

## THIS PANDEMIC MIGHT LEAD TO POSITIVE CHANGE

Colleagues,

In the history of our Institute there has never been a more dramatic moment than the coronavirus crisis we are experiencing now. You have received my various messages along the way, as the effects of this pandemic have unfolded, culminating in the restricted access of our university laboratories and encouragement of staff to work at home.

I want to thank you for adjusting your research lives to this new reality. We realise that working from home presents real challenges to many of you, and we want to acknowledge the creative solutions colleagues have found.

Team conversations are vital to how we continue our work. In Business, Shah Miah is setting up a student research network. Historian Dianne Hall is convening a three-weekly Zoom meeting of lecturers and higher degree students to share digital archive research strategies, to discuss key history texts, and to rehearse conference papers. Others have regular lunch time Zoom get togethers and WhatsApp discussions.

My team and I are available to offer advice at any time. We will continue to syndicate news of funding opportunities, as we watch how the government stimulus packages to reactivate parts of the economy.

Our research will continue to focus on those aspects of sustainability and liveability where we have already made a name for ourselves.



On Wednesday morning, 1 April, joggers along The Tan in South Yarra were greeted by a number of elm trees wearing face masks for protection from the coronavirus. This was not just an April Fool's Day prank. The graffiti artist is trying to convey a really important point – that human and environmental lives are inextricably joined. [Image below, Source: Rob Pascoe]

We cannot have sustainable industries without liveable communities. And vice versa. The pandemic has reminded us that the economy and the society are not separate realities.

Historian William H. McNeill published a world history in 1976 entitled *Plagues and Peoples*. He showed that diseases, population declines, economic development, and the emergence of new religions were often connected to each other.



“...CONVEY A REALLY IMPORTANT POINT – THAT HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL LIVES ARE INEXTRICABLY JOINED...”

# COVER STORY

**P**andemics are caused by ecological factors, but they also have profound social and economic effects. They nudge important changes in human behaviours, including the way we treat other species.

**O**ur research in sustainable industries will win greater attention in the media and in the broader public because of what is happening in 2020. For example, our work towards extracting potash from central Australian lakes takes on a new urgency if there is a break in the global supply lines that bring potash from Canada.

**S**imilarly, the liveability of our communities requires us to undertake new research. The recent bushfires had already thrown into sharp relief the need for identifying the implications of such catastrophic events for the shape of Australia's tourism industry, for how we understand the ecology of our continent, and for the way we assess risk management. In some respects, the bushfires were a precursor event to the coronavirus.

**T**he pandemic has restricted physical access to university campuses, but we have moved much of our research and teaching online. Online education, as provided by schools and media organisations such as the ABC, will help unemployed Australians to retrain for jobs in the post-virus economy.

**W**e can expect to see increased funding opportunities in food where we do important work in finding alternatives to meat and opportunities for our local manufacturers, and in community health where we work in tandem with the new Footscray Hospital.

**O**ther research underpinning the new liveability to benefit from public investment might include distributed energy programs, urban transit, and construction, as stimulus investment will likely to be directed towards future industries.

**C**onventional economic policy has been turned on its head by this crisis. Working with communities and private industry partners, our researchers will play their part in this new normal.

**T**he post-virus world will certainly be different and has the potential to be a better place in which to live.

Professor Stephen Gray

Director, Institute for Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities

Victoria University, Melbourne

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# INFRASTRUCTURE

## VIRTUAL FENCING HOPES TO REDUCE ROAD-KILL

Whether virtual fencing is effective at mitigating road-kill, a problem that is on the rise in Victoria with the increasing pace of urban development, is being investigated by Dr Christine Connelly, one of our two environmental science lecturers.

Virtual fencing is triggered by the headlights of approaching vehicles and emits sounds and flashing lights to discourage wildlife from crossing the road while the vehicle passes. The technology shows promise as a way to reduce road-kill, but a rigorous study is required to fully understand its efficacy.



IMAGE: DR CHRISTINE CONNELLY AND STUDENT CHEYANNE BURDETT INSPECT ROADSIDE VEGETATION [SOURCE: STUART CLEGG]

The study is a collaborative research project and Christine Connelly is working with the Bass Coast Shire, Phillip Island Nature Parks and local citizen scientists, to carry out the project at Rhyll on Phillip Island, a hot-spot for wildlife-vehicle collisions.



IMAGE: THE ROAD FROM RHYLL TO COWES IS HAZARDOUS FOR PHILLIP ISLAND'S WILDLIFE [SOURCE: STUART CLEGG]

During semester two, science student Cheyanne Burdett took part in the study, collecting data about existing fences and vegetation along the roadside for her Applied Project in the final year of her Bachelor of Science.

A local paper, *The Advertiser*, published an article on 11 December quoting Christine Connelly and explaining the research project to local residents. Read the article here: <http://bit.ly/35ogkRT>

A video about the project and our student's involvement has been produced by Victoria University, <http://youtu.be/Y3CLdYQGZ1A>, with a team led by senior video producer, Stuart Clegg.

