



LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

All kinds of clever

2019-
2022

Research
Impact Strategy





I'm pleased to release this, the Research Impact Strategy 2019-2022, to the La Trobe community.

La Trobe's strong results in the first Engagement and Impact assessment in 2018 (EI18) reflect our history as a university that has always had an eye to how its research can effect positive change in the world.

The introduction of research engagement and impact performance measures makes an intentional approach to planning, tracking, capturing and communicating our impact critical. We must keep pace with government and community expectations that publicly funded research yield direct public benefit.

EI18 taught us many things. One of the most important of those is that institutional and researcher literacy around what constitutes high-quality impact is non-negotiable, as is an understanding of the importance of establishing external partnerships and collaborations that lead to high-impact outcomes.

To our early career researchers: I want to impress upon you that you are in a unique and exciting position to explore building engagement and impact into your research design. You can maximise the reach and significance of your research outcomes by including these in your career-plan. I urge you to do this, as well as making the most of the depth of experience of your more established colleagues and the support for impact and engagement provided by the Research Office and the Office of the PVC (Industry Engagement).

I look forward to watching La Trobe's reputation for high-impact research grow locally, nationally and internationally through implementation of the Research Impact Strategy 2019-2022.

Professor Susan Dodds

Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Research and Industry Engagement)

Research Impact at La Trobe

Maximising the contribution our research makes to the economy, society, environment and culture, beyond the contribution to academic research.

A new context

The global research impact agenda has been building over recent years. In Australia, it culminated in the first iteration of the ERA Engagement and Impact assessment in 2018.

Universities are being asked to look outward and open up. Researchers are increasingly engaging with non-academic partners and communities and are active participants in ensuring their research realises its benefits to the world.

Up until 2018, however, government policy mechanisms in Australia placed emphasis almost solely on academic measures of university performance: publication rates and quality; Category 1 income and citation metrics. In a tight competitive and fiscal environment, universities have been required to recognise, reward and support research that achieved these kinds of measures – and they still must. What has changed, however, is the sole emphasis on academic measures of performance.

The changing environment underpinned by the ERA Engagement and Impact Assessment (herein EI-18) offers exciting and growing opportunities for La Trobe's research to extend its reach and achieve real-world benefits and we will be strategic about how we invest to achieve these. However, we will not do this at the expense of research quality; we will continue to build our profile as an institution producing high-quality, peer-reviewed, high-impact research.

Transforming our model of research

Definitions of and nomenclature around research impact varies across countries, funding schemes and evaluation mechanisms. The ARC defines impact as 'the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to academic research.' The definition of engagement is 'the interaction between researchers and research end-users outside of academia, for the mutually beneficial transfer of knowledge, technologies, methods or resources.'

Performance in future ERA-EI assessments is critical. Working alongside our strategies to maximise our ERA performance, the implementation of this impact strategy will position La Trobe to achieve high performance ratings for the impact of our research, and our engagement with communities, industry, and government.

But our own impact agenda is far broader than ensuring performance in the next EI assessment. La Trobe's proud history of engagement shows that it is, and has always been, an institution of and for the communities in which it is located and those we serve through our teaching and research activities.

Recognising research with impact

La Trobe researchers undertake their work because they want their research and teaching to have an impact, to have a positive effect on wellbeing, health, social and legal justice, the environment and economy: it is in the organisation's DNA.

What is new, however, is our ability to recognise and reward high-quality engagement and impact activities; to support and resource high-impact research and harness these achievements to build partnerships with next and end-users to yield the greatest possible benefit to society.

There are, of course, researchers at La Trobe across a variety of disciplines who have been achieving research impact for years, decades, even. We acknowledge the achievements of these researchers, and we also recognise that there are researchers undertaking pure or fundamental research that may not yield 'real-world' change in the immediate future but will profoundly influence the course of knowledge and the ability of other researchers to achieve future impact. Ultimately, we must achieve balance in our approach: our strategy must cover all bases and bring everyone along.



Photo provided by kind permission of Professor Mike Clarke,
Ecology, Environment and Evolution
EI18 Impact case study, Environmental Sciences



Photo provided by kind permission of Professor Chris Bigby, Living with Disability Research Centre
E118 Impact case study, Studies in Human Society

What **success** looks like

What will successful implementation of this strategy mean for the University, our students, communities, partners and staff? Ultimately, it will help drive several fundamental aspects of our strategic goals.

