



BUILDING A HEALTHY WEST

A CENTENARY CAMPAIGN PROJECT

CELEBRATING
A CENTENARY OF
OPPORTUNITY 2016



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

WHO WE ARE

When Footscray Technical School welcomed its first students in 1916, its enterprising principal, Arch Hoadley, adopted the motto, 'The Door of Opportunity'. A visionary ahead of his time, he intuitively understood the transformative nature of education.

One hundred years on, Victoria University (VU) still strives to show the way, as the 'University of Opportunity and Success'. We believe that a modern university should provide educational opportunities for the many, not the few.

We welcome students – from any educational, socioeconomic and cultural background – who are committed to continuing their education. We believe an excellent education should be available to the whole community. A healthy, prosperous society is built upon the talents and expertise of the whole spectrum of society.

We collaborate and engage with a wide variety of stakeholders, including government and other educational institutions. Our facilities, research and knowledge are available not only to our students but also to our industry and community partners.

Each and every member of our diverse community is respected, and encouraged and supported in their efforts to achieve excellence.

In 2016, we are celebrating 100 years of providing further education in Melbourne's west and beyond.

We have embarked on an ambitious program that shines a spotlight on our strengths and differences as a university, showcases our wonderful students and graduates, strengthens our connections to our alumni community and grows our philanthropic opportunities.

For the first time in our history we are asking our community to invest in major initiatives at VU so we can continue to provide improved health and educational opportunities for our communities.

'Building a Healthy West' is one of these initiatives.

Melbourne's west faces greater health, economic and social challenges than other parts of Melbourne, and Australia. We are seeking philanthropic support to help tackle these challenges and halt the growing impact of chronic disease.



CHRONIC DISEASE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Australian Government Department of Health cites chronic disease as the leading cause of death and disability in Australia.

Chronic diseases are conditions that are long-lasting and persistent. Examples include cancer, mental illness, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disorders and diabetes, which can have devastating long-term impacts on individuals, their families and communities.

A NATIONAL CHALLENGE

The burden of chronic disease in Australia threatens to overwhelm the health budget and the capacity of health services. In 2011, 90% of all deaths in Australia had chronic disease as an underlying cause.

The World Health Organization has estimated that at least 80% of all heart disease, stroke and diabetes cases, and 40% of all cancers, are preventable.

Many chronic diseases share common causes and risk factors – a set of behavioural, cultural, social and environmental determinants. Lifestyle-related factors that increase the likelihood of chronic disease include smoking, high alcohol consumption, being overweight or obese, being physically inactive or having poor nutrition.

Environmental factors that can also impact health include access to fresh fruit and vegetables versus fast food, the amount of tree canopy and small parks that enable small groups to gather outdoors for social or physical activity.

HEALTH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN MELBOURNE'S WEST

Melbourne's west is VU's home. It is also one of Australia's unhealthiest places, with high rates of lifestyle-related chronic disease, in particular type 2 diabetes.

The region's diverse population has grown rapidly since the 1940s, driven largely by migration. It became the hub of a vibrant manufacturing sector that employed up to 40% of Victoria's population.

However, the decline in manufacturing has contributed to high levels of adult and youth unemployment. This economic challenge, combined with still rapidly rising population levels, has meant public infrastructure and service funding has struggled to keep pace.

Poor health is both a symptom and cause of systemic disadvantage. Ignoring this outcome of inequality until it manifests in hospital and other medical treatments can become a 'band-aid' approach with significant cost to the community.



Research has shown that higher levels of education correspond to better health outcomes. Where people live also has a significant impact on their health.

Tackling the causes of preventable disease not only spares much cost and suffering, it promises to help break cycles of disadvantage and promote an overall healthier, happier and fairer Australia.

WHAT WE ARE DOING



VU is using our expertise in applied research, sport and health, as well as our government and community partnerships, to build a stronger and healthier region.

The University's Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Management focuses on biomedical and behavioural interventions – particularly relating to nutrition and lifestyle – to prevent diabetes, obesity, pregnancy-related morbidity and hypertension.

Philanthropic support will help the Centre make a greater positive impact in Melbourne's west.

Research has shown that tackling the rise of obesity and curbing type 2 diabetes requires a coordinated approach by health services. Unfortunately, due to the complexities in diverse communities, this has been lacking in Melbourne's west.

It is important to find out how people engage with allied health services and whether they get effective outcomes. We can do this by collecting standardised data from participating clinics and agencies. This will then enable us to provide targeted training and resources to doctors and health workers to better manage and prevent type 2 diabetes.

More broadly, we are introducing a series of interventions to reduce the risk of diabetes in the population. A representative group will be monitored over time to provide insight into how lifestyle correlates to the prevalence of diabetes in the western region.

