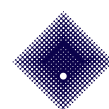




Driving change through collective action

Sustainability Report 2024



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**



Moondani Balluk Garden, VU Footscray Park Campus.

Acknowledgement of Country



Victoria University acknowledges, recognises and respects the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Bunurong/Boonwurrung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung of the Kulin who are the traditional owners of University land in Victoria, the Gadigal and Guring-gai of the Eora Nation who are the traditional owners of University land in Sydney, and the Yugara/YUgarapul people and Turrbal people living in Meanjin (Brisbane).

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Vice-Chancellor's statement



Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Shoemaker with Indu Kohl at VU's annual tree planting day.

At Victoria University (VU), we honour people, place and planet. Protecting Country is a core principle - a template for everything we do – and our vision is to be one of the leading impact-driven universities in the world by 2030.

This year, that vision came to life through bold initiatives and powerful partnerships that advance our commitment to sustainability, and the breadth of work highlighted in this report reflects our deep alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2024, we launched our First Nations Action Plan, with targeted actions to increase participation and success, strengthen research outcomes, foster partnerships, and embed cultural safety and leadership across the University. Our Major Alliance with Greater Western Water continues to drive innovation in sustainable construction, circular economy practices, and water treatment research. As part of our 2024 Community Tree Planting Day, 200 volunteers planted over 2,500 trees at our Werribee Campus - bringing our total to 12,500 trees since 2022. Meanwhile, conservation efforts at the Iramoo

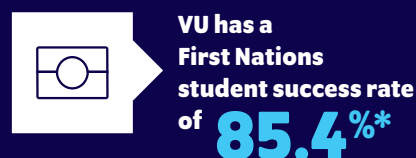
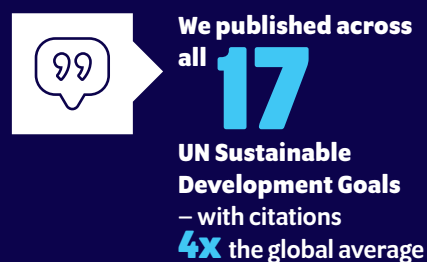
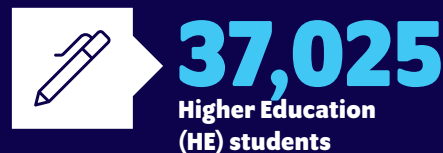
Grasslands Reserve at St Albans Campus are helping to protect and restore one of the region's last remaining pockets of Indigenous flora and fauna.

We also established a landmark five-year partnership with Our Watch, embedding a whole-of-University approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Our mental health and wellbeing ecosystem continues to grow, with headspace Werribee and the Orygen Specialist Program co-located at our Werribee Campus, and Lifeline Western Melbourne providing vital crisis support at St Albans.

VU is a partnering institution. We know that real impact is only possible when we work together with communities, industries, governments. This report is a testament to what we can achieve when we do.

Professor Adam Shoemaker
Vice-Chancellor and President

2024 Sustainability highlights



*Source: Equity Performance Data, Australian Government, Department of Education.

Australia's largest student experience survey, commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education, **2023 QILT** (Quality Indicators for Learning & Teaching) asked over **200,000 Higher Education** students about their University experience. Amongst public universities, **Victoria University ranked:**



Quality of Entire Educational Experience
VU ranked **No. 1** in Victoria and **No. 6** nationally (and first among dual sector institutions)



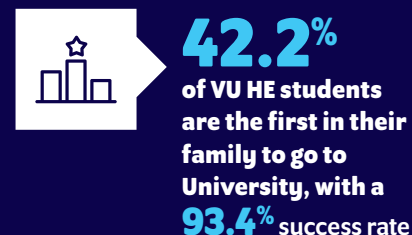
Teaching Quality
VU climbed to **No. 1** in Victoria and **No. 4** nationally



Peer Engagement
VU ranked **No. 1** in Victoria and **No. 2** nationally



Skills Development
VU is **No. 1** in Victoria and **No. 5** nationally, well above the national average



NOTES:

- Students may be counted in multiple sections of the same table but will only be counted once in the totals. Therefore, totals may be lower than the sum of their parts. This applies to all the figures in the snapshot.
- Equity Rates: Aggregated measure that includes First Nations Peoples; Non-English-Speaking Background; Disability; Low socio-economic status; Rural/ Remote. Excludes International.

- HE success rates: Passed Load as a proportion of assessed load for domestic, onshore, commencing and continuing students in all qualification levels who are in one or more of the equity groups. Excludes international and First Generation students.
- VET Success Rates: Passed Load (in Effective Hours) as a proportion of Assessed Load (in Effective Hours) for domestic, onshore, commencing and continuing students in all qualification levels who are in one or more of the equity groups.
- First-in-Family student participation includes domestic and international.

Our global Times Higher Education (THE) 2025 impact rankings

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



SCORE

62.9 out of 100

RANK

401-600 out of
1788 institutions

4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



SCORE

64.6 out of 100

RANK

301-400 out of
1975 institutions

6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



SCORE

74.9 out of 100

RANK

=96 out of
1042 institutions

10 REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



SCORE

79.1 out of 100

RANK

=68 out of
1261 institutions

12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



SCORE

73.5 out of 100

RANK

201-300 out of
973 institutions

13 CLIMATE
ACTION



SCORE

61.6 out of 100

RANK

101-200 out of
1089 institutions

16 PEACE, JUSTICE
AND STRONG
INSTITUTIONS



SCORE

62.4 out of 100

RANK

201-300 out of
1265 institutions

17 PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE GOALS



SCORE

93.9 out of 100

RANK

=56 out of
2389 institutions

VU Strategic Plan: Start well, finish brilliantly

Our Purpose

VU emboldens its people to design their future and has a deep commitment to protecting Country.

Our Vision

To be a global leader in dual-sector learning and research by 2028.

Strategic Drivers

To achieve our vision, VU has identified five strategic drivers.



Doing dual differently



Protecting Country



Partnering with principle



A thriving place to study and work



Maximising research with impact



Protecting Country



Protecting Country is about people, place, and planet

At VU, our commitment to Protecting Country is foundational to every action and decision we make. We recognise our responsibility to respect, listen to, and elevate First Nations people, voices, and standpoints. Country is more than land - it is a place of belonging, a way of believing, and a source of cultural and environmental knowledge. Country has inherent rights of its own.

First Nations achievement



Karen Jackson speaks at the Moondani Balluk Garden opening at Footscray Park Campus, February 2024

Victoria University launches First Nations Action Plan

In 2024, Victoria University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adam Shoemaker, and Director of the Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit, Karen Jackson, jointly launched the *First Nations Action Plan 2025–2028*. This important Plan

reflects VU's enduring commitment to embedding First Nations perspectives, leadership, and knowledge across all aspects of the University.

The First Nations Action Plan aims to:

- Drive consistent, year-on-year growth in the enrolment and success of First Nations students.

First Nations achievement

“The First Nations Action Plan is a crucial step in acknowledging the need for positive and progressive change, and working together with commitment, connection and courage. The Plan will drive positive outcomes for the lives of First Nations students and staff.

We are asking non-First Nations students and staff to listen deeply, do the heavy-lifting and seek out the many available tools that are required to meet these challenges.”

Karen Jackson
Director of the Moondani Balluk
Indigenous Academic Unit

- Ensure First Nations student retention and success rates meet or exceed those of non-First Nations peers.
- Increase the representation and leadership of First Nations colleagues across all levels of the University.
- Strengthen VU’s external reputation and influence through meaningful First Nations engagement.
- Embed sustainability practices that honour First Nations cultures, knowledges, and deep connections to Country.
- Advance and amplify First Nations-led research and knowledge creation.

Yorta Yorta woman Ms Jackson led the development of the Plan, which was done in consultation with First Nations students and staff at VU.



Aboriginal History Archive

The Aboriginal History Archive (AHA), housed within the Indigenous Academic Unit, Moondani Balluk, at VU, continued to lead nationally in its Aboriginal community-controlled model, ensuring Aboriginal people control the management and interpretation of this extensive and unique trove of historical data. This aligns with the global Indigenous Data Sovereignty movement led in Australia by the Maïam nayri Wingara Collective and underpinned by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

With support from the Paul Ramsay Foundation, the AHA launched its Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance (IDS&G) project to document and enhance its policies and practices. Guided by Indigenous-led consultancy Kowa Collaboration, the project included a three-day workshop in October 2024 to assess current operations and co-develop a Data Sovereignty and Governance Protocol for implementation in 2025-2027.

“We are incredibly proud of the contribution each of the interns have made to the archive. Aboriginal archivists are few and far between, so this is the ideal opportunity to encourage and support the next generation of academics and researchers. Each of them brings a new energy, vision and passion for the work. It’s been fantastic to see their confidence grow.”

Rochelle le Pere
Project Manager of the
Aboriginal History Archive

The workshop confirmed AHA’s strong alignment with Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles. Led by First Nations scholars and operated by a majority Indigenous team, the Archive is deeply committed to serving Aboriginal communities. In recognition of its leadership, Professor Gary Foley and the



From left: VU interns Coen Briggs-Brown, Nioka Thorpe-Williams and Natasha Ritchie with Alan Brown (VAHS), Pam Nathan, Will Bracks and Professor Gary Foley.



Aboriginal History Archive Indigenous Data Sovereignty Workshop, guided by Kowa Collaboration, VU, October 2024.

AHA team were awarded a major Australian Research Council Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities (LIEF) grant to expand the Archive.

Support from the Paul Ramsay Foundation has enabled the creation of several internship positions, offering participants direct experience working with one of Australia’s most significant collections - documenting over 50 years of Aboriginal activism in contemporary political history.



Bush dyeing workshops held as part of the Blak Women’s Healing Project.

Supporting Blak Women’s Healing through Cultural Practice and Connecting to Country

VU’s Indigenous Academic Unit, Moondani Balluk, has led a program addressing the profound and often devastating impact Aboriginal women face when engaging with the child protection system.

The Blak Women’s Healing Project, developed and delivered by Moondani Balluk researchers—Executive Director Karen Jackson, Dr Paola Balla, Rowena Price, and Lutfiye Ali—is a multi-phase initiative grounded in Indigenous knowledge, cultural art practices, and storytelling. Designed and led by Aboriginal women, the project supports healing through culturally informed practices. Supported by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the project began in 2010 and was completed across 2023 and 2024, focusing on Aboriginal women in Melbourne’s west whose families have had harmful experiences with child protection services.

Fourteen women participated in various aspects of the program, with four women (aged 30 to 70) taking part in the full

two-year initiative. Stage One involved bush dyeing workshops facilitated by Dr Balla, creating a culturally safe space for healing and storytelling. These workshops culminated in a group research yarn around a fire-pit, where the women reflected on their experiences. Stage Two focused on translating these insights into policy and practice change. Key themes that emerged included silencing, coercive practices, misrepresentation of Aboriginal mothers, and surveillance. The project’s impact is already evident, with researchers leading workshops for child protection staff and developing resources to improve engagement with Aboriginal families.



Progressive inclusivity



A group of more than 50 VU staff, students, friends and family members braved the 38-degree summer heat to march proudly in Melbourne's iconic 2024 Midsumma Pride March.

