2012 – 2017

World ready: La Trobe in 2017
A strategic directions paper
“Our students will be attracted to La Trobe because they want to be part of a University that is dealing with the big issues of the day. They will want to make a difference to the world, and be well equipped to flourish in the workplaces of the 21st Century. Our graduates will be renowned for their employability and for their deep understanding of some of the most pressing challenges facing the global community.”
The rapidly changing higher education environment, La Trobe's approaching 50th birthday in 2017, and a new senior leadership team, make this the right time to take stock of the University's achievements and to reset our aspirations for the future.

This document makes some important propositions for the future character and direction of the University. It proposes a La Trobe of the future that builds on the strengths, character and ethos of the La Trobe of the past and present. It seeks to reanimate the University by refreshing its founding ideals of research excellence in areas that really matter, promoting access to an outstanding University education, and community relevance.

It positions La Trobe as one of the big three Victorian universities, with a critical role to play in Melbourne's north and a distinctive mission relevant to the regional communities it serves. It includes targets for performance ranked against other Australian universities, and some uniquely 'La Trobe' strategies for reaching those targets.

The University's senior leadership team has developed this Strategic Directions Paper with significant input from the University Council, senior leaders from across the University, a group of younger La Trobe staff, and three specialised working groups including student representatives. It is now being made available to the whole University community for further development and feedback. There are specific questions posed in each section of the document, on which comment is invited. The final section sets out how you can provide your comments, and what happens next.
Executive summary

From its foundation in 1967, La Trobe’s mission was to be at the forefront of change – to explore, highlight, and lead the changes necessary for a just and prosperous society.

In its earliest days, La Trobe attracted high achievers who chose us over more prestigious institutions because we were at the centre of important social, economic, political and scientific developments. These graduates include some of our most influential alumni, such as Patricia Edgar, Tim Flannery, Bill Kelty, Terry Moran, David Morgan, Elizabeth Proust, Geoff Raby, Andrew Robb, Swee Hin Toh, Virginia Trioli, Don Watson and Ian Watt.

In a rapidly changing environment for universities, La Trobe will need to adapt quickly in order to reclaim its role as leader of the national conversation in the areas that matter most, and to improve its attractiveness to the nation’s, and the world’s, most able and high-potential students.

In terms of formal comparisons, we will aim to be one of the major three universities in Victoria, one of Australia’s top 12 universities, and we will improve our current rank as one of the top 500 in the world; but we will do this by adopting a number of distinctive strategies:

- We will identify and develop selected areas of cross-disciplinary teaching and research focus that build on our existing strengths, and which address some of the most pressing questions affecting the future of human societies and their environments. These will be areas in which we can lay claim to be one of the best in Australia, and the world, and which will attract the best students, staff and researchers to come and work or study with us.
- We will seek game-changing partnerships for our teaching and research, based around our areas of teaching and research focus.
- We will develop a distinctive approach to curriculum and the student experience that will equip all La Trobe graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to flourish in the workplaces of the 21st century.
- We will engage more deeply with Melbourne’s north, and with the regional communities we serve.

This is a bold vision for the University that seeks to return the University to its radical beginnings, but reinterpreted and refreshed in a modern context.

Achieving this vision will involve hard choices, and will require the University to do many things differently:

- We will need a more flexible policy framework for our staff, so that they are enabled to play to their strengths, supported in adapting to new work practices and expectations, and rewarded when high performance is demonstrated.
- We will need to ensure that the University is run as efficiently and effectively as possible, so that we are able continually to generate the resources needed to reinvest in our infrastructure, and to support our academic staff to focus their energies on teaching and research.
- We will need to become comprehensively student-focused, and adapt our degree programs and modes of delivery to students’ preferences rather than our own.
- We will need to become an excellent partner to those who want to work with us in our teaching and research, or who depend on us for building human capital or driving economic activity in a region. In particular, we will need to turn our campuses outwards, so that they become accessible, vibrant places of community interaction, as well as places of scholarship and learning.

What this paper does not propose is administrative change for change’s sake, or an attempt to alter the University’s essential character. Its aim, rather, is to re-craft what we already have in a way that is consistent with La Trobe’s founding ideals and the positive aspects of our culture to ensure that we deploy our resources to advance those ideals in a manner that gives them new life in the contemporary world.
Context

POLICY AND FUNDING ENVIRONMENTS

Almost every aspect of funding and regulation of higher education is under review, and the pace of technological change is increasing quickly. As a result, government policy and societal need have transformed the environment in which La Trobe must work. Like every other university we are being required to:

- educate more students from more varied backgrounds, and compete for them in a deregulated market
- adapt to the changing expectations of students, especially in the use of technology for education
- conduct more research to a higher standard in disciplines that are socially and economically relevant
- be a better partner to external organisations
- act in a demonstrably fiscally responsible and business-like manner.

