

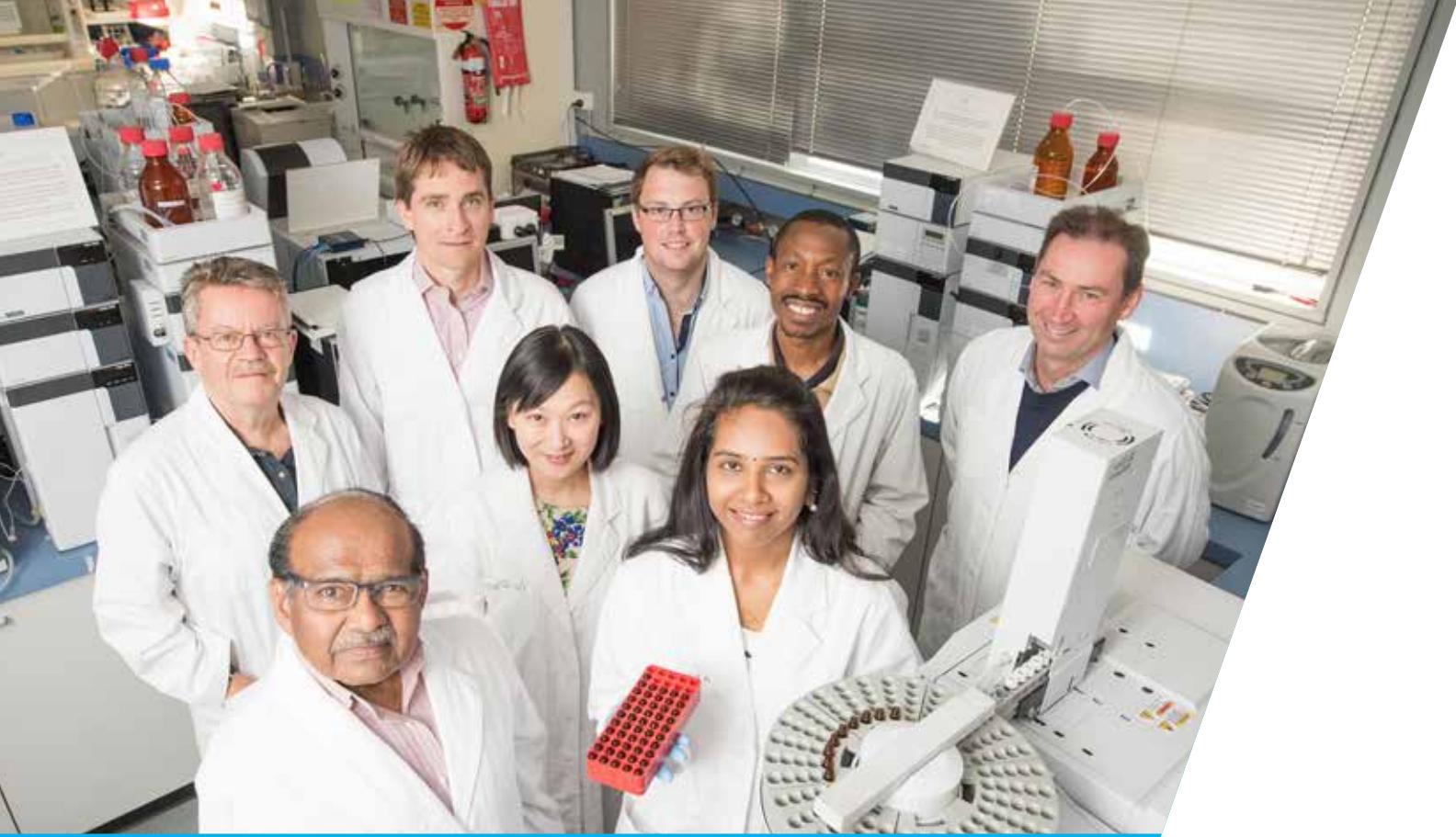


**VICTORIA**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY STRATEGY

2018–2021





### Acknowledgment of Country

Victoria University (VU) acknowledges the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) and Wathaurung (Wadawurrung) on our Melbourne Campuses, and the Gadigal and Guring-gai people of the Eora Nation on our Sydney campus. These groups are the custodians of University land and have been for many centuries. As we share our own knowledge practices within the University may we pay respect to the deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal community and their ownership of Country. We acknowledge that the land on which our campuses stand is the place of age old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. The Kulin and Eora people's living culture had, and has, a unique role in the life of these regions. VU supports the aim of Reconciliation Australia to build better relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the benefit of all Australians. It is important that staff, students and visitors understand and respect the significance of recognising the traditional owners of University land.