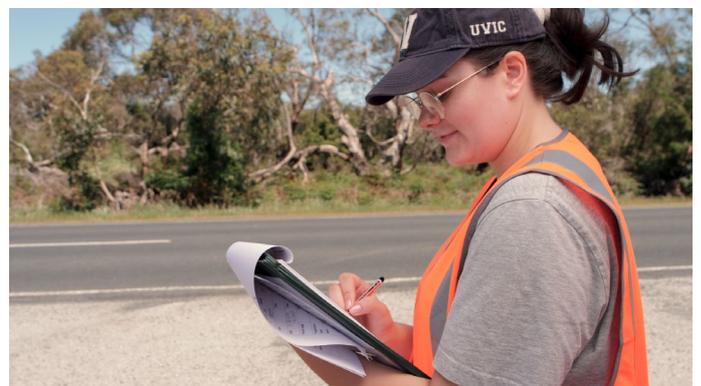


IMAGE: CHEYANNE BURDETT MAKES NOTES IN THE FIELD [SOURCE: STUART CLEGG]

# INFRASTRUCTURE

## VICTORIA TAKES CHARGE OF ENERGY

The Parliament of Victoria has recently legislated to amend existing laws, in order to take back oversight of the development of the electricity infrastructure in Victoria, from quasi-national regulatory authorities.

These developments follow rising concern that existing regulatory processes were impeding reliable supply in the context of the Government's widely supported policy to increase production from renewable sources in Victoria.

Last year VEPC, situated within the Victoria Institute of Strategic Economic Studies, undertook a major study to assess policy needed to ensure reliable supply in Victoria. Its report *Ensuring reliable electricity supply in Victoria to 2028: suggested policy changes*, released in November 2019 concluded that existing rules could not be relied on to ensure reliable supply and suggested that the Government propose changes to those rules or alternatively that it decide to derogate (diverge) from them.



IMAGE: KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON: ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR BRUCE MOUNTAIN [SOURCE: VICTORIA UNIVERSITY]

In mid-2018, the Victoria Energy Policy Centre (VEPC) began operations following the award of a research grant from the Victorian Government. VEPC is directed by Associate Professor Bruce Mountain. Commenting on the new legislation, Bruce Mountain said: 'The Government has decided to derogate from the rules. This is a major development. VEPC is very pleased to have had the opportunity to contribute analysis and information leading up to this decision.'

## ISILC/VUBS EVENT: PUBLISHING IN QUALITY JOURNALS

ISILC and the Victoria University Business School organised an exceptional research event on 13 February, inviting an editor-in-chief and senior editorial members of higher-ranked journals to a meeting at City Flinders Campus. The expert panel members included:

Assoc Professor John Lamp, Editor-in Chief, AJIS

Assoc Professor Sharif As-Saber, RMIT

Professor Sardar Islam, Victoria University

Assoc Professor Himanshu Shee, Victoria University

More than 25 Business academics and research students attended the event, asking how they might improve their publication record and also lift the quality of their publications.

The event was sponsored by Prof Mark Farrell, Pro Vice Chancellor of Business and Law, as part of his effort to improve the research culture of the Business School. The event opened with a talk by Prof Stephen Gray, the ISILC Director. It was organised and chaired by Assoc Professor Shah Miah, the ISILC Business Research Discipline Leader.

# INFRASTRUCTURE

## SHARING BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC KNOWLEDGE WITH CHINESE RESEARCHERS

Now four years old, the CUFE-VU Centre for Research on Business and Economics (CRBE) has opportunities for researchers in Australia and China in areas such as the following:

- energy and environmental economics
- economics of trade and tourism
- public finance and public policy management
- international financial reporting standards
- social welfare and social security
- international governance
- health and sport economics

The CRBE is headed up by Dr Yongqiang Li, a Senior Lecturer in Law at the College of Law and Justice.

Doing business with China or doing research on China requires deeper understanding of China's economy, society and systems of governance and businesses strategies need to be developed to cater to specific new customer preferences and requirements. The same can be said for Australia. Flagship events such as annual conference will help advance mutual understanding between the two countries, their scholars and their business communities. The conferences also provide excellent opportunities for Australian and Chinese stakeholders to showcase their initiatives and achievements and prepare for doing business between China and Australia.

Armed with a multidisciplinary educational background that spans applied physics, the law and public policy, Dr Li's research focuses on establishing the evidence base for public policy and legal decision-making from behavioural and empirical perspectives, including Nudge Theory. He currently (co-)supervises nine PhD students who work in related areas. His current research project investigates the interaction disruptive technologies and law. He is developing mathematical models with colleagues to apply artificial intelligence to intellectual property law and migration law.

Dr Li teaches Statistics, Econometrics, Operations Research, Decision Science, Taxation Law, Corporations Law, Intellectual Property Law, Evidence and Criminal Procedures, Civil Procedures and Contract Law.



IMAGE: DR YONGQIANG LI

If you are interested in becoming a Research Associate of CRBE, contact Dr Yongqiang Li directly at [Yongqiang.Li@vu.edu.au](mailto:Yongqiang.Li@vu.edu.au).

# VALE PROFESSOR NIGEL STEPTO

## (12 SEPTEMBER 1971 – 4 FEBRUARY 2020)



It is with much sadness that we acknowledge the death from cancer of Professor Nigel Stepto on Tuesday 4 February 2020.

Nigel studied at the University of Cape Town in South Africa where he completed a Science degree with Honours in Marine Biology, a Masters in Zoology, before a second Honours degree in Exercise Science. He then travelled to Australia and completed his PhD in 2002 at RMIT under the supervision of Prof John Hawley, with whom he continued to collaborate for the next 18 years.

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Nigel commenced his academic career at Monash University in 2002, working as a postdoctoral research fellow and lecturer in Exercise Physiology. He then joined Victoria University in 2007 as a Lecturer in Exercise Physiology, in the School (later College) of Sport and Exercise Science, where after several promotions, he was awarded Professor of Clinical Exercise Science in 2018. In addition to being a significant contributor to teaching in Exercise Physiology in the College, he was also highly active in numerous leadership roles that focused on supporting postgraduate research students.

