

FOOTSCRAY UNIVERSITY TOWN



REJUVENATING FOOTSCRAY TRANSFORMING MELBOURNE'S WEST THROUGH EDUCATION

More than an urban renewal project
More than a Tertiary Education Project

Prepared by Victoria University in collaboration with Maribyrnong City Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF MELBOURNE'S WEST, TO PROGRESS VICTORIA THE "EDUCATION STATE"

Victoria's contribution to the national economy, through and beyond the mining boom, hinges on developing and capitalising on its human resources. Melbourne already possesses one of the world's most intensive concentrations of educational and research infrastructure within and close to its CBD. By positioning itself as 'the Education State', leveraging a sector in which it excels, Victoria can contribute greatly to Australia's national prosperity and international profile.

A major challenge to the future of the 'Education State' agenda, however, is to unlock the potential of Melbourne's West. It is home to the fastest growing population areas in Australia, but underperforms on most measures of economic and social well-being in comparison to the rest of Melbourne. The key to unlocking this potential is Footscray, acknowledged as the gateway to the west. The challenge still lies, however, in the perception of Footscray as outdated, and its historical association with crime and the drug trade. Although renewal of the area is gradually occurring, there is a need for a catalyst to spark more rapid economic and social development. The role of education in building strong, resilient and resourceful communities and growing business activity is widely accepted.

FOOTSCRAY UNIVERSITY TOWN

Victoria University and the Maribyrnong City Council have established a partnership to develop a plan to bring about *Footscray University Town*, as the first University Town in an Australian Capital City.

Victoria University already has two campuses in Footscray and a number of other partnerships and activities, including teaching and research activities at the Whitten Oval, the home of the Western Bulldogs, and collaboration with the Footscray Community Arts Centre and the Western Hospital. Almost 20,000 university students already study in Footscray, and an increasing number will be living in Footscray under the plan. A range of other partners will also be part of this project. It is more than an urban renewal project, and more than a tertiary education project. It will be the linking theme that generates confidence, investment, business growth and employment, to ensure that the West of Melbourne plays its part in Victoria's ongoing prosperity.

SOME FEATURES OF FOOTSCRAY UNIVERSITY TOWN.

Key features of the plan for the future of *Footscray University Town* include:

1. The seamless integration of the University within the fabric of Footscray, to include a range of academic, social, community and retail facilities, as well as student accommodation, permeating the town.
2. Building on an increasingly thriving creative and recreational industry sector in Footscray and its surrounds, particularly driven by Victoria University's College of Arts and College of Sport and Exercise Science:
 - an Arts Precinct, including shared University-community visual and performing arts spaces, and the proposed development of an Arts Incubator; and
 - a Sports Precinct, including elite sport facilities, shared University-community sport facilities, and a Sports Industry Incubator.
3. Building on the cultural diversity of Footscray by establishing a state-of-the-art International Pathway College as a key initiative to bring more international students to the west of Melbourne.
4. Developing Footscray as an educational and R&D hub for the West of Melbourne, with strong connections to other educational and research activities including:
 - extending the existing partnerships with schools across the West of Melbourne, including further strengthening the ties with Maribyrnong College as an elite sports school through the Maribyrnong Sports Academy, and developing a new Science and Maths Education Centre of Excellence in

partnership with the Melbourne Museum through Scienceworks, another icon of the west of Melbourne;

- video-linked educational delivery to other Victoria University sites in Werribee, Altona, Melton, Sunbury and Broadmeadows;
 - a new Trades Academy in partnership with other VET providers, working closely with Industry, to raise the quality and status of trades training in Australia, with activities in Footscray, Sunshine, Broadmeadows and the Docklands, for example the automotive trades, the building trades and cooking;
 - R&D and teaching activities in applied Science and Engineering, focussed on environmental sustainability, involving research on water, energy, food and sustainable buildings, drawing on the expertise of Victoria University's College of Engineering and Science in Footscray, working with its Institute of Sustainability and Innovation, and its industry partners, based at Werribee.
5. Overseas experience of College and University Towns provides a basis for the aspirations of this project:
- higher average incomes in such locations than in comparable communities not based around education (for example, in the US, average incomes \$10,000 p.a. greater in College Towns);
 - vibrant business communities that develop to service the City's education activities, but that also use
 - the skilled graduates produced to grow new hubs of business innovation;
 - communities which are dynamic and self-reliant in creating civic amenity; and
 - serving a role in developing Melbourne and Victoria as the heart of Australia's education industry, which in turn will help to propel the nation towards the high-skill economy that must develop to complement our nation's resource richness.

