



The Power of Purpose

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses), the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses), and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways

across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.

In making this Acknowledgement of Country we commit to respectful and responsible conduct towards all others according to the Traditional lores of this land, particularly at times of formal ceremony.

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It has been a privilege to return to the University of Melbourne and reconnect with so many of you, our valued donors, volunteers and alumni. Thank you for the many ways you support our University.

◀ Professor Glyn Davis AC, Interim Vice-Chancellor



It is humbling to reflect on your generosity and the lasting impact it has on our students, researchers, staff and communities in Melbourne and beyond. Our donor community continues to inspire, demonstrating a shared commitment to creating change today while building an ongoing legacy for future generations.

◀ Oonagh Kane, Executive Director (Advancement)

Spending time on campus again, I have seen the profound impact of your generosity – from those moments when students discover a passion for a subject and suddenly see a life of possibility ahead to the scholarship we offer the world.

Your support opens doors for students, including many from underrepresented backgrounds. Gifts of every size can have a lasting impact, not only on individual lives, but across families, communities and generations.

Your generosity also empowers emerging researchers to pursue innovative, life-changing work that addresses some of the world's most pressing challenges. This work reflects the spirit of resilience at the heart of the University's Strategy 2030 and reinforces the University of Melbourne's enduring purpose: to contribute to society through education, research and engagement.

The stories in this report show the collective power of philanthropy. They speak to a community united by shared values and belief in what education and research can achieve.

Your generosity creates opportunities, advances ideas and strengthens partnerships that benefit people and communities far beyond the University.

I also wish to warmly acknowledge incoming Vice-Chancellor Professor Carolyn Evans, who returns to the University in October 2026. We have been meeting regularly, and she is looking forward to connecting with as many of you as possible.

On behalf of the University of Melbourne, let me again thank you for your continued generosity and support.

In my first year as Executive Director, it is a privilege to thank you for trusting the University of Melbourne to deliver the transformation and impact you wish to see in our changing world. Throughout this publication, you will discover stories that bring that impact to life.

Your generosity is creating opportunities for talented students who may not otherwise have been able to study at the University. In this report you will meet 2026 Narrm Scholar Mobin, an elite wrestler balancing academic ambitions with his sporting pursuits, and recipient Tully, who was awarded a scholarship

after receiving a NASA internship to explore the origins of life.

You will also read about the pioneering work of Dr Leo Chen and his team at the Melbourne Brain Stimulation Lab, who are advancing mental health treatment, and the *Djambatj Dhukarr* learning exchange – an inspiring partnership between Melbourne teachers and Yolŋu educators that strengthens educational practice through shared knowledge, culture and practice. Alongside these forward-looking achievements, we celebrate important milestones, including 100 years of the Sidney Myer University Trust and 10 years of the Pathways to Politics for Women program.

Every gift matters. Together, your contributions support students, researchers and innovative initiatives.

To all our donors, thank you. Your generosity is making a lasting difference.

Your generosity helps students believe in what is possible. Through the opportunities you create, talented young people can pursue their dreams, find their place and build brighter futures for themselves and those around them.

Student Success



Making every move count

[Read more online →](#)

Thanks to a community of more than 850 donors, Narrm Scholars like Mobin can pursue their ambitions in the classroom through chemistry and on the world stage – towards Olympic gold.

Only three weeks after signing up for a wrestling academy, Mobin was offered an unexpected opportunity: to compete at a national competition. “It was 2023 and I was in Year 10. My coach called to say he had a spare seat in his car and encouraged me to come to Adelaide with the team,” he says. “I’d joined the academy for Jiu-Jitsu, which I’d been doing since I was 13, but I thought I’d have a go.”

Mobin surprised everyone – including himself – when he made it to the finals. “I was against a guy who had been wrestling for a long time. In wrestling, if you’re down ten points to zero, you’re out. At the end of the first period, I was down nine to zero. Somehow I came back and won, 12 to 11. I won the nationals! And after that, I was all in.” Since then, Mobin has continued to excel in the sport, winning seven national titles and representing Australia at the 2024 U17 World Championships.

Mobin (right) winning a match at the 2026 Victoria State Wrestling Championships



Narrm Scholarship Program

Since 2024:

850+ Donors have supported the Program since its inception

2,439 Total Narrm Scholars supported

Number of new Narrm Scholars each year



A pathway to opportunity

Today, Mobin is studying a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Chemistry. Receiving a Narrm Scholarship alongside his offer gave him the confidence and support to pursue his studies while continuing to train and compete at the highest levels.