Like all universities, we must lift the quality of our teaching and research. At the same time, we will need to be much clearer about our strengths in teaching and research as we seek to distinguish ourselves from other universities and thereby increase our attractiveness to prospective students, staff and partners. We don’t have a choice about addressing these demands, but we can turn them to our advantage. This makes it vital that the University has a clear understanding of its own future and the distinctiveness of its offerings in teaching and research.

BUILDING ON OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND HISTORY

La Trobe was the third university created for Victoria, and was established to be complementary to, but different from, the other two. Its founders aspired to create a university that would (1) provide an accessible alternative to the two pre-existing universities, (2) bring university education to the northern suburbs of Melbourne, and (3) excel in a number of selected disciplines. Shaped by the era of our birth, La Trobe developed a distinctive ethos which joined ‘social engagement’ to the pursuit of academic excellence. Reflecting our desire to engage with the outside world, our public intellectuals became and remain among the liveliest in the nation, and our alumni are some of the most influential their generations have produced.

In the 1980s and ‘90s we redefined the University through new relationships in country Victoria. We are now the biggest provider of higher education to Victoria’s regions, and have the largest regional enrolment of the mainland Australian universities in the AWRU top 500. And crucially, La Trobe now has some of the world’s best researchers in biochemistry, agricultural sciences and the humanities. These are achievements of which we can be justly proud.

Times have changed, and the manner in which we must play our part in the world and the complexity and cost of academic research have changed with them. For instance, our home in Melbourne’s north is being transformed by the combination of accelerating population expansion and rising demand for higher education. The regions we serve face new challenges as a result of structural changes in national and global economies along with environmental and social challenges. And the issues facing our society, and to which our courses and research must respond, have to cover crucial new areas such as climate change, the ageing of our population, the rise of Asia’s power and influence, and the revolution in the medical sciences.

Our history equips us with the right formula for success in such an environment. Our geography, ethos and academic strengths can be the starting points for an even livelier and stronger La Trobe that retains its relevance and remains true to its ideals. However, we have to improve in a range of areas.

OUR CURRENT SCORECARD

At present, we are not uniformly one of Victoria’s top three on a range of measures, we are not the best in Australia in enough areas, and we are not sufficiently well regarded in enough disciplines.

There are things we are doing well

- We have some world-class areas of research strength, are ranked in the top 500 universities in the world and in the global top 50 of universities aged under 50.
- We have steadily increased our VTAC first preferences and market share over the last three years through curriculum renewal and improved marketing.
- We have clear targets for financial performance, which we generally achieve.
- We have begun a program of refurbishment and major investment in key infrastructure at the Melbourne, Bendigo and Shepparton campuses.

And areas where we must do better

- We have too many areas of poor research performance, and our research performance overall has not improved relative to the rest of the sector.
- We offer more programs and subjects per staff FTE than any other university in Victoria, with no demonstrable benefits for the quality of the student experience.
- We have an extremely low percentage of fee-paying domestic graduate coursework students, and a low percentage of international fee-paying students compared to the rest of the sector.
- We have made limited investments in online and flexible learning, and our physical and virtual infrastructure requires new investment.
La Trobe will be a university known for its excellence and innovation in relation to the big issues of our time, and for its enthusiasm to make a difference.

We will lay claim to selected areas of teaching and research (Areas of Teaching and Research Focus – ATRFs), addressing issues fundamental to the future of human societies and their environments in which we will be amongst the best in the world, with a capacity to attract outstanding partners to work with us in those areas.

In the tradition of great campus universities, we will improve our attractiveness to creative and independent thinkers from all social classes, ethnic groups and parts of the world, with a passion for changing things. They will choose us because we are at the centre of important social, economic, political and scientific developments; because we are flexible and innovative in our modes of delivery; and because we equip them with an identifiably modern education, sending them out to be successful and to make the world a better place.

In doing so, we will regain our place as one of Australia’s top 12 universities, improve our current ranking in the world’s top 500, and reclaim our place as unambiguously one of the top three ranked Victorian universities, playing a critical role in Melbourne and Victoria’s north.
Our plan

Achieving our Objective will require well-targeted and implemented plans in teaching, research and engagement.

Our goals will need to be measurable, capable of being applied at every level of the University hierarchy, and should directly support our higher-level aspiration to be one of Victoria’s three leading universities. The core themes across all areas are improving the quality of our teaching and research, identifying and playing to our strengths, and engaging more deeply with our local communities and partners.

A. OUR CHARACTER

Our people

Our students will be attracted to La Trobe because they want to be part of a University that is dealing with the big issues of the day. They will want to make a difference to the world, and be well equipped to flourish in the workplaces of the 21st Century. Our graduates will be renowned for their employability and for their deep understanding of some of the most pressing challenges facing the global community.

Our students will come from a wide range of social, ethnic and global backgrounds. They will have busy lives inside and outside University, and will expect us to provide their courses flexibly in ways that suit their diverse needs for different styles and places of learning.

Our staff will be highly motivated and ground-breaking, willing to act and to be held accountable for outcomes: people who are willing to disrupt the status quo and pursue new ideas, who want to create afresh; people who will expect reward for high performance, and who will expect high performance from those around them. In order to renew our workforce, we will make ourselves an attractive place for young academics and professional staff to make their careers, and provide them with the support, rewards and flexibility they need. Risk-taking and innovation will be encouraged.