CREATING THE UNIVERSITY TOWN

Major projects assisting in creating the University Town will include:

- efforts to utilise the Federal NRAS scheme to facilitate the rapid creation of student accommodation;
- creating facilities to foster creative arts and sporting precinct developments;
- creation of open-space areas in central Footscray, and also surrounding the 'downtown' area;
- positive consideration of development projects providing student-related accommodation, entertainment and recreational facilities in central Footscray;
- creation of joint-use community / University meeting and function spaces;
- facilitation of University-funded projects throughout the central Footscray area, including the potential of targeted philanthropic support of appropriate activities.

Governments at the State and Federal level could assist through direct funding of particular projects; relocation of Government functions into the 'University Town' precinct; and allowing areas of Crown land to be used to support projects that develop the University Town concept.

1. THE CONTEXT

THE KEY TO VICTORIA'S PROSPERITY IS EDUCATION

As a State without the natural resources of the mineral-rich regions of Australia, Victoria faces challenges in the context of a national economy which has been going through a mining boom. These can be met by harnessing our greatest assets, our human resources, using them to drive productivity and social inclusion, and putting ourselves at the forefront of the Asian century. This in turn, will also be of great value to the nation, as the economic indicators suggest that the benefits of the mining boom are already peaking.

Demand for quality education and training in Asia is huge and growing. Victoria can position itself as the "Education State", driving high participation in tertiary education, and increasing productivity for the State and the nation. Getting education right has big payoffs. Greater skills bring higher wages and a more adaptable workforce. If others recognise our leadership, they will come here to study, generating jobs, international linkages and other economic benefits. When Victoria is viewed nationally and internationally as 'the Education State', export earnings will rise, and our status as a 'good neighbour' during the Asian century will be improved, as will our productivity, living standards and social inclusion.

2. THE CHALLENGE

OPENING MELBOURNE'S WEST

A challenge for this bold vision is Melbourne's west, which has historically been under-represented in terms of infrastructure, educational attainment and opportunities to share in Victoria's prosperity. The region now encompasses the fastest growing population areas in Australia. But in order to remain one of the world's most liveable cities, and to help drive future prosperity, Melbourne must pay greater attention to the role of the Western suburbs. The key to unlocking the west is its gateway: Footscray.

The challenge is that Footscray has a perception problem. It has been seen as dated, unsafe, undeveloped and the first stop on the way to the 'wild west'. Rather than acting as a welcoming doorway to the exciting west, it has been a psychological barrier. Until Footscray is rejuvenated, it will act like a cork in a bottle, hindering the West's development, rather than fostering it.

3. THE SOLUTION

EDUCATION

The role of education in building strong, resilient and resourceful communities that encourage personal and organisational responsibility and provide the environment for business growth is becoming increasingly obvious. As populations in high-growth corridors expand, the need to provide concrete opportunities to lead the region's economic development is critical, as is the need to provide a more highly-skilled workforce to support the efforts of the business sector.

Partnerships are a key component of this approach to building resilience and self-reliance, and it is critical to link primary, secondary and tertiary education with business, industry, the community and governments at all levels to achieve genuine and sustainable transformation. Victoria University and the Maribyrnong City Council are leading by example in a ground-breaking project of renewal through education. In working together to address long-term and entrenched disadvantage in the town of Footscray, both organisations recognise that strengthening the population skill base and making it more productive builds important competitive advantage not only for the city itself, but for the western region, the State and the nation.

