

2024 Annual Report

Research and Impact





Country is alive.



Country is here and now and not some relic of the past.

We acknowledge and pay our deep respect to the Ancestors, Elders, and families of the Traditional Owners on all of our campuses – the Kulin Nation (Melbourne campuses), the Eora Nation (Sydney campus) and the Yugara/YUgarapul and Turrbal Nation (Brisbane campus).

At Victoria University (VU) we honour Indigenous cultures. Everything we do and every decision we make is underpinned by a commitment to Protecting Country.

Country is both a place of belonging and a way of believing, as well as contributing to the conservation of critical environmental and diverse cultural assets.

It is a community-driven movement towards long-term social, cultural, physical, and economic prosperity and sustainability.



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From the Deputy Vice- Chancellor, Research and Impact



It's my privilege to present to you Victoria University's 2024 Research Annual Report - a publication that reflects not just the work we do, but the values that guide our practice. At VU, our research is never abstract. It's grounded, community-connected, and driven by purpose. This report shows what that looks like in action.

Across our five research themes, VU researchers are delivering outcomes that matter: advancing Indigenous knowledge systems; supporting breakthroughs in health, sport, and wellness; driving sustainable environmental solutions; and shaping policy in childcare, education, and the economy. Together, these areas define where VU can – and does – make the greatest difference.

This year's research report showcases 14 powerful stories that illustrate the depth, diversity, and purpose of our work. Also our national and global impact. From trauma-aware teaching in Thai classrooms to rare disease breakthroughs, climate-resilient urban design, and transformative research on the VU Block Model, these stories show how our research translates into better outcomes for people, place and planet. We highlight work advancing Indigenous Data Sovereignty, supporting policy reform in early childhood education and workforce planning, and building international research collaborations that centre around equity, care, and sustainability. These research highlights sit alongside new insights into our university performance — from global rankings and publication impact, to grant success and the strength of our researcher cohort.

Our institutional progress continued to be shaped by the implementation of VU's [Research and Impact Plan 2023–2028](#), which provides a clear and strategic framework for building a research culture that is impactful, inclusive and globally engaged.

VU's story is a distinctive one. From our beginnings as a [Technical School](#) in Melbourne's west, we have grown into a university with a research footprint that spans 90 countries, supported by our unique dual-sector model and driven by brilliant, cross-disciplinary VU researchers and dedicated industry partners through research collaborations. This is what continues to set us apart.

I extend my deep thanks to our research community for their commitment to research excellence and researching with impact.

As we look to the future, we do so with a clear understanding of the challenges facing universities and global disruption. Delivering on our Research and Impact Plan, while staying agile and aligned to purpose, has never been more important.

Research is not just valuable – it's vital. It drives our ability to question, innovate, connect, and ultimately, solve. At VU, we are not only responding to the world as it is—we are helping to shape a future that is more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient.

Professor Andy Hill
Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
Research and Impact

2024 Research and Impact snapshot



\$18m+
in research income



Our work was cited
2.4x more than the
global average¹

300+² 
researchers driving
discovery at VU



Ranked **7th**
in the world for
Sport Science School
(for the 3rd year running)
– Shanghai Global Ranking 2024



770
research publications



We published across all
17 UN Sustainable
Development Goals
– with citations 4x
the global average



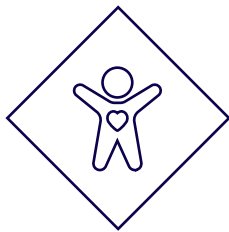
457
publications co-authored
with researchers
in **94** countries (59.35%)



>420
HDR students

¹ Academic Impact CNCI 2.43 (more than 2.4 times higher than the world average).

² '>300' is approximately 328 VU researchers by headcount in 2024. Researchers are defined as Teaching and Research Academics (TRAs) and Research Only Academics (ARES).



Health Sport and Wellness

In 2024, VU researchers continued to show how sport, health, and wellbeing can drive social change. From global collaborations to community-based initiatives, our work is advancing inclusion, improving health outcomes, and strengthening the role of sport and movement in everyday life.



UNESCO partnership to develop the Sports and Physical Activity Framework

In 2024, Victoria University partnered with UNESCO and international collaborators to develop a practical, globally relevant tool for measuring the social value of sport. The Sports and Physical Activity Impact (SAPA) Framework offers a new way to evaluate how sport and physical activity contribute to outcomes such as health, education, inclusion, and economic opportunity.

