

New school to bridge skills gap ahead of tourism wave



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Victoria University (VU) recently launched its new School for the Visitor Economy, in response to widespread staff and skills gaps in the hospitality, tourism and events sector.

Victoria is experiencing a boom in tourism generated by an increase in both domestic and international visitors. Recent statistics released by Business Victoria indicate that three million international visitors came to Victoria in the year to September 2018 (up 6.4 per cent from the previous year) spending \$8.3 billion¹. A further 25.4 million domestic visitors in the same period (up 6.8 per cent) contributed a further \$14.6 billion to the visitor economy.²

These figures illustrate the exponential growth occurring in our state's visitor economy. Estimates show Victoria's hospitality, events and tourism sector is expected to grow more than four per cent per annum until 2026, generating over \$150 billion per year.

While these figures are great news for Victoria's economy, businesses currently engaged in the sector are already facing skills gaps and recruitment shortages. The anticipated growth is set to see this increase and the need for qualified and skilled staff has never been greater.

The new School for the Visitor Economy³ has been established to respond to this

need. VU has a long history of producing highly-qualified graduates who are skilled and ready for planning, management, technical and service roles across tourism, events, hospitality and related sectors.

Students will be able to pathway seamlessly between vocational education courses at Victoria University Polytechnic and tertiary courses at VU. With courses commencing at Certificate II and continuing through to PhD level, students can enter and exit education as required throughout their career, topping up their practical skills or undertaking executive-level training or research.

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Grant Dreher, Vice President, Victoria University Polytechnic said “The School for the Visitor Economy is a vital initiative supporting the state government's commitment to growing the visitor economy and increasing tourism-based employment. Victoria University's position as a dual-sector institution enables students to undertake a wide range of tertiary education options.

The tourism, hospitality and events programs ensure that students are work-ready when they graduate through the University's key student placement partnerships with industry leaders. World class facilities including three state-of-the-art commercial kitchens, a training bar and restaurant which seats 150 guests are used to simulate a real world environment.”

Joanne Pyke, Director, School for the Visitor Economy said “Completing a course at the School for the Visitor Economy will open up a wide range of employment opportunities for graduates within Victoria, Australia and overseas. Opportunities range from entry-level positions in hotels, restaurants, sports associations, events companies and visitor centres right through to senior executive roles in private industry and government”.

VU is a leader in customising training programs to meet the specific needs of business and enterprise across the sector. The School will harness the University's strong research capabilities and its diverse cross-disciplinary expertise in the areas of tourism planning, economics, transport and logistics, sustainability, marketing, data analytics and many more. A program of events aimed at building networks and knowledge-sharing is also being implemented. ♦

¹ Business Victoria business.vic.gov.au/tourism-industry-resources/research/international-research

² Business Victoria business.vic.gov.au/tourism-industry-resources/research/domestic-and-regional-research

³ School for the Visitor Economy vu.edu.au/visitor-economy