Our size

La Trobe is a mid-size Australian university located in an area of rapid population growth. We therefore have a capacity to grow further in an uncapped, student demand-driven system.

This growth will give us the ability to cater for all of the student types we need – high achieving school graduates from across Australia, mature-aged students, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, Indigenous students, those seeking professional degrees, and, importantly, those from the regions we serve, including the fast-growing suburbs of northern Melbourne. Growth in student numbers will also increase our resource base for all purposes, including research, and will increase the efficiency in our use of campus facilities.

We will plan for growth to about 35,000 EFTSL. This represents growth of about 2,000 EFTSL at our regional campuses, and of about 6,200 EFTSL at Bundoora and our CBD campuses. This will require careful planning to ensure that growth does not place undue strain on existing and planned infrastructure. This will include greater use of flexible delivery modes and more intensive use of existing teaching spaces.

In order to achieve this growth while maintaining entry standards commensurate with a university, we need to become more appealing to high-potential students, whether measured by ATAR scores or otherwise; to increase the proportion of these students in our commencing cohorts; and to attract a larger share of these students state-wide.

We will increase the number and proportion of graduate coursework students to about six per cent of projected total load, by 2017. This will require strengthening our graduate courses through new or refreshed programs that address clear market need, a new inner-city campus presence, improved marketing and recruitment, and greater use of flexible or online delivery.

We will continue to recruit significant numbers of onshore international students and aim to increase this to 7,000 students by 2017. We will strengthen the range of source countries of our international student cohort to make our campuses culturally richer and more diverse. We will not set a limit to the number of international students studying with us, but we will set a maximum of 35 per cent of students coming from any single country, with at least an additional four countries each representing 10 per cent or more of the international cohort. This is an achievable level of diversity given current patterns of recruitment.

In summary

- We will expand our total load to 35,000 EFTSL by 2017.
- Within this overall total, we will increase the number of international students from 5,300 students to 7,000 students; and the proportion of domestic fee-paying graduate coursework students from the current three per cent, to six per cent of our total student load.
- We will increase the proportion of our students who are from low socio-economic or Indigenous backgrounds to, respectively, 20 per cent and 0.9 per cent (currently 17.5 per cent and 0.6 per cent).
- We will expand our share of VTAC first preference applicants from 12.6 per cent to 14 per cent, and our state-wide share of students with an ATAR of 80+ from 7.1% to 12%.
Our plan

Achieving this quality-led growth will require a number of interlocked strategies:

- improved marketing
- strengthened partnerships with schools
- strengthened partnerships with TAFEs, and smoother articulation pathways
- a targeted scholarship strategy to attract high-potential students
- improved domestic graduate coursework recruitment and improved graduate courses
- improved international student recruitment
- expansion of professional development and short courses as feeders to award programs.

The way we do things

Successful implementation of this strategy will require us to change the way we do things – to become faster moving, more collegiate and less tolerant of poor quality.

- We will need to get better at drawing together our strengths from across the University.
- We will need to become more meritocratic, and more performance and evidence-based.
- We will need to improve and streamline our administrative systems to support all staff to do their work.
- We will need to be tough-minded about investing in and expanding areas of strength, and be willing to exit or shrink areas of relative weakness.
- We will need to improve our people and business processes and increase levels of client focus in our central service delivery.
- We will need to be comprehensively student-focused in the programs we offer, the way we offer them, and the experience and services we provide.
- We will need to improve our capacity to develop deep and effective partnerships.
- We will need to maintain our standards of academic excellence whilst thinking more commercially and exploiting all opportunities for revenue raising.
- We will need to move quickly to lead, anticipate and adapt to important trends in higher education.

B. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Curriculum distinctiveness: The La Trobe Framework

We want students to be attracted to La Trobe for the distinctive content and quality of our degrees, and to be drawn to us for the fact that we enable them to better understand, and engage with, the big issues of the day. In short, we want our students to be ‘work ready’ and ‘world ready’. We will recapture the sense that La Trobe is the place intelligent people, who want to make a difference, want to come and study. As a result, our graduates will be renowned for their employability and for their deep understanding of some of the most pressing challenges facing the global community.

La Trobe already offers a wide range of disciplinary and professional degrees; we offer students an extensive range of enrichment experiences within, or alongside, assessed curriculum; and we have initiated a vital program of curriculum redesign through Design for Learning, which promotes the quality and coherence of learning experiences in all of our degrees.

It is now time to incorporate all of these features into a coherent, university-wide approach to curriculum and the student experience, with additional features that emphasise breadth of learning and systematic exposure to the major challenges they will face over the course of their lifetimes. Collectively, these features will be known as the La Trobe Framework, sustaining a student body that is global in outlook and ready for international experiences.