After facing some unexpected and challenging circumstances during his secondary school studies, Mobin appreciated the recognition of the barriers he had overcome, but also his potential to succeed.

“
When I got the scholarship, it was... honestly, it was a relief
”

Mobin is one of 2,439 students whose university journeys have been supported through the Narrm Scholarship Program. Since the inaugural cohort was awarded in 2024, more than 850 donors have contributed to Narrm Scholarships, helping students from underrepresented backgrounds overcome barriers to education through financial assistance and enrichment opportunities.

Together, these contributions are strengthening a diverse and inclusive undergraduate community.

For Mobin, the scholarship eased the financial pressure of university and allowed him to focus on building his future beyond the wrestling mat.

“I’ve always loved chemistry,” he reflects. “I also like to get into the fine detail, argue different points of view, and work out new solutions.”

Mobin hopes to combine his scientific knowledge with his passion for problem-solving through a Juris Doctor at the Melbourne Law School with plans to pursue a career in patent law.

Balancing his ambitions

Mobin continues to balance his university studies with the demands of elite wrestling. Through the University’s Elite Athlete Program, he has access to tailored support, including flexible study arrangements, assistance with competition and travel costs, and on-campus sporting facilities.

Together, the Narrm Scholarship and Elite Athlete Program have given Mobin the support and confidence to pursue his ambitions on and off the mat.

His training schedule requires focus, discipline and commitment, with preparation often involving multiple sessions each day.

Alongside his studies and training, Mobin works part time as a coach to further fund his sporting commitments, including competitions and training camps.

“My parents are not able to cover that sort of cost,” says Mobin. “Corporate sponsorship is not really a thing in wrestling.”

Looking ahead, Mobin has his sights set on the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

“I am going for gold,” he says.

While wrestling remains a major part of his life, Mobin is equally excited about the challenges ahead in law.

“I’m someone who loves a challenge that will keep me engaged and focused. On the wrestling mat, you have to be 100 per cent present. I look forward to bringing this skill to my career in law.”

Whether on the wrestling mat, in the laboratory or eventually in the courtroom, Mobin is determined to apply the curiosity, discipline and resilience that have shaped his journey so far.

“Because of the scholarship, I could really give it a proper go. If I didn’t have the scholarship, I’d have to stop uni or find another way. I’m honestly so grateful to everyone who supported me and gave me this opportunity.”

Reimagining the future of aerospace

The Dee and John Collier Scholarship is helping Tully’s aerospace ambitions soar.

Tully’s fascination with flight began early. Growing up around aircraft, she flew solo in a Piper PA-28 Warrior on her 15th birthday – the youngest age Australians can take to the skies alone.

Having reached the clouds, Tully turned her focus to outer space. She went on to study engineering at the University of Melbourne, specialising in aerospace, driven by a desire to understand the

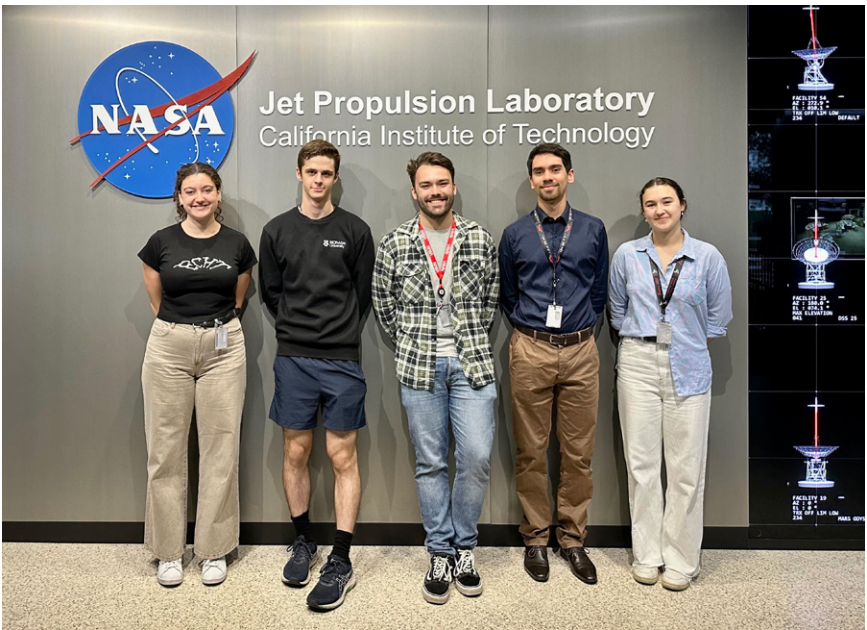
universe, solve complex problems and create technologies with lasting impact.