### Warning to Indigenous Australians

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this document may contain images or names of deceased persons.

### Cover Image

Mural at Victoria University Footscray Nicholson Campus

**Artist** Heesco

**Title** Ms Citizen of the World

Dressed in centuries old traditional Mongolian dress along with modern fashion accessories, holding a smart phone. Symbolising old and new cultures of our ever changing world. Winner of the inaugural Footscray Art Prize in 2017.

# VICE-CHANCELLOR'S FOREWORD

Victoria University is the *University of Opportunity and Success*. We are an open and inclusive University, without boundaries. We have a clear vision — to create exceptional value for any student from any background and uplift the communities in which we operate.

A hallmark of VU is the cultural diversity that permeates within our institution, and within our greater community. VU's cultural diversity is a distinctive strength. We pride ourselves on our commitment to providing outstanding educational opportunities to an incredibly diverse student population with an experience that is interculturally inclusive, innovative, community connected and transformational.

Our students, who we expect will be global citizens, are given the opportunity to learn from each other across cultural boundaries and this positions them competitively to succeed in an increasingly diverse society — a skill that employers value.

The diversity of our staff also creates a rich tapestry that complements and enhances the work that is undertaken at VU each and every day.

The Cultural Diversity Strategy is an important milestone for the University. We all have a part to play in providing a connected and globally relevant university experience, and this Strategy consolidates a shared understanding of how our various roles and activities create a culturally inclusive, dynamic and respectful University community.

The Strategy has been developed in consultation with staff, students and the broader University community, with a focus on the key Principles that frame the University's approach as a whole-of-institution commitment.

I am excited to enact the objectives of the Strategy in partnership with our students and staff, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact this Strategy has on the Victoria University community.



**Professor Peter Dawkins AO**  
Vice-Chancellor and President



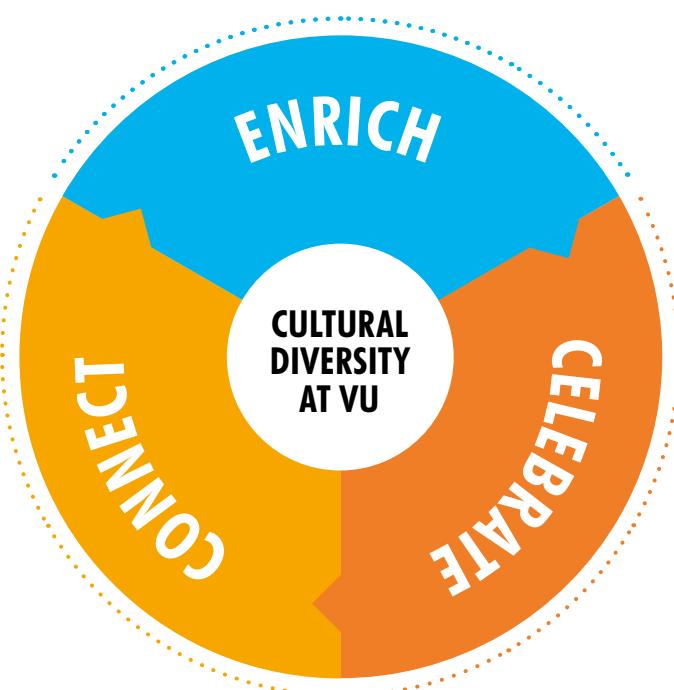
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Victoria University is renowned for its multicultural richness. The cultural diversity that distinguishes our students, staff and community enriches the VU experience. It enables intercultural interactions and understandings, in so doing, promotes values around social cohesion. As the *University of Opportunity and Success*, Victoria University has a compelling vision to be open and excellent, creating outstanding opportunities for any student from any background. We are a dynamic and socially inclusive University that empowers the communities within which our multiple campuses sit. As such, VU is the university *with a heart*.

The Cultural Diversity Strategy addresses the University's specific, conscious commitment to engage with cultural diversity, as set out in the Transformational Agenda. That is, to build and extend opportunities and initiatives that:

- **connect** us all as a community dedicated to scholarship and active citizenship;
- **enrich** the lives of students, staff and the community; and,
- **celebrate** the powerful benefits that cultural diversity provides.