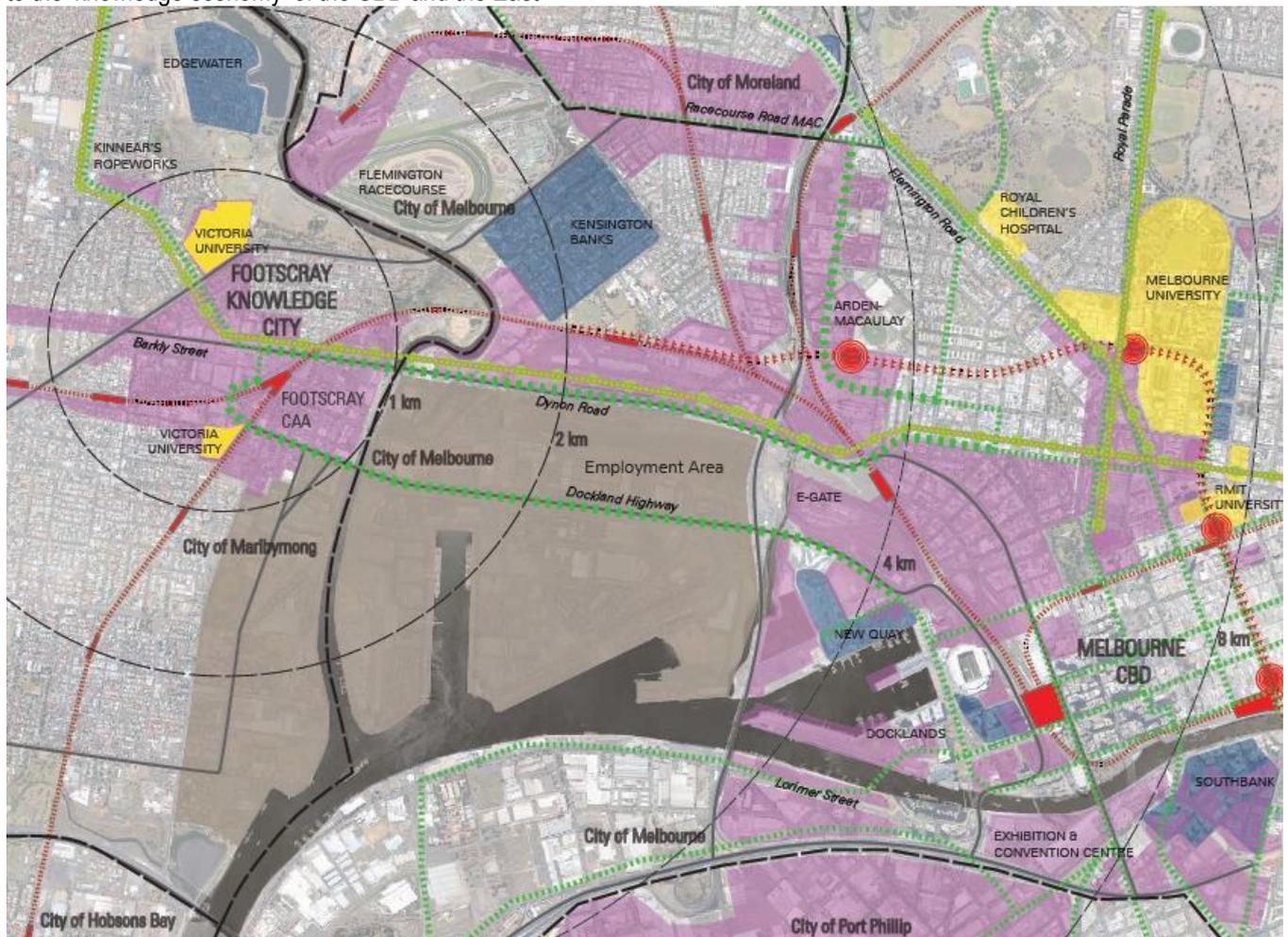
There is strong recognition of the importance of knowledge economies in driving the State's prosperity. The City of Footscray, with its close proximity to the CBD and genuine dynamism, is in a strong position to become a knowledge centre, but can only do so through strong and committed partnership activity. Such knowledge partnerships are already in place.

**4. THE OPPORTUNITY
FOOTSCRAY UNIVERSITYTOWN**

Plans are underway to develop Footscray as a dynamic, culturally diverse University Town with major regional transport, services and employment hubs. Its distinctive and diverse heritage and location on the Maribyrnong River will be celebrated with new mixed-use neighborhoods, a revitalised town centre and an extended and upgraded network of rejuvenated parks, quality streets and vibrant facilities. Underpinning this development will be Centres of Excellence in fields already present in Footscray.