Gold recognition was awarded to VU in the 2024 Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI) Awards. AWEI is a nationwide benchmarking activity ensuring the University is living up to our values of progressive inclusivity. The benchmark is paired with the largest and only national employee survey, measuring LGBTQIA+ inclusion for staff at VU.

“As a University, we are thrilled to receive this recognition. We look forward to celebrating with community and working further to build a more inclusive VU where you can be ‘Uniquely You’”

**Sara Austin (she/her)
Equality, Inclusion and
Belonging Lead.**

“Visibility backed by action is what truly drives change. At VU, we’re building a culture where LGBTQIA+ staff and students don’t just feel welcome—they feel seen, heard, and valued. That means leadership commitment, active allyship and making inclusion part of our everyday decisions. Real change happens when people can show up as their full authentic selves and know they’ll be embraced for it.”

**Tessa Benson (she/her)
Director Advisory and HQ and
Pride Network leadership team.**

The University’s commitment to inclusion for the LGBTQIA+ community and beyond has gone deeper and more intersectional, with initiatives and celebrations supporting trans and gender diverse staff and students, and targeted education across the University. There is much work still to do, the University continues to work with the VU community to build on this achievement.

VU’s Pride Network and its leadership team have been instrumental in this achievement, driving initiatives, celebrations and advocacy across the University.



Net Zero



Volunteers at V4U Day 2024 - Planting native species at Burndap Park.

Throughout 2024, VU continued to advance its commitment to achieving Net Zero emissions by 2025, reaching several key milestones across community engagement, infrastructure, research, and operational sustainability:

- **Community Tree Planting Initiative:** Over 2,500 trees were planted by 200 volunteers during the 2024 Community Tree Planting Day, bringing the total to 12,500 trees since 2022. This initiative is part of the Victorian Government's *More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West* program, which aims to plant 500,000 trees to enhance canopy coverage across Melbourne's western suburbs.
- **Climate Emergency Conference:** VU co-hosted the Climate Emergency Conference in partnership with Maribyrnong City Council, convening over 200 local government representatives to collaborate on climate action strategies.
- **Laboratory Sustainability Achievements:** VU received Platinum Certification from *My Green Labs* for sustainability improvements across its laboratories and TAFE facilities. Highlights include:
 - Participation in the *International Laboratory Freezer Challenge*,

promoting energy-efficient cold storage practices.

- Introduction of Styrofoam recycling and a TerraCycle Zero Waste Box system at the Werribee Campus, with plans to expand to other campuses in 2025.
- Exploration of textile recycling opportunities for implementation in 2025.
- **Green Ambassador Network:** A new Green Ambassador network was launched, comprising 20 student and staff representatives. This group plays a pivotal role in shaping and driving sustainability initiatives across the University.
- **Climate Adaptation Research & Collaboration:** VU conducted research into thermal comfort, urban heat mitigation, green infrastructure, and ventilation. Knowledge exchange forums were hosted with stakeholders from Melbourne, Riyadh, and Myanmar to explore climate adaptation strategies.
- **Energy Efficiency Upgrades:** A wider temperature band (19–25°C) was implemented across buildings where feasible to reduce energy consumption. VU also continued upgrading critical building services, including electrical switchboards, LED lighting, and heating and cooling systems.

Addressing Modern Slavery Risks

Demonstrating an ongoing commitment, VU continues to identify and mitigate modern slavery risks across its operations and supply chains. In 2024, VU undertook a series of targeted actions to strengthen its approach:

- **Supplier Engagement:** Suppliers in high-risk categories were invited to complete detailed Supplier Assessment Questionnaires to enhance transparency and assess potential risks.
- **Policy Implementation:** Procedures under the VU Modern Slavery Prevention Policy were finalised, including clear pathways for reporting incidents or concerns related to Modern Slavery.
- **Awareness and Education:** Modern Slavery Awareness training was delivered biannually to all staff. The program was expanded to include students - addressing their specific vulnerabilities - and suppliers, to foster greater understanding of industry-related risks.



Countries with the most ambitious targets - Japan, the United States, the European Union, and Australia - are expected to experience shifts in industrial activity. Meanwhile, regions with weaker targets, such as Russia and parts of Asia and the Pacific (excluding China, India, and Japan), may see increased emissions as industries relocate.

From an economic perspective, India and the broader Asia-Pacific region are projected to benefit due to their modest targets and reliance on energy imports. Lower global demand for fossil fuels is expected to reduce prices, favouring energy-importing nations.

In contrast, the Middle East is likely to be the most adversely affected. Its economy is heavily dependent on fossil fuel exports and faces relatively stricter targets than other low-commitment regions. As a result, its projected per capita income growth drops to 1.5% annually - compared to 2.1% without coordinated climate action.

Australia’s economic impact is modest. If no action were taken, real income per capita would grow by approximately 1% annually to 2030. With current commitments, this growth is slightly reduced to 0.9%. However, Australia is projected to have the highest per capita emissions among modelled regions until 2028, surpassed only by Russia thereafter.

This presents a challenge in global climate diplomacy. Many of the countries benefiting economically from others’ climate efforts have significantly lower per capita incomes than Australia. Encouraging stronger commitments from these nations will be difficult while Australia’s per capita emissions remain high.

Global Climate Commitments and Economic Implications: Insights from Modelling

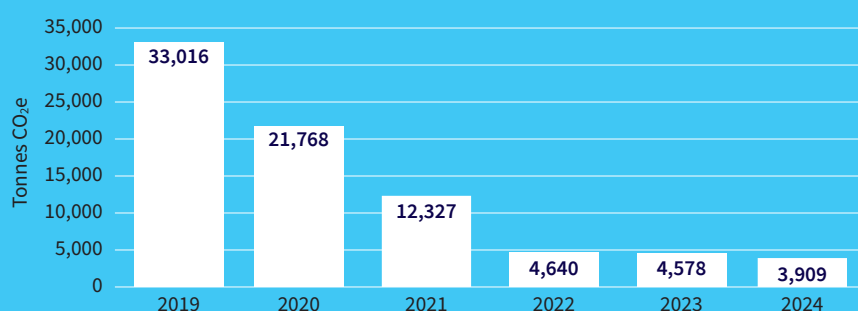
Under the Paris Agreement, most nations have pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, aiming to limit global temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, with efforts to cap it at 1.5°C. Australia’s contribution includes a commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050 and a 43% reduction from 2005 levels by 2030.

To understand the economic implications of these commitments, a variant of the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) model was used by VU’s Centre of Policy Studies to simulate the 2030 targets. The model incorporates a wide range of emissions sources and identifies cost-effective pathways for each region to meet its goals.



Driving environmental change

Total Net greenhouse gas emissions*



* Note that there are other greenhouse gas emissions that are measured to calculate VU's overall emissions. These include emissions such as staff travel to campus and electricity transmission leakage. These are not included in the above table but are included when determining VU's overall emissions.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Initiatives

VU has achieved a remarkable reduction in total net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, decreasing from 33,016 tonnes in 2019 to 3,909 tonnes in 2024 - an 88% reduction over six years.

A key driver of this success was the purchase of 100% green electricity starting July 1, 2021, which led to:

- A 50% reduction in electricity-related emissions in 2021, contributing to a GHG emissions drop from 21,768 to 12,327 tonnes.
- A complete elimination of electricity emissions from 2022 onwards, reflected in the continued decline in GHG emissions to 4,640 tonnes in 2022 and further reductions in subsequent years.

Other impactful initiatives include:

- Energy efficiency upgrades, including LED lighting retrofits and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system optimisations.
- Sustainable transport programs, such as improved cycling infrastructure and support for electric vehicles.
- Waste minimisation strategies, including enhanced recycling and organic waste diversion.
- Sustainable procurement practices, prioritising low-emission products and services.
- Staff and student engagement programs promoting climate awareness and behavioural change.

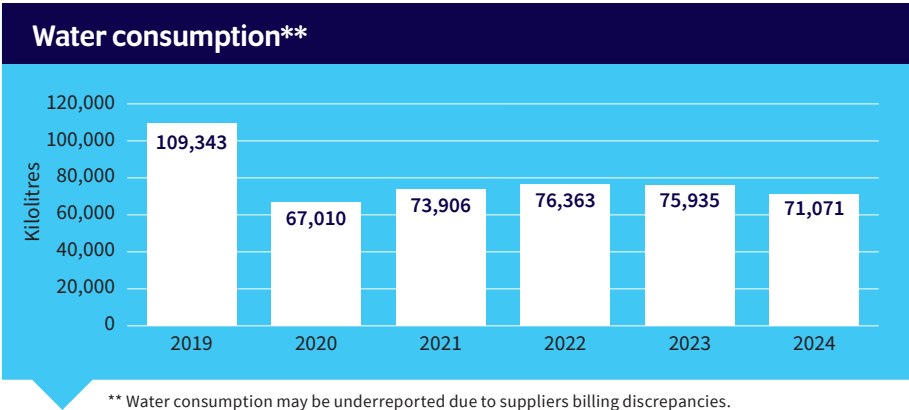


Solar panels powering campuses.

These efforts demonstrate VU's strong commitment to climate action and its leadership in sustainability within the tertiary education sector.



Driving environmental change



** Water consumption may be underreported due to suppliers billing discrepancies.

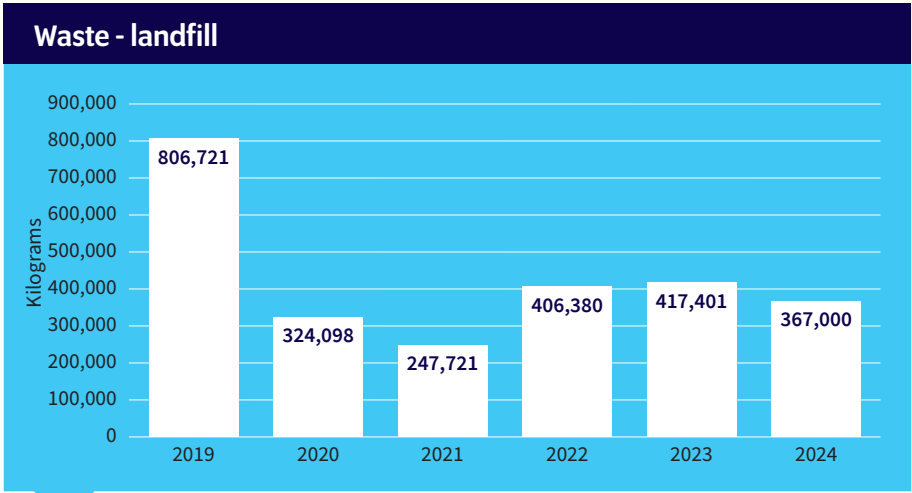
Water Consumption and Conservation Initiatives

A strong commitment to sustainable water management, is reflected in VU’s downward trend in water consumption from 2019 to 2024. Water usage dropped significantly from 109,343 kilolitres in 2019 to 67,010 kilolitres in 2020, likely due to reduced campus activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although consumption gradually increased between 2021 and 2023, it remained well below pre-2020 levels. In 2024, water usage declined again to 71,071 kilolitres, reflecting the impact of ongoing conservation efforts.