Charting our course

Research impact is *everyone's* responsibility, insofar as La Trobe has made an explicit commitment to be an engaged, collaborative university that positions the development of productive partnerships as a core strategic goal. To meet this goal, to effect real change and to perform in the next ERA-EI assessment we must take a whole-of-institution

approach to research impact. Senior executive, organisational and research leaders, researchers and the staff who support them must be willing to embrace necessary adjustments to the way we do research and the way it is managed.

This strategy is designed to help the La Trobe community chart the course forward and support decision-making at the institutional, organisational unit and individual researcher level.

Research excellence

Excellent impact can only be achieved by excellent research. We will not cease our constant pursuit for excellence in research, but our strategy will increase capacity among our researchers to design for engagement and impact and will provide support to track and capture evidence of success.

Partner of Choice

Our reputation for delivering excellent research with high-impact for next and end-users will be unequalled. Existing and new partners will actively seek out our researchers because of their proven track-record in understanding the needs of partners and end-users and how to work collaboratively to overcome the challenges of implementing research outcomes to achieve benefit. Strategic engagement will increase our end-user (Category 2-4) income stream.

An outstanding student experience

Being taught by an academic whose research is grounded in real-world examples of working with policy-makers, government and community organisations has the potential to significantly increase our students' learning and bring alive the realities of bridging the theory-practice gap. Stories of successful real-world application of research also has the potential to attract both undergraduate and graduate research students to La Trobe.

Student and graduate employability

The global research-impact agenda means that universities internationally are looking to recruit academic staff with developed capacity to achieve impact. Our Industry PhD program already provides a unique, deeply engaged experience for graduate researchers. However, successful implementation of this strategy will also see La Trobe's 'traditional' PhD graduates sought out by other higher education institutions for their potential to achieve impact due to their literacy in the principles of research impact and, in some cases, demonstrated achievement.

Embedding **engagement** and **impact**

Research projects that include engagement and impact as part of their design from the outset are known to be more likely to achieve significant reach and impact.

Preparing for EI success

While one case study in each Field of Research (FoR) was required for the EI18 assessment, it will not be clear for some time whether this will remain the case in consequent assessments: it's possible we will be required to submit more than one impact case study for each code.

A number of lessons were learned from EI-18. One of these was the benefit of early identification and development of research with impact. Far from leaving it until the year prior to an assessment, we need to identify, support and develop research impact in current projects and those about to commence. This will require input from research leaders as well as a selection process by the Impact Working Group.

By early 2019 we will identify three research projects in each FoR that are most likely to achieve high impact in time for the next EI process. We will provide targeted support to these projects and researchers to maximise engagement and impact. This process will also work to look beyond the next EI assessment and identify projects with impact likely to be realised in the longer-term.

What we will do:

- We will continue the tenure of the Impact Working Group
- We will identify three likely high-impact research projects in each FoR to best position ourselves for the next EI Assessment (expected 2021). The Manager, Research Impact, will work with Heads of School, Heads of Department, Research Directors, Research Centre Directors, the Impact Working Group and Research Performance Team to identify areas of significant impact. Selected projects and researchers will be provided with targeted support to assist them to maximise their engagement and impact capacity leading up to the next EI assessment.

Our culture

Today's University requires a balance of high-quality fundamental and applied research, not only to meet government performance requirements, but so we can continue to make a meaningful contribution to knowledge while also meeting the needs of the community, our research partners and end-users.

To support this, as outlined in the Research Plan 2018-22, we will:

- Develop a culture that values and generates impact from research through industry engagement
- Develop a University-wide culture of engagement and embed partnerships at all levels of research activity

Here, 'industry' refers to a range of external partners including private enterprise, community groups, not-for-profit organisations and government.

Research leaders and 'impact champions' will be integral to developing a culture in which high quality engagement and impact activities are encouraged and formally recognised. Decisions about where to best place time, effort and resources must be both strategic and meaningful. We will consider the design of an Impact Framework to assist these decisions.

We will also design formal opportunities to recognise and reward achievement in impact and engagement.