The University Town concept, however, is more than an urban renewal project, and more than a tertiary education project. In unblocking the Western bottleneck, the plan acts as a catalyst to generate confidence, investment and employment critical for Victoria’s ongoing prosperity. It will foster involvement and investment at government and commercial levels which will galvanise and boost a nascent development landscape. The injection of government and private funding into *Footscray University Town* will ensure commercial interests are confident in the mid-to-long term investment potential for infrastructure and transport, for road networks, for rail modernisation and upgrades, for the freight and logistics sector, and for residential renewal. These vital frameworks will help underpin a stronger economy, and link the gateway of the west to the central Melbourne knowledge belt.

Figure 1 - The KNOWLEDGE CITY circle of activity: Footscray as the West’s gateway connection to the ‘knowledge economy’ of the CBD and the East



A partnership already exists with a definite plan to make Footscray the first University Town in a major capital city in Australia. In its *Strategic Plan 2012-2016*, VU commits to partnering with the Maribyrnong City Council to ensure that tertiary education becomes and remains a distinctive characteristic of the renaissance of Footscray as a University Town. Maribyrnong's Councillors have recently enthusiastically endorsed the potential of that vision in agreeing to partner with Victoria University to bring this vision to reality.

Footscray is just six kilometres from the CBD of Melbourne, and it will continue to change and grow rapidly over the next 30 years. The Central Activities Area comprises 5,012m². It boasts panoramic city views beyond the Maribyrnong River and Melbourne Ports. The Footscray Activities Area (FAA) is bounded by the Maribyrnong River in the east and major arterial connections: Geelong Road to the west, and Ballarat Road to the north. It is the true gateway to the Western Region of Melbourne. It is accessed from the central area of Melbourne over the Maribyrnong River via Ballarat Road, Dynon Road or Footscray Road, as well as being readily accessed from Geelong Road via the West Gate Bridge approach.

Footscray Railway Station is a major transit hub that has two metropolitan train lines, and rail links that pass through to Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong.

Currently there are about 14,000 people who live in Footscray, with an estimated worker population of 1,965 who have office-based jobs. Over the next 20 years it is forecast that Footscray will grow to a resident population of 30,000 and a working population of over 11,000. It will continue to serve a regional catchment that is also experiencing rapid growth and change. The population of Footscray is a mix of diverse cultures and people who span all stages of the life cycle. A range of products and services are accessed by the local and regional community. The presence of a number of education, health and community service providers means that visitors from across the Western Region come into Footscray on a regular basis to access regional services.

Against this existing backdrop, the University is working to consolidate its presence to help the population of the west achieve sustainable and resilient growth. It envisages the expansion of existing partnerships to further cement the University Town concept within Footscray. The location of teaching activities, student accommodation, shared-use community facilities, education-related retail and student amenities will transform the current environment into a vibrant place to live, work and play, and an attractive location for investment. The co-location of a number of higher education and TAFE programs in the centre of Footscray will capitalise on a variety of existing partnerships, including those that Victoria University has with The University of Melbourne, Le Cordon Bleu and others.

Footscray as a University Town and the prospective Arts and Creative Industries precinct is aligned closely to the direction being taken by Victoria University partners in Malaysia and China. There is scope as the precinct develops to build significant large-scale exchange programs into the curriculum. As the partnerships with VU already exist, it will represent an expansion through new programs with existing long-term international partners. As a consequence, large numbers of arts and creative industries students will be attracted to Footscray as part of their home-based Malaysian and Chinese degrees, while the Australian students will spend similar periods in Malaysia and China. This free-flow of talent will provide the resources to build the reputation of Footscray as a vibrant international arts and cultural centre at the international level.

Typically, a University Town will comprise around 20,000 students. With the combined force of the student numbers at Victoria University, The University of Melbourne, RMIT and ACU, there are approximately 150,000 students using services educational services and facilities within a 6 kilometre radius of the central business district. Within half an hour on public transport, students can move easily between Footscray, the CBD and Parkville. While the University Town concept involves Victoria University as a key driver, it does not presume that Victoria University has a monopoly on the student population which would inhabit or visit Footscray as part of this growth trajectory.