Nigel's great passion was research and his research career was outstanding, with global impact. Nigel was a great contributor, a vibrant and committed researcher, and passionate to whatever he committed himself. He sought the highest standards in himself and in others. His research traversed exercise physiology, muscle metabolism, insulin sensitivity, epigenetics and increasingly, his highly prominent work focused on women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). He worked closely with Prof Helena Teede from Monash for over two decades in this PCOS research, where he was recognised as an international leader in PCOS, physical activity in women's health and unravelling mechanisms of disease. Nigel was an active member of their NH&MRC Centre for Research Excellence, as well as their National and International network, where he made key contributions in advancing science and developing and disseminating international guidelines - now used in 126 countries. He made key contributions in developing recommendations for exercise interventions in PCOS. He published over 84 journal articles, half of these during the past 5 years and his work has attracted strong citations. Nigel was recently awarded almost \$1M in NH&MRC funding as first chief investigator. Nigel was an invited speaker at numerous Australian and international conferences.

Nigel's research has been career-building and indeed, career-defining for many people, including 3 postdoctoral research fellows, 12 PhD graduates (6 as principal supervisor) and 16 Honours students as principal supervisor. He has 2 current PhD students and 1 postdoctoral fellow. All have received exceptionally high-quality training under Nigel's guidance and as a result, many are now excellent early career scientists.

# VALE PROFESSOR NIGEL STEPTO (12 SEPTEMBER 1971 – 4 FEBRUARY 2020)

His outstanding contribution to facilitating so many people's careers was recognised in 2017 when Nigel was awarded the Victoria University Vice-Chancellor's Citation for Excellence in Research and Research Training (Supervision).

In recent years Nigel provided outstanding research leadership at Victoria University. He led the Womens Health research group, and was a vital member of the leadership team of Victoria University's new Institute for Health and Sport, where as Co-Deputy Director – Research Training he was heavily involved in managing over 200 research students. He was also a highly active member of Victoria University's Research Executive Group. Nigel was also a strong contributor to the national body, Exercise and Sport Science Australia (ESSA), including most recently, as Chair of the ESSA Research Committee. This was recognised through his recent posthumous award of an ESSA Fellowship. Nigel was also a Project Director of the Australian Institute for Musculoskeletal Science (AIMSS), a joint medical research Institute between Victoria University, Western Health and the University of Melbourne.

Nigel was an active member of the Australian Physiological Society (AuPS) since 2007. He made numerous contributions to the society through many presentations at annual meetings and he organised a symposium on High Intensity Intermittent Exercise and Training at the 2013 meeting in Geelong. Many of his former PhD students and postdoctoral fellows continue this work as current AuPS members, including two as council members.

Just seven days before his death, over 50 staff and PhD students from Victoria University were privileged to visit Nigel and pay their respects to him and his family. That occasion saw the announcement of the Nigel Stepto Travel Award to support international conference travel for research students, a Nigel Stepto PhD Student Scholarship, and finally, an Outstanding Service Award from the Institute for Health and Sport. Nigel left us too soon and he will be greatly missed by his many colleagues and friends in AuPS and around the world. He is survived by his wife, Fiona Dempster and his daughters Matilda (14 years) and Harriet (11 years).



A NIGEL STEPTO  
PODCAST  
RECOMMENDED  
WOMEN WITH  
POLYCYSTIC  
OVARIAN  
SYNDROME  
(PCOS) TAKE MORE  
EXERCISE  
[SOURCE: FX  
MEDICINE]

# SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIES

## UPDATE: PLANETARY HEALTH

A forum was held on January 30, attracting 120 participants from right across the university.

The project is led by deputy vice chancellor research, Prof Corinne Reid, and the university's chief finance and operating officer, Mr Ian Ford. Dr Jeannie Rea (Arts & Education) has been appointed a senior project officer to help guide the work.

Corinne Reid: 'Indigenous communities across Australia are foundational custodians of planetary health in our country. I hope we will be guided by this wisdom as we take our first steps in this conversation at Victoria University. Indigenous voices are at the heart of a place-based approach to planetary health and tie us strongly to both the history and the future of this place we call "home".'

The second forum was held on 24 February.

In essence, place-based planetary health is an ambitious research-based initiative that provides direction and connection to a wide range of university staff and students across a wide range of physical and social sciences.

In per capita terms Australia contributes greatly to the planet's environmental problems. As the smoke from this summer's bushfires lapped around the globe, the Australian maelstrom dominated the world's media throughout January. At the same time Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are well-regarded internationally for the depth and quality of their research.

The challenges in planetary health are as much political and social as they are environmental and natural, demanding a research-informed style of activism.

Presentations and discussions from the first two forums, and others that will follow, will be available on the university intranet.

Contact: [jeannie.rea@vu.edu.au](mailto:jeannie.rea@vu.edu.au)

## PLANETARY HEALTH 30 JAN 2020



IMAGE: PROFESSOR REID ADDRESSES THE CROWD AT THE PLANETARY HEALTH FORUM

With the next Planetary Health Forum set to take place at our Footscray Park campus on 24 February, we took a look back at the last forum and the topics and areas discussed...

The first VU forum to look at planetary health saw VU staff from a wide variety of disciplines and departments come together on 30 January 2020.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Professor Corinne Reid led the forum and expressed her delight at the large number of staff who attended and the cross-section they represented.