The features of the La Trobe Framework will be:

La Trobe Hallmarks within selected ATRFs

These will be a small number of ‘Hallmark’ areas of study in our Areas of Teaching and Research Focus (ATRFs). Within each ATRF, we will offer a suite of unique degrees at undergraduate and graduate level (coursework and research). To be the best in these exciting fields, you will simply have to come to La Trobe. These cross-disciplinary Hallmark areas will address some of the planet’s most pressing problems, lead to excellent career outcomes for students, and be ones in which La Trobe will claim international pre-eminence of expertise and quality. These areas will lie within ATRFs, such as food security; human disease and health; sport and human movement; water and sustainability; regional Australia; human security; design, innovation and creativity. The undergraduate degrees in these areas would be targeted at high-potential students, would be highly selective, and will be supported by scholarships and other enrichment programs. We would also seek to engage external partners to support the delivery of the degrees, through guest lectures, work experience opportunities and scholarships. They will also form the basis for close learning and staffing partnerships with universities around the world, which have complementary strengths in the Hallmark areas.

QUESTIONS...

- Does this section adequately describe the character the University will need to have in order to achieve the Objective set out earlier? Is anything missing?
- What will be the biggest challenges facing us in moving in this direction? How can we overcome them?
The programs will draw on both University capability and the top adjunct staff across the globe, and use the latest learning technologies and the NBN to deliver programs across all campuses.

**La Trobe Pervasives and Learning Enrichment**

La Trobe Pervasives will be required features of all La Trobe degrees that will promote work-readiness and give graduates the proficiency and knowledge they need to address the major social, economic, technological and political issues they will face as workers and global citizens. By choosing La Trobe, students will know they are choosing a thoroughly modern and highly distinctive education that will benefit themselves and the world. Examples of Pervasives will include: Sustainability Thinking, Global Citizenship, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Cultural Competencies, Work Readiness and Making a Difference. Alongside this required curriculum content would sit La Trobe Enrichment Experiences that would include opportunities for all students to participate in at least one of the following: work placement and work experience (traditionally labelled ‘Work Integrated Learning’, but better titled ‘Innovation and application in the workplace’), Study Abroad, Study Tours, Participation in R&D Projects and game-changing partnerships.

**Breadth of learning**

This will require students to study a specified proportion of their degree from subjects designed specifically to broaden student perspectives, in regional and global history and politics, technology, leadership, healthy populations, and other areas. This requirement could be either an end in itself, or a means of embedding Pervasives across the curriculum.

Collectively, these curriculum features would be known as the La Trobe Framework, and would produce graduates who are technically skilled in their own disciplines or professions, but who also have a good understanding of the major global issues they will face, and a capacity to innovate and problem-solve.

Adding these new features into existing activity gives us a view of the La Trobe Framework as shown in the diagram (figure 1) below.

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**FIGURE 1: THE LA TROBE FRAMEWORK**
Our plan

Professional programs

La Trobe already offers a large number of degrees leading to professional qualifications. We will continue to expand our professional offerings in areas of strong student demand and to introduce existing successful programs in new locations. We will also consider whether any degrees currently offered at bachelors level should be offered wholly or optionally at graduate level.

Course profile

La Trobe offers more degrees than our competitors, with a correspondingly high number of courses and subjects with low enrolments. This means that we are spreading our teaching efforts thinner than necessary (and thus making our staff work harder), spending resources on additional quality assurance, and diluting the concentration and force of our marketing. There are no observable benefits of this from a student point of view. In short, we urgently need to focus our academic profile.

Accordingly, priority will be given to reducing the number of low enrolment courses and subjects through the annual course and load planning process. By 2017, and preferably sooner, no more than two per cent of our undergraduate courses should fall below our defined low enrolment threshold; and no more than five per cent of undergraduate and graduate subjects should fall below the threshold. There should be a clear strategic purpose in those low enrolment courses and subjects (as defined) we retain. This rationalisation will release the resources needed to develop the market-attractive programs of the future.

Design and delivery model

Courses and subjects will be developed in accordance with a design and delivery model that is focused on improving the quality of student learning, student engagement, flexibility and graduate outcomes.

In the design and delivery model, La Trobe will draw on new strategic delivery partnerships, models and technologies and where possible, leap-frog other institutions in the provision of blended, flexible and/or online learning. We will explore all options through a ‘radical learning project’, that will seek to redefine the student experience, the ways in which we can make creative use of technology to support it, and how we can provide the technical and design skills needed to deliver it. We will seek to develop a culture of creativity and innovation that will underpin our approach to learning and teaching. Funding will be set aside for those who can innovate in ways that are scalable to the rest of the University.

We will seek to streamline the course development and approval process so far as possible consistent with proper quality assurance. This will be important to allow us to respond nimbly to changing needs and preferences.

La Trobe people: Teaching and Learning

We will increasingly rely on a diverse and specialised range of University employees to deliver our teaching programs, including research-only staff, graduate teaching assistants, educational designers and external lecturers and industry experts. Our employment framework will need to recognise and accommodate this diversity, and to support our staff with a range of skills and career expectations.

