (GBV) a compulsory subject for all midwifery degrees in

Timor-Leste. The work has led to a new joint venture with the UN and Ministry of Health to develop a national in-service curriculum for health providers to address GBV on a national scale.



**CASE STUDY: AUSTRALIA-INDONESIA DISABILITY RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY NETWORK (AIDRAN)**

Although the Indonesian government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011, Indonesians with disabilities still face discrimination and unequal access to public services such as education and healthcare. Disability-inclusive development has been recognised as a priority in Australia’s international development program. Australia also has established with Indonesia a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. DFAT has supported Dr Dina Afrianty and a team including collaborators from Universitas Aisyiyah (UNISA) and Brawijaya University (Malang), national disability advocates and Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs) to provide training and resources for disability advocates in Indonesia.

In addition to successful national policy advocacy, solutions delivered include intensive professional development courses for young educators and advocates and for health educators and professionals; establishment of a network and website for sharing videos, information, tools and referrals; and guidelines for online learning.



**Sustainable food and agriculture**

The production of high-quality crops, foods and plant-based medicines is critical for food security, health and wellbeing, and the environment. La Trobe researchers develop cutting edge methods to improve capability and capacity, to

secure a sustainable agricultural and food production future. Our researchers do this by working in partnership with primary producers, the food industry and government.

**Goal: Production of high-quality foods and medicines for improved health, reduced environmental impact and enhanced economies**



**CASE STUDY: GENETIC REDUCTION OF METHANE EMISSIONS IN AUSTRALIAN DAIRY CATTLE**

In Australia, livestock emissions account for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions in the agricultural sector. Up to 44% of livestock emissions are methane, and 65% of these emissions come from cattle. From a partnership between DataGene, Agriculture Victoria Research, Dairy Australia, the Gardiner Dairy Foundation and La Trobe researchers, a methane reduction trait has been developed and implemented in the Australian national breeding program. This reduces the environmental impact of dairy cattle without affecting other valuable traits such as

production, health, and fertility. The Sustainability Index released by DataGene has shifted the mindset of Australian dairy farmers in making environmentally conscious breeding decisions and helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.



## Social change and equity

Social inequality is driven by structural disadvantages such as race and gender, economic systems, climate change, and lack of access to basic resources.

Achieving social justice and equality requires long term and sustainable action to close the inequity gap.

### Goal: More just and equitable societies



#### CASE STUDY: PACIFIC ROLE MODELS

Young Pacific Islander adults are caught in an intergenerational spiral of racism, isolation, and disengagement. Testimonials express an overwhelming need for accessible careers information and role models from a similar cultural background. The Pacific Islander Network’s website contains video statements by Pacific people who grew up in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, representing a wide range of careers and diverse routes to realising professional success. Providing a platform to challenge damaging stereotypes, it demystifies career development and

gives access to relatable role models who can mentor the next generation. Inspired by the website, Microsoft are now offering free training in IT skills to a cohort of young Pacific people in regional Victoria.



#### NEXUS TEACHER PLACEMENT PROGRAM

Schools in regional areas struggle to recruit and retain good teachers. In response to the 2018 Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education, the Department of Education committed \$6.3m to delivering a long-term solution to this critical issue. Developed by La Trobe University, the Nexus Program draws on prior research by Professor Jo Lampert which demonstrated the effectiveness of a community-led, employment-based pathway to teacher training. The Nexus Program embeds high-performing teachers in schools identified as hard-to-staff, with a particular focus on urban low socio-economic, regional and rural communities. The

success of Nexus has been demonstrated by an independent evaluation and renewed funding of \$4.8 m to extend the program until 2026. The NEXUS program also won the Employability Award in The Australian Financial Review Higher Education Awards 2022.



## University anti-poverty programmes

La Trobe University provides low-income student support and support to students from low or lower-middle income countries via several programmes outlined below.



### LA TROBE'S GOLDEN LANYARD SCHOLARSHIP FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

Each year, our staff fund scholarships by donating to the Golden Lanyard Staff Giving program. The program provides access to scholarships to commencing or continuing students who are experiencing disadvantage and who otherwise might not have the opportunity to undertake tertiary study.

Through the program, staff can make tax-deductible donations to help students reach La Trobe and thrive while they're studying here. Staff who contribute receive a golden lanyard in acknowledgement of their generosity.

Since the Golden Lanyard program launched in 2013, staff have collectively donated to support over 50 full access scholarships for students from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds.

One such student is Philip. After being displaced by war in Syria, a staff-funded scholarship gave Philip the chance to build a new life at La Trobe. Today, he's on track to achieve his goal of practising law in Australia.

### SUPPORT FOR LOW INCOME AND DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

La Trobe University acknowledge that many students may experience financial difficulties at some time. There are a range of services and supports offered to assist students experiencing financial hardship, including:

- Pathways and entry programs that provide alternative ways to get into university
- Access to free financial counselling
- International student support program - Payments are available for on-shore enrolled international students experiencing significant financial hardship. This fund is part of the International Education Resilience Fund (IERF) by the Victorian Government to support our international students most impacted by COVID-19
- Emergency Aid - a one-off payment of AUD\$250 to support students in crisis for one-off unexpected emergencies that will have a negative effect on a student's wellbeing
- Financial support resources

---

## Contact

Office of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor,  
Research and Industry Engagement  
La Trobe University  
Victoria 3086, Australia

E [dvcrie@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:dvcrie@latrobe.edu.au)  
T +61 3 9479 1789