



## 2024 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and La Trobe University

### Purpose

This compact is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the University. Entering into a Compact is one of the quality and accountability requirements, which a higher education provider must meet under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) as a condition of receiving a grant. Specifically, subsection 19-110(1) of HESA requires that Table A and Table B providers must, in respect of each year for which a grant is paid to the provider under HESA, enter into a Mission -Based Compact with the Commonwealth for a period that includes that year.

All strategies should provide qualitative and/or quantitative measures of assessment.

### Mission and Strategic Planning

#### Strategic Planning

La Trobe's [2020-30 Strategic Plan](#) articulates our strategy to emerge from the pandemic as a more resilient, future-focused and efficient institution.

In 2024 we will review our progress against the strategy and refine it to reflect both the institution's emergence from the effects of the pandemic as well as new developments underway in pursuit of our ambition to be a university known for making a positive difference to the lives of our students, partners and communities. La Trobe's 'Strategy Refresh' will be complete in 2024.

#### Addressing national and sector priorities

##### *Workforce and skills*

La Trobe is a major provider of graduates in sectors experiencing widespread workforce shortages, particularly in the health, care and teaching sectors. La Trobe will boost its focus on educating students across these degrees.

We will also develop an Artificial Intelligence Strategy, part of which will set out how La Trobe will help to prepare AI-ready graduates for jobs of the future.

As Victoria's only truly statewide university, La Trobe will continue to drive regional economies and industry by offering regional communities access to a local university to educate and upskill their existing and future workforces.

##### *Ensuring student and staff safety*

La Trobe will ensure that our campus and online environments are safe and inclusive. We take a proactive approach to training and primary prevention and respond to all reports of harassment, discrimination and violence in a victim centred and trauma informed way.

La Trobe will continue to implement its 'Respect at La Trobe Initiative', which comprises four complementary plans:

- [2023-26 Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Action Plan](#)
- Anti-Racism Plan (to be complete by the end of 2024)

- [Universal Design and Inclusion Plan 2023-2030](#)
- [La Trobe Indigenous Strategy 2022-2030](#)

La Trobe will apply its [working definition of antisemitism](#) to guide our response to discriminatory behaviour against Jewish students, staff members and campus visitors.

We will place cultural safety at the centre of our efforts to ‘decolonise the curriculum’ by rolling out cultural capability training, aspiring to a 100 per cent completion rate among staff and students.

La Trobe will continue to build on successive increases to our investments in measures to address the root causes of sexual harm and harassment. Our [Sexual Harm Prevention and Response Action Plan](#) outlines La Trobe’s approach to increasing reporting awareness, expanding support services and tackling the systemic causes of gender inequality.

*Security: Countering foreign interference and cyber and data security*

La Trobe’s enterprise risk management and compliance frameworks – monitored by the University’s Council - explicitly address risks associated with foreign interference and cyber security.

In 2024, La Trobe will finalise its Cybersecurity Strategy and Roadmap and refresh its ICT Security policies.

*Upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom*

The [La Trobe University Act 2009](#) requires the University to serve the public interest by ‘promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate’ and La Trobe’s new [Enterprise Agreement 2023](#) addresses intellectual and academic freedom.

La Trobe will continue to apply its [Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Policy](#) and [Media Engagement and Public Utterances Policy](#).

## Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

La Trobe was founded to broaden access to and participation in higher education in Melbourne’s north and, later, in regional Victoria. We have succeeded for many thousands of students who would otherwise have been excluded from the opportunities provided by a university education. For the regional communities we serve, participation in higher education is less than half of that of Melbourne.

La Trobe aspires to achieve parity in outcomes and experience for students from underrepresented cohorts. This is measured on an annual basis to monitor progress and inform the ongoing development of supports.

In 2024, La Trobe will:

- Take forward our [Indigenous Strategy 2022-2030](#) and [University Design and Inclusion Plan 2023-2030](#).
- Prioritise scholarships for students from equity cohorts
- Offer alternative entry pathways for under-represented communities to access University and expand our [Regional Pathways Program](#) with funding support from philanthropy and government sources
- Collaborate with TAFEs to provide seamless pathways from vocational to higher education
- Establish a new scholarship endowment to support students from equity cohorts with access to education whereby the University will match donations dollar for dollar up to total of \$50m over ten years.