These reductions are supported by strategies outlined in the VU Environment Policy, which include:

- Ensuring water-sensitive campus landscapes, gardens, building and urban design.
- Adopting water-efficient practices and technologies for reducing water consumption.
- Implementing systems for water recycling, harvesting and reuse.

These initiatives reflect VU’s commitment to sustainable resource management and environmental stewardship.



Landfill Waste Reduction and Contributing Initiatives

Over the past six years, VU has significantly reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill. In 2019, landfill waste totalled 806,721 kilograms. This dropped sharply in 2020 to 324,098 kilograms, likely due to reduced campus activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Continued efforts saw further reductions in 2021, reaching 247,721 kilograms. While there was a temporary increase in 2022 and 2023, landfill volumes remained well below 2019 levels. In 2024, waste declined again to approximately 367,000 kilograms, reflecting the impact of ongoing waste minimisation strategies.

VU has implemented several initiatives that have driven this reduction, particularly in paper waste:

- Reviewing volumes of printed collateral across the university.
- Revising Course Guide content and size to reduce unnecessary printing.

- Promoting sustainable office printing practices.
- Reporting on paper consumption across the business.

These actions have led to a 55% reduction in paper waste in 2024 compared to 2019, contributing significantly to the overall decline in landfill waste.





Wyndham Tech School solar roof.

Energy Usage and Sustainability Initiatives

Significant achievements in sustainability continue at VU, with 67% of total energy usage in 2024 sourced from renewables. Of the 108,642 GJ consumed across all campuses, 72,282 GJ was generated from renewable sources, including solar energy installations.

This achievement reflects the impact of several initiatives completed in 2023 and ongoing efforts to reduce energy consumption and environmental impact:

- **Solar Energy Expansion:** Continued installation of solar panels across campuses contributed significantly to renewable energy generation.
- **LED Lighting Upgrades:** Energy-efficient LED lighting was installed across university sites, reducing electricity usage and maintenance costs while improving lighting quality and safety.
- **Electrification of Building Services:** Upgrades to building systems included the electrification of Footscray Park Building L and its swimming pool heating system, projected to reduce natural gas consumption by 8%.
- **Smart Digital Signage:** Programming of digital communication signage to enter sleep mode outside business hours has helped reduce unnecessary energy use.
- **Green Building Standards:** All new buildings are designed to meet at least a 5 Star Green Star – Education rating, including the Sport and Learning Precinct and the VU City Tower, which recycled 90% of its construction materials.

- **Sustainable Transport:** VU supports low-emission commuting through free shuttle buses, bike-friendly infrastructure, and promotion of public transport.
- **Water Conservation:** Rainwater harvesting systems at Footscray Park and Sunshine campuses save millions of litres annually, with recycled water used for landscaping and facilities.
- **Waste Reduction and Recycling:** Comprehensive recycling programs support VU's zero-waste goals.
- **Smart Energy Systems:** Building automation systems, motion sensor lighting, and high-efficiency mechanical equipment enhance energy management and reduce consumption.

These initiatives are part of VU's broader commitment to Protecting Country and achieving Net Zero emissions by 2025, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and fostering a healthier planet for future generations.



Empowering Future Clean Energy Leaders at Wyndham Tech School

Wyndham Tech School is equipping secondary students with cutting-edge technology and immersive learning experiences to prepare them for careers in Victoria's growing renewable energy sector. Through a grant from the Clean Energy Equipment Fund (CEEF), the Tech School acquired 30 virtual reality headsets and accessories, advanced software and hardware, two-way radios, and access to the Unreal Engine training platform.

This investment supports the development of a virtual training environment where students from Year 7 to Year 12 will simulate and design energy networks that deliver safe, clean, and reliable power. Delivered through Wyndham Tech School's Renewable Energy Academy, the initiative provides a hands-on, future-focused pathway into clean energy careers.

As one of nine Victorian Tech Schools to benefit from the CEEF's funding round, Wyndham Tech School is playing a vital role in supporting Victoria's transition to a sustainable energy future. The program ensures students gain access to industry-standard equipment and training, fostering the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the renewable energy workforce.



Maximising Research with Impact



Driving Ethical, Collaborative Solutions for a Sustainable Future

VU delivers ethical, collaborative research that addresses challenges facing people, place, and planet. Guided by Protecting Country and a commitment to First Nations leadership, VU advances epistemic justice and contributes to the UN SDG. As a dual-sector institution, VU partners with industry and communities to co-create solutions with global relevance, driven by inclusive and collaborative knowledge creation.

Collaborative research, sustainable outcomes



Professor Maurice Guerrieri at the Structural Fire Testing Facility, VU Werribee Campus.

Enhancing Infrastructure Resilience Through Fire Safety Innovation

The Fire Research Group at VU is advancing fire safety engineering to support sustainable and resilient infrastructure. Through pioneering numerical modelling and full-scale experimental testing, researchers are helping urban planners and transport agencies better predict bushfire spread and improve tunnel safety.

At the Structural Fire Testing Facility on the Werribee Campus—one of the most advanced in the Southern Hemisphere—VU conducts real-time testing of tunnel lining materials using a custom-built furnace and ISO 17025-compliant systems. Led by Professor Maurice Guerrieri, the facility has attracted tier-one industry partners and contributed to major infrastructure projects, including the Melbourne Metro Tunnel.

VU's research is reshaping international fire safety standards, challenging outdated assumptions about concrete moisture levels and spalling risk. By generating reliable, live-streamed data from full-scale tests, the University is setting new benchmarks for fire safety and infrastructure sustainability.





Lab testing at the biomechanics facility at VU Footscray Park Campus, preparing for real time trials, in everyday settings.

Transforming Falls Prevention through Wearable Technology and AI

Leading a transformative project, VU researchers are working to reduce falls among older adults and individuals with restricted mobility - an issue that accounts for 43% of injury-related hospitalisations and 42% of injury deaths in Australia.

Neuromuscular disorders resulting from trauma, ageing, and musculoskeletal impairments increase the risk of balance loss and falling. Traditional gait research has been largely confined to laboratory settings, offering limited capacity to intervene in real-world scenarios. VU researchers Professor Rezaul Begg and Dr Alessandro Garofolini are addressing this gap through the development of AI-powered wearable assistive devices that monitor gait and predict balance loss in real time.

Their project, *Predictive Biomechanics for Modelling Gait Stability and Falls Prediction*, is advancing biometric monitoring beyond the lab and into everyday life. Participants wear sensors during daily activities, allowing researchers to remotely analyse gait patterns using predictive biomechanics. The system uses artificial

intelligence to interpret motion-sensing data and alert users to take corrective action before a fall occurs.

This research has already led to the development of a wearable sensor-based biofeedback system that improves swing foot control and reduces tripping risk. Collaborations with Western Health, Austin Hospital, and Royal Melbourne Hospital have supported clinical integration, while funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has enabled further expansion.

Looking ahead, the team is transitioning the technology to a home-based rehabilitation platform, broadening its accessibility and impact across the community. With over 45,000 new stroke cases annually in Australia, this innovation has the potential to significantly reduce fall-related hospitalisations, lower healthcare costs, and enhance quality of life for thousands of stroke survivors and others living with mobility challenges.



Sustainable Laboratory Leadership

Through targeted initiatives in energy efficiency, resource optimisation, and laboratory recycling, VU is cultivating a culture of sustainability among staff and students. These efforts support VU's long-term sustainability goals, aligning with international best practices while improving laboratory operations and reducing costs.

A major achievement in this space is the Platinum Green Lab Certification awarded to VU's pilot laboratory at Werribee through the My Green Lab (MGL) program. This certification represents the highest level of recognition in laboratory sustainability and is considered the gold standard globally. It assesses performance across 14 key areas—including energy use, waste reduction, water conservation, and staff engagement - and is endorsed by the United Nations' Race to Zero campaign and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).

VU's leadership in sustainable science was further demonstrated by its ranking in the top 20% of global participants in the 2024 International Freezer Challenge, which promotes energy-efficient cold storage practices in research environments.

These accomplishments reflect VU's commitment to embedding sustainability into research infrastructure and operations, while contributing to global efforts to reduce the environmental footprint of scientific research.





Students explored real-life stories of racism through posters and engaged in group discussions to identify and reflect on the types and impacts of racism depicted.

Empowering Youth to Challenge Racism: The Bigger Than This Program

VU, through its Community Identity and Displacement Research Network (CIDRN), partnered with VicHealth and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) to co-design *Bigger Than This (BTT)* - an innovative anti-racism initiative aimed at reducing the harm and impact of racism in Victorian schools.

Developed in collaboration with a youth working group, BTT engaged young people aged 15–25 in shaping the program's design, development, and delivery. The result was a 100-minute school-based program for Year 9 students, incorporating story posters, shared language cards, and a creative activity to foster understanding and dialogue around racism and anti-racism.

Following a call for participation circulated by the Department of Education, 70 schools expressed interest, with 10 selected to pilot the program. These schools represented a diverse mix of geographic locations, sizes, and cultural backgrounds. The pilot ran from late 2023 through Term 1 of 2024.

Delivered by young facilitators with lived experience of racism, the program created

safe spaces for candid conversations and empowered students - particularly those from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds - to share their stories and insights. Creative and collaborative methods were central to the program's success, enabling students to express and co-create knowledge in dynamic, engaging ways.

The research and evaluation of BTT was led by Dr Sam Keast and Professor Christopher Sonn, with support from Dr Roshani Jayawardana and Angela Paredes Castro, contributing valuable insights into youth-led approaches to social change and equity in education.



Global Collaboration for Social Change: Supporting the Indaba Podcast

Indaba, a podcast initiative rooted in Critical Community Psychology, is co-led by Professor Christopher Sonn from VU and Assistant Professor Natalie Kivell from Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada. The project receives both in-kind and financial support from global institutions - including VU, which is proud to be among its contributors. Grounded in an interdisciplinary field driven by social justice and decolonial values, *Indaba* aligns closely with VU's commitment to equity, inclusion, and sustainable social impact.

Indaba - a South African Indigenous term meaning "a meeting" - serves as a global platform that brings together scholars, practitioners, and activists to reimagine how we live and relate to the world. Through storytelling and critical reflection, the podcast explores methodological, theoretical, and practical knowledge that informs social change practice.

Curated into five thematic pairs of episodes, each begins with a contextually grounded narrative followed by a reflective dialogue featuring voices from South Africa, Indonesia, Chile, Australia, Palestine, and Canada. This collective approach fosters a rich exchange of ideas and exemplifies the power of global collaboration in advancing sustainable and socially just futures.





Associate Professor Ehsan Yaghoubi with recycled materials for concrete mix.

Innovative Road Construction using Recycled Materials

Through a pioneering project that reimagines how road networks are built and maintained, VU is leading innovative research into sustainable infrastructure. Spearheaded by Associate Professor Ehsan Yaghoubi, the initiative involves laboratory testing of a unique mix of recycled materials - including concrete from demolished buildings, crushed beer and wine bottles, waste plastic, and tyre rubber - to backfill sewer trenches beneath roads and other trafficable areas.

This alternative construction method aims to improve the strength and longevity of roads while addressing environmental and economic concerns.

