



The Hon Gayle Tierney MP

Minister for Training and Skills
Minister for Higher Education

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Professor Zlatko Skrbis
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Dear Professor Skrbis

I am pleased to provide the final signed copy of the Partnership agreement between the Government of Victoria and Australian Catholic University (compact). The signing of this compact represents a significant milestone and reflects the Victorian Government's commitment to a strategic partnership with each Victorian university.

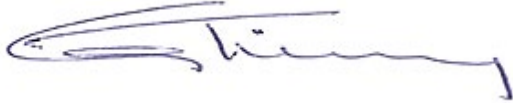
Last year brought unparalleled challenges to Victorian universities and I appreciate the commitment and resilience your institution has shown. I recognise that Australian Catholic University has worked closely with the Victorian Government over the last year and thank you for this regular engagement. This compact reflects the close partnership that we have built and demonstrates the importance of working together for the benefit of the State of Victoria. The focus of the compacts is intentionally on shared areas of interest that are specifically relevant for the State, noting that the Commonwealth Government retains primary responsibility for funding and policy for higher education and universities.

The Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund (VHESIF) is highlighted in the compact as a short term initiative for collaboration. The VHESIF marks an unprecedented investment from the Victorian Government in our local universities to support jobs and the State's economic rebound. Universities form an essential part of the Victorian economy and the VHESIF's \$350 million investment is a significant opportunity for the Government to partner with universities to assist in Victoria's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. As a direct response to the pandemic, please note that the VHESIF is time limited in nature, meaning there are no further funding commitments beyond the term of the VHESIF.

The compacts also set some exciting longer-term objectives and priorities for the Victorian Government and Victorian universities to collaborate on over the coming years. These priorities do not represent funding commitments, but rather are strategic in nature and intentionally broad to capture our many areas of shared policy interest and mutual benefit. To progress these broad areas of collaboration, further detailed work is needed to determine how we will take them forward. I look forward to continuing this next stage of work together to achieve positive outcomes for Victoria.

I am pleased to formalise our strategic partnership and I look forward to publicly sharing these documents at vic.gov.au, as I anticipate the benefits being widespread for the State of Victoria.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gayle Tierney', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Hon Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Training and Skills
Minister for Higher Education

16 March 2021

Cc: The Hon Tim Pallas MP, Treasurer

PROTECTED: Sensitive

Partnership agreement

Government of Victoria and
Australian Catholic University

FINAL VERSION



1. Purpose and context

This partnership agreement frames the ongoing relationship between the Victorian Government and Australian Catholic University and sets out agreed areas of common interest and mutual benefit.

This partnership reflects the common interest of all Victorian universities and the Victorian Government to work together for the prosperity of Victoria. While Victorian universities are global organisations with international reach and national significance, this agreement recognises the importance of their foundation in the State of Victoria.

This agreement builds on the existing core value exchange between all Victorian universities and the Government of Victoria. As organisations, the Victorian Government and Victorian universities represent significant employers to the Victorian economy. Working together, we have a joint responsibility to invest in and develop not only the skills and capabilities of our workforces, but to build the skills and capabilities needed across the Victorian economy. Collaboratively, Victorian universities and the Victorian Government play a critical role in growing innovation and research and development (R&D), with expenditure on R&D highly and positively correlated with economic growth. University students, including both domestic and international, make a significant contribution to Victoria's economic activity and prosperity.

Universities contribute significant value to the State of Victoria by:

- Providing high quality skills, training and education for the State and building knowledge and skills for Victoria's workforce, and the workforce of the future
- Drawing students, knowledge workers and resources into Victoria and enhancing the State's international reputation by ensuring that international students studying in Victoria have an exceptional experience
- Driving knowledge creation, leading new ways of thinking and supporting innovation
- Supporting students to undertake research using evidence from Victoria and other jurisdictions, which helps to inform policy development and delivery, including social recovery reforms
- Hosting significant infrastructure and facilities that enable R&D activities contributing to a diverse and sustainable economy
- Contributing to economic development, particularly through collaborations with industry that boost productivity, trigger innovation, create jobs, attract foreign direct investment and foster start-ups
- Building, sustaining and driving the prosperity of local and regional communities and economies
- Increasing the connection between research institutions, industries, services and communities to help build a safer, more resilient and just society.

The Government of Victoria contributes significant value to the higher education sector of Victoria by:

- Promoting higher education in Victoria, nationally and internationally
- Preparing young people for higher education through school education and providing pathways through Vocational Education and Training (VET).
- Providing support for international students
- Being a significant employer of university graduates and shaping and fostering other industries in the economy that employ university graduates
- Creating cultural and economic hubs that foster innovation
- Developing significant infrastructure across the State

- Encouraging R&D in priority industry sectors that benefit the economic prosperity of the State and improve outcomes for Victorians, including by facilitating connections through the Victorian Government Trade and Investment offices
- Connecting universities with Victorian Government organisations, industry and civil society to identify and unlock opportunities for shared value creation
- Advocating to the Commonwealth and other States and Territories on shared objectives.

This rich value exchange between universities and the Government of Victoria has already led to a series of existing agreements and joint collaborations, including both strategic and contractual arrangements. This agreement is not intended to duplicate or amalgamate these and is not legally binding. This is a broader partnership agreement that sits alongside existing arrangements to frame the overarching strategic partnership.