Within this group there will be an emphasis on curbing gestational and early childhood diabetes. Currently one in three women in the west is obese, well above the national average.

Pregnant women will be tested and given education on lowering the risk of gestational diabetes. Newborns will be assessed for health status and diabetes risk.

By combating diabetes and its causes we can make a difference not only to individuals and their families but also the greater community.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: THE MOST CRUCIAL STAGE OF LIFE



The most critical period for establishing good physical and mental health is in early childhood. During the first two years of life, nutrition and other environmental factors can induce changes in development that have a long-term impact on health and disease risk. These epigenetic changes not only persist into adulthood but are transmitted to the next generation.

THE BRIMBANK COLLABORATION – TRANSFORMING A COMMUNITY

VU think tank, the Australian Health Policy Collaboration (AHPC), is focusing on residents within the Brimbank Local Government Area.

The Brimbank Collaboration looks at social and environmental factors that impact on people's lifetime health outcomes, and where intervention can improve these. The initiative uses community strengths, such as organised community groups and new medical facilities, to improve health and education outcomes.

The research focuses on intervening during four pivotal life stages – early childhood, school years and youth transitions, family formation, and prime years – to give people the ongoing capability to achieve better health.

Magnified across communities, this project has the potential to create intergenerational change in health, education and economic outlooks at a national level.

Our research has identified areas of particular pre- and post-natal risk in Brimbank, such as low birth weights, lack of breastfeeding and a high incidence of gestational diabetes.

Hospital personnel are often able to identify vulnerable babies and families at an early stage. Unfortunately Victoria currently does not share such vital information between hospitals and health care agencies.

We have developed a platform of shared information that can allow health professionals to intervene and improve the prospects of vulnerable children and families.

We are in the initial stage of instituting the Abecedarian Approach. This credentialed program teaches good parenting, with an emphasis on healthy eating and reading to children. It will be made available to first-time mothers attending parent groups, and to more than 17,000 children and their families in Brimbank.

The AHPC is influencing health policies and practices, and uncovering knowledge that will help entire populations flourish. Philanthropic support in public health will move us towards ensuring healthy lives for those in Melbourne's west, and across Australia.

SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS



As Australia's leading sports university we are at the forefront of research to promote more active lifestyles.

Our Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living specialises in the social and environmental factors that influence community participation in sport and exercise.

GETTING THE WEST MOVING

We are preparing a face-to-face sport and recreation survey of households in Melbourne's west to identify the factors preventing people from getting the required amount of physical activity. Migrant children, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, are less involved in organised sports and often have poor access to sporting coaches and facilities.

We have developed a program to promote the fundamental motor skills of children in West, which currently indicates a lag behind national averages. Grade 1 children will be screened and then regularly engaged in game-based sessions of motor skill training.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

One in two Australians lives with a chronic disease and one in five have multiple conditions.

Reducing chronic disease by tackling the causes could result in a generational saving of \$1.5 billion in treatment costs, restore \$800 million in lost productivity and increase the workforce by up to 10%.

The place-based solutions to improve health outcomes that we are developing, implementing and validating in Melbourne's west can be scaled up for national, and even international, application.

With your support we can research and put in place programs that will curb the spread and impact of chronic diseases. We can give children, especially those in vulnerable circumstances, the best chance in life. We can also get the west moving to improve the physical health and wellbeing of its residents.

With those and other projects, we can build a healthier western region together and show the way to building a healthier Australia. Your generosity could improve not just the life chances of individuals but transform the futures of entire communities.

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY CENTENARY CAMPAIGN

As VU celebrates 100 years of further education in Melbourne's west, we have embarked on an ambitious program to promote and build on our strengths.

As the University of Opportunity and Success, we provide educational opportunities for the many, not the few, and help students fulfil their potential by removing the barriers to education and providing the best learning facilities. We also work with local partners on community initiatives to improve community health and education.

With your support we can change the face of education and deliver significant community projects across Melbourne:



CREATING OPPORTUNITY FUND

VU scholarships provide accessible education to any student with the talent, determination and commitment to study, regardless of their socioeconomic or educational background. Through the Creating Opportunity Fund we want to secure and expand opportunities for TAFE, undergraduate and postgraduate students.



BUILDING A HEALTHY WEST

The people of Melbourne's west face greater health and education obstacles, and experience high rates of chronic disease. We are utilising our research expertise and strong local partnerships to improve health and education outcomes for communities in the west.



STATE-OF-THE-ART LEARNING FACILITIES

The VU-owned Land Titles Office in Melbourne's CBD is one of Victoria's most highly prized heritage buildings. Currently in a state of disrepair, our vision is to revitalise the building as a thriving community law and teaching hub in the heart of Victoria's legal precinct.

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