

**Nathalie Nehma**

**Statement of Policy – Candidate for Victoria University Council**

My commitment to Victoria University is both deeply personal and profoundly professional. I have worked at Victoria University for over 22 years, and my association with the institution spans more than three decades across both TAFE and higher education. VU is not simply my workplace; it is the institution that enabled my transformation, recognised my potential, and shaped my leadership.

I arrived in Australia at the age of 26 after spending my entire childhood and youth living through war in Lebanon. Like many migrants, my previous qualifications were not recognised. What sustained me was the belief of educators who saw promise where systems did not. At Victoria University, lecturers supported me to begin again... first with a Diploma, then a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and ultimately a PhD. That journey reflects the core of VU's mission: access, equity, and the power of education to change lives. That is why, VU is more than a workplace for me. It shaped who I am and who I am becoming every day. It is now a part of my identity.

Today, I am a doctor and academic leader, serving as Head of the Early Childhood discipline in Higher Education. I lead with a deep understanding of both academic rigour and the lived realities of students, staff, and communities who navigate structural disadvantage, migration, disruption, and resilience. I bring to Council not only institutional memory but also a systems-level perspective shaped by teaching, research, leadership, and community engagement.

As a member of the Victoria University Council, my policy focus will centre on three strategic priorities. First, **community-anchored growth**, strengthening VU's role as a civic university that partners meaningfully with different institutions, industry, First Nations communities, and culturally diverse populations in Melbourne's west and beyond. Second, **equitable access and student success**, ensuring that innovative models such as block teaching continue to support diverse learners while being matched with strong academic governance and staff wellbeing. Third, **workforce sustainability and academic integrity**, advocating for professional recognition, secure career pathways, and inclusive leadership across TAFE and Higher Education.

I believe effective governance is grounded in listening, courage, and long-term stewardship. I seek Council membership to contribute thoughtful oversight, values-driven decision-making, and a voice shaped by lived experience, scholarly leadership, and unwavering commitment to Victoria University's purpose. I am standing for Council because I believe deeply in what VU makes possible for everyone including myself, and that is, "start well and finish brilliantly".