Planetary health is defined as a movement focussed on finding solutions to the complex challenges impacting the health of people and the planet on which we live, in recognition that the wellbeing of each depends upon the other. In particular, *Place-based* planetary health involves finding local solutions for local communities whilst sharing what we know with communities around the world.

# SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIES

People were invited to share their reasons for getting involved. Reasons given which included the recent bushfire situation bringing the climate crisis into stark view for them. For others, planetary health was already an important element of their work, and some felt strongly that VU as an institution of research and thought leadership has a moral obligation to take an active role in this space.



IMAGE: A TEAM DISCUSSES OPPORTUNITIES FOR VU AROUND PLANETARY HEALTH

Participants gathered into groups to discuss ideas on possible innovation across four key areas: the university, teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

A multitude of options were discussed.

Those discussing the university proposed solar panels on the roofs of our campus buildings, an internal database to share commonly purchased items such as cables to reduce e-waste, and more community gardens with compost bins at all our campuses.

The teaching and learning groups identified the need to make planetary health a key factor in studies, and part of the curriculum. Proposed ways included embedding planetary health topics into generalist courses, and to harness interest in the topic to tailor course content.

Some proposed a bolt-on planetary health literacy module, as well as committing students to planetary health focused extra-curricular activities such as volunteering throughout their course.

The teams that looked at research opportunities felt there was an imperative to focus on bushfires and reduce single use plastics. They felt VU could contribute by continuing to develop big data solutions to emerging situations, as well as further work on technological advancements around water quality improvement and economic modelling.

Finally, the groups looking at our wider community identified the need to better understand the people who make up the VU community, their unique planetary health issues and opportunities as well as to highlight the importance for learning from indigenous communities in this conversation. Groups looking at this area also felt there it was important to engage with the community in an inclusive way that enabled them to understand the information. Finally, they felt that there was a clear need for advocacy, to 'get political' and engage communities to influence government and other powers for positive change.



IMAGE: DISCUSSIONS TAKE PLACE AT THE PLANETARY HEALTH FORUM

When reflecting on the ideas proposed, Professor Reid said that a large majority focused on climate change, identifying that as a clear and present idea in people's minds when thinking about planetary health. She also highlighted that planetary health is much broader than this and includes creating liveable cities and strong, healthy communities.

# SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIES



IMAGE: FURTHER DISCUSSIONS TAKE PLACE AT THE PLANETARY HEALTH FORUM

The main feedback from staff was that planetary health needs to become embedded in our everyday work and that staff and senior leadership working together would provide the strongest platform. Professor Reid outlined a range of commitments being made by senior leadership to support the planetary health initiative at VU.

Professor Reid closed the event by thanking everyone for their attendance and encouraged everyone to personally join the [Planetary Health Alliance](#), sharing that plans are underway for VU to apply for membership as an organisation.

A second forum on planetary health will be held on 24 February, C203, Level 2, Building C, Footscray Park.



IMAGE: PRESENTING RESPONSES FROM ONE OF THE GROUP DISCUSSIONS AROUND

★ [Click here to join the VU Planetary Health mailing list.](#)

All of the ideas captured at the Forum were collected to be considered. Follow this link [Planetary Health Forum, Jan 30](#) for the presentation in January.

MORE IMAGES FROM THE FORUM



# SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIES

## WHAT WE LEAVE IN OUR WAKE

The aerodynamics of a car or any other object that moves at speed includes a flow field, including the wake behind the moving 'bluff body'. Inside this downstream wake is the eye of recirculation, like the eye of a storm on a weather map.

Usually the moving object has dimples or other surface adaptations that minimise the drag, such as in racing cars. But what would happen if we instead applied porous media to the surfaces of bluff bodies?

In this experiment, using the work of doctoral student Sakineh Sadeghipour, this idea is tested using cylinders that had circular, square and rectangular cross sections.

The porous materials were sheets of polyurethane open cell materials with three different values of pores per inch (PPI), namely, 20, 40 and 60. Significantly, the principal effect of the porous media was to cause the eyes of the recirculation region to be located further downstream.

The effect of the permeability was increasingly diminished in the square and rectangular geometries. The effect of the porous media applied was to dampen down the normal stresses further downstream of the bluff bodies.

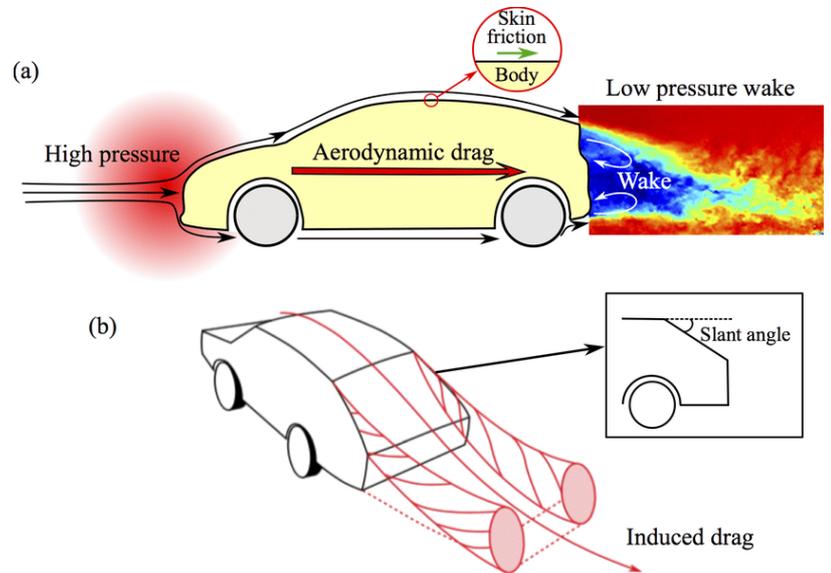


IMAGE: THE AERODYNAMICS OF A CAR TRAVELLING FORWARDS [SOURCE: RESEARCHGATE]

Reference: [Sadeghipour, S.](#), [Ali, S. A. S.](#), [Liu, X.](#), [Azarpeyvand, M.](#) and [Thorpe, G. R.](#) 'Control of flows around bluff bodies mediated by porous materials', *Experimental Thermal and Fluid Science*, Volume 114, 1 June 2020, Paper Number: 110048.