The growth of a University Town will act as an extraordinary stimulus to business both within Footscray, but also within the western region of Melbourne more generally. The western region is currently a net exporter of workers to other parts of Melbourne, not only stifling the region's development, but exacerbating the transport bottlenecks that are currently worsening in Melbourne. The development of a workforce educated and living in and around Footscray will produce skilled and professional workers available to support business development in the west, as well as providing a new source of entrepreneurial talent to commence new enterprises in the west.

While the scale of activity proposed for Footscray is larger, there are other examples of education serving as a mechanism for reinvigorating a depressed area. A case study is the example of Deakin and its expansion to the Geelong waterfront. The waterfront area in Geelong (between the coast and the CBD) had a range of huge former wool warehouses. These became derelict when the wool market collapsed. They were heritage listed and could not be demolished, but there was no practical use for them. They were a big inhibitor to developing the CBD and they were a visible sign of stagnation. Small business around them dried up. In the 1990s, Westfield and Deakin were encouraged to take over the buildings for use as shopping centres and as a city campus of Deakin, away from its original campus in what is now suburban Waurin Ponds. At the time, there was opposition to Deakin's new campus, with some claiming the concept would not work. The basic idea was to bring students into the city to help generate and support economic activity. Some 15 years later, it is clear the expansion has been very successful. The old pubs on Geelong's waterfront are now home to students rather than sailors, and what was previously a depressing and run-down part of the city is now a vibrant space. A range of small businesses have sprung up since the original development.

The success in Geelong happened because local stakeholders, most notably Deakin and the Geelong City Council, worked effectively with the three arms of government (in particular, planning at a State Government level, and support from the Federal Government for Deakin's capital expansion) to rejuvenate an area that was stagnant. The model that we propose is similar, but the potential impact will rejuvenate not just Footscray, but will serve as a catalyst for more rapid development in the west of Melbourne, which in turn will rebalance the city and move Victoria substantially towards a goal of becoming 'the Education State'.

In that regard, this project is more complex than simply providing funding to a university or a City Council. This project is about using the partnership strength and position of Victoria University as a mechanism for working with the City of Maribyrnong to improve the amenity, useability and desirability of Footscray as a place to live, work and play. It is about fostering greater amalgamation of key business, government and commercial interests to establish and encourage partnerships and to generate renewal on social, cultural, urban and economic levels. It will support business growth and transform a community that is rich in promise, but that currently underperforms on many social and economic measures, and that in turn can open the west of Melbourne to business and social development.