2. Principles

Principles for how the Government of Victoria and all Victorian Universities will work together

- Work towards mutually beneficial outcomes
- Approach common challenges in a collaborative and forward-thinking manner
- Engage on the best way to utilise intersecting resources, especially during Victoria's economic recovery
- Consult and engage with each other before taking major action in priority areas for collaboration
- Share information, including data and project opportunities, where appropriate to progress shared objectives and priorities and maintain appropriate confidentiality when doing so
- Minimise the administrative burden when engaging with each other
- Continue to ensure commercial arrangements are objective and at arm's-length
- Attract and leverage private (such as industry) and Commonwealth investment in Victoria's higher education sector
- Work closely with industry to ensure initiatives meet their needs
- Apply a transparent approach to engagement
- Renew the Partnership Agreements every 2-3 years to ensure priorities remain valid and to reflect organisational changes and economic conditions, with the next renewal due in June 2023.

3. Shared objectives

Key common objectives that the Government of Victoria will work on with all Victorian Universities

- A vibrant and diverse university sector with world-leading education, research and engagement outcomes.
- Stronger alignment of education pathways with industry demand where the Victorian Government is a significant employer, to deliver a skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers.
- A strong, inclusive post-COVID-19 economy and society, including realising key infrastructure, social, health and human service opportunities, pursuing new industry and trade opportunities and fostering equitable participation for key affected cohorts.
- Collaboration and connections between higher education and Victoria's priority industry sectors, including through the development of Priority Precincts and National Employment and Innovation Clusters in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.
- Research that brings demonstrable new productivity, commercial, social, health and environmental benefits to Victoria.
- Victoria's global engagement, including through bi-directional exchange of people, research and ideas, transnational education, investment and opportunities for collaboration.
- A more integrated tertiary education system which benefits Victorians through clear post-secondary pathways, forges closer partnerships between universities and TAFEs, directly contributes to the COVID-19 recovery and critical projects and sectors, and aligns higher education with broader changes and aspiration in the Victorian and national tertiary system.

4. Priorities for collaboration

Priority areas for collaboration between the Government of Victoria and Australian Catholic University. These are especially relevant to the mission of Australian Catholic University.

Existing areas of collaboration

- Development of Victoria's future health and education workforce.
- Initial teacher education policy, including addressing the projected shortage of teachers and improving the overall attractiveness of teaching as a profession.
- Public health research, including relationships with industry/health providers designed to refine and deliver best practice in Victorian health settings.

Short term initiatives for collaboration

- A six month payroll tax deferral valued at approximately \$110 million across all Victorian Universities, to provide short term cash flow relief during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund, for which the State Government of Victoria is contributing \$350 million to fund university capital works, applied research and research infrastructure projects that boost productivity and support Victoria's economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. Each project funded through the Victorian Higher Education State

Investment Fund will be governed by an individual project funding agreement that will document the agreed outputs and outcomes that Australian Catholic University will deliver.

- Appropriate welfare support for international students experiencing hardship due to the impacts of COVID-19, and initiatives which support the return of existing and new international students to Victoria and maintain Victoria's position as a destination of choice for higher education.
- Availability and viability of clinical placements to meet the growing requirements of Victoria's future health workforce.

Long term initiatives for collaboration

ACU and the Victorian Government will work together to deliver the following longer term initiatives:

- Medium and long term workforce planning and development in key areas of projected skills shortage, particularly health care and teacher education, where the Government is a significant employer and which are core areas of strength for ACU.
- Engage on world standard health research and education, namely from the Melbourne campus with benefit flowing on to ACU campuses regionally and more broadly.
- Applied and translational health research, including support for relationships with industry (especially health providers), designed to improve community health outcomes and to refine/deliver best practice in Victorian health settings.
- Best practice education research to: inform curriculum development; improve practice; and develop teacher performance through professional development.
- Increasing access to higher education for Victorians in regional areas (especially Ballarat and Western Victoria) and for those from disadvantaged or under-represented groups.
- Interfaith engagement and leadership, noting ACU's commitment to respect for, and harmony between, all faiths and its record of bringing together parliamentarians, community leaders and faith leaders at an annual parliamentary interfaith breakfast.

5. Mechanisms for ongoing engagement

Practical ways in which the Government of Victoria and all Victorian Universities will engage and work together in partnership

- Victorian Government officials (coordinated through the Department of Education and Training) and Vice-Chancellors meet regularly to discuss ideas, share information and address shared challenges and issues. Information and knowledge garnered from this engagement is shared with relevant Departments across Victorian Government and within universities, as appropriate.
- A forum is held periodically where Vice-Chancellors can engage directly with relevant Victorian Government Minister(s)
- To take forward initiatives of mutual benefit, existing working groups that align to the priority areas identified in the Partnership Agreements will be used wherever possible, with new working groups developed only if essential. This includes bilateral groups between the Victorian Government and individual universities to progress their priorities for collaboration as well as multi-lateral groups for shared objectives. All working groups should include relevant Departments from across Victorian Government and appropriate officials from within universities to ensure a joined up approach.

Signed for and on behalf of Australian Catholic University



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Professor Zlatko Skrbis
Vice-Chancellor and President

On the 14 day of January 2021

Signed for and on behalf of the State Government of Victoria



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The Hon. Gayle Tierney
Minister for Higher Education

On the 16 day of February 2021



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Tim Pallas MP
Treasurer

On the 28 day of January 2021