The project builds on earlier successful trials using recycled materials in non-trafficable areas such as backyards. With funding from Sustainability Victoria through the Recycling Victoria Research and Development Fund – Materials, VU partnered with Greater Western Water (GWW) for design, construction, and site management, and Ground Science Pty Ltd for technical expertise.

“This alternative approach to traditional road construction helps to conserve natural sand and gravel, which is becoming scarce, and finds useful applications for waste materials like plastic, tyres, and glass, reducing the amount sent to landfill.”

Associate Professor Ehsan Yaghoubi

Months of rigorous lab testing have shown the recycled mix to be as stable - if not more so - than traditional sand and gravel-based materials. A full-scale trial is now underway at a site in Sunbury, where the trench backfill is being tested under truck loads over a nine-month period to monitor for cracks or deformation caused by traffic and rainfall.

This approach not only conserves increasingly scarce natural resources like sand and gravel but also diverts significant volumes of waste from landfill, supporting a circular economy. GWW's General Manager of Operations and Delivery Solutions, Jodie Hallam, highlighted the long-term environmental benefits: “It's an innovative approach to

address landfill waste and offers a cost-effective, sustainable and efficient way to backfill trenches in critical areas while still responding to urgent access requests promptly,” she said. “We see potential to share this technology with our peers across the water industry, expanding these benefits beyond our service region.”

Associate Professor Yaghoubi emphasised the importance of collaboration with industry partners in overcoming implementation challenges and translating research into innovative solutions. “We’re talking potentially innovative green construction materials and techniques to build our transport network that could be stronger, cheaper and greener,” he said.



Platypus Watch: A Collaborative Environmental Monitoring Initiative

As a proud partner with the Werribee River Association (WRA), VU is contributing to the Platypus Watch project - an environmental research initiative focused on monitoring water quality and platypus habitats along the Werribee River. This collaborative effort involves the collection and analysis of water samples from urban and peri-urban locations over a ten-month period, contributing valuable data to support local biodiversity and river health.

Funded by Greater Western Water, the project commenced in August 2024. It provides opportunities for community engagement, with residents invited to participate in various aspects of the research. Activities include water sampling, guided river tours, habitat assessments, laboratory visits at VU, and educational presentations delivered both online and in person.

The project aims to deepen understanding of the impact of pollutants on platypus populations. The findings will inform future conservation strategies and support advocacy for the protection of this iconic native species in the western region.



VU's Izanhua Zhang and Mohammad Mirzadeh, Greater Western Water's Jasmine Thom, Werribee River Association's Lisa Field and National Measurement Institute's Hao Nguyen. Photo credit: Damjan Janevski, Star Weekly.

yet remains underused in mental health prevention and treatment.

VU's policy brief outlines four key recommendations:

1. Include dietitians in mental health care teams under the Better Access Initiative.
2. Develop national resources to support health professionals in using nutrition to improve mental health.
3. Support social prescribing that includes nutrition-focused community services.

4. Raise public awareness of the role of diet in mental wellbeing.

These recommendations aim to promote sustainable, evidence-based dietary support within Australia's mental health system.



Nutrition and Mental Health: Policy Insights from Victoria University

Highlighting the important connection between diet and mental health, VU's health policy team is advocating for stronger integration of nutrition into mental health care.

With over 4 million Australians affected by mental health conditions and limited access to comprehensive care, new approaches are urgently needed. Poor diet quality - especially in disadvantaged communities - is a known risk factor for both physical and mental health issues,



Examples of healthy meals to improve mental health.

Addressing Health Inequity for a More Sustainable Future

Revealing a growing health divide, VU's 2024 release of *Australia's Health Tracker: Chronic Conditions by Socioeconomic Status* shows that disadvantaged communities are experiencing higher rates of preventable chronic illness and premature death.

Between 2017 and 2021, over 125,000 Australians aged 30–70 died from preventable conditions - 71% of whom lived in the most disadvantaged areas, often in regional and rural locations.

The report highlights that where people live strongly influences their health outcomes. Communities experiencing social and economic disadvantage—characterised by lower income, education, employment opportunities, and housing quality—are disproportionately affected by chronic conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease.

Lead author Professor Rosemary Calder, Director of VU's Australian Health Policy Collaboration, calls for urgent action through place-based approaches that respond to the specific needs and strengths of local communities.

The Tracker has informed a set of ten policy proposals aimed at reducing preventable disease and improving health outcomes in disadvantaged communities. These include coordinated local initiatives, long-term funding for community organisations, and better integration of health and social care systems.

Improving health equity is not only a matter of justice - it is essential to building sustainable, resilient communities.



Werribee Childrens Centre

Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education: Global Insights from VU Research

A groundbreaking international study led by VU's Mitchell Institute has revealed that approximately 24% of Australians live in 'childcare deserts' - areas where there are more than three children for every available childcare place. Alarming, around 700,000 Australians reside in communities with virtually no access to childcare services.

This research, part of a world-first initiative mapping childcare accessibility across nine countries and over 10 million children, builds on VU Mitchell Institute's 2022 report *Deserts and Oases: How accessible is childcare in Australia*. It explores how different policy approaches influence equitable access to childcare and identifies strategies that support families more effectively.

Professor Peter Hurley, Director of the Mitchell Institute and lead author of the report, emphasised the significance of the findings:

"We know that high-quality accessible childcare has huge benefits, for both workforce participation and helping young children to thrive. Governments around the world are committing billions of dollars, pounds and euros to increase the supply of childcare, without much understanding of the best way to do it," Professor Hurley said.

"For the first time, we can see the impact of different government policies and how nations compare. The results will affect the lives of millions of families around the world."

The report, *International Childcare Report: Mapping the Deserts*, highlights stark disparities in access. Affluent neighbourhoods tend to have better childcare availability and higher fees, attracting providers to areas where they can charge more. However, countries like Sweden and Norway demonstrate that fair and widespread access is achievable, regardless of socioeconomic status.

In contrast, nations such as France, England, Wales, and Australia require stronger government involvement - comparable to the public school system - to ensure equitable access in disadvantaged communities.

Australia ranked fourth out of nine nations in terms of childcare accessibility. While the number of childcare places in Australia grew by 70,000 between 2020 and 2024, many communities still face significant barriers.

The findings underscore that universal childcare in Australia will not be realised without substantial reform.

"Childcare affects us all. Ensuring our system works effectively is critically important," said Professor Hurley. "This research fills massive gaps in our understanding and is an important step in ensuring nations can learn from each other so that all families can access childcare when they need it."





Associate Professor Malindu Sandanayake in his lab. Photo credit: SBS News.

Innovative Upcycling: Turning Textile Waste into Sustainable Concrete

Pioneering a novel method of upcycling polyester, researchers at VU have repurposed pre-owned high visibility vests into concrete for footpaths.

Driven by the challenge of Australia's annual 23kg per capita textile waste, lead researcher Associate Professor Malindu Sandanayake sought a sustainable solution for polyester, a material known for its durability and resistance to natural decomposition.

"This is a fibre that will not break down in the natural environment, so we thought we could capitalise on the strength of it to replace other polluting materials that are traditionally in concrete such as cement," Associate Professor Sandanayake said.

With end-of-life uniforms contributing 11,000 tonnes of textile waste annually - 99 per cent of which ends up in landfill - the team focused on high-vis vests, which typically have a short lifespan due to fading reflector strips after 25 washes.

"We think this is just the beginning of a new approach to greener construction and look forward to finding more ways to challenge traditional building processes."

**Associate Professor
Malindu Sandanayake**

In collaboration with Melbourne-based social enterprise Assembled Threads, the team spent six months refining the mix, testing 15 versions to achieve the optimal combination of cardboard and textile. A key goal was to replace virgin cement with a sustainable composite while maintaining structural integrity.

A successful trial pour was conducted in April at the Eastern Freeway upgrade site, in partnership with the Eastern Burke to Tram Alliance (ETBA). Testing results have been promising.

"Initial testing shows this behaves in the same way as traditional concrete. In fact, trial testing achieved the desired compressive strength earlier than expected.

It is as strong, almost more so, than a traditional cement composition. Prolonged monitoring of the test sites will be undertaken post completion of the project," Associate Professor Sandanayake said.

The concrete also passed large-scale fire testing, confirming its safety and durability. The mix offers a reduced climate footprint and is cost-effective due to its low-carbon conversion process and use of landfill-bound materials.

The project has already attracted strong interest from industry, with potential applications in structural concrete and asphalt roads.





A Thriving Place to Study and Work



**A place where people are valued, celebrated,
and inspired**

VU is proudly different and productively radical.
We celebrate and invest in our people – fostering
belonging, pride, and purpose.

Social license



VU students volunteering at Reaching Out in the Inner West of Melbourne.

Reaching Out in the Inner West of Melbourne

Reaching Out Inner West is a grassroots charity delivering vital support to people experiencing homelessness and hardship across Melbourne's west. From home-cooked meals and clothing to haircuts, toiletries, and sleeping bags, their work is grounded in dignity and care.

Operating from a granted space at Victoria University's Footscray Nicholson campus, the charity credits this partnership as essential to its growth and continued service. Beyond providing space, VU staff and students actively contribute – volunteering regularly, undertaking placements, and engaging in research that strengthens community impact.

Together, we are building a more connected, compassionate west.



Victoria University in the Community (VUiC)

VuiC strengthened its ties with local governments and organisations in Melbourne's west, focusing on inclusivity, sustainability, and economic prosperity. Through partnerships with local councils and community groups, VUiC implemented programs to meet community needs, enhance educational opportunities, and drive local economic growth.

Key highlights include:

- VU renewed its five-year Memorandum of Understanding with Maribyrnong City Council, solidifying its role as a key community leader.
- Successful bid to establish a Suburban University Hub in Melton, in partnership with Melton City Council and Djerriwarrh Community & Education Services. This hub, to be opened in 2025, will aim to reduce educational disparities and bring tertiary education closer to local communities.
- The Next Economy Jobs Challenge, which created pathways into paramedicine for students from culturally diverse backgrounds, saw high graduation and progression rates. 90% of students completed their Certificate III in Non- Emergency Patient Transport and 80% advanced to higher-level paramedicine studies.



A group shot of the student and staff volunteers at V4U Day 2024.

- Engagement with the Future Footscray Steering Committee, to shape a bold and visionary trajectory for the evolution of Footscray, fostering innovation, growth, and a thriving community.
- VU secured \$80,000 in scholarships for Hume students and continued addressing the demand for early childhood educators. Through partnerships, the university helped upskill local educators, with impressive employment outcomes, including 24 out of 25 Early Childhood Education graduates in Hume securing jobs.

V4U Day

An annual event involving students, staff and alumni, V4U Day is an award-winning, student-led volunteering event. In 2024, the 290 volunteers delivered 19 impactful projects for 19 community partners, from environmental clean-ups and aged care tech support to garden revitalisations and refugee aid.

V4U Day continues to be a powerful expression of our values—connection, contribution, and community impact.



Leading student and staff experience



Recent VU graduate.

Outstanding QILT 2023 Student Experience Survey results

VU had sector-leading results in the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) National Report released in 2024. These results reflect VU's unrelenting commitment to our students, to educational equity and excellence and the phenomenal success of the VU Block Model®.