What we will do:

- We will design a La Trobe-specific 'Impact Framework', which will include an easy reference guide to research impact to supplement the Research Impact Strategy and assist with its dissemination and implementation.
- We will build the profile of research impact at La Trobe. This may include an award for 'Research Impact and Engagement' in 2019 alongside the Research Excellence prize in the current suite of Staff Awards and an annual, impact-specific event that

celebrates achievements in impact. This may take the form of an impact challenge or competition, which have had success in building the profile of research impact in other universities.

- Internally, at department/centre, school, college and university-level we will regularly recognise and celebrate significant research impact achievements as we do other aspects of research achievement.

Recognition and reward

Traditional measures of research performance are widening to include other achievements and outcomes. Engagement and impact activities require time and effort by researchers and, while culture change embracing these changes is critical, it will not alone be enough.

Embedding engagement and impact activities and achievements in our core personnel policies and processes will legitimise and recognise these as integral to achieving our broader strategic aims. This strategy is already part of the *Research Plan 2018-2022*: "Review and improve the systems and incentives that value and reward research staff, including the publication award scheme, academic workload planning systems, Career Success and academic promotions systems, to capture achievements in income, publication, impact, leadership and other research outcomes" (p.11).

Action has already taken place on this in some areas; for example, the new Academic Promotions Evidence Matrix includes new metrics for 'Impact and Esteem' which encompass engagement and impact activities.

What we will do:

- We will review and revise existing personnel policies and procedures to reflect, in a sensible and balanced way, the changes to expectations of university researchers and the kinds of activities they must undertake to contribute to the University's research performance.

Systems, expertise and infrastructure

For our research to perform well in the next EI assessment, we need strong, verifiable evidence, not only of the impact of our research, but the pathway to impact; that is, *how* the research inputs, outcomes, engagement with and of end-users led to change in the world outside academia.

Primarily in preparation for the next EI assessment but also in order to be able to identify and understand our research impact and engagement achievements for partnership and reputation-building purposes, we need to investigate and implement systems to log, track and document our impact and its pathways.

In addition to reviewing whether our systems are adequate to accommodate these new measures of research performance, we must also review whether our current support services adequately meet these new requirements. For example, consideration should be given to the need to build into our Research Platforms the capacity to apply economic principles to measuring and reporting the impact of our health and social research.

What we will do:

- We will investigate cost-effective options for meeting researcher needs for tracking and documenting engagement and impact through the purchase or development of appropriate fit-for-purpose software
- We will review and assess whether current internal research support services have the capacity to meet the needs of researchers and the University.

Professional development

We will invest in our researchers by providing them with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills according to their individual needs and the goals they have for their research. We commit to supporting our researchers to build impact into the research process, rather than it being a bolt-on once projects are completed.

A researcher's familiarity with the principles and practices of research engagement and impact depend on an array of factors – discipline, the

nature of projects undertaken, funding streams, level of access to mentoring, stage of career; just to name a few. The reasons why researchers today should be knowledgeable about and skilled in engagement and impact are also many and include:

- **Funding:** major grant schemes have already introduced research impact track record in criteria and many philanthropic schemes also ask for an account of a researcher's/ research program's impact in application material. This is likely to become even more common (and, possibly, standard), as questions about the relevance of university research to the 'national interest' are increasingly asked.
- **Career:** with the increasing global focus on engagement and impact as a performance measure, universities in a variety of countries are interested in the recruitment of engaged scholars whose research attracts attention and is likely to contribute to an institution's impact record. For researchers doing fundamental research, an understanding of the policy and organisational ecosystems of universities is critical to being able to articulate an individual contribution, in context, to an academic department/Field of Research.
- **Teaching and student recruitment:** The student experience at La Trobe will be enriched by teaching delivered by academics who are engaged and connected in the professional contexts into which their students will eventually move. Public reputation and track record in high-impact research can also make a researcher a sought-after supervisor for high-quality graduate research candidates.
- **University performance:** How a university performs in national assessments and global ranking measures affects all its members. It has an effect on reputation and profile, student recruitment, funding and workforce sustainability.