Teaching and research staff who wish to focus on being excellent teachers will be given every encouragement, support and reward for doing so through the development of a ‘teaching scholar’ career track. Teaching scholars will be leaders of our teaching and learning, recognised for their excellence, have clear career pathways based on recognised teaching-related promotion criteria and will form part of a virtual network of esteemed teachers at the University. Only outstanding teachers would be considered eligible for the ‘teacher scholar’ career track. This would be a numerically small but strategically very significant group.

Our industrial framework will need to become more flexible to recognise these different, and equally valuable, members of our teaching workforce. We will develop clearer expectations of performance for staff in teaching and research.

We will also need to support all our staff to acquire the skills needed to support an enriched curriculum and new modes of delivery.

QUESTIONS...

- How distinctive is the offer in the La Trobe Framework curriculum?
- What is your opinion of the list of Pervasives? What others could be considered?
- How should we define a distinctive approach to the student experience, and what role should technology play in its delivery?
- What will be the main challenges in achieving our objectives in Teaching and Learning, and how can we overcome them?
Game-changing partners to support teaching and learning

To accelerate the development of its teaching and learning strategy, La Trobe will seek ‘game-changing’ partners able to work with us to increase local and global access to La Trobe Hallmarks and fee-paying programs.

Examples of partners might include the peak bodies, national and international university networks, research institutes, companies and governments. University partnerships should be strategically developed, deep in nature, involve highly-ranked universities and should involve student and staff exchange, joint research projects, shared teaching arrangements and cross crediting.

Goals we want to reach by 2017

- La Trobe will be ranked in the top 12 nationally in a majority of Fields of Education (FoE) in which we offer degrees on standard indicators of learning and teaching quality, student experience and graduate outcomes.
- We will achieve our targets for growth and the composition of the student body set out on page 5.
- We will reduce our low enrolment courses and subjects in line with the targets set out above.
- We will achieve our targeted increase in market share.
- Twenty per cent of our students will be able to study overseas for part of their degree.
- Twenty per cent of our students will be studying in flexible mode.

Each of these targets can be applied at University, faculty and school/department level, so that we can track performance against University goals at every level of the University. This will strengthen accountability for performance and outcomes.
Our plan

C. RESEARCH

La Trobe will actively shape and organise its research effort so as to make the most of our current capacity, and build new capacity in areas where we can make a real difference, and which matter to the future of human societies.

The University’s research whole will be far greater than its individual parts and be aligned with La Trobe’s distinctive research strengths and the University’s distinctive ethos.

High performing researchers will join La Trobe to achieve more, and promising early-career researchers will join to accelerate their careers. Mid-career researchers will be supported to the next stage of their research careers. The University aims to ensure our researchers have the appropriate resources, development and environment to make the most of their potential as international scholars.

Improving our performance in research metrics is not an end in itself, but a necessary step for obtaining the credibility and resources needed to elevate La Trobe in the Australian higher education system.

A greater part of our research effort will be concentrated in areas aligned with the University’s desire to make a difference to our localities and the world by addressing contemporary social and global issues. We are already extremely well placed in crucial areas such as biotechnology, agriculture, movement of people and cultures, water ecology and economics, and health issues related to the ageing of our population.

We need to build on these areas to develop substantial research strength by selective strategic investment, research leadership and support. This selective strategic investment will need to be provided to cross-disciplinary as well as disciplinary areas and in some cases to individual researchers and research teams.

In particular we need to build strategic aggregations of people and programs to strengthen cross-disciplinary areas of research development. These should be the largest sensible aggregation of people and programs that will allow us to compete successfully for large grant opportunities and provide the necessary scale of resources and research outcomes.
University-wide Areas of Teaching and Research Focus (ATRFs) – Research

To achieve these important research goals, La Trobe will invest in five to six major University-wide, cross-disciplinary ATRFs. All disciplines will potentially have a role in each of the selected areas, although each ATRF will have stronger affinities with some disciplines than others.

The criteria for selection of these areas will be that they:

- build on at least two areas of underlying disciplinary strength at La Trobe
- address pressing national or global problems
- be easily recognised in the community
- can attract or retain game-changing external partners
- can attract or retain sustained, major international relationships
- have the potential to double research income from its component parts by 2017
- enable a credible claim of strong competitive advantage by La Trobe
- can identify existing or potential research leadership
- can attract postgraduate students and EPRs.

These will be tested through rigorous evidence before adoption. Additionally, each area will need a credible claim of existing national pre-eminence or a detailed plan to attain it. Examples of areas that may meet these criteria include Food Security: Building Healthy Communities in the Asia-Pacific Region; Ecology, Water and Sustainability; Movements of People and Cultures; Molecular Basis of Disease; Social and Sexual Relationships in Contemporary Society; Regional Australia; Recovery and Rehabilitation; Sustainability in the Asia-Pacific: Water, Food and Human Security.

An opportunity will be provided for other ideas to come from any part of the University.