Led by Professor Ramón Spaaij, the Framework is evidence-informed, scalable, and designed to be accessible — especially to civil society organisations and communities that may lack formal



Professor Ramón Spaaij.

“This is about creating a freely available toolkit that empowers communities and governments to show how sport is making a difference. It supports inclusion, builds capacity, and drives more equitable access to sport and physical activity.”

Professor Ramón Spaaij

evaluation tools. The project is a collaboration between VU, UNESCO’s Regional Office for South Asia, the Sports and Society Accelerator, and the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences.

Co-designed with input from grassroots practitioners to policy makers, the SAPA Framework is adaptable to diverse social and cultural contexts. It is currently being piloted across diverse contexts in India, where it’s being adapted to suit different communities and local needs.

The Framework contributes to UNESCO’s global mission of promoting the educational, cultural, and social dimensions of sport — and supports the goals of Agenda 2030 by enhancing equity and wellbeing through active participation.

“This partnership brings global expertise into conversation with the Indian sporting ecosystem. Together we aim to showcase the many ways sport and physical activity can contribute to cohesive, healthy, and happy societies.

Dr Shraddha Chickerur,
National Programme Officer at UNESCO

Stronger bones, stronger communities: culturally inclusive health education

Good bone health is essential as we age — yet many older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities have been left out of vital health education. In 2024, Victoria University researchers helped change that.

The MINDSET program — short for Multicultural commuNities co-DeSignEd osTeoporosis education — is Australia’s first co-designed, culturally appropriate bone health education initiative for older people from multicultural communities. Led by VU researchers and funded by the Department of Health, the program delivers practical, evidence-based education in Arabic, Mandarin, Vietnamese and English.

Designed in partnership with the community, MINDSET goes beyond simple translation. It uses storytelling, interactive

“MINDSET is an excellent example of how we can collaborate with the community to develop evidence-based and culturally meaningful resources for CALD communities.”

Professor Clarice Tang

workshops, multimedia resources, and culturally relevant examples to help participants understand how to protect their bone health and reduce the risk of osteoporosis. It also includes a train-the-trainer toolkit to support community health workers to deliver the program in their own languages and local settings.

Since its development in 2023, the program has been rolled out across Greater Western Sydney and Western Melbourne, with more than 30 trained multicultural health workers delivering sessions in seven different languages. The program has been adopted as part of the Daughters and Sons of the West initiative led by the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, expanding its reach through trusted community networks. It has also been embedded into Healthy Bone Australia resources.

“I wish we had this program earlier. For the first time, I felt we have not been left behind — we now have a program that is written for us.”

MINDSET participant

“The pinnacle of my career would be if I could help people with my research. We’re building a strong evidence base to show ASA can work — and bring real hope to patients and their families.”

Professor Emma Rybalka



Professor Emma Rybalka and Dr Cara Timpani.

Exploring effective treatment options for ultra-rare ADSS1 Myopathy

Professor Emma Rybalka and her team at Victoria University continued their groundbreaking work on ADSS1 myopathy — an ultra-rare muscle-wasting disease that currently has no cure.

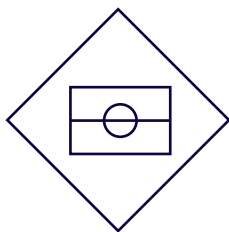
ADSS1 myopathy affects around 200 people worldwide, causing progressive deterioration of skeletal and heart muscle from adolescence, often leading to severe disability and early death by around age 50. Patients and families live with uncertainty, pain, and a lack of treatment options — simply because their condition is too rare to attract traditional medicines development.

That’s where VU’s researchers are making a difference.

In a world-first study, Professor Rybalka’s lab is testing whether adenylosuccinic acid (ASA) — a small molecule that replaces the missing ADSS1 enzyme — could be the first treatment to target the root cause of the disease. If successful, this would offer hope that early intervention could prevent or delay the devastating muscle loss that defines ADSS1 myopathy.

In 2024, the team began a comprehensive pre-clinical evaluation of ASA’s potential to slow disease progression. If results confirm what early data suggests, this work could lead to a clinical trial — and eventually, to the first-ever treatment for this forgotten disease.