The Strategy underlines our central tenet: to be renowned as an interculturally engaged, educationally responsive and globally connected university that enriches the lives of many and prepares us for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Strategy has four key cultural diversity goals which reflect a whole-of-institution responsibility.





## GOAL 1

### **Lead a whole of institution commitment to fostering an exceptional interculturally engaged VU experience.**

Victoria University will continuously improve its approach to creating an inclusive and respectful campus culture through best practice, whole-of-university initiatives. In this way we will develop a collaborative approach to enhancing our Australian and international reputation for being an interculturally engaged learning, teaching and research university.

## GOAL 2

### **Advance culturally inclusive initiatives that lead to excellent student and staff academic, research and citizenship outcomes.**

The University will continue to improve the processes, approaches and opportunities that contribute to strong academic and employability practices outcomes for students and staff. This aligns with our strategic vision as the *University of Opportunity and Success* — to be open and excellent, creating exceptional value for any student from any background. In this way, we will enhance our reputation as a sector leader in providing a distinctive, culturally enriching educational opportunity.

## GOAL 3

### **Provide a harmonious and safe environment that celebrates cultural diversity amongst its students, staff and community.**

We will continue to build our profile as a socially responsible educational institution that celebrates its many achievements in promoting and developing its diverse cultures. We will continue to advance University collaborations that contribute to an inclusive and safe university and community environment.

## GOAL 4

### **Build meaningful partnerships that uplift our students, staff and diverse communities.**

Finally, we will draw on the existing social and cultural capital within our wider community to identify opportunities for transforming the lives of those community members. The University will continue to build strong relationships with the community, particularly in its heartland west of Melbourne.

These four goals are established around a set of eight guiding Principles of Cultural Diversity outlined in this Strategy.

# VICTORIA UNIVERSITY PRINCIPLES OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

<b>PRINCIPLE 1 RECOGNISE</b>	Victoria University recognises that cultural diversity enhances and enriches the experiences of all its members.
<b>PRINCIPLE 2 ACCESS</b>	People from all backgrounds will have outstanding opportunities to engage with and contribute to all aspects of University life.
<b>PRINCIPLE 3 RESPECT</b>	All members of the University community should respect each other's cultural, ethnic, religious and racial identities within the Australian and institutional legal and policy frameworks.
<b>PRINCIPLE 4 CELEBRATE</b>	All University members will have the opportunity to contribute to, participate in and celebrate the rich social, cultural, economic, health and well-being benefits of Victoria University's culturally inclusive University experience.
<b>PRINCIPLE 5 CONNECT</b>	Victoria University will continue to connect with partners by sharing expertise and building and translating knowledge to promote social cohesion, cultural diversity, intercultural literacies and multiculturalism.
<b>PRINCIPLE 6 RESPOND</b>	As part of its moral purpose, Victoria University will reflect a whole-of-university approach to provide a safe, harmonious experience and environment for its members.
<b>PRINCIPLE 7 CHAMPION</b>	As part of its unique community orientation, Victoria University will lead, collaborate and champion opportunities to foster and develop cultural inclusivity and intercultural capacity, particularly in Melbourne's west.
<b>PRINCIPLE 8 ENRICH</b>	Victoria University will expand its endeavours to become a leading, culturally responsive, globally-connected tertiary provider with a respectful and inclusive culture across all its activities.





# CONTEXT

**Victoria University has always been quietly proud of its reputation for being one of the most culturally diverse universities in Australia, with students and staff from a wide range of ethnic, linguistic and faith-based backgrounds — both local and international. In essence, we are a multicultural success story.**

We proudly represent and champion the cultural diversity of our geographical location in the west of Melbourne. Over several generations, the west has been the first home for a significant number of new residents who have established new lives in Australia. Residents represent cultures from over 130 different nations<sup>1</sup>. VU's diversity has enabled us to build a rich campus environment with a global outlook, a unique depth of socio-cultural capital and community connection. It is now time to take this commitment to the next level and lead the sector in this area.

The Cultural Diversity Strategy provides a strong framework to build VU's unique narrative around how our particular University contributes to and advances the transformative potential of the educational experience. It provides a clear affirmation that positions VU as fostering rich, deep intercultural connections. Such connections are multi-directional as they facilitate knowledge building, skill development and positive social impact through every aspect of the VU experience.