La Trobe expects to be in receipt of a Higher Education Continuity Grant, and intends to direct this funding over a four-year period to deliver additional funding to students from under-represented and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds through:

- Scholarships

- Placement bursaries
- Specific student support

We also propose to direct a portion of the funds to contribute to the building of new student accommodation in Bendigo to help ease the effects of local housing shortages for our students.

La Trobe will continue to deliver our high-impact retention and success strategies that directly support underrepresented cohorts and students identified as academically at-risk. These include:

- Providing more than \$6.4m annually in scholarships that have improved student retention (+12.5 per cent for all students, +26.5 per cent for Indigenous students)
- An Indigenous Student Accommodation Scholarship that guarantees a funded place in on-campus accommodation
- Providing tailored support in high failure-rate subjects with high proportions of low SES students through our Subject Support Tutor program
- Converting compulsory readings and materials into free, online access through the 'La Trobe Digital and Free' program

## Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

### Learning and Teaching

In 2024 La Trobe will launch a refreshed Education and Experience Plan to guide our work through to 2030. We will also expand opportunities for students to undertake industry placements and deepen industry connection to our curriculum.

#### *Transforming our educational offer*

La Trobe will increase the number of eligible courses in our successful [Study Flex](#) program, which enables students to choose between online and on-campus study throughout their degree. We will also expand our online courses as well as short course offerings, allowing professionals to enjoy and benefit from life-long learning.

#### *Teaching excellence*

La Trobe will establish a 'La Trobe Educational Leadership Academy' to drive high-quality teaching outcomes for our students. Through the Academy, we will offer outstanding teachers professional development opportunities, such as the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education Curriculum, and ensure they are rewarded and recognised for their contributions to student learning.

#### *Decolonising the curriculum*

As noted elsewhere, La Trobe will continue efforts to decolonise the curriculum by 2030 as outlined in our [Indigenous Strategy](#).

#### *Employability*

La Trobe's employability agenda will feature in a new Education and Experience Plan, which will provide more opportunities for students to engage with industry as part of their studies.

We will partner with industry to improve student employability and to address areas of emerging skills needs through market-informed course development and integration within the curriculum.

The [Career Ready Advantage Award](#), developed in consultation with employers, will support students to build and record employability skills and experiences, develop networks and pursue work opportunities.

We will also up-scale [Elevate](#), our student entrepreneurship program, to provide opportunities for many more students to connect with industry and build entrepreneurial skills. In partnership with Elevate, we will participate in the Government's pilot Startup Year Scheme.

## Supporting Student Experience

Our plan to improve student experience is informed by student voice and partnership, and encompasses strategies in student engagement, success, retention and employability.

### *Student Engagement*

We will enhance students' sense of belonging across our campus network and all modes of study, and continue to activate our campus network to promote student engagement, connection and learning.

### *Student Retention*

We will develop a 2024-2026 Student Retention Plan as a core feature of a refreshed Learning and Teaching Strategy, through which we will:

- Continue to implement our proactive advising support program, which identifies students at risk of failure and provides targeted advice and support. We will monitor the success of these cohorts following a 25 per cent improvement in retention outcomes for high-risk students in 2023).
- Simplify processes to underpin a revised Academic Progression Review Policy and better support students to understand their academic outcomes.
- Undertake early identification of students experiencing challenges or at risk of poor engagement.

### *Admissions Transparency*

La Trobe will continue to support under-represented students to access higher education by offering achievement-based admissions pathways such as [Aspire](#) and [Rise with La Trobe](#).

We will also improve the information and assistance we provide to prospective students with a disability, to ensure they understand the inherent requirements and support available prior to enrolment, so they may benefit from appropriate adjustments to facilitate their learning and engagement.

## Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

La Trobe's [Research and Industry Engagement Plan 2020-2024](#) sets out the approach for sustaining La Trobe's research excellence and bolstering:

- The reach and impact of our research
- Research collaboration and partnerships
- The experience and outcomes for our graduate researchers
- Support for industry through collaboration and co-location

It prioritises discovery and translation research with demonstrated impact in four areas – sustainable agriculture and food; the care economy; health translation science; and medical innovation. La Trobe seeks to make a major contribution to Australia's national prosperity and wellbeing through the University's [research themes](#), and our recently established [Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and Food](#) and the [Care Economy Research Institute](#).

La Trobe's performance in research and research training, along with the quality and integrity of its programs, is monitored through regular reports to the research sub-committees of the Senior Executive Group and Academic Board. The Plan will be reviewed in 2024 and a new five-year plan will be developed to realise our ambitions set out in a refreshed University-wide Strategy.