In 2023, Tully, a then 21-year-old Gundungurra woman, was selected as one of only five Australians to undertake a three-month internship at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory through the National Indigenous Space Academy (NISA), funded by the Australian Space Agency. The internship, designed to encourage Indigenous participation in STEM,

placed Tully among world-leading scientists and engineers working at the forefront of space exploration.

For Tully, the experience deepened her commitment to aerospace engineering and expanded her sense of what the field could become.

But alongside her practical training, Tully was also developing a more purpose-driven vision, informed by her experience as an Indigenous woman.



Tully at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, as one of five Australian students selected for a NASA internship with the National Indigenous Space Academy (NISA)

“What would space exploration look like if we approached it from an Aboriginal worldview with responsibility first?” she asks. “Bridging Indigenous knowledge with advanced engineering concepts, aiming to bring unique perspectives and holistic approaches to science, is a passion of mine.”

Fuel for ambition

The Dee and John Collier Scholarship is helping Tully turn that vision into practical action. Dee (BA 1960; GDipEd 1962) and John Collier (BE 1960) both attended the University of Melbourne, and John had an illustrious career as a mining engineer, making a major impact on the industry as an exploration leader worldwide. He left a bequest to support research travel at the University, and Dee is continuing this legacy by supporting students through the scholarship.

The scholarship has been critical in helping Tully pursue her Master of Mechanical Engineering. By supporting her academic studies, Tully has been able to pursue her final year capstone project working with an Aboriginal community in Alice Springs, exploring how aviation parts that would otherwise be sent to landfill can be repurposed and used

again in local community contexts. Through the project, Tully is exploring how engineering and community knowledge can uphold an Aboriginal worldview of circularity.

“This project has been especially meaningful as it connects my engineering studies with my passion for Indigenous innovation and sustainability,” Tully says. “I’m so grateful for the opportunity to spend time on this project as a result of having financial support.”

Engineering with purpose

Beyond her studies, the scholarship has also allowed Tully to engage in international learning opportunities. At Technische Universität Berlin, she completed the CanSat Satellite Design course, working alongside students from across Europe to design and launch a model satellite.

“*These experiences have broadened my global perspective*”

“It’s also reaffirmed my commitment to a career that bridges advanced aerospace technology with responsible, community-led innovation,” she says.

After completing her masters degree, Tully hopes to pursue a PhD exploring ways Indigenous knowledges can be embedded within contemporary engineering research. Her long-term ambition is to work at a space agency as an aerospace engineer.

She envisions a future where scientific techniques, engineering innovation and traditional knowledge work together to advance both space exploration and sustainable technology.

“The recognition and support from receiving this scholarship empower me to be a stronger advocate for women and Indigenous Australians in STEM, as well as those from a rural background,” Tully says. “I want to use the platform and resources it provides to amplify underrepresented voices, work towards dismantling barriers, and foster a more inclusive and equitable engineering landscape.”

[Read more online →](#)

Tully, the 2024 Dee and John Collier Scholarship recipient



Redefining success through a law scholarship

Receiving the Price Scholarship to study law has given Gonya security, stability and a new relationship with success – one that can lift her family and empower her community.

Gonya was born and raised in Launceston, Tasmania. She studied both sciences and humanities in secondary school and was undecided between the two. It was a turn of events in South Sudan that focused her sights on law.

“My mother’s home, back in Juba, was taken by people who wanted to sell the property to international developers. They forged her death certificate to legitimise the sale. We were contacted by friends in South Sudan who told us about the fraud. Trying to sort it out from Australia was incredibly stressful for my parents.”

“I realised that, being such a young country, the rule of law is practically non-existent in South Sudan and corruption is rife. There’s a lack of legal literacy in the community. I could see a clear need for someone like me

to communicate constitutional rights to the community and examine legal reform to support equity and justice.”

Finding a path to law

Gonya first heard about the University of Melbourne through a teacher, then attended a ‘Meet Melbourne’ information evening in Launceston. Her parents had reservations about her applying to an interstate university, concerned they could not fund the cost of living in Melbourne throughout her degrees.

“I understood their frustration, but I felt I needed to take the step and apply, then see what kind of support might be available,” says Gonya. She gained a place in the Bachelor of Arts and received a partial scholarship from Trinity College, which she supplemented with a casual job at a supermarket, and later at the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria.

Once she graduated, Gonya applied for the Juris Doctor (JD). “I built up my personal confidence to apply, but my circumstances – my socioeconomic background and my parents’ circumstances – were weighing me down. I had to trust that external supports would be available to help me take the next step.”