In December, the team won a major National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant to progress this critical research.



First Nations Knowledge

VU's commitment to Indigenous-led research deepened in 2024, as Moondani Balluk strengthened cultural sovereignty, knowledge sharing, and community-driven change. Our research centres Aboriginal voices, rights, and way of knowing - shaping a more just and connected future.



Clockwise from left: Ted Wilkes (AHA), Skye Trudgett (Kowa), Will Bracks (AHA), Taylah Austen (AHA), Karen Jackson (Moondani Balluk), Kim Kruger (Moondani Balluk/AHA), Marjorie Thorpe (AHA), Rochelle Le Pere (AHA).

Upholding Indigenous Data Sovereignty at VU

The Aboriginal History Archive (AHA), part of Moondani Balluk at Victoria University, continued its leadership in Indigenous Data Sovereignty - ensuring that data about Aboriginal peoples is created, controlled, and shared by Aboriginal peoples themselves.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty is part of a global movement that gives Indigenous communities the right to govern how their knowledge is used. In Australia, it has been shaped by the Maiaṁ nayri Wingara Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, whose 2018 statement urged institutions to reform their practices.

This movement is grounded in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which Australia supports. The Australian Research Council now asks researchers working with Indigenous knowledge to follow these principles.

Supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation, AHA launched the Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance (IDS&G) project to improve its policies and practices. This work has been guided by Kowa Collaboration, an Indigenous-led consultancy led by Dr. Skye Trudgett. In October 2024, Kowa worked with AHA staff for three days to review how the archive is doing and create a plan for future steps.

"AHA's founding philosophies, and the staff's dedication to these values, give it strength. It allows AHA to grow its collection while respecting the wishes of Aboriginal communities who want their knowledge kept somewhere safe, culturally and politically."

Dr Clare Land,
Research Director, Moondani Balluk

The result was a Data Sovereignty and Governance Protocol to be implemented in 2025 - guiding everything from technical operations to archival practices, ensuring alignment with Indigenous-led principles and cultural safety.

The workshop confirmed that AHA's values are already closely aligned with the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty. The archive is led by First Nations scholars, operated by a mostly Indigenous team, and committed to serving Aboriginal communities. This foundation positions AHA to both strengthen its own practices and lead nationally in Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

In November, Professor Gary Foley and members of the AHA team were awarded a major ARC Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (LIEF) scheme grant to expand the Archive.

Blak Women's Healing – culture, connection and change

Victoria University researchers worked alongside Aboriginal women to reimagine approaches to child protection through a process grounded in cultural safety, lived experience and Blak love.

The Blak Women's Healing Project (BWH) centred Aboriginal women's voices, knowledge, and leadership to explore what healing looks like on their terms. Led by Moondani Balluk researchers in collaboration with a cross-disciplinary team from the Institute for Health and Sport, the project created space for storytelling, truth-telling and systems change.

Building on earlier practice-based research, the 2024 program brought together community, academia and government to support transformational change. BWH's impact is based on creating spaces of unconditional Blak love, connection and healing by and for Aboriginal women – a practice developed and theorised by Paola Balla in her creative PhD at VU.

“The aim of this workshop is to make direct and tangible impact on how service providers respond to Aboriginal women, their children, and families by providing child protection workers with training based on Aboriginal women's lived experience.”

Dr Lutfiye Ali, Researcher,
Blak Women's Healing Project

A key focus in 2024 was translating the lived experience of Aboriginal women of Melbourne's west — contributors to earlier phases of BWH — into practical action. These women clearly articulated what needed to change in child protection policy to reduce harm to Aboriginal families. In response, the BWH team committed to delivering training to frontline child protection workers.

Drawing directly from the women's insights, the team developed a five-hour workshop, *Identifying and Preventing Violence*, designed to shift how the sector responds to Aboriginal women and their families.

Workshops were delivered in June and October by BWH team members Rowena Price and Lutfiye Ali to child protection staff from the Brimbank, Melton, and Western Melbourne areas.

A report capturing the project's outcomes was finalised and shared with participating women. It is now publicly available via the AIATSIS knowledge exchange: [VU Repository link](#).

The report identifies three powerful outcomes:

1. **(Re)connecting and strengthening cultural identity** – facilitating agency and change;
2. **(Re)building community** – shifting from lateral violence to lateral love;
3. **(Re)narrating stories together** – placing blame and shame where it belongs.