Our University's approach is to be inclusive of *all* cultures. The view of cultural diversity at VU resonates with the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001):

"Cultural diversity is a source of exchange, innovation and creativity...cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature...it widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development...a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence".<sup>2</sup>

Cultural diversity, for the purposes of this strategy, encapsulates notions of identities around nationality, ethnicity, race, faith, language(s) background and identifying cultural heritage — noting the intersectionality of any number of these. The Strategy also recognises the multi-directional interactions that occur when members of various cultural groups come together. These interactions at VU are viewed as enriching, respectful, educative, reflexive and inclusive. VU understands that interculturality is achieved when interactions go beyond being just transactional. Rather, our understanding of cultural diversity/interculturality embraces the reciprocity that occurs when multiple perspectives, spaces, experiences, knowledge and mindsets are shared. In short, this intercultural reciprocity is regarded as powerful in terms of its transformative potential. As such, it aligns to VU's strong social justice agenda and sense of moral purpose.

The Strategy is forward looking as it maps out how we can meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century student who will navigate an increasing globally mobile and agile world.

The Strategy commits to creating experiences that share knowledge, connect stakeholders, promote understanding and celebrate humanity through its curriculum and complementary activities. As a University we will continue to advance and effect positive social change through learning and teaching experiences, research and policy advancement, as well as through strategic partnerships with schools, industry and the community.



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY AFFIRMATION

**TO BE DISTINGUISHED  
NATIONALLY AND  
INTERNATIONALLY AS  
AN INTERCULTURALLY  
ENGAGED, EDUCATIONALLY  
RESPONSIVE AND GLOBALLY  
CONNECTED UNIVERSITY.**

# VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

## OUR VISION

As the *University of Opportunity and Success*, we will be open and excellent, creating exceptional value for any student from any background and uplifting the communities in which we operate.

## OUR MISSION

We will achieve this vision by:

### **Education**

Providing high-quality, engaging career-based tertiary education at all levels of vocational and higher education with flexible entry and exit points, appropriate pathways, engaging and rigorous curriculum and contemporary delivery; while maintaining rigorous standards and ensuring that all students are supported to meet those standards.

### **Research and Engagement**

Undertaking high-quality and innovative applied and translational research which results in healthier, smarter and sustainable communities in the west of Melbourne and beyond, and connecting deeply with industry and the community, in turn enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Cultural diversity supports and fosters intellectual diversity.



# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Victoria University's Cultural Diversity Strategy is framed by the aspirations and themes outlined in the VU Strategic Plan and Transformational Agenda (White Paper). In particular, this Strategy articulates how it will support the University's clear focus of moving beyond its current achievements to progress to the next level of becoming world class. It reflects the Vision of being open and providing outstanding opportunities to any student from any background and uplifting communities.

The VU Strategic Plan articulates directions around positioning VU as an open and excellent university. In November 2017 VU released its Transformational Agenda which sets out the Four Big Ideas. At the core of each of these Four Big Ideas is the notion of developing a VU culture that promotes opportunity and success as part of VU's strong sense of social justice. The intersections between the Strategy and the Four Big Ideas are represented in Figure 1 (see page 11).

Further, in terms of strategic alignment, the Cultural Diversity Strategy is informed by the principles outlined in UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the Australian Racial Discrimination Act 1975 Codes and Standards, and the Victorian Government's policy commitment, which calls upon a shared responsibility to building a socially cohesive community through active citizenry.

This Strategy embraces the socially responsible ethos that characterises VU and reflects other key University equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives and strategies. This Strategy also supports the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy (2017–2020).



Paola Balla, Moondani Balluk, 2017





The Affirmation outlined in this Strategy reflects our ongoing commitment to deliver measurable impact that grows and deepens in significance over time for both VU and the entire region, driving economic prosperity and meeting the health, education and community service needs of the diverse and rapidly growing population in the west of Melbourne.

# ALIGNMENT WITH THE TRANSFORMATIONAL AGENDA'S FOUR BIG IDEAS



# THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY STRATEGY

## VU'S CULTURAL DIVERSITY GOALS

**The Cultural Diversity Strategy recognises the rich socio-cultural capital of its students, staff, and partners. It aims to foster this capital through rich experiences, capability-building opportunities and excellent collaborations.**

The Strategy recognises the relational nature of successful partnerships that lead to transformational experiences, for instance, the intercultural exchanges between students and staff, students and peers, students and their research partners, staff and the community. Our work at the University is characterised by partnerships and areas of engagement.

This Strategy Framework articulates the Four Cultural Diversity Goals that will guide this work as a whole-of-institution partnership across four areas of engagement as represented in Figure 2.