We will make ongoing improvements to the quality and internationalisation of our research and involve partners and the community in the prioritisation, design and delivery of research. This will be demonstrated by implementation of research impact and public involvement strategies; through IP creation and spin-out companies; and by case studies showing improvements to community health, environmental sustainability, export income and job creation.

Innovation priorities are outlined in the Industry Engagement Plan 2020-2024 (see next section). In 2024, these will include:

- Targeting and engaging with industry for research collaboration aligned to our research themes and Institutes.
- Implementing our [Commercialisation Plan 2022-2030](#), which includes seed funding and researcher training.

In 2024, La Trobe will provide opportunities to students through a recently launched 'Clinician Researcher PhD Program', which will support the development of professional clinicians based at partner health organisations. We will also continue to offer an [Industry PhD Program](#) in partnership with commercial, government and the NFP sector.

A broad program of training will be offered to our staff and students in 2024:

- [Professional development](#) for career development, managing and planning research, graduate research supervision, funding, research communication and publication, engaging with industry, entrepreneurial skills and commercialisation
- Research ethics and integrity training
- Raising awareness of researcher obligations under foreign interactions and defence trade controls legislation
- Cultural training, a cultural safe space and Indigenous community partnership support through the newly established [Gabra Biik, Wurruwila Wutja Research Centre](#)

La Trobe offers research training through a portfolio of higher degrees by research. In 2024, La Trobe will:

- Review HDR course offerings with a focus on quality, candidate experience and outcomes, pathways into HDR programs, embedded research training subjects, and opportunities to increase the availability of research training programs for students in regional Victoria
- Refresh the [Graduate Researcher Experience and Wellbeing Implementation Plan](#)
- Offer scholarships for students to undertake graduate research degrees, including for under-represented and equity groups

## Strategies for Engaging with Industry

La Trobe engages with industry to provide our partners with access to research, innovation and talent; to provide our students with entrepreneurial skills and experiences to be career-ready; and to develop and deliver knowledge and innovations to contribute to the health, sustainability and economic development of our communities.

In 2024 our priorities for industry engagement include:

- **Driving the development of our innovation ecosystem in the focus areas of health & wellbeing, agriculture & food and digital innovation.** We will target and engage with a range of partners to support their business growth, and to enable and support our research and education priorities
- In partnership with CSIRO, working towards **establishing the Australian Food Innovation Centre** to catalyse the growth of the agriculture and food industry to commercialise new food products, drive sector growth, create jobs and improve health outcomes
- **Implementing our [Commercialisation Plan](#)** to build the commercialisation pipeline
- **Developing the Research & Innovation Precinct** as a place-based innovation ecosystem within the University City of the Future to support the growth of businesses and drive commercialisation of research. A focus will be attracting and establishing anchor partners, including [BioNTech's new mRNA clinical scale manufacturing](#)

[facility](#), and establishing the newly launched Digital Innovation Hub and Bio Innovation Hub (to open in 2024) as platforms for engaging industry

- **Partnering with industry at our regional campuses.** In 2024, we will support Deloitte in establishing a new [Digital Operations Centre](#) at La Trobe's Bendigo campus, offering training and employment opportunities for students and local workers transitional to technology-based roles
- **Partnering with health service providers** and our [Academic and Research Collaboration in Health network](#) to advance clinical research collaboration, joint appointments, research training for professional clinicians and clinical student placements.
- **Expanding [Industry PhDs](#)** to identify and solve industry-relevant problems and prepare researchers for work with and in industry
- **Up-scaling [Elevate](#)**, our student entrepreneurship program, to enable students to connect with industry and build entrepreneurial skills
- Delivering the final year of **La Trobe's participation in the Federal Government's National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund Pilot**

In 2024, La Trobe's Chancellor, the Hon John Brumby AO, will continue to convene industry roundtables with sector leaders to discuss industry challenges and identify where La Trobe can partner with industry to address business needs and to support workforce and business sustainability.

SIGNED for and on behalf of  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

by

Madonna Morton

---

Full name (please print)

First Assistant Secretary

---

Position

of the Department of Education



Signature

29/05/2024

---

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of

La Trobe University

by

---

Full name (please print)

Theo Farrell

---

Position

Vice-Chancellor and President

---

Signature



In the presence of:

Witness (please print)

Rosemary Nanev

---

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Executive Assistant

---

Signature