It also documents the violence Aboriginal women experienced in their encounters with child protection systems.

In recognition of its impact, the BWH team received the 'Research with Impact' award in VU's 2024 Staff Brilliance Awards — celebrating research that is community-led, transformative, and grounded in justice.



Child protection staff at VU's workshop.

Global connections, local knowledge: sharing Moondani Balluk's research practices

Victoria University continued to strengthen its international profile in Indigenous-led research, through the growing global recognition of Moondani Balluk's methodologies, leadership, and place-based practice.

At the heart of this recognition is a long-standing collaboration between Professor Karen Jackson, Executive Director of Moondani Balluk, and Professor Chris Sonn, founder of the Community Identity and Displacement Research Network (CIDRN). Together with their teams, they are building powerful connections with like-minded scholars in the Global South and the United States.

In June 2024, Professor Sonn and Dr Sam Keast delivered a keynote address at the annual Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology conference in Boston College. Their keynote, under the theme 'Transforming Psychology and Reimagining Knowledge,' explored Moondani Balluk's place-making approach and reflected on Professor Jackson's leadership.

During the same visit, Sonn and Keast joined the annual Public Science Project at the City University of New York, led by Distinguished Professor Michelle Fine (VU Adjunct). Their participation was supported by international research links, including with Professor Puleng Segalo (University of



Professor Chris Sonn (VU) and Shayda Azamian from Vanderbilt University, City University of New York, 2024.

"Moondani Balluk has claimed and created a place in which Indigenous knowledges can be practiced and lived. The ultimate impact is epistemic justice — resourcing Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing."

Professor Chris Sonn,
CIDRN

South Africa), who visited VU in 2023 and collaborates with both Professor Sonn and Professor Fine.

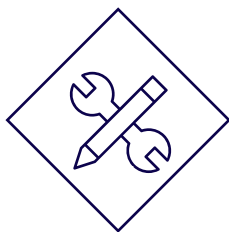
These connections have sparked a deeper partnership between Moondani Balluk, CIDRN, and the Public Science Project. Together, they are sharing

approaches to community-based and Indigenous-led research with a focus on collaboration, culture, and change. In 2025, Moondani Balluk will host the first Critical Participatory Action Research Gathering, with Michelle Fine and Maria Torres attending in person. The three-day workshop will bring together researchers to explore share and reflect on community-led, Indigenous, and creative ways of doing research.

This partnership elevates Indigenous research methodologies — not as an alternative, but as central to reshaping research cultures. While Critical Participatory Action Research is often focused on policy reform, Moondani Balluk's work is equally transformative: it centres culture, connection and community through arts-led, place-based research.



Public Science Project Workshop, City University of New York, 2024. Includes Dr Sam Keast and Professor Chris Sonn from VU.



New Generation Skills, Workforce Impact

As industries and communities evolve, so too must education. In 2024, VU research tackled the future of skills and the global workforce - designing more inclusive pathways, building capability for emerging industries, and connecting education with people's lives and aspirations.



Sarah Jobson (centre left) with students at a graduating students' reflection day celebration.

Investing in people – research with community and individual impact

Early childhood educators play a vital role in children's lives – yet many face barriers to career progression, often balancing full-time work, caregiving responsibilities, and study with limited support. In 2024, VU researchers continued work on a major project designed to change that.

Investing in People is a multi-year research initiative, funded by the Victorian Government, focused on increasing the number of early childhood educators upskilling to become early childhood teachers. Led by a team of VU researchers, the project works directly with students, communities, and employers to understand – and remove – obstacles to success.

The research uncovered a clear pattern: many students were first in their family to attend university, spoke English as an additional language, had caregiving responsibilities, and lived in outer suburbs with limited access to campus. Beyond academic preparedness, travel, time, and confidence were the biggest barriers.

“This research shows what's possible when universities design with people's lives in mind – not just their student numbers.”

Professor Mary-Rose McLaren,
Lead Researcher

In response, the team co-designed a course that addressed these challenges including place-based learning, digital access to university resources, and localised study support networks. These changes saw retention rates well over 90% and nearly 100% completion success – outcomes that far exceed national benchmarks.

More than 1,500 students – mostly women – have progressed into teaching roles, gaining financial independence, local peer networks, and the confidence to lead in their field.