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY

## TROUBLES ABOUT THE TROUBLES



IMAGE: PEACE WALL IN BELFAST, 2019, WITH AN ACERBIC REFERENCE TO THE EUROPEAN UNION [SOURCE: SUPPLIED]

On 9 March, the VU historians group hosted a seminar by Dr Chris McConville on research ethics and oral history. The talk was entitled:

**T**he Boston College Tapes”: Research ethics and the problem with oral history

The violent years of Northern Ireland, from 1966, and known as The Troubles are back in the news this month. Brexit has opened all sorts of questions about links between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, just as Sinn Fein records the most votes in the latest Irish elections.

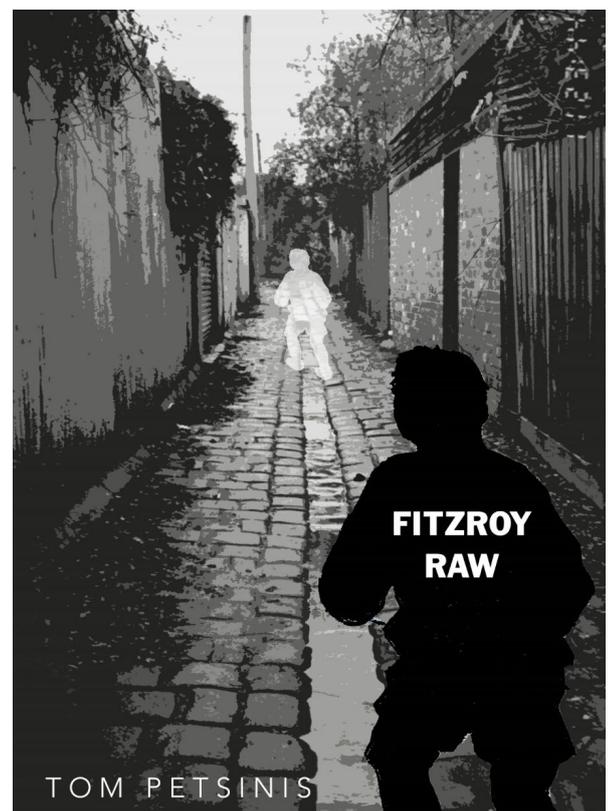
Boston College is one of America's wealthiest universities, following the fundraising drive of its current president, William P. Leahy SJ. BC has always kept strong connections with its Irish-American heritage, and it was from here that tape recordings were made with paramilitaries who had been involved in The Troubles on one side or the other. These tapes were intended to be confidential, but were subpoenaed by the courts and police in Northern Ireland later gained access to some of them as potential evidence in ongoing murder inquiries.

The methodology of this research project and the continuing dispute about police access to interviews, raise important questions, for historians, just as they do for university ethics managers, especially as regards confidentiality, informed consent in interviewing, and academic researchers' control over their findings.

## SIXTIES FITZROY

The latest novel by Dr Tom Petsinis, former Victoria University mathematician, poet and author, will be available shortly. It is the story of Nick Mangos, an immigrant boy from Macedonia who grows up in this quintessential working-class suburb. Of course, the title suggests both the rawness of the neighbourhood, and the sound of the then local AFL club, the Lions. Order your copy from

<https://scholarly.info/book/fitzroy-raw/>



# CULTURAL DIVERSITY

## HOW COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCE MEDIA REPORTS OF TERRORISM

For three years now Dr Virginie Andre has organised a series of international workshops in Europe, Northern America, Southeast Asia and the Maghreb. These workshops bring together media broadcasters, strategic communication specialists, front-line practitioners, academics and policy makers. The participants discuss and share first-hand experiences of the impact media reporting of terrorist events has had on their own work as key communicators and policymakers.

Media reporting also affects how individuals and communities, as well as mainstream societies understand, interpret and react to particular terrorist events. It shapes how communities perceive not only mainstream society and governments but also their own communities and place within that particular society. Sensational and misguided media reporting of terrorist events can undermine social cohesion, cause irreparable damage to communities, polarise societies and give rise to and perpetuate discrimination, racism and violence. Thus, it has become urgent to better understand the effects of media reporting of terrorist events in view of developing best practice recommendations for media handling of terrorism that balances the need for security, including diminishing the effectiveness of terrorism output, and the media's interests.

In light of the significant impact of media reporting of terrorism on communities, three workshops were held during 2019 with the concerned communities in Chicago and Vancouver in partnership with CAIR Chicago (<https://www.cairchicago.org/blog/2019/6/june-10-11-understanding-the-impact-of-media-terrorism-reporting-a-communitys-perspective>) and Life After Hate, and in London in partnership with Scotland Yard and the Finsbury Park Mosque.

In Chicago, one of the two-day workshops provided a dedicated space for young people to explain and share with other participants how they have experienced the media reporting of terrorism.