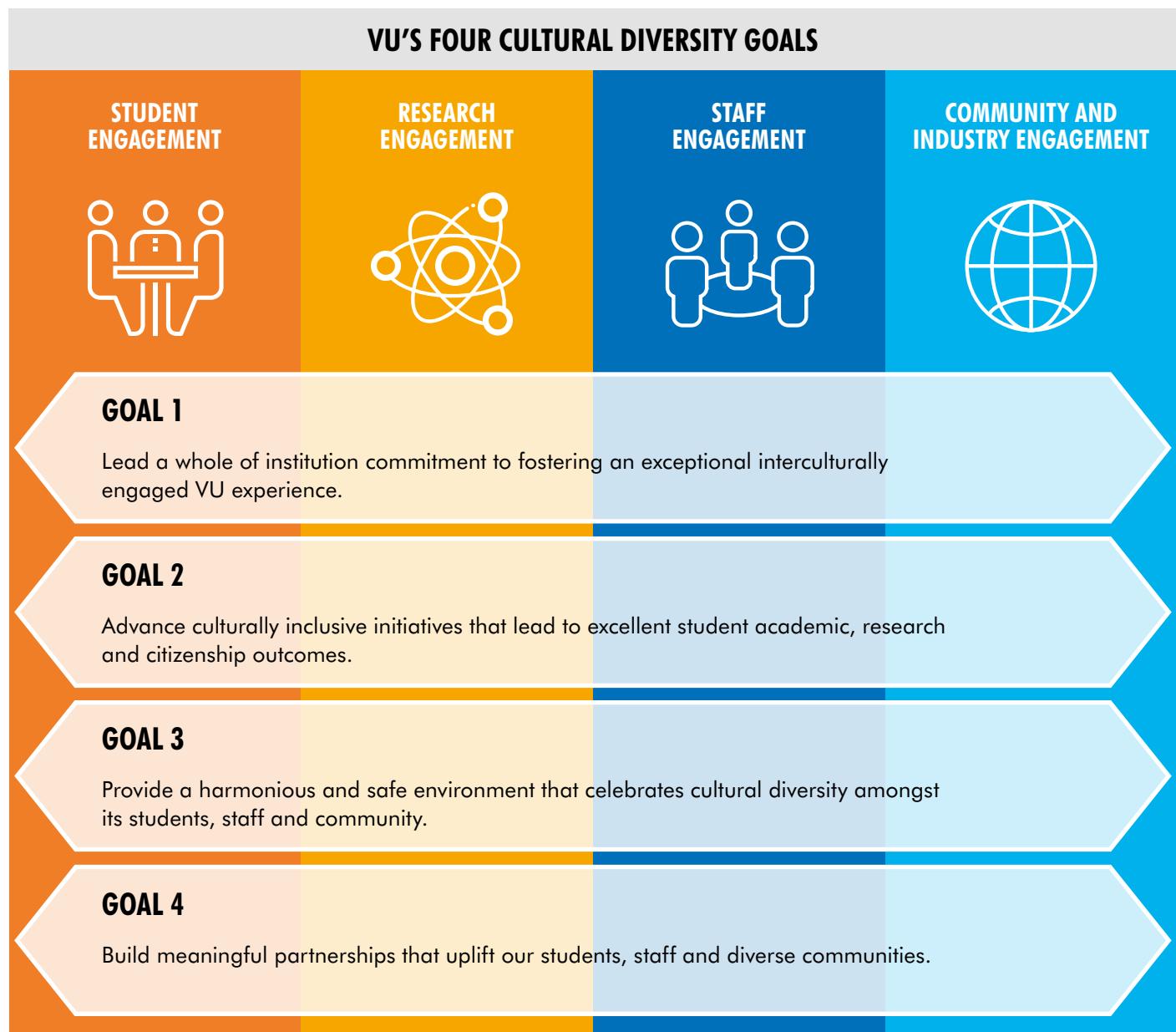
In this way, the Strategy builds on VU's many achievements as a culturally diverse and responsive University, and, importantly, provide scope to advance the transformative experiences VU cares about — experiences that lead to:

- enhancing student success outcomes;
- furthering the broader staff value proposition of being a great place to work;
- contributing to and enhancing impactful research; and,
- advancing deep connections with industry and community.

In adopting a whole-of-university approach, the Strategy calls upon each member of the University community to be an active and responsive participant. The associated VU Cultural Diversity Action Plan provides a blueprint for the University's implementation of this Strategy over the next three years.



## THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY STRATEGY FRAMEWORK



# CULTURAL DIVERSITY GOALS AND HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES

## 1. LEAD A WHOLE OF INSTITUTION COMMITMENT TO FOSTERING AN EXCEPTIONAL INTERCULTURALLY ENGAGED VU EXPERIENCE.

### **High-level objectives are to:**

- 1.1 Demonstrate a high-level strategic commitment to integrating a whole-of-university approach in creating a culturally inclusive, educationally innovative and globally connected culture that supports the Cultural Diversity Strategy.
- 1.2 Ensure that the objectives of the VU Cultural Diversity Strategy are reflected in University planning, design, implementation and evaluation processes and practices.
- 1.3 Advance and develop intercultural literacies programs and resources that enable stronger learning, teaching, research, partnership and employability outcomes.
- 1.4 Engage in strategic collaborations to inform and develop institutional and partnership initiatives that aim to develop intercultural awareness, engagement and resilient communities.
- 1.5 Foster critical conversations about cultural diversity and inclusivity through targeted reference groups, collaborations and activities across the University that lead to improved policies, programs, research and practices.
- 1.6 Collaborate with People and Culture to support culturally inclusive and equity practices around staff recruitment, mentoring and professional development activities to enhance capacity building, progression pathways and leadership.

## 2. ADVANCE CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE INITIATIVES THAT LEAD TO EXCELLENT ACADEMIC, RESEARCH AND CITIZENSHIP OUTCOMES.

### **High-level objectives are to:**

- 2.1 Enhance and develop specific initiatives that contribute to student success through culturally responsive and enriching curricular and complementary activities, in particular, the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.
- 2.2 Contribute to initiatives that develop pathways for Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students (VU Polytechnic to postgraduate level studies).
- 2.3 Strengthen links with local and international stakeholders to attract international students, advance international partnerships and improve the internationalisation of the student experience.
- 2.4 Advance and inform scholarships and programs that aim to address participation barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), refugee and asylum seeker students.
- 2.5 Leverage our reputation for a committed approach to developing an inclusive cultural campus experience to attract and retain students and staff.
- 2.6 Contribute to fostering student capability in becoming successful VU graduates in their fields who inspire and uplift their communities and the broader community.



### **3. PROVIDE A HARMONIOUS AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT WHICH CELEBRATES CULTURAL DIVERSITY AMONGST ITS STUDENTS, STAFF AND COMMUNITY.**

#### **High-level objectives are to:**

- 3.1 Establish a process that profiles and rewards the contribution of staff, students, alumni and partners in creating a culturally inclusive University community.
- 3.2 Showcase the University's multicultural story as part of the transformational difference we make to the lives of our community members.
- 3.3 Dismantle obstacles to creating a university wide culturally harmonious environment by ensuring all students, staff and partners feel safe, included and supported in all University interactions.
- 3.4 Promote and celebrate cultural diversity and reconciliation and advocate socially cohesive values that underlie our moral purpose through a range of activities and collaborations.
- 3.5 Contribute to initiatives around the creation of culturally sensitive physical spaces and facilities on campus for students, staff and their communities.
- 3.6 Strengthen and develop research initiatives that focus on building community understanding and capacity to be interculturally engaged, safe and resilient. Also, foster VU's reputation for innovative research and policy advancement work.

### **4. BUILD MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS THAT UPLIFT OUR STUDENTS, STAFF AND DIVERSE COMMUNITIES.**

#### **High-level objectives are to:**

- 4.1 Promote and encourage high-quality internal and external research and partnerships which investigate and champion cultural diversity and advance collaborations and programs locally and internationally.
- 4.2 Strengthen initiatives that foster VU's legislative remit of being representative of Communities of the West, in particular as part of the University's broader Engagement Framework through high-quality culturally responsive partnerships.
- 4.3 Build and enhance key partnerships with corporate, government, social and educational stakeholders to support and enhance learning, teaching, research and employability outcomes.
- 4.4 Ensure strong engagement with secondary schools and community groups to create pathways and engagement opportunities that attract culturally diverse students.
- 4.5 Instigate and participate in community events and programs that create engagement opportunities for students, alumni, industry, staff and community members as well as potential stakeholders.
- 4.6 Position research activities and strengths to inform and advance knowledge in cultural diversity and multiculturalism to enhance the work of the University and its partners, with a specific aim to enhance collaboration and impact.

# OUR COMMUNITY





## CONTACT

To provide feedback,  
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For more information, visit  
**[vu.edu.au/cultural-diversity](http://vu.edu.au/cultural-diversity)**



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