The impact spans both policy and personal transformation. The research offers higher education providers evidence for designing more inclusive learning models and gives government clear data to guide future investment in the early childhood education workforce.



VU-led workshop at Baan Kratoom Lom School, Bangkok, Thailand.

Trauma-aware classrooms: strengthening teaching practice in Thailand

VU researchers worked in partnership with Thai educators to embed trauma-aware teaching practices in primary schools across Bangkok. The project aimed to better understand the impacts of complex trauma and create classroom environments where all students feel safe, supported, and able to learn.

Professor Marcelle Cacciattolo and Associate Professor Mark Vicars co-designed and delivered a series of workshops with colleagues from Mahidol University including Associate Professor Mathuros Tipayamongkhogul, Associate Professor Nuntiya Doungphummes and Dr Narongdej Phanthaphoommee. Together they developed a program of interactive activities to build practitioner skills and knowledge in trauma education.

More than 40 teachers, principals, and school leaders from three Bangkok-area primary schools participated. Sessions explored how trauma can affect the developing brain and nervous system, how certain environments or classroom cues can trigger overwhelm and disengagement, and how trust-based relationships can support students' capacity to learn. Teachers were introduced to practical trauma-sensitive strategies they could use in their own classrooms.

"I learnt about the signs and symptoms of trauma. I also understood the importance of creating safe learning spaces for all students"

Teacher who participated in the Thai study

The workshops received strong engagement and positive feedback from participants, and laid the groundwork for broader research collaboration. In late 2024, the team was awarded a Thai National Research Council grant to extend the work across 15 schools in four Thai provinces.

The 2025 study will explore the long-term impact of trauma-aware pedagogy on student wellbeing, classroom culture, and teaching practice. It will also develop a national framework to guide Thai teachers in supporting students who have experienced adversity or psychological distress. In doing so, it seeks to embed care and safety into the core of teaching and learning practice.

Researching what works: strengthening the VU Block Model for the future of work

Since its launch in 2018, VU's award-winning Block Model has reshaped how students experience university. Researchers at the Mitchell Institute have been closely

"I have ADHD and the block model is pretty much ensuring my success. I have attempted university twice in the past and twice I have failed with traditional course structure. The block model makes things a lot more achievable for people with neurodiversity (sic).

Quote from a student during the block review feedback process

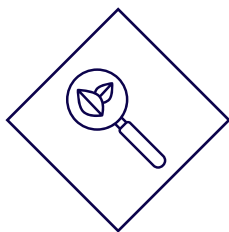
studying the model to understand who it works best for, how it supports learning, and how it can evolve to meet the changing needs of students and the workforce.

This research has directly informed improvements to the student experience at VU and provided valuable insight to education leaders internationally considering new approaches to teaching and learning. The first in-depth analysis was published in 2022, in the academic paper *Equity through Complexity: Inside the 'black box' of the Block Model*. Drawing on staff and student interviews and university data, the study identified key strengths - including higher engagement, clearer expectations, and stronger academic outputs for equity cohorts.

In 2024, VU researchers published the world's first academic paper exploring block delivery in postgraduate education. *Achieving Success in Postgraduate Studies* offered practical insight into how the model enables deeper learning, more flexibility, and stronger student-teacher connection at the postgraduate level.

A third study in late 2024 — *Research to Support the Strategic Review of the VU Block Model* — brought together the voices of over 3,000 students, staff and alumni. It provided a comprehensive picture of how the model influences learning, assessment and graduate outcomes, and is now shaping the next evolution of Block learning at VU.

The Victoria University Block Model (VUBM) has now been adopted by universities in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Malaysia, and Vietnam, with discussions underway at universities in Belgium, Canada, Singapore, and additional institutions in the UK and USA.



Green research translation

In the face of climate change, VU researchers are delivering practical solutions that matter. From greener construction to renewable energy skills mapping, our work is accelerating the shift toward a more sustainable, resilient future.

“This project proves that sustainable alternatives are not only feasible but also economically advantageous. We’re reducing environmental impact, driving industry change, and opening up new markets.”

Associate Professor Ehsan Yaghoubi



Above: An innovative backfilling technique—Direct placement of green mixture into a trench directly from mixing truck.; Right: The multi-disciplinary and cross-organization project team at the Sunbury site.