In all three cities, participants explained how the reporting of terrorism has led to an expectation that Muslim communities and Muslims must condemn terrorist attacks on the basis of their faith, implying an indirect solidarity of Muslims with terrorism should they fail to do so. This can lead to collective shame, fear, and paranoia and, in some instances, it can affect one's sense of belonging and identity. In Chicago, the problematic and excessive media coverage of the 9/11 attacks continues to affect generations of young Muslim Americans and how they see their place in American society. A young woman explained how she does not identify at school as Muslim as it is less problematic in her day-to-day school life:

'I'D RATHER BE SEEN AT SCHOOL AS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN THAN A MUSLIM. IN A WAY, I AM LUCKY AS I AM BLACK, SO PEOPLE DO NOT ASSUME STRAIGHT AWAY THAT I AM MUSLIM. SO I DON'T TALK ABOUT MY FAITH. IT'S EASIER THAT WAY.'

IMAGE: CANADIAN WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT READING ARTICLE WRONGLY REPORTING BREIVIK ATTACKS AS AL QAEDA MASSACRE [SOURCE: SUPPLIED]



# CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Community workshop participants in northern America and in the United Kingdom identified a clear bias when media report on terrorism, depending on 'whether the attacker is white or is a person of colour.' They felt that often 'brown' or 'black' attackers or communities are framed within a particular narrative painting them as 'evil' while white attackers or communities are depicted as 'simple human beings who have gone wrong.' This use of biased narratives, which aims to demonise particular communities and perpetrators of certain faith or of different skin colour contributes to the polarisation of societies and, in some instances, according to participants, can increase the risk of radicalisation of individuals.

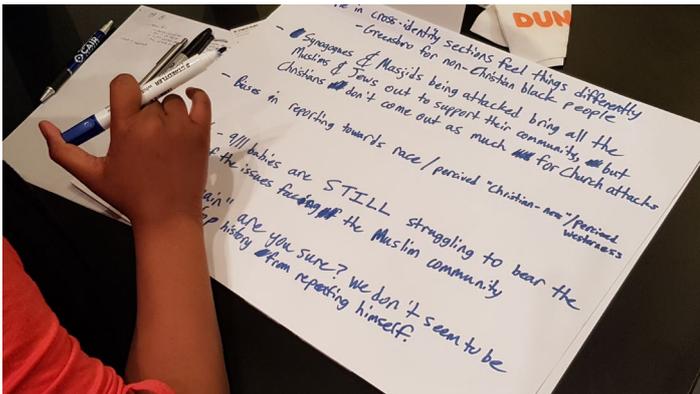


IMAGE: AMERICAN WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS DISCUSSING WHETHER MEDIA REPORTING OF TERRORISM IS BIASED [SOURCE: SUPPLIED]

The Chicago workshop also offered the unique opportunity to participants to exchange with former right-wing extremists about their journey into and out of radicalisation, white supremacy racist ideology, and media biased reporting of terrorism.

At the Finsbury Park mosque workshop, UK participants had the opportunity to hear from Spanish reporter and former Islamic State hostage Marc Maginedas. He shared his personal experiences regarding the problematic reporting of terrorist events, and the respective American and British community perspectives on media reporting of terrorism.



IMAGE: SPANISH REPORTER AND FORMER IS HOSTAGE MARC MARGINEDAS EXPLAINING TO WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS THE IMPACT OF MEDIA TERRORISM [SOURCE: SUPPLIED]



IMAGE: CAIR CHICAGO DIRECTOR DESCRIBING THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE TO UK WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS [SOURCE: SUPPLIED]



SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW DR VIRGINIE ANDRE AND WORKSHOP COORDINATOR ONNI SARVELA DISCUSSING THE WORKSHOP FINDINGS [SOURCE: SUPPLIED]

Finally, all participants have strongly welcomed the opportunity to have a safe space to discuss these issues openly and with different stakeholders. They have expressed the wish for an increase in this type of activity.

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY

In July and October 2019, Virginie Andre delivered trainings on Media and Countering Violent Extremism to 60 Thai practitioners and military personnel and 30 Singaporean civil servants. The training allows her to disseminate results from the various workshops to front-line practitioners in order to build awareness and assist in shaping better practices in addressing and reporting on terrorist and violent extremist related events.



IMAGE: COLLECTIVE EXERCISE WITH THAI WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS DURING MINDSET CHANGE MODULE OF MEDIA AND CVE TRAINING [SOURCE: SUPPLIED]

Virginie Andre also had the opportunity to caution policy-makers and media practitioners against doing the work of terrorists and the impact of the reporting on affected communities at the Global Coalition Against Daesh international conference on Words Matter. She also spoke about her concept of the duty of care or 'do no harm' towards communities when reporting on terrorism as well as presented policy recommendations. Finally, she contributed to the Coalition's awareness video campaign and media training on the challenges of reporting on terrorist events. The video is available at: <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/we-are-not-here-to-do-the-work-of-the-terrorists-for-them/>

The research findings on media reporting of terrorism and its impact were further presented at the Nordic conference on violent extremism in Aarhus, Denmark in November 2019.

## LEARNING FROM FORMER WHITE SUPREMACISTS

The second week of March was a busy one for Associate Professor Debra Smith and Dr Teresa De Fazio. Their guests that week were Robert Örell and Tony McAleer, two of the world's leading activists working to assist people disentangle themselves from ultra-right groups.