What we will do:

We will provide researchers with regular opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge to build individual and University capacity to maximise the impact of research, with a particular focus on:

- Planning and designing research for impact
- Building and maintaining stakeholder relationships
- Tracking impact pathways
- Measuring impact success
- Evidencing impact
- We will build our internal capacity and contribute to a vibrant research culture by harnessing the experience and expertise of researchers with impressive impact track-records by inviting them to be involved in developing and/or mentoring colleagues.

Engaging for impact

To meet the goals of performance and impact that we have set in the *Research Plan 2018-2022* and to ensure we are Partner of Choice (*Strategic Plan, 2018-2022*) we will need to radically revise our approach to communication and engagement with our partners and research end-users. We will also need to align the way that internal units and services with a stake in external communication about our research and its impact work together for consistent, effective and clear messages to the right stakeholders at the right time.

To support researchers in engaging effectively and efficiently with their stakeholders and end-users we will design a series of resources for the reporting of impact successes to current partners and to invite engagement for new partners with them and the University.

- We will bring together key internal stakeholders to plan the alignment of our goals and activities to achieve targeted communications about our research and its impact to external audiences, particularly our existing and potential research partners and end-users.
- We will support researchers to build and strengthen engagement with their stakeholders by designing and making available downloadable resources for engaging with partners and end-users.
- We will collect a 'library' of research impact case studies from researchers across the disciplines in order to be ready to use these in communications with potential partners as opportunities arise.



Photo provided by kind permission of Professor Helen McLachlan and Professor Della Forster, Judith Lumley Centre E118 Impact case study, Medical and Health Sciences (Public and Allied Health)



Case studies

IN THE FIRST NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT, EI2018, LA TROBE HAD 13 IMPACT CASE STUDIES (OF 18 SUBMITTED) RATED AS EITHER MEDIUM OR HIGH. SUMMARIES OF TWO OF THE SEVEN IMPACT CASE STUDIES RATED 'HIGH' ARE BELOW.

One-on-one midwife care reduces caesarean section rates during childbirth and improves health outcomes for babies.

The La Trobe University led Comparing Standard Maternity Care with One-to-One Midwifery Support (COSMOS) randomised trial (comparing continuity of one-on-one care from a midwife called caseload midwifery with standard maternity care), resulted in a 22% reduction in the proportion of women requiring caesarean section, and a reduction in the proportion of babies requiring admission to a special care nursery. Following this trial (the world's largest and Australian first), the caseload midwifery model is increasingly available, with data showing availability in 31% of Australian public hospitals that responded to a large national survey. The model highlights that trust, and a sustained relationship between the midwife and woman giving birth are critical to positive birth outcomes.

Professor Della Forster, Professor Helen McLachlan, Dr Michelle Newton
Judith Lumley Centre, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Decent Work for Domestic Workers: Equality and Protection under International Law.

This research has influenced international law regulating the work of domestic workers (e.g., maids and servants). It helped shape the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention on Domestic Work (Article 10), and the Recommendation on Domestic Work (Article 9.13) adopted in 2011 and influences laws applying to domestic workers in a range of countries. These impacts arose from research which generated: a conceptual framework with key imperatives for policy actors, a proposed set of principles to underpin reforms and a 'model law' that pioneered a 'framed flexibility' framework based on the needs and vulnerabilities of domestic workers, and the demand for their labour.

The model McCann and Murray developed has changed the way countries regulate the work of domestic workers.

Associate Professor Jill Murray
La Trobe Law School

Actions and responsibilities

Key

DVC (R)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	MRED	Manager, Research Education and Development
EDRO	Executive Director, Research Office	HoS	Head of School
PVC (IE)	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Industry Engagement)	HoD	Head of Department
PVC	Pro Vice-Chancellor	D - RC	Director, Research Centre
APVC(R)	Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)	RD	Research Director
C - IWG	Chair, Impact Working Group	HR	Human Resources
MRI	Manager, Research Impact		