Revolutionising trench backfill with recycled materials

Victoria University led a ground-breaking project that reimaged how we build beneath our cities — proving that sustainable alternatives to traditional construction methods are not just possible, but commercially and environmentally smarter.

Working alongside Greater Western Water and Ground Science, VU researchers completed a full-scale field trial using 100% recycled materials as trench backfill — a first in Australia, and possibly the world. The trial followed two years of intensive lab testing and took the innovation from theory into practice with a live infrastructure project in Melbourne’s west.

The results were promising. Using mobile batching plants on-site, the team reduced reliance on traditional crushed rock, a natural resource in growing scarcity. The new method offered faster installation, improved structural integrity, and cut over 280 tonnes of carbon emissions annually — all while reducing construction costs.

The implications are significant. Greater Western Water oversees more than 200 trenching projects each year in its western region alone. If scaled across Melbourne, this innovation could unlock a \$10 million



annual market for recycled backfill — offering both environmental and economic gains.

The project, led by Associate Professor Ehsan Yaghoubi, gained national media attention, with coverage across Channel 7 News, ABC Ballarat radio, and Engineers Australia’s Create magazine, reaching over 360,000 people. Industry leaders including Jaydo, Winslow, APD, and DCE have expressed interest in commercialising the technology, while Standards Australia is now considering updates to the AS/NZS 3725 standard on buried concrete pipes, set for revision in 2025.

The team’s achievement was recognised with the 2024–25 VU Staff Brilliance Award in the Research with Impact category. They are now exploring opportunities to replicate and scale the approach across other infrastructure projects, with interest growing from both government agencies and private contractors.



First Forum on 'Adaptive Greening Solutions to Tackle Climate Change,' hosted by Victoria University at City Tower and fully funded by the Council for Australia-Arab Relations (CAAR), fostering Australia-Arab collaboration on climate action.

Greening solutions to tackle climate change and urban overheating

Victoria University led an international research project aimed at tackling two of the most urgent challenges facing cities today — climate change and urban overheating. Funded by the Council for Australia-Arab Relations, the project brought together academics, governments and innovators from Australia and the Middle East to explore practical, nature-based solutions to help cities adapt.

The initiative, titled *Knowledge Exchange: Greening Solutions to Tackle Climate Change and Urban Overheating*, focused on the cities of Melbourne, Riyadh, and Manama. It aimed to spark new thinking, share expertise, and explore scalable green infrastructure technologies tailored to each city's climate and geography.

Led by VU's Liveable Cities and Infrastructure group and Associate Professor Elmira Jamei, the project delivered three major forums in Melbourne, Riyadh, and Manama. These events brought together 97 experts from 12 countries, including academics, start-ups, government agencies, and urban planners.

Each forum offered a space for global dialogue — identifying barriers to implementing large-scale greening projects, exchanging region-specific knowledge, and setting the foundations for long-term collaboration. Key discussions included how to reduce urban heat through advanced green design, and how to co-develop place-based, nature-based solutions that support each city's path toward climate resilience.

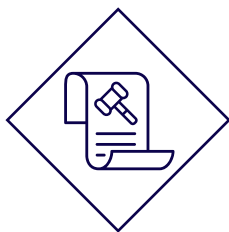
Nature-based solutions such as expanded tree canopies, vertical greening systems,

"This work contributed to a global conversation on climate adaptation — and helped position VU at the forefront of international efforts to green our cities."

Associate Professor Elmira Jamei

and permeable pavements are already showing promising results in reducing temperatures in dense urban environments — offering immediate benefits for communities facing rising heat.

The research also contributed to global climate policy conversations, resulting in a white paper submission to the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP 16) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).



New Frontiers, Policy, Advocacy, and Justice

VU's research is driving policy shifts, reimagining systems, and advocating for a fairer, more inclusive society. In 2024, we shaped national conversations in early learning, international education, workforce futures, and equitable economic transition.



Children at Melbourne childcare centre.

Childcare deserts research leads to major policy shifts

In 2024, VU's Mitchell Institute released the *International Childcare Report: Mapping the Deserts* — part of a global study on access to early childhood education and care across nine countries. The report found persistent gaps in availability, particularly in regional and disadvantaged communities, and called for stronger government leadership in planning and funding childcare infrastructure.