VU was ranked first in the state and in the top six nationally in four of six categories:

- **Quality of Entire Educational Experience:** VU ranked No. 1 in Victoria and No. 6 nationally (and first among dual sector institutions).
- **Teaching Quality:** VU climbed to No. 1 in Victoria and No. 4 nationally, showcasing the extraordinary commitment of VU's academic and professional staff.

- **Peer Engagement:** VU ranked No. 1 in Victoria and No. 2 nationally. VU is nearly 20 percentage points above the national average, which is a testament to the VU Block Model® style of small group learning.
- **Skills Development:** VU is No. 1 in Victoria and No. 5 nationally, well above the national average.



Leading student and staff experience



Four key members of the thrive team, L-R: Jeffrey Schwarz, Rohenna Young, Julian Chu, Divot Meiksans.

thrive

The thrive program involves active living, social connection and wellbeing activities, designed to improve mental health, increase physical activity, foster staff engagement, promote self-care and boost overall positivity. The program features a wide range of activities, including trivia, volunteering, gym classes, pickleball, nutrition workshops, tree planting, walking groups and craft sessions – delivered in collaboration with multiple VU departments to ensure broad participation.

In 2024, VU expanded the thrive program, offering even more programs for a longer period and including both students and staff. Over 1,500 staff and 3,000 students engaged in the program in 2024, with more than 46,000 individual interactions.

Feedback from VU colleagues revealed that the program helped foster personal connections and improved professional relationships. Additionally, the program had a 96.4% satisfaction rate and over 80% of participants reported increased engagement, happiness, and mental

wellbeing. The feedback from students was truly moving, with one expressing that participation in the thrive program was their best day as a university student so far. This kind of personal impact speaks volumes, reminding us that the connections we build and the environment we create are essential to the University experience.



Meaningful education for UN SDGs

Achieving the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - including its 17 global goals - is essential to safeguarding the future wellbeing of humanity and the planet we all share. At VU, efforts to advance the SDGs are embedded across our teaching and research, campus operations, and external collaborations.

VU's graduate capabilities are integrated into all courses, equipping students with the skills and attributes needed for lifelong success. These capabilities foster a strong commitment to sustainability and encourage bold, innovative solutions to pressing global challenges.

The Graduate Capabilities Guidelines - outlined in VU's Learning and Teaching Standards Policy - define three overarching capabilities that guide student learning and development.

Graduate capabilities (GC)



GC1

Adaptable and capable 21st century citizens who can communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically and solve complex problems.



GC2

Confident, creative lifelong learners who can use their understanding of themselves, and others to achieve their goals in work and learning.



GC3

Responsible and ethical citizens who use their inter-cultural understanding to contribute to their local and global communities.

UN SDG alignment - New and updated educational offerings

Enhancing alignment with the United Nations SDGs, a suite of new and updated educational offerings has been introduced at VU to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to address pressing global and local challenges.

New Program Introduced:

- **Graduate Certificate in Planetary Health:** Designed to tackle sustainability issues at both global and community levels.

Updated Programs:

- **Bachelor of Business:** Now integrates sustainability and digital transformation themes.
- **Bachelor of Science:** Refocused to address climate change, biodiversity, and other global challenges.

- **Bachelor of Social Work:** Strengthened with human rights and social justice content.
- **Bachelor of Youth Work:** Revised to highlight inclusive education and community engagement.
- **Graduate Certificate in Global Public Health:** Expanded to include planetary health and equity-focused health systems.
- **Master of International Community Development:** Refined to incorporate sustainability practices and Indigenous knowledge systems.

These curriculum changes reflect a broader institutional commitment to embedding the SDGs across teaching, research, and community engagement.

In parallel, efforts to decolonise and Indigenise the curriculum are underway. Moondani Balluk is leading the development of compulsory professional learning modules for academic staff,

aimed at embedding equity, inclusion, and Indigenous scholarship into all teaching.

A key principle from these modules states: 'First Nations knowledges from ancestors continue to evolve. Protecting Country is about the interconnectedness of people, place, time. It offers a shared responsibility and care for all living things now and into the future.'



Kenyah Hura, Bachelor of Youth Work student.

Equity through access

Admissions Pathways for Diversity and Inclusiveness

Engaging Future Students

A commitment to inclusive and equitable access to tertiary education underpins VU's approach to engaging prospective students from diverse backgrounds. The Student Recruitment team collaborates with career practitioners, educators, community organisations, and individuals to ensure future students receive timely, relevant information about study and career pathways. Key initiatives include:

- **Regional Outreach:** As a member of the Tertiary Information Service, VU contributes to a collective effort among universities, TAFEs, and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to deliver tertiary and career guidance to students in regional areas.
- **Campus Engagement Experiences:** VU offers tailored on-campus experiences to secondary students:
 - *Year 9 and 10:* Hands-on workshops and interactive challenges designed to spark interest in various study areas.
 - *Year 11 and 12:* University-focused days featuring guided campus tours, course presentations, and immersive sessions with academics, alumni, and industry partners.
- **Community-Based Engagement:** Specialised programs are available for community organisations and groups that are under-represented in higher education, including culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- **Schools Outreach:** VU actively participates in school expos and delivers presentations to support students in exploring tertiary options.
- **Personalised Course Advice:** Prospective students can access one-on-one consultations with VU course advisors for guidance across TAFE, undergraduate, and postgraduate offerings.
- **Sport & Recreation Industry Pathway (SARIP) Program:** SARIP provides a sport-focused curriculum aligned with the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), offering students valuable

industry experience and pathways to further study and employment. The program includes funding support for students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Inclusive Admissions Practices Supporting Diverse Student Pathways

A simplified and accessible admissions process is central to VU's commitment to educational equity. As one of only six universities in Australia offering both TAFE and university-level courses - from certificates to PhDs - students are empowered to begin their learning journey at a level that suits their needs and aspirations.

Recognising that success in education can take many forms, VU's admissions approach is designed to be transparent and flexible. Key initiatives supporting diverse entry pathways include:

- **VU Early Entry:** A membership-based program designed to support Year 11 and 12 students with conditional offers, scholarships, personalised guidance, and opportunities to engage with the VU community.
- **First Nations Application Support:** First Nations students applying via Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) can access the Equity Scheme, while direct applicants are encouraged to apply for special consideration. Moondani Balluk staff are available to provide course advice and connect students with support services and pastoral care.
- **Special Entry Access Scheme:** School Leaver Applicants: VU participates in VTAC's Special Entry Access Scheme, which includes:
 - *Category One:* Personal information and location (e.g. Indigenous background, first in family, regional location, under-represented school or gender, non-English speaking background).
 - *Category Two:* Disadvantaged financial background (e.g. Centrelink support, financial hardship).
 - *Category Three:* Disability or medical condition impacting education.



Students at Orientation festivities.

- *Category Four:* Difficult circumstances (e.g. refugee status, homelessness, family violence, natural disasters).
- **Special Entry Access Scheme (Mature Age Applicants):** Mature age students (21+) can apply under categories similar to school leavers, including:
 - *Category A:* Personal information and location.
 - *Category B:* Financial disadvantage.
 - *Category C:* Disability or medical condition.
 - *Category D:* Other difficult circumstances affecting education.

Flexible Entry Options Supporting Student Success

A range of pathway and foundation programs ensure students can access tertiary education regardless of their academic background or readiness. These options allow students to begin at a level that suits them and progress toward their goals, often earning credit toward future qualifications.

Preparatory programs such as the Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation (22582VIC), Foundations (JYAC), and English and General Education courses support academic readiness. Secondary students can gain industry-relevant skills through VET Delivered in Secondary Schools (VDSS), while the Asylum Seeker Vocational Education and Training (ASVET) program provides subsidised access to training for asylum seekers and refugees, removing barriers to participation and promoting educational equity.

Holistic Student Support Enhancing Access and Belonging

A comprehensive suite of support services assist students from diverse backgrounds to thrive academically and personally. Dedicated programs such as those offered through VU's Moondani Balluk provide cultural, academic, and pastoral support for Aboriginal students, while initiatives like VU Kickstart assist first-in-family students in transitioning to university life.

Students benefit from tailored career guidance through the VU Careers Hub, academic support via Learning Advisors

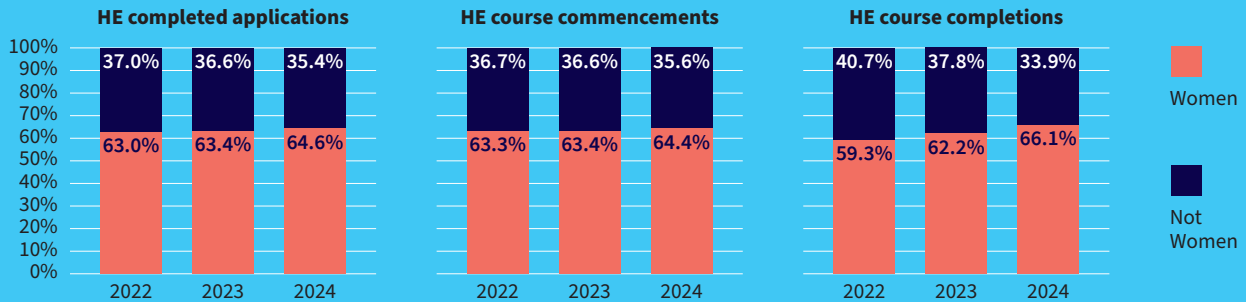
and Student Mentors, and wellbeing services including counselling, welfare assistance, and free meals. Additional support is available for students with disabilities, care leavers, asylum seekers, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Institution-wide commitments to equity, gender equality, First Nations inclusion, LGBTQIA+ support, and anti-violence initiatives underpin VU's inclusive learning environment, ensuring every student feels respected, supported, and empowered to succeed.



Measuring and Tracking Equity at VU

Women's Higher Education (HE) Completed Applications, Course Commencements, and Course Completions



Key Insights: Women students in higher education

Participation and success rates for women in higher education at VU have shown a consistent and positive trajectory across key stages of the student journey.

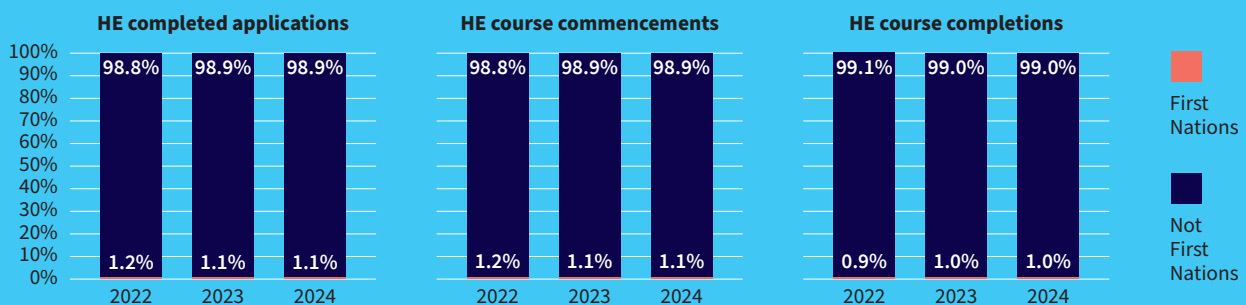
- The proportion of women submitting higher education applications increased from 63.0% in 2022 to 64.6% in 2024, reflecting growing engagement with university pathways.