In selecting ATRFs, it will be important to consider the fit with existing and planned staffing of faculties, especially the interaction with teaching programs. This consideration will relate to the criteria for research leaderships, postgraduate students and EPRs. Selected ATRFs would attract major external funding streams and be built on at least one discipline at ERA level 5. They would be led by strong research leaders appointed by the University, and be strategically shaped and funded. The ATRFs would act as a focal point for the University’s engagement with major partners, including corporations, NGOs, government departments, research institutes and universities around the world.

The organisational design for ATRFs would require careful thought, learning from La Trobe’s experience with research centres and institutes. The aim will be to create powerful organisations within the University with the leadership and resources needed to draw staff together within the University, and to engage strongly with partners outside it.

The University will contribute as an intellectual leader to the sustainable development of its communities in Melbourne’s north, the central, northern and Mallee regions of Victoria and the Murray Darling Basin.

Discipline strength, responsiveness and innovation: programs of research

The ATRFs will not be the only focus for the University’s research investment. It will be important, in addition, to ensure that we maintain and develop the underlying disciplinary strength of our research teams, and that we are responsive to new emerging areas of cross-disciplinary research. For that reason, La Trobe will create incentives for researchers to initiate research programs to build research excellence from the ‘bottom up’, with the freedom to pursue new opportunities, funded through a venture capital-like, performance-gating process. There may be around 20 such programs. Some of these may evolve to become future ATRFs. The interaction between the programs of research and the ATRFs, as well as the needed supporting organisational design, will need careful consideration.

All teaching and research staff will be expected to aspire to become EPRs, or to take on more specialised roles in which they have the potential to excel. However, outside of the ATRFs and programs of research, La Trobe would cease to invest in research areas unless the individual researchers were outstanding.

Research training

In addition to a focus on excellence in supervision and facilities, La Trobe will provide distinctive research training by ensuring that the La Trobe Pervasives will also be a feature of the postgraduate experience for all higher degree research students. The needs of candidates for higher degrees will be assessed in order to identify the education and development options that will enhance their further career prospects, and will be offered supplementary coursework and specialist training, some of it carrying additional credit towards their postgraduate qualifications. Those working within ATRFs and in other fields where there are established links with industry partners will be offered diverse opportunities to explore innovations and applications in the workplace.
Our plan

Game-changing partners to support research

To accelerate the development of its research strategy, La Trobe will broaden the range of those from whom we seek funding support, and for whom research is conducted. We will seek ‘game-changing’ partners able to work with us to raise our research efforts to international significance. Examples of partners might include the Gates Foundation, agribusiness companies, mining companies, public research institutes (like the Department of Primary Industries), major sporting organisations (such as the International Olympic Committee), and the United Nations.

La Trobe people: Research

A whole-of-University staffing strategy and implementation plan will need to be developed to deliver this research strategy. This research strategy will require changes to La Trobe’s staffing and performance:

- Research productivity will need to increase as a result of the strategy; research performance will need to be actively managed to lift the proportion of EPRs.
- Individual development plans will be needed to enable staff to transition to EPRs and support provided to retain EPRs.
- La Trobe will need to develop a pipeline of young academic talent by attracting more postgraduate research students and Early Career Researchers (e.g., through post-doctoral programs), and creating more supported pathways for young researchers from marginal or fixed term employment into something more secure.
- Academic staff without strong research performance or potential would be moved to more teaching-intensive roles, with clear expectations set for performance in those roles.
- La Trobe will appoint talented people to business development and commercialisation roles for each of the University-wide research themes so as to maximise partnership and funding opportunities for each of the ARDs.
- Our employment conditions and industrial framework will be reviewed in order to support staff who wish to spend time commercialising intellectual property or working with industry partners.

Goals we want to reach by 2017

- We will be well on our way to achieving a 100 per cent increase in research income across all categories from 2012 levels, with two-thirds of our increased income coming from ATRFs.
- We will improve international research-based rankings to top 300 by 2017.
- All academic staff will be either established productive researchers, on their way to becoming such, or will be performing well in more specialised roles for which research is not a major part of their work expectations.
- At least 60 per cent of EPRs will be aligned with ATRFs, and each ATRF will include at least one laureate professor or equivalent.
- Deep partnerships will be established with major corporates, NGOs or government departments in each ATRF.

D. ENERGISING OUR COMMUNITIES

La Trobe is a multi-campus university with a focus on developing unique teaching strengths at each campus, a comprehensive research presence at the Melbourne and Bendigo campuses, and strategically located concentrations of research activities across its regional campuses. It also has a developing presence in Melbourne’s CBD.

Bundoora

La Trobe is critical to the economic, social and environmental future of northern Melbourne, which is now Melbourne’s fastest growing region. It is our responsibility to act as a major leader in northern Melbourne by providing its people, businesses and public institutions with highly relevant education and skills, and by being a place of enlightenment and good practice.