This research built on the Institute's earlier work identifying so-called 'childcare deserts' — neighbourhoods with limited or no access to early learning. The term is now widely used in national policy discussions to describe the unequal distribution of services.

The 2024 report received broad national and international media coverage, including from ABC and iTV, and contributed to renewed national discussion about the accessibility of early childhood education. Following the release of the report, the Federal Government introduced the \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund to support the construction of new

"This research has injected the language of equitable access into Australia's early childhood reform agenda."

Professor Peter Hurley,
Lead researcher

centres in under-served areas. Several state governments followed with similar policies and have engaged with Mitchell Institute researchers to explore how their planning systems could adopt more equitable approaches

Beyond increased investment, the research has helped shift the national policy agenda. Accessibility is now considered alongside affordability as a core goal in early education reform. Federal Minister Anne Aly has described childcare as "essential infrastructure," comparing it to the public school system — a significant reframing of the sector's role.

The Mitchell Institute's work continues to inform federal and state policy thinking, supporting a more equitable approach to early learning in Australia.

Informing the debate on international students

The Mitchell Institute continued to play a central role in shaping national conversations on international student policy in 2024. As debate intensified around proposed student caps, the Institute provided independent, evidence-based analysis to support more informed policy development.

In May, the Federal Government announced plans to limit the number of international students at each university through a formula-based cap. The proposal prompted significant response from the higher education sector and dominated national media coverage throughout mid-2024.

Throughout this period, the Mitchell Institute acted as a steady and informed voice, contributing data, insights, and commentary to support more balanced discussion. This included direct engagement with policymakers and public analysis through reports and media contributions.

In August, the Institute published [*International Students: The Migration Nexus*](#) — a detailed report that examined the relationship between international education and migration, and proposed a structured model for managing student numbers. The report was timely and constructive, offering an alternative approach to caps and contributing meaningfully to the Government's policy considerations.

The report also prompted discussions within the sector, with several universities referencing the framework in their submissions to the Department of Education. Key think tanks and commentators cited the analysis in media interviews, reinforcing its credibility and relevance.

Although the proposed cap legislation was ultimately blocked, the debate led to regulatory changes that will shape the sector moving forward. The Mitchell Institute continues to be a key contributor to this space — offering rigorous, practical analysis that supports long-term planning and protects the integrity of Australia's international education system.



Participants in Uganda enjoyed CoPS modelling training course.

Shaping the future: CoPS' impact on economic modelling, workforce planning, and sustainability in 2024

Throughout the year, the Centre of Policy Studies (CoPS) at Victoria University continued to influence how governments, industries, and institutions around the world plan for the future. Through its internationally recognised economic modelling expertise, CoPS helped inform critical decisions across labour markets, workforce development, and climate policy.

Over the year, CoPS delivered seven advanced economic modelling courses to more than 100 participants from 15 countries, including graduate students, government advisors, and researchers. These courses equipped professionals with the tools to simulate policy reforms and understand their broader economic effects — strengthening analytical capacity across regions and sectors.

In Australia, CoPS provided labour market forecasts to the Commonwealth and most state governments. These forecasts — published on public government platforms — supported workforce planning and education policy by identifying areas of future job growth. CoPS modelling continues to highlight increasing demand in care-based occupations, particularly

within the vocational education sector, helping to inform strategies for training and skills development.

CoPS also advanced work on green economic models, simulating carbon emissions pathways, and exploring the economic impacts of achieving net-zero emissions. The models show that a transition to net-zero is economically achievable, though the effects vary across sectors and regions. These findings support the need for strong, equitable policy frameworks — particularly for vulnerable populations and low-income nations — and reinforce the importance of international cooperation in achieving sustainable outcomes. Looking forward, CoPS is expanding its modelling toolkit to support state governments in developing just transition strategies and to address workforce impacts in emerging green industries.

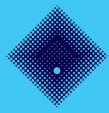
“CoPS labour market forecasts are a major contribution to our work in understanding the future skills needs of the Australian economy and how the skills system can meet these needs.”

David Turvey,
Executive Director at Jobs and Skills
Australia

**Find out more about how you can
be part of research here at VU**



vu.edu.au/research



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

For more information, contact:

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Impact

Phone

+61 3 9919 5006

Email

dvc.research@vu.edu.au

Postal Address

Victoria University
PO Box 14428
Melbourne VIC 8001

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