- Commencement rates remained strong and stable, rising slightly from 63.3% to 64.4%, indicating sustained access to study opportunities.
- Most significantly, completion rates improved from 59.3% in 2022 to 66.1% in 2024, highlighting enhanced retention and academic success.

These outcomes point to the effectiveness of VU's inclusive education strategies. Initiatives such as the VU Block Model®, which supports manageable

workloads and deeper learning, alongside wraparound student support services, have likely contributed to these gains. Programs that promote flexibility, wellbeing, and belonging - including counselling, career support, and peer mentoring—continue to play a vital role in enabling women to thrive throughout their studies.

First Nations Higher Education Completed Applications, Course Commencements, and Course Completions



Key insights: First Nations students in higher education

More than 350 First Nations students choose to study at VU. With an 85.4% success rate, the University demonstrates strong outcomes for First Nations students in higher education. These outcomes reflect the impact of VU's targeted strategies to improve

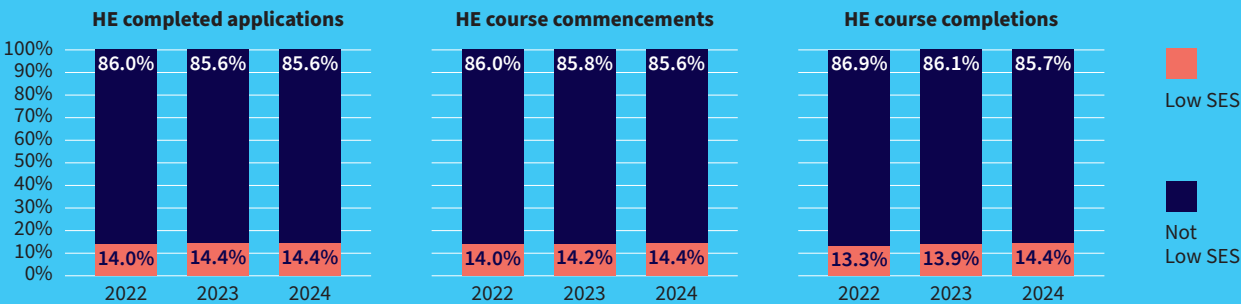
participation and achievement for First Nations students, including culturally responsive support services, community engagement, and inclusive curriculum design.

While First Nations students currently represent a small proportion of higher education applications,

commencements, and completions (around 1.0–1.1%), there is a clear commitment to strengthen and build on this work. VU aims to continue leading nationally in supporting First Nations students through expanded initiatives and deeper engagement.

Measuring and Tracking Equity at VU

Low socioeconomic status (SES) Higher Education Completed Applications, Course Commencements, and Course Completions



Key insights: Low SES students in higher education

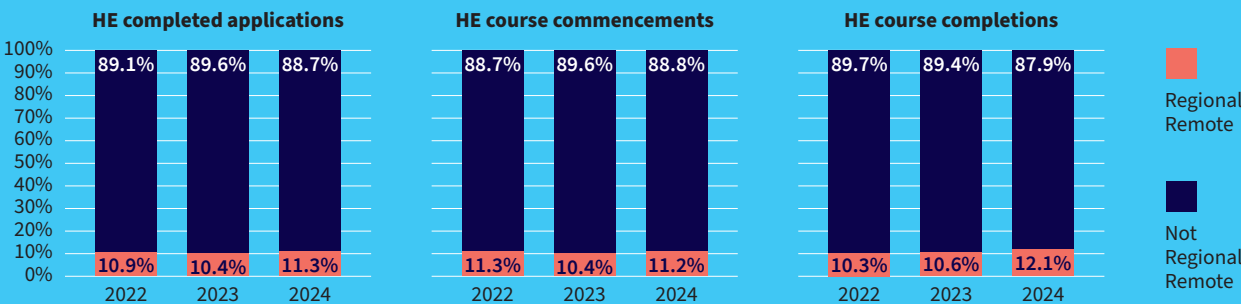
Tracking low SES students across applications, commencements, and completions reveals a consistent and positive trend in higher education participation and success.

Importantly, course completion rates for low SES students increased from 13.3% in 2022 to 14.4% in 2024, reflecting improved retention and the effectiveness of holistic student support initiatives that foster access, inclusion, and a strong sense of belonging. These initiatives include wellbeing services such as

counselling, welfare assistance, and free meals.

These trends demonstrate the impact of equity-focused programs and reinforce the importance of continuing to expand access and support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Regional and Remote Students Higher Education Completed Applications, Course Commencements, and Course Completions



Key insights: Regional and Remote students in higher education

Students from regional and remote areas continue to demonstrate strong engagement and achievement across the higher education lifecycle. While their representation in applications and commencements has fluctuated slightly over the past three years, the overall trend points to sustained participation and growing success.

- The proportion of regional and remote students applying to and commencing higher education programs has remained above 10%, with a noticeable increase in 2024, suggesting renewed interest and improved access to university pathways.
- Completion rates have shown consistent improvement, rising from 10.3% in 2022 to 12.1% in 2024, indicating that students from regional and remote areas are not only entering university but are

increasingly succeeding in completing their studies.

These outcomes reflect the effectiveness of VU's commitment to equity, including initiatives that support students outside metropolitan areas through flexible delivery modes, digital access, and tailored wellbeing services. Continued investment in these areas will be essential to further strengthen outcomes and ensure regional and remote students thrive at every stage of their education journey.



Flexibility to study anywhere, anytime, with support from the dedicated VU Online team.

VU Online recognised for excellence in student engagement

Creating a thriving and inclusive learning environment means meeting students where they are - and when they need it most. VU Online has been recognised with the 2024 Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) Award for Excellence in Student Engagement. The award celebrates VU Online's sector-leading model of academic support tailored for online learners.

Since its launch in 2018, VU Online has delivered flexible, engaging digital education designed to help students achieve their academic and professional goals. Understanding that many students juggle full-time work and other commitments, the team developed a layered support system available outside traditional hours - offering personalised academic assistance seven days a week, including evenings (6–11pm) and weekends (12–6pm).

“As a team, VU Online has worked tirelessly to ensure the highest quality of online academic student support to become a global innovator and pioneer in tailored digital online higher education.”

Michael Ratcliff
VU Online CEO

Support is provided by academic facilitators, lead academics, student success advisors, and specialised services, all working together to meet the diverse needs of a growing student body. The model is powered by learning analytics that detect early signs of disengagement, enabling timely outreach via email, chat, text, and phone. Advisors use real-time engagement data to tailor their approach to individual student preferences.

“This award is a testament to the incredible collaboration and dedication of the entire VU Online team. From learning design and academics to marketing, student administration and contracts, every individual contributed to the excellence and innovation that this recognition represents. Together, we’ve shown what is possible when a whole team works towards a shared vision of student academic success.”

Professor Chris Walsh
Dean and Chief Academic Officer

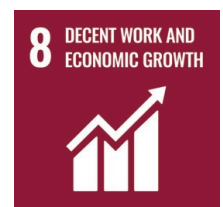


Championing Ethical Practice and Human Rights

A strong commitment to ethical practice and human rights at VU drives efforts to address modern slavery across university operations and supply chains. Guided by the core value to “always be ethical,” the University works to identify, assess and manage risks, while promoting responsible business conduct with partners and suppliers.

As part of the Australian Universities Procurement Network (AUPN) Anti-Modern Slavery Working Group, VU collaborates with peers to improve transparency, reduce duplication, and support compliance with national reporting obligations.

In 2024, this work included participation in 11 sector-wide forums on topics such as student worker exploitation, ethical sourcing, and survivor experiences. Collaborative data analysis and a supplier remediation pilot involving five vendors further strengthened sector-wide efforts to address modern slavery risks and promote positive change.





Doing Dual Differently



Dual-sector, single vision: VU is driving meaningful outcomes

VU is a leading dual-sector institution, bringing together Higher Education, TAFE, industry, and research to address workforce and skills gaps -particularly in areas of strength such as health, education, public policy, and cyber security. This collaborative model enables flexible, future-focused learning and upskilling opportunities that respond directly to industry needs and community priorities.

Future ready through dual-sector innovation

38,282

student work placements in 2024 across our huge network of industry partners

11,576

Higher Education graduates in 2024 (includes undergraduate, postgraduate, non-award and research Doctorate)

3,646

Vocational Education graduates in 2024

2,421

students enrolled in

VU online

23

post-graduate programs

Business and Management courses ranked

#1 in Victoria for:

- Overall Education Experience
- Skills Development
- Teaching Quality.

Nursing courses

#1 in Victoria for:

- Student Support (and #1 in Australia)
- Skills Development
- Overall Education Experience.

Digital Learning Plan 2024–2028

The VU Digital Learning Plan 2024–2028 sets out a learner-centric, digital-first strategy to enhance the quality and accessibility of education. It builds on existing strengths in online learning, blended TAFE delivery, and the success of VU Online, while supporting flexible, multi-channel course delivery. Central to the Plan is the five-year Course Modernisation Project, which brings together students, educators, industry, and experts to co-design courses that align with career pathways across secondary, TAFE, and higher education. Piloted with Civil Engineering in 2024, the project will expand to courses in cyber security, health, and education in 2025 - focusing on course relevance, student support, work-integrated learning, and improved employment outcomes.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Gen AI Action Plan 2024–2028

The Gen AI Action Plan 2024–2028 outlines a strategic approach to integrating generative AI into teaching, learning, assessment, and research. It comprises four program streams: enhancing Gen AI literacy and ethical awareness; embedding AI-informed course design and authentic assessment; strengthening research integrity; and promoting diversity, equity, and accessibility in AI adoption. The Plan aligns with VU's commitment to academic integrity and regulatory standards. A highlight includes *The Welcome Room* AI chatbot—featured by TEQSA as a sector exemplar—providing 24/7 tailored support to a diverse international student cohort in the Graduate Diploma of Early Childhood Education.

VU TAFE: Building skills and powering the workforce



VU TAFE student.

In 2024, VU TAFE reinforced its role as a leader in vocational education by delivering innovative, industry-responsive programs that support workforce development and social inclusion. A key highlight was the exceptional growth of the Certificate IV in Mental Health, which became a flagship offering with over 300 active enrolments. Delivered as a Free TAFE course, it directly responds to the increasing demand for peer workers with lived experience - an urgent need identified by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

The program is designed to equip students with practical skills and knowledge to support individuals across a range of settings, including NDIS-funded services, housing and homelessness support, rehabilitation, and public advocacy. Strong employment outcomes and deep engagement with industry partners such as Mental Health Victoria ensure graduates are well-prepared to contribute meaningfully to the mental health workforce. This initiative reflects VU TAFE's commitment to inclusive education, community wellbeing, and sustainable career pathways.



VU Block Model®

Strategic Review of the Block

In 2024, VU conducted a comprehensive Strategic Review of the VU Block Model®, the largest pedagogical innovation of its type in the world. The Block Model enables students to focus on one subject at a time in four-week blocks (or eight-week blocks for some postgraduate courses), replacing traditional lectures with small, interactive, learner-centred classes. This format promotes deep understanding, timely feedback, and active progress, creating a more engaging and supportive learning experience.