'Shame' and childhood trauma, says Tony McAleer, is what drove him to engage in right-wing extremism for 15 years. He co-founded Life After Hate in 2011. Robert Örell described the skill of these groups in giving their members a sense of purpose and community connection which was missing in their lives. He has served as a member of the European Commission's RAN (Radicalisation Awareness Network).



PHIL SHEPHARD, CHARLES ALLEN APM, DR TERESA DE FAZIO, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DEBRA SMITH, HON TIM WATTS MP, ROBERT ÖRELL AND TONY MCALEER, SPEAKERS AT THE 12 MARCH EVENING FORUM [SOURCE: VICTORIA UNIVERSITY]

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY

On Monday they filmed a training video for frontline practitioners. On Tuesday they met with adjunct researcher Dr Kate Barelle, who works with STREAT, a social enterprise for at-risk youth. They also presented at a forum hosted by the Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Communities. On Wednesday they met with the Victoria Police. The week's activities culminated with a special forum organised by the University's Cultural Diversity Office called *Learning about Hate: Creating a Connected Community*. This forum was opened by Hon Tim Watts, the Member for Gellibrand who noted the particular importance of the University's collaboration in contributing to understand and respond to an increasing global problem. Other speakers at this forum included Mr Charles Allen, from the Institute for Economics and Peace, and Prof Stephen Gray. The forum was moderated by Mr Phil Shephard, director of Active Leadership. It was well attended by representatives of government, researchers, community, faith groups and the consular corps.

## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS:

On Friday night, 13 March, SBS News ran a segment on the forum, available at <https://mms.tveyes.com/ProgramSummaryView.aspx?ProgramSummaryItemID=b1e4bed8-f665-496c-b080-6d1479069022>

Bianca Hall, 'Meet the former violent Nazis who now preach compassion', *The Age*, 15 March.

## HIGH TIME TO DEPART

A farewell event for poetry educator Dr Mary Weaven was held on Friday, 28 February. The host, Associate Professor Mary-Rose McLaren began with a poem she had composed for the occasion, in the spirit of Henry Lawson.

IMAGE: DR MARY WEAVEN



*There was movement at the campus for the word had passed around*

*That the Mare from old VU had got away*

*She was off touring in her Kombi*

*She's no geriatric zombie*

*You'll find her reading by the campfire night and day.*

*She will take her own desires for the bush life and retreat*

*Marking moments from her teaching and the tramping of her feet*

*In the making of the justice that the unions each assay –*

*And they say she'll keep on driving*

*Through the night times ever striving*

*For enlightenment, empowerment and equity of pay.*

Mary Weaven opened her speech with a few lines from Andrew Marvell's poem, published in 1681:

*For at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near,  
And yonder all before us lie,  
Deserts of vast eternity*

There is a strong sense of urgency there. We must act quickly. Those deathly '*deserts of vast eternity*' are stalking us.

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There's no time to waste. *Time's winged chariot is hurrying near!* These are the words that Marvell hoped would seduce the object of his desires. Induce a sense of panic and then have his wicked way.

Seductive words do have an impact on how we view the world, and on how we act upon the world. We currently have a Prime Minister from marketing: 'How good is Australia?' The rhetorical question has never sounded so hollow or so sinister.

But back to the *winged chariot*. When I taught this poem, I took great joy in showing students how to recognise and 'talk back' to persuasion. Once they were confident about 'talking back' we could move on from there, to develop our own persuasive skills. These are the skills that allow us to convince others of important, pressing matters. This is how we develop agency, responsibility, and it is how we become good citizens. 'Political literacy', this could be called. And one way to develop that sort of literacy – any sort of literacy – is to build on the skills of poets ... literary artists ... to strengthen our own literacy.

How we educate the next generation has never been so important. Universities have a vital role to play here, of course, and so do secondary and primary schools. When I started to put these words together, the south east part of Australia was still burning. Millions of wild animals, birds and insects have been killed because we did not heed the warnings of climate experts. Terms like 'climate change refugees' have entered our lexicon. These are powerful words, powerful concepts, and we want the next generation to have the confidence to respond to powerful language with equally powerful action. That is what education needs to do. Sounds a bit like 'praxis'.

We want the next generation also to *enjoy* the power of words. It is possible to actively ENJOY learning about our language, and to ENJOY learning how to resist seductive lines that might actually be taking us in directions that we would rather not go, directions that are not in our long-term interests.

To my way of thinking, it is the English teachers in secondary schools who play a central role in doing this work.

English is still a compulsory subject in secondary schools, and long may it remain so.

Over the last 18 years, VU has given me the opportunity to work with the next generation of English teachers ... many of them are now the *current* generation of English teachers! ... and I've had the opportunity to shape the way that these people operate within their chosen profession: teaching. This has been a fabulous privilege, and I'll miss it very much. Working with teachers, and pre-service teachers, is an absolute delight.

I want to thank: Brenda Cherednichenko, Tony Kruger, my PhD and Minor Thesis students, Tom Clark, with whom I began my poetry research, all of my sessional colleagues, a fabulous team of ex-colleagues, some now retired, and sadly some deceased, current colleagues who've kindly come along today, Jen Curley and her team, my darling partner, Mic, who is also a VU ex-student, as are two of our three children.