In the classic campus style, we must aim to make Bundoora into a place that draws people to it from the city and the surrounding suburbs to engage in intensive intellectual and cultural activity that benefits the world beyond. By creating a comfortable, welcoming, highly attractive and reflective campus-style environment, our distance from the centre of Melbourne can be turned to our advantage, as it is in many American and British colleges and university towns. In many respects, this accords with the original intention of the University’s founders and designers: to give life to the classical concept of an Agora—a place for mixing ideas, debate, business and civic leadership.

To achieve this, we will use our campus at Bundoora to engage outwards with the surrounding community, through health, sport, business, the arts, and by stimulating the national conversation through activities such as the Ideas and Society program.

QUESTIONS...

- Are these research goals realistic? Are they sufficiently ambitious?
- Are the criteria for selection of ATRFs the right ones?
- What will be the biggest challenges and opportunities in implementation, and what can be done to overcome or exploit them?
We will use the expansive Bundoora real estate (375 hectares) to strengthen the University’s overall strategic position, increase the density of the campus, and improve its engagement with the northern suburbs of Melbourne. In particular, we will:

- further develop the Northern Bioscience Precinct and the Research and Development Park so that it can play a more effective role in incubating and catalysing innovative new businesses that will diversify the economic base of Melbourne’s north
- consider developing the existing hospital site with private health providers
- seek government support to expand our sporting facilities, and make better use of the land we own between the current sports hub and Plenty Road
- develop Mont Park as a new professional school or other facility
- encourage Melbourne’s great cultural institutions to open a northern campus or hub on our land as part of a community arts facility that could be shared by the University
- consider sale or co-development of some assets and invest the proceeds in core academic activity
- seek to partner with the private sector to develop more student accommodation
- improve public transport services to reduce student journey times, and improve Bundoora’s accessibility to more of Melbourne’s suburbs
- reinvigorate the Agora, the University Union, our clubs and societies and sporting activities to keep more students on campus longer
- investigate the possible use of land on the campus fringe to create a more village-type atmosphere that can contribute to university life on evenings and weekends.
Our plan

Schools and TAFEs
La Trobe will continue to strengthen its connections with local schools to win greater proportions of their best and brightest students through a revitalised scholarship strategy and by deepening its links with schools. It will further develop its relationship with Charles La Trobe College (Quantum Victoria), and develop deeper partnerships with metropolitan institutes of TAFE. We will make use of the NBN to enrich the learning experiences of students in all our regions’ schools and to support the professional development of teachers.

Regional campuses
La Trobe is the biggest provider of higher education to students from Victoria’s regions. Our Bendigo, Shepparton, Mildura and Albury-Wodonga campuses play a strategic role in the development of their regions’ communities, economies and environments. This will increasingly occur through partnerships – with schools, TAFEs, local governments, local employers and regional communities represented through our RABs. We will also support strategically focused research, including the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre based at Albury-Wodonga and Mildura.

This requires that our regional programs have local leadership and locally responsive decision-making structures. On regional campuses, we will strike a better balance between centralised academic-focused faculty decision-making on the one hand, and local responsiveness and leadership on the other. We will meaningfully engage with local communities through our Regional Advisory Boards. Campuses, and their Directors, will have greater authority to shape the program profile at each campus, with the support of the faculties, but will be expected to achieve budget and business plan targets in doing so. Organisational and budgetary measures will support these objectives.

QUESTIONS...
- Which are the most important enablers of the University’s strategy?
- What else should be included in this list?
We will ensure our program profile at each campus contains a suitable mix of discipline-based and professional degrees offered at more than one campus, and degrees or majors that are unique to each campus, which reflect local needs or demand, and which support the development of local academic leadership capacity. Where possible, we will develop integrated strategic relationships with TAFE partners, with whom we are co-located at every regional campus, that will involve stronger credit pathways and joint offers, and, as necessary, co-provision of support services. Subject to financial viability of the TAFE Institutes, we will support TAFEs to offer diplomas and associate degrees using our curriculum.

We will make more material available through flexible means, supporting students in regional communities for whom full-time attendance at University is not always possible, and building on the success of our Education programs offered in blended mode at Shepparton.

Research will take place across all our campuses. Bundoora and Bendigo will have researchers working across all of the ATRFs. Other campuses will have more strategically targeted concentrations of researchers, contributing to at least one ATRF.

**Bendigo**

Bendigo has the potential to be a truly great university city. La Trobe will play a central role in helping Bendigo realise that potential. We seek to be to higher education in Bendigo what the Bendigo Art Gallery has become to culture—an iconic institution that attracts people from all over the country. We will do that by providing an outstanding experience for students, and by offering high demand programs attractive to Australian and international students alike that are unique to the Bendigo campus.

We will develop more student accommodation on our Bendigo campus, to enable us to meet the accommodation needs of interstate, regional and international students wishing to study in Bendigo.

Our aims will include establishing a radical model of integrated health care and a comprehensive health professional education program in Bendigo to cater for a rapidly growing and ageing rural population.

La Trobe will operate Bendigo as an integrated campus with a single point of leadership in Bendigo, with faculties playing an important academic leadership role in response to a primary campus-based leadership role.