After seven years of exclusive Block delivery, there is overwhelming evidence of positive outcomes for students – particularly those from equity backgrounds – with profound impact on retention, completion, success, and overall student satisfaction.

The Strategic Review, chaired by Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Fellow Professor Sally Kift, adopted a future-focused lens to

explore enhancements to the Block Model's operating principles and outcomes. The process involved extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders through surveys, written submissions, and interviews. The final report presented 12 commendations, 11 affirmations, and 20 recommendations, and praised the unwavering commitment of VU staff to student success and community impact.

In 2025, implementation of the Review's recommendations will commence, ensuring VU continues to lead globally in equity-focused, innovative education and sets new benchmarks in transformative university learning models.



Students studying the unique VU Block Model.



IBILTA Conference 2024 at VU City Campus. Top row L - R: Professor Steve Hayward, Professor Thomas Roche, Professor Alasdair Blair, Professor Andrew Smallridge. Bottom row L - R: Professor Adam Shoemaker, Professor Laura Straus, Dr Ellen Buck, Professor John Germov.

Academy launched to assist education providers worldwide to implement VU Block Model

The VU Block Model Academy is a new initiative designed to support institutions worldwide in adopting the VU Block Model®, alongside research evaluation and teacher development.

Launched at the 2024 International Block Intensive Learning and Teaching Association (IBILTA) Conference at the VU City Campus, Melbourne, the Academy builds on a proven model of student success.

Introduced in 2018, the VU Block Model and First Year College® offer an evidence-based approach where students study one subject at a time in four-week blocks.

This structure, supported by specialist educators, helps first-year students gain confidence, skills and a strong foundation for university life.

The Academy offers virtual and in-person workshops, action-based meetings and professional development programs, supporting institutions to tailor the model to their own needs.

As global interest grows, the Academy responds to calls for greater value and improved outcomes in higher education.



“It was not without its challenges, and we learned a lot as an organisation. We are now in a position to share our expertise and experience with many institutions around the world who have expressed interest in adopting the VU Block Model. We are thrilled to be able to share our innovation with the world... As world-leaders in block teaching, launching the Academy enables us to share our expertise and experience with the global community.”

Professor John Germov
Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer

VU Online: Expanding access and excellence



VU online offers flexible study options supported by a dedicated team.

In 2024, VU Online experienced substantial growth, with student enrolments increasing by 47.8% compared to the previous year. This growth was accompanied by a notable expansion in geographic reach, with 23% of students based in Melbourne's west, 15% from regional Victoria, and 35% from interstate. This broadening footprint reflects VU's commitment to inclusive education and its growing national influence in online learning.

VU Online continues to play a vital role in engaging students from equity backgrounds, offering flexible, high-quality learning experiences that support diverse needs and circumstances. Central to its success is a strong focus on responsive and personalised student support, which has consistently resulted in the highest Student Evaluations of Teaching and Unit across the University.

Retention rates in 2024 remained strong across all courses, with every program achieving rates at or above 86%. The Master of Business Administration stood out with an impressive 92% retention rate, underscoring the effectiveness of VU Online's student-centred approach and its contribution to sustainable educational outcomes.



VU Global: Advancing sustainable international education



VU Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Impact, Professor Andy Hill, with graduates from our Sunway Malaysia campus.

The *VU Global Plan 2024 - 2028*, guides the strategic development of VU's international education portfolio across both onshore and offshore programs. Delivered through the newly established VU Global unit, the Plan supports inclusive growth, operational efficiency, and high-quality transnational education (TNE).

Key priorities for onshore international education include regional activation, diversified recruitment channels, streamlined operations, and targeted pricing and scholarship strategies to enhance access for students from equity backgrounds. For TNE, the focus is on strengthening existing partnerships, entering new markets, and ensuring sustainable, high-quality delivery.

The Plan incorporates detailed objectives, performance targets, and a coordinated risk management strategy to safeguard institutional integrity. Measures include robust admissions controls, enhanced governance, and the use of advanced data analytics to support evidence-based decision-making. Specific frameworks also address visa compliance and the regulatory and cultural complexities of TNE, ensuring VU's global education offerings remain resilient, inclusive, and future-focused.



Wyndham Tech School: Empowering future-ready learners



Wyndham Tech School.

Wyndham Tech School (WTS) continues to inspire secondary students through high-impact STEM education, positioning itself as a STEM Centre of Excellence that connects industry, education, and community. In 2024, WTS engaged 9,748 students from Wyndham and Hobsons Bay in immersive, hands-on learning experiences, delivering 46,953 student program hours - well above the Department of Education's target of 35,000 hours.

Programs ranged from one-day mentoring sessions with industry professionals to 10-week curriculum-integrated experiences. These extended programs accounted for half of all offerings and enabled teachers to undertake professional development and micro-credentials, equipping them to teach out-of-field and independently implement Tech School content in their classrooms.

WTS also provided VU students with valuable opportunities to gain teaching experience by employing them as

casual staff to facilitate Future of Work programs. This initiative supported career development and strengthened education-to-employment pathways, with five student-as-staff positions offered in 2025. Through these efforts, WTS exemplifies VU's commitment to inclusive, future-focused education.



Award winning Agritech Program – Wyndham Tech School (2024 ATEM Award)

The Agritech program at WTS empowers students to explore innovative solutions to global food security challenges, projected to intensify as the world population approaches 10 billion by 2050. Central to the program is the award-winning Smart Farm, a hands-on learning environment that integrates sustainability, technology, and education.

Students engage in two distinct learning streams:

- **Entrepreneurship:** Focused on food production through a business lens, students conduct market analysis, develop branding strategies, and apply financial planning. Tools like ArcGIS and AI support the creation of Shark Tank-style pitch presentations.
- **Systems Engineering:** Emphasising future farming through engineering and data science, students code

microcontrollers, design and 3D print components, and use sensor technology and data logging to optimise agricultural outputs.

The Smart Farm has made a significant impact, engaging:

- Over 1,600 high school students
- 60 secondary teachers
- 80 pre-schoolers
- More than 250 preservice teachers

In recognition of its outstanding contribution to education and industry collaboration, WTS was honoured with the 2024 ATEM (Association for Tertiary Education Management) Award for Excellence in Industry and Engagement for the Smart Farm initiative.

This program exemplifies how education and technology can drive sustainable innovation in agriculture while fostering digital literacy and STEM skills across diverse learner groups.



The Smart Farm WTS innovative educational project is centred around a 40ft shipping container converted into a high-tech vertical farm.

VR Nurse Training – Wyndham Tech School

In partnership with VU's Health Simulation team, WTS delivered immersive Virtual Reality (VR) training focused on aggression and violence de-escalation in clinical settings. This innovative program enabled over 50 VU nursing students to practice managing high-stress scenarios in a safe, controlled virtual environment.

By integrating cutting-edge simulation technology, the program supports:

- Enhanced clinical preparedness
- Improved emotional resilience
- Sustainable training practices that reduce reliance on physical resources and traditional simulation setups

This initiative exemplifies how digital innovation can advance healthcare education while contributing to more sustainable and scalable learning models.



VU nursing student participating in VR training at Wyndham Tech School.



Smart Water Solutions workshop.

Smart Water Solutions – Wyndham Tech School

Water is one of our most vital resources and one of our greatest sustainability challenges. WTS's Smart Water Solutions program, co-designed with Greater Western Water, equips students with the skills and knowledge to tackle real-world water management issues through technology and innovation.

Students explore how diverse roles in data, design, engineering, and technology intersect to solve problems such as safe drinking water access, wastewater treatment, and water efficiency. Using industry-relevant tools - including ArcGIS, sensors, robotics, microcontrollers, 3D modelling, and AI - students mirror the digital practices of water professionals.

The program is delivered as part of WTS's Embedded Program model, offering weekly sessions over a term or semester.



Wyndham Tech School: Empowering Future-Ready Learners

Promoting Gender Equality through Tech Engagement

As part of our commitment to gender equality and empowering young women in STEM, WTS partnered with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to deliver the *Inspiring Women in Tech* event. This initiative provided 44 female students from four partner schools with the opportunity to connect directly with professionals across various tech fields.

“I got to learn from real people with experience instead of just reading about what my future could look like.”

Year 10 student feedback

Through interactive discussions, students explored diverse career pathways and gained first hand insights into the tech industry. The event aimed to challenge gender stereotypes and broaden perceptions of what a future in technology can look like for young women.

This initiative reflects our ongoing efforts to create inclusive opportunities and foster gender equity in education and industry engagement.

“A career in tech wasn’t really on my radar before, but now I’m thinking about it and seeing how I can involve it in my future.”

Year 11 student



Women in Tech day at Wyndham Tech School.



Partnering with Principle



Powerful Partnerships, Meaningful Impact

VU partners with ethical, like-minded organisations to create lasting change for students, staff, and the community. Each collaboration is built on trust, quality, and shared purpose - delivering unique opportunities in education, research, and industry.

Our 'flipped campus' model brings major partners onto our campuses, connecting learners directly with industry through internships, co-designed learning, and collaborative research.

Together, we turn local action into global impact, aligned with the UN SDGs.

Where industry meets education



**WESTERN
CHANCES**

Empowering Young People in Melbourne's West: A major step for VU and Western Chances

A bold new chapter in community collaboration is unfolding at VU's Footscray Nicholson Campus, where a strengthened alliance between Western Chances and VU is creating transformative opportunities for young people in Melbourne's west. Under a new 'flipped campus' agreement, Western Chances has expanded its presence on site, reinforcing a shared commitment to equity, education, and leadership development.

Since 2006, VU has worked alongside Western Chances, a charitable foundation dedicated to empowering young people in Melbourne's western suburbs through educational scholarships and life-changing opportunities. The 2024 agreement formally recognises Western Chances as a Major Alliance Partner, building on successful initiatives such as Access Scholarships, campus immersion programs for secondary students, and tailored student engagement activities.

This partnership exemplifies VU's commitment to sustainable, community-driven impact - where education is not only accessible, but transformative.

"Equity in education is a central theme in the Universities Accord, and our elevated partnership with Western Chances speaks brilliantly to that point. The expanded space at Footscray Nicholson Campus will enable Western Chances staff, students and volunteers to elevate their support of young people in the west of Melbourne."

Professor Adam Shoemaker
VU Vice-Chancellor

VU's partners

- Aspect Autism Australia
- Ambulance Victoria
- cohealth
- CommUnity Plus
- Footscray Community Arts
- Futurity Investments
- Greater Western Water
- Industry Capability Network
- Lifeline Western Melbourne
- Melbourne Airport
- Orygen and headspace
- PEXA
- Sharpe and Abel
- Western Bulldogs
- Western Bulldogs Community Foundation
- Western Chances
- Western Health

"Through this Major Alliance, we are poised to create new opportunities for our young people and pave the way for increased access to education, skills, learning pathways, and employment. At the heart of this partnership lies a deep-rooted belief in the power of education and our profound love for the west."