5. THE DRIVER

A UNIVERSITY WITH A SPECIAL MANDATE TO SERVICE AUSTRALIA'S FASTEST GROWING REGION

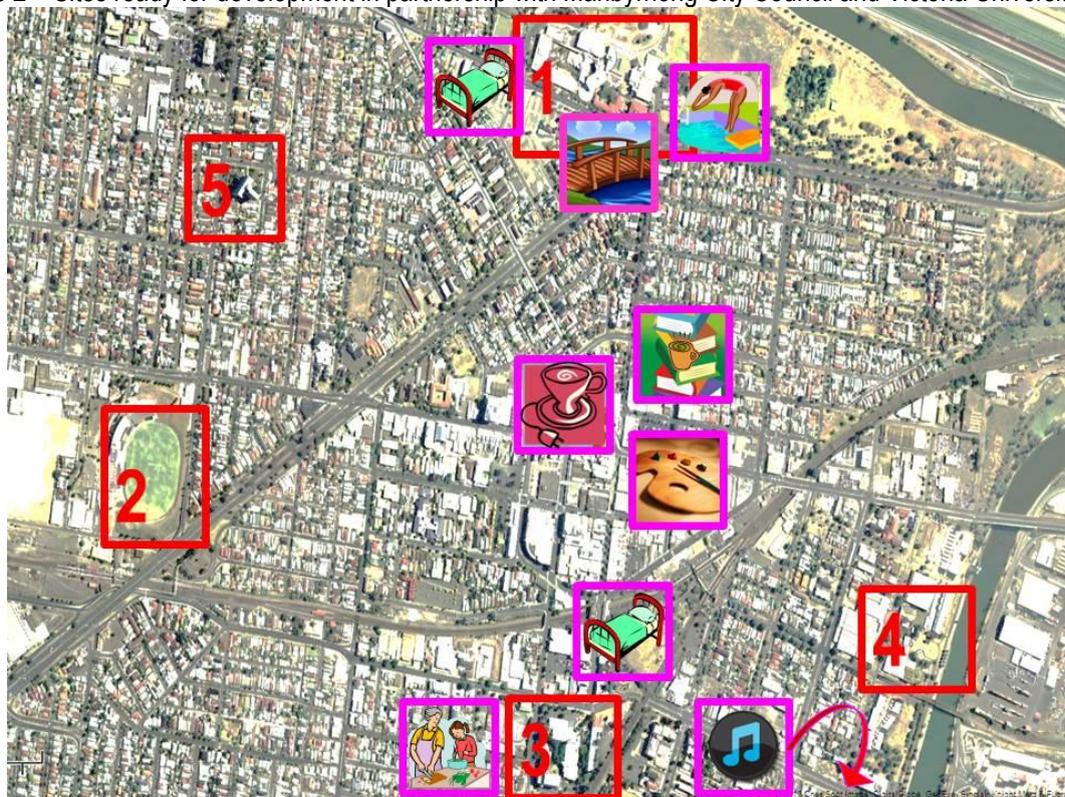
Victoria University has played an important role in contributing to the development of Footscray and the western region for almost a century. Since its origins in Footscray in 1916 when Footscray Technical School was established, Victoria University has clearly identified Footscray as the administrative heart of its operations that stretch from the CBD right through the outer western suburbs of Melbourne. An attractive Footscray rejuvenated by tertiary education into a knowledge centre will help to rebalance Melbourne, strengthen its status as a liveable city, and fill a critical missing piece in the identification of Victoria as 'the Education State'.

Victoria University is a tertiary institution like no other. Boasting dual-sector status, the University's delivery profile spans the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF, 1-10), serving students at certificate level (including apprenticeships) right through to post-graduate level. The University has a special mandate to service what is Australia's fastest-growing region. Population growth in the west has now outstripped Victoria's by double, and it has quadrupled in the last decade. It is predicated that the region will remain a growth hotspot for the next 20 years. The west is home to approximately 13.4% of Victoria's population, and of Melbourne's three growth corridors ranks as number one for both numerical population increase, and growth rate.

Factors driving this high growth trend in the western growth corridors include relative proximity to Melbourne's central areas, land affordability and diverse housing stock. The availability of secure, well located and affordable housing provides pathways to employment and education, supports choices, builds strong, connected and sustainable communities and provides opportunities to participate in community life. A strong skills base in the west means we can meet the other needs of the region – social, community, health, wellbeing and the economy.

Recent research also shows that there is a new cultural transition happening in Melbourne's west. Aspirational Australians are seeking affordable housing on the outer edge of the western growth corridor, and a new middle class are emerging on the inner west. A 'latte line' of middle class suburbs has been identified which stretches south from Essendon through to Yarraville and Williamstown. Quite simply, the West can now claim its own middle class precinct, wedged firmly between the CBD and the bulk of the region's population base.

Figure 2 – Sites ready for development in partnership with Maribyrnong City Council and Victoria University



1. Victoria University – Footscray Park campus
 2. Whitten Oval, home of the Western Bulldogs and location of specialised VU teaching facilities
 3. Footscray University – Footscray Nicholson Campus
 4. Footscray Community Arts Centre
 5. Western Hospital, part of the important Western Health partnership
- Icons outlined in pink – other potential developments already in planning:
1. Student Accommodation – Tiernan St and GroCon developments already flagged, with many other possibilities throughout Footscray (including Maribyrnong development flagged for Droop Street)
 2. Plaza Bridge across Ballarat Rd linking Footscray Park Campus to the Town
 3. Mills Close Redevelopment, providing community access to the University's gym and aquatic centre
 4. Downtown Bookshop and Coffee Shop, replacing existing bookshops at both Footscray campuses and taking students into CBD
 5. Relocation of some TAFE activity into a downtown Footscray location
 6. Arts Incubator Precinct, possibly based around Maddern Square and potential location for the University Art Collection
 7. Kitchen Incubator for small businesses, linked to excellent commercial kitchen facilities on Footscray Nicholson
 8. Music partnership with Kindred Studios in nearby Yarraville.