Action	Responsibility	Accountability	Timeline
1. We will continue the tenure of the Impact Working Group	MRI	C-IWG	Feb 2019 – Dec 2022 To be reviewed annually
2. We will identify three likely high-impact research projects in each FoR to best position ourselves for the next EI Assessment (expected 2021). The Manager, Research Impact, will work with Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors (Research), Heads of School, Heads of Department, Research Directors, Research Centre Directors, the Impact Working Group and Research Performance Team to identify areas of significant impact. Selected projects and researchers will be provided with targeted support to assist them to maximise their engagement and impact capacity leading up to the next EI assessment.	MRI HoSs HoDs D-RCs RDs APVCR (ASSC) APVCR (SHE)	EDRO PVC (IE)	High-impact research in each FoR identified: August 2019 Support and development needs established: Oct 2019
3. We will design a La Trobe-specific 'Impact Framework', which will include an easy reference guide to research impact to supplement the Research Impact Strategy and assist with its dissemination and implementation.	MRI	EDRO	Completed and disseminated Oct 2019
4. We will build the profile of research impact at La Trobe. This may include an award for 'Research Impact and Engagement' in 2019 alongside the Research Excellence prize in the current suite of Staff Awards and an annual, impact-specific event that celebrates achievements in impact. This may take the form of an impact challenge or competition, which have had success in building the profile of research impact in other universities.	MRI	DVC(R)	Feasibility of Staff award established July 2019 At least one impact-focused event delivered by end 2019

Action	Responsibility	Accountability	Timeline
5. Internally, at department/centre, school, college and university-level we will regularly recognise and celebrate significant research impact achievements as we do other aspects of research achievement.	HoSs HoDs D-RCs RDs APVCR (ASSC) APVCR (SHE)	PVC (SHE) PVC (ASSC)	Ongoing
Action	Responsibility	Accountability	Timeline
6. We will review and revise existing personnel policies and procedures to reflect, in a sensible and balanced way, the changes to expectations of university researchers and the kinds of activities they must undertake to contribute to the University's research performance.	MRI HR	PVC (IE) EDRO	Completed Dec 2019
7. We will investigate cost-effective options for meeting researcher needs for tracking and documenting engagement and impact through the purchase or development of appropriate fit-for-purpose software	MRI	EDRO	Software rolled out to researchers by Aug 2019
8. We will review and assess whether current internal research support services have the capacity to meet the needs of researchers and the University.	MRI	DVC(R) PVC (IE) EDRO	Review complete November 2019
9. We will provide researchers with regular opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge to build individual and University capacity to maximise the impact of research.	MRI MRED APVCR (ASSC) APVCR (SHE)	EDRO PVC (IE)	Ongoing 2019 - 22
10. We will build our internal capacity and contribute to a vibrant research culture by harnessing the experience and expertise of researchers with impressive impact track-records by inviting them to be involved in developing and/or mentoring colleagues.	MRI APVCR (ASSC) APVCR (SHE)	PVC (IE) PVC (SHE) PVC (ASSC)	Ongoing 2019 - 22
11. We will bring together key internal stakeholders to plan the alignment of our goals and activities to achieve targeted communications about our research and its impact to external audiences, particularly our existing and potential research partners and end-users.	MRI	DVC(R) PVC (IE) EDRO	Stakeholder group established and active May 2019 External communications plan completed Nov 2019
12. We will support researchers to build and strengthen engagement with their stakeholders by designing and making available downloadable resources for engaging with partners and end-users.	MRI PVC (IE)	DVC(R)	First suite of resources available by Dec 2019
13. We will collect a 'library' of research impact case studies from researchers across the disciplines in order to be ready to use these in communications with potential partners as opportunities arise.	MRI	EDRO	Ongoing

'We should aim to redefine what it means to be a great university in the 21st century: deeply connected and committed to excellence, innovation, accessibility and relevance.'

Professor John Dewar | Vice-Chancellor, 2018
Strategic Plan 2018-2022



Photo provided by kind permission of Dr Jillian Garvey, Archaeology and History
E118 Impact case study, History and Archaeology



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

La Trobe University acknowledges that our campuses are located on the lands of many traditional custodians in Victoria. We recognise their ongoing connection to the land and value their unique contribution to the University and wider Australian society.

We are committed to providing opportunities for Indigenous Australians, both as individuals and communities through teaching and learning, research and community partnerships across all of our campuses.

La Trobe University pays our respect to Indigenous Elders, past, present and emerging and will continue to incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems and protocols as part of our ongoing strategic and operational business.

ENQUIRIES

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