Terry Bracks AM
Western Chances Founder and Chair



Footscray Community Arts: A Legacy of Community and Culture

Footscray Community Arts is a proudly independent arts precinct committed to amplifying diverse voices and sharing stories. Guided by the belief that “*all communities are valued as makers of culture*,” the organisation supports, develops and presents contemporary arts in collaboration with the communities it centres - particularly First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+, d/Deaf and d/Disabled artists.

In 2024, Footscray Community Arts celebrates 50 years of creative impact, community connection and cultural leadership.

A Longstanding Collaboration

VU has partnered with Footscray Community Arts since 2013, building on a shared commitment to education, creativity and community in Melbourne’s west. This relationship traces back to 1974, when Footscray Community Arts was founded on the then Footscray Institute of Technology campus - now Victoria University.

Today, the partnership offers VU students opportunities to engage in research, internships and work placements across event management, technical production, marketing, and the Footscray Community ArtLife program.

“We are immensely proud to have such a long-standing connection with FCA, an iconic and influential organisation that continues to positively impact countless members of our community, along with providing VU students with professional opportunities and contributing positively to the student experience through their creative arts and dance programmes. FCA’s dedication to fostering creativity in Melbourne’s west is both admirable and inspiring, and we look forward to future collaborations.”

Professor Adam Shoemaker
VU Vice-Chancellor



Photo credit: Footscray Community Arts.

“Footscray Community Arts’ enduring partnership with Victoria University is such an important part of our evolution. Over 50 years, our shared values have fuelled community-driven creativity and resilience. I’m privileged to see our impact on Melbourne’s cultural landscape, forging pathways and opportunities for our local community.”

Julia White
Chair, Footscray Community Arts

Collaborative initiatives have included:

- Student placements and performance opportunities for VU musicians
- Footscray Community Arts’ involvement in VU orientation events
- Karen Jackson, Executive Director of VU’s Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit, and Dr Paola Balla, Principal Research Fellow Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit, serving on the Footscray Arts Indigenous Advisory Group.
- Joint exhibitions such as *BOLDER* and *BRIGHT*, featuring collaborations between local artists and VU students through VU Hive Lab

A recent highlight is the *In Place* production with Na Djinang Circus, where VU’s Iramoo

Grassland Centre Nursery provided native plants to 100 community participants. These plants were returned to Footscray Community Arts in October 2024 as part of the Fringe Festival set design, and later became part of the precinct’s native garden.

A Partnership Grounded in Place

Footscray Community Arts was born from a grassroots movement led by artists, unionists and community members, including Peter Green and George Seelaf—both deeply connected to VU’s predecessor institutions. The original site, a 2,700 square foot tin shed known as 87A at Footscray Park, was offered in-kind by VU’s then Director Doug Mills. It became a vibrant hub for multicultural artistic expression in the west.



Where industry meets education

Community Health and Education through Cooking and Nutrition (CHEW) Program

In 2024, VU continued its commitment to community wellbeing and student development through the CHEW program, delivered at the Werribee Campus. Across four weekly sessions, final-year Nutrition and Dietetics students, under the guidance of a supervising dietitian, collaborated with members from local organisations in purpose-built teaching kitchen and classroom spaces.

“We saw immediate appreciation through engagement and conversations with the clients. It really surprised me to see how well this client group did with food preparation and cooking, as well as their engagement and discussions within the education session.”

Zoe Donaldson
Nutrition Science student

Throughout 2024, 26 VU students facilitated nutrition education and hands-on cooking experiences for 55 community participants. Partner organisations included headspace, Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect), Sunshine Special Development School, St Joseph’s Flexible Learning Centre, and Interact Australia.

Working in small groups of around 10, community members shared their interests and questions about nutrition, prompting students to tailor sessions on topics such as food label reading, healthy food swaps, meal planning, and preparation. These interactive sessions fostered mutual learning and built strong connections between students and participants.

The practical component took place in VU’s eight-station teaching kitchen, where students guided participants through step-by-step recipes. Each session concluded with a shared meal, reinforcing the social and educational value of cooking together.

The CHEW program exemplifies VU’s commitment to sustainability through community partnerships, education, and health promotion - empowering students and community members alike.

“It’s a great way for students to practise being nutrition educators, in a safe environment. It’s fantastic watching them grow their confidence over the four weeks.”

Monica Wellington
Program Coordinator



L-R: Aidan Mai, Phoenix Vilaysak, Kiki Dhaliwal, Zoe Donaldson.



AFLW 2024 new jumper announcement: Isabella Grant, Kylie Watson-Wheeler, Deanna Berry, Professor Adam Shoemaker, Elizabeth Georgostathis, Ameet Bains and Analea McKee.

Elevating Women's Sport: VU Becomes Co-Major Partner of Western Bulldogs AFLW

As co-major partner of the Western Bulldogs AFLW team, VU has reinforced its decades-long collaboration with the Club and deepened its commitment to advancing women's sport. The enhanced partnership includes the prominent placement of the VU logo on the AFLW playing guernsey and the introduction of the VU Education and Professional Development Program - supporting players, coaches, and staff with access to education and leadership development while competing at the elite level.

"We are world leaders in research and advocacy for women and sport. Many of the current Western Bulldogs AFLW players list are current VU or TAFE students, so it's clear our support for female athletes extends well beyond what happens on the field."

Professor Adam Shoemaker
VU Vice-Chancellor

The program reflects VU's commitment to gender equality by creating pathways for women in sport to thrive both on and off the field. It also strengthens VU's role as a values-driven partner, supporting inclusive education and leadership development across the sporting sector.

"We at the Bulldogs are delighted to elevate our partnership with Victoria University, one of our longest standing Club partners."

Ameet Bains
Bulldogs CEO



headspace, Orygen & VU to supercharge mental health care, research & workforce in Melbourne's west

A landmark partnership between Orygen, VU, the Royal Melbourne Hospital, and the Parkville Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Service (PYMHWS) has launched an integrated youth mental health centre at VU's Werribee Campus. This initiative brings together headspace Werribee and Orygen Specialist Program services, creating Victoria's first on-campus headspace centre.

The centre responds to rising mental health needs in Melbourne's west, where headspace services have seen a 27% increase in young people accessing care since 2019. It offers seamless access to primary and specialist services while providing VU students with practical experience and graduate employment pathways in youth mental health, occupational therapy, peer work, and youth work.

Executive Director of Orygen, Professor Patrick McGorry AO, said the launch of the new site was a landmark moment for youth mental health care in Australia:

"The launch of this integrated youth mental health centre at Werribee is a huge milestone and will offer the opportunity for VU students to work with experts in the field, while also providing a seamless service offering for young people across all stages of ill-health and a template for service innovation across youth mental health services in the north and west of Melbourne."

VU Vice-Chancellor Professor Adam Shoemaker said the University was proud to be demonstrating an innovative approach with this partnership and to be doing so uniquely on the Werribee Campus:

"As well as providing care to young people, the service will provide direct practical experience and graduate employment pathways for students studying higher education and TAFE courses in mental health, occupational therapy, peer work and youth work."



headspace Werribee, VU Werribee Campus.

“This initiative is a true exemplar of the Universities Accord Review Panel’s recommendation to promote work-integrated learning opportunities within universities and to align TAFE delivery to industry skills needs.”

Maddie Roberts Castano, member of headspace Werribee’s Youth Advocacy Group (YAG), and said the YAG had played an important role in providing feedback and making sure the new space is youth-friendly and supports the needs of young people in the new location:

“The centre will not only provide essential mental health services, but its new location will serve as a cornerstone for enriching the broader community.”

“By offering accessible support and engaging programs, the centre will help foster a more connected community.”

This partnership exemplifies VU’s commitment to collaborative, community-focused solutions that address urgent health challenges while creating meaningful pathways for student learning and workforce development.

VU: Founding Partner of WoMEDA and Champion of Inclusive Economic Growth in Melbourne’s West

The West of Melbourne Economic Development Alliance (WoMEDA) was established in early 2016 through strategic collaboration between VU, the Victorian State Government, and key stakeholders from local government and the business sector.

WoMEDA emerged from a shared recognition of the need for a coordinated approach to the region’s economic challenges and opportunities. It focuses on the area covered by six local councils: Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley, and Wyndham.

VU has played a foundational role in WoMEDA’s establishment and ongoing leadership, contributing funding, in-kind support, and strategic direction through its Centre of Policy Studies.

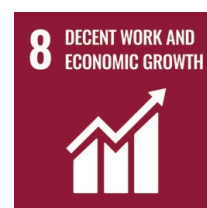
VU continues to promote sustainable development and inclusive economic growth through research, policy expertise, and regional partnerships. A recent example is its central role in producing WoMEDA’s half-yearly economic update.

The report, commissioned by WoMEDA – with major author Professor Janine Dixon, Director of VU’s Centre of Policy Studies, provides detailed analysis of labour market trends in Melbourne’s West. Key findings include:

- **Employment Growth:** Over 100,000 new jobs have been created in the region over six years. Residents now represent one-sixth of Greater Melbourne’s workforce.

- **Commuting Patterns:** Nearly half of the region’s workforce commutes outside the area, with 32% travelling into the CBD. Limited local jobs and inadequate transport infrastructure are major factors.
- **Gender Disparities:** Long commutes disproportionately affect women, contributing to a 10% gender gap in employment-to-population ratios - above the national average of 7.6%. Childcare access further exacerbates this gap.
- **Employment Forecasts:** VU projects 84,000 additional jobs by mid-2033, growing at 1.75% annually - outpacing the national rate. Over 30% of this growth is expected in health care and social assistance, mostly within the region.
- **Sectoral Trends:** Growth in logistics, manufacturing, and construction remains modest, but a recovery in manufacturing is forecast, with 2,500 new jobs expected over the next decade.

VU’s enduring involvement in WoMEDA underscores its commitment to evidence-based policy, regional development, and equitable economic opportunity. Through research, engagement, and collaboration, VU continues to advocate for decent work and a sustainable future for Melbourne’s West.





The pedestrian bridge connecting the New Footscray Hospital to the Footscray Park Campus was installed in March 2024.

Advancing Health Through VU and Western Health Collaboration

In partnership with Western Health, VU's Research Building, currently under construction, will be embedded within the New Footscray Hospital, showcasing VU's commitment to translational health research and cross-sector collaboration. This state-of-the-art facility strengthens VU's ability to attract globally recognised researchers, PhD candidates, and strategic investment from both government and industry.

The partnership has already delivered significant impact: more than 600 VU students have gained hands-on experience through placements at Western Health across disciplines including nursing,

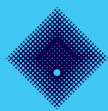
midwifery, social work, physiotherapy, health services, and speech pathology. Notably, nearly 150 students transitioned into employment with Western Health following their placements, and 48% of Western Health's graduate nurse intake in 2024 were recruited from VU.

Further deepening the collaboration, a co-funded PhD scholarship was established to support a Western Health nurse or midwife in pursuing doctoral studies - an investment in the future of healthcare leadership.

A major milestone in the partnership was the completion of the Ballarat Road footbridge, physically linking the new hospital with VU's Footscray Park campus. Officially opened by Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister Mary-Anne Thomas, the bridge

stands as a symbol of the strong connection between VU and Western Health, and a vital conduit for developing the healthcare workforce of the future.





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UNIVERSITY**

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