**Albury-Wodonga, Mildura and Shepparton**

These campuses are important to the University’s mission to offer higher education opportunities and to increase participation rates in Victoria’s regions. La Trobe will develop closer strategic delivery partnerships with local TAFE providers, and greater use of blended modes of delivery. As noted above, strategically targeted research activity will be supported at each of these campuses, with research active staff participating in at least one ATRF.

In keeping with a more devolved campus governance structure, these campuses will each be managed as free-standing integrated business operations. Each campus will develop its own campus-specific strategy, covering program profile, research and community partnerships.

**E. ENABLING STRATEGIES**

The strategic directions set out in this paper will ask much of our academic staff. They will also ask much of our dedicated professional staff, to whom will fall the task of implementation. These enablers will be as critical to the success of the strategy as its teaching and research aspects, and they will require every bit as much energy and innovation in delivery.

The key enablers are:

- Imaginative and aggressive marketing and development campaigns which strongly reposition La Trobe as the radical, quality university, and the natural alternative choice to Victoria’s two GO8s. We have done much to improve our visibility in the marketplace in recent years, and we have improved our market share as a result; but as competition for students becomes more intense, we will need to ensure that all aspects of our marketing strategy, from school liaison to graduate coursework recruitment, are as effective as they can be. We will also need to re-recruit our extremely distinguished alumni as friends and champions of the University as a precursor to engaging in major advancement and fund raising campaigns.

**QUESTIONS…**

- What issues regarding our regional strategy, if any, are not addressed in this section?
- What opportunities for Bundoora or Bendigo have not been captured?
- What will be the biggest challenges and opportunities in implementation, and what can be done to overcome or exploit them?
Our plan

• Improved business processes and a stronger focus on client service by all service areas to staff and students. Although there have been significant improvements in recent years, our service to students is not as seamless as it could be, and our business processes and use of technology are not as advanced as students and staff are entitled to expect.

• Renewal of infrastructure and technology to ensure that La Trobe remains an edgy, exciting and capable institution. We have started a program of investment in physical infrastructure at all our campuses, and this will need to continue since much of our building stock is below standard. We will also need to make significant investments in technology for teaching, research and service delivery.

• Investment in staff that enables, and requires, high standards of performance, and which rewards staff for high achievement that supports the University’s goals. We have made good progress in recent years in our promotion and performance management policies and processes, and improving our organisational development capacity. Yet the challenges confronting universities will continue to require us to innovate in our staffing policies, and to continue to set and reinforce high standards of performance for all staff.

• Leadership and management that is capable and effective. The directions set out here will require effective leadership through a period of change. In particular, the University will need leaders that are able to translate these ideas into practice, and to take colleagues with them. For that reason, the University will continue to invest in leadership support and development, and will encourage younger colleagues to put themselves forward for leadership roles in the future.

• An ability to be a nimble and responsive partner to governments, industry, other universities, NGOs and philanthropic bodies. This will require a strong external client focus, commercial expertise and good internal systems.

• Financial management and results that deliver the capacity to reinvest. La Trobe must strengthen its financial capacity by increasing revenue from all sources (including fundraising and advancement), improving productivity (including better use of our infrastructure), improving our recruitment of students in higher-yielding categories of load, improving administrative effectiveness, reducing costs, and actively managing its balance sheet to produce stronger returns to enable reinvestment in its core teaching and research activity.

F. EXECUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This Strategic Directions Paper will inform the development of a new University Strategic Plan, which will be adopted by University Council in late 2012. The Plan will be informed by the feedback obtained in response to this paper.

In the meantime, the detailed development and implementation of the Teaching and Learning, Research and Regional Engagement aspects of this proposed Strategy will be undertaken by three specialised working groups, established for the purpose. These groups will analyse feedback obtained in response to this Directions Paper, and will develop a new University Teaching and Learning Plan, a refreshed Research Plan and a comprehensive Regional Plan that will support the new Strategic Plan.

All these Plans will be implemented through a revised annual business planning and budget process, which will monitor progress at faculty level towards key targets. Deans, Divisional Heads and senior professional staff will be held accountable for outcomes.

In addition, it is expected that the new Strategic Plan will lead to the establishment of a number of ‘World ready’ projects, each of which will be essential to the realisation of the University’s goals. These ‘World ready’ projects will be overseen by a coordinating group chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. Some of these, such as the “La Trobe Radical Learning Project”, will start straight away, while others will await the approval of a new Strategic Plan.

G. NEXT STEPS

Responses to this paper are now invited, especially to the specific questions raised.

The period of consultation will run from 15 June until 31 August. Feedback from staff and other stakeholders will be collected until 31 July, allowing one month to collate feedback and make the summary available to staff.

Feedback can be submitted via a dedicated email address at: strategic-plan@latrobe.edu.au

Or, via the enterprise Social Network, Yammer.

Please note, feedback will be considered as public unless otherwise stated by the parties making the submission.

For further details, visit: latrobe.edu.au/vice-chancellor

QUESTION...

• What will be the biggest challenges and opportunities in implementation, and what can be done to overcome or exploit them?