*WHEN you've rattled around VU – for almost  
twenty years;  
When the past, by distance softened, nearly fills  
your eyes with tears –*

*You are haunted oft, wherever or however you may  
roam,  
By an inkling that you ought to spend a bit more  
time at home.*

*You forget the petty quarrels – work issues that  
used to jar –  
You think fondly of all your colleagues – how  
they'll wonder where you are;*

*When emails no longer occupy every night and day,  
When lingering over coffee – makes you glad to be  
away,*

*When, in short, you've done your best, in the  
fullness of your heart,  
Then it's time to pack your bags . . . And it's high  
time to depart.*

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## NETDS: EXCEPTIONAL VU PRESERVICE TEACHERS ARE WORKING IN MELBOURNE'S MOST DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS

The National Exceptional Teaching for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS) is a research project in which Victoria University is currently participating. This project is funded by the Department of Education and Training and is also being delivered by Deakin University and ACU (Brisbane campus). The project was originally developed in 2008 by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) under the leadership of Professor Jo Lampert and Professor Bruce Burnett.

The aim of the NETDS program is to support graduate teachers to become effective teachers when working in low socio-economic schools. Understanding the challenges to schooling that are faced by low income families and their children is a fundamental aim of this program. Equipping graduate teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to effectively tackle disadvantage in schools is a social justice standpoint that underpins this work.

VU NETDS preservice teachers are placed in schools that are identified as disadvantaged according to the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICESA). During their placement, preservice teachers work collaboratively with mentor teachers and leading teachers to develop inclusive teaching and learning lesson plans. Preservice teachers also engage in extra-curricular activities that provide exposure to how schools work constructively to ensure that all students, despite their backgrounds, can flourish.

In their tutorials, NETDS preservice teachers participate in theoretical debates on topics such as poverty, social justice, the hidden curriculum and inequity in schooling. Alongside their lecturers, preservice teachers apply a critical theory lens to investigate issues such as the political, social, structural and historical elements that impact on a student's ability to succeed in schooling. Readings and discussion challenge the types of pedagogies, assessment and curriculum that either disadvantages students from vulnerable or marginalised groups, or do not take their needs into consideration. As one past NETDS preservice teacher observed:

*"I thought it was a good program in that we were all focusing on disadvantaged schools. I found there were a great bunch of teachers in the class and we analysed each other's placements so a lot of us had similar things happening and similar issues and things we all needed to work together .....everyone was understanding where we were coming from."*

Professional development sessions on trauma informed teaching and learning practices are also facilitated by *Berry Street* for the participating preservice teachers. At the end of the year, a NETDS VU conference is held, which involves presentations by key note speakers. Last year Sonia Lindsay presented on her extensive experience with refugee children and traumatised children in the Broadmeadows area. Preservice teachers also present posters on their NETDS experience in round table discussions. During round table discussions preservice teachers have an opportunity to share key learning moments that have impacted on their perceptions of what it means to be an effective teacher in a low SES school.

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Data findings that have been gathered by the VU NETDS project team indicate that NETDS graduates feel more confident when working with learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. As one graduate stated:

*"It made me re-evaluate myself as a teacher... It made me reflect a lot about who I am, and my growing commitment to teaching. It gave me strategies. It prompted me to read more – e.g., about student engagement... This brought out a sense in me of the need that students have in these low-SES areas."*

During her practicum, this preservice teacher also spoke about gaining greater insight into the importance of 'emotional intelligence'. She was given readings at her school that allowed her to understand the value of establishing nurturing and caring relationships with her students. Her comment,

*"It was great to have rich conversations with experienced educators... great to get a new perspective,"*

draws our attention to the benefits of belonging to a learning community that offers additional insights into effective and inclusive teaching practices. Gaining exposure to new theoretical concepts that can be more strongly linked to practice is important to strengthening teacher capacity for graduate teachers.

The NETDS program supports VU's social justice mission and recognises the need for preservice teachers to be socially and morally committed to all learners in a classroom.

The NETDS project team in 2020 includes Associate Professor Marcelle Cacciattolo, Dr Ligia Pelosi, Melissa Thomas and Wendy Balassa. Dr Michael Hallpike has been instrumental in leading the MTEACH Secondary Program cohort in previous years and was also the past project manager of NETDS.

## THE MITCHELL INSTITUTE REPORT ON EARLY CHILD EDUCATION COSTS

Victoria University's Mitchell Institute last month launched its [\*Australian Investment in Education: Early Childhood Education and Care\*](#) report looking at the amount of funds going into the sector from both government and families.

It found that the families with two parents on the average income were spending more educating their children aged under five than those sending their children to private primary schools.

Governments are spending much less per child on early childhood education and care compared to their investment in primary school education.

This is despite evidence that high-quality early learning can set a child up for life, with children from disadvantaged backgrounds receiving the most benefit.



Government spending on childcare and preschool has increased 140% over the past 10 years, in part due to the increased participation, and possibly from policy reforms to improve quality across the early childhood sector.

Although changes to the Child Care Subsidy in 2018 reduced the amount that some low-income families contribute to early childhood education and care, many parents are still wearing high out-of-pocket costs.

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[Research from The Front Project and PwC](#) has [found](#) for every dollar invested into preschool, the economy receives a return of \$2. [Research shows](#) that two years of quality early learning can put a child eight months ahead academically and set them up more broadly for school education and life beyond.

Evidence shows that children from disadvantaged communities have the most to gain from extra years of quality early learning, yet children from the poorest families end up [three years behind in their schooling compared to the wealthiest students](#).



“..FOR EVERY  
DOLLAR INVESTED  
INTO PRESCHOOL,  
THE ECONOMY  
RECEIVES A  
RETURN OF \$2..”

The report generated significant media interest with Education Policy Lead Dr Jen Jackson interviewed by [ABC TV News](#) and [the Age](#). Dr Jackson also wrote an opinion piece for [the Conversation](#) that was syndicated to [The Guardian](#) and SBS news.