That trust was well placed. Gonya was offered a Commonwealth Supported Place and awarded a Price Scholarship, enabling her to accept her JD offer and stay in Melbourne.

The Price Scholarship

Established in 2015 by Malcolm Price (BCom 1983; LLB Hons 1983) and Cathy Price, the Price Scholarship provides a living allowance for three years to high-achieving JD students from regional or remote areas of Australia who are experiencing disadvantaged circumstances.



Gonya, Price Scholarship recipient

Malcolm and Cathy are passionate about supporting dedicated students to succeed in their studies and make a positive impact on the world with the problem-solving skills they gain through studying Law.

Reflecting on the impact of the scholarship, Gonya says, “By setting up the Price Scholarship, they are providing vital support so that more students like me can walk into unfamiliar spaces with confidence.”

That confidence extends into every aspect of Gonya’s studies. “As someone who could never decide between sciences and humanities, law is the perfect intellectual challenge for me! I’ve become enchanted with the formulaic nature of law, how it melds the nuance and curiosities of English comprehension with the logical sequencing of mathematics. We analyse how

cases are written, then use stable structures to apply them to different scenarios.”

Holding steady through uncertainty

The Price Scholarship has kept Gonya steady and focused on her studies. “When I was offered a place in the JD, it was very stressful working out how I would cover rent and groceries.”

“
Receiving the scholarship has given me security and stability
”

“But, even more importantly, receiving the Price Scholarship helped me reframe my mindset when it comes to my academic success. Growing up, my parents often reminded me that they sacrificed everything so I could achieve anything. I came to see sacrifice and achievement as a carefully weighted scale, feeling that my success came at their expense.”

“But now, freed from that burden, I can use my successes to raise up my family and empower my community. I have a better relationship with how I succeed.”

Read more online →

When generosity is multiplied, students thrive

Through the power of collective giving, a community of generous donors is providing a lifeline for students in need and inspiring them to give back.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Lachlan wasn't sure how he would continue his studies.

With the casual work he relied on disappearing almost overnight due to lockdowns and public health restrictions, and study and social life moving online, managing university became increasingly difficult.

A Student Support Grant eased the immediate financial pressure, allowing Lachlan to purchase an iPad that quickly became an essential part of his studies and daily life. It helped him adapt to online learning, complete readings wherever he could and stay connected with friends during months of isolation.

"It benefited me in a huge way," he says. "My mental health and motivation improved dramatically – technology was infinitely more important in that year."

The impact of this donor support continued to assist Lachlan well beyond the pandemic, with the iPad serving him throughout the remainder of his degree and into the early years of his career.

The power of collective giving

Lachlan's story is one of 1,049 grants made possible through the generosity of the University's donor community.

Through the generosity of donors, the Student Support Fund provides practical assistance via Student Support Grants for students experiencing financial hardship, as well as Emergency Support Grants that can be deployed rapidly in response to crises such as natural disasters.

Every gift to the Student Support Fund, regardless of size, joins with hundreds of others to create a flexible source of support that provides access to essential resources, equipment and opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach. These donor-funded grants provide an essential safety net when students need it most.

For Doctor of Veterinary Medicine student Thalia, a Student Support Grant provided much more than financial assistance.

“
The Student Support Grant lifted a huge weight off my shoulders
”

"I've seen real improvement in my energy, motivation and academic performance. This would not have been possible without the stability your generosity provided."

For Erandi, a PhD candidate in Agricultural Sciences, the grant provided an opportunity to continue pursuing her studies.

"Receiving a Student Support Grant was a precious opportunity that words cannot fully express," she says. "I hope that one day, I too will be able to give back and support future students as you have done for me."

Support when it matters most

As students continue to face cost-of-living pressures, initiatives such as the Campus Canteen help students access affordable meals, while donor-funded grants provide targeted financial assistance when unexpected hardship arises.

Joanne Ligouris, Academic Registrar and Executive Director of Student and Scholarly Services, says, "As the cost of living continues to rise, more students are finding themselves on the brink of food insecurity due to the rising costs of rent, groceries and utilities."

"The stress of these situations affects far more than a student's finances. It impacts their wellbeing, their studies and their capacity to succeed."

She says this vital work would not be possible without the ongoing commitment of our generous community.

"Individually, you give our students hope and motivation. Collectively, you make it possible for them to overcome hardship and build capacity for a resilient future."



▲ Students accessing affordable meals at the Campus Canteen amid cost-of-living challenges

For many students, receiving support represents more than financial assistance – it shows them the power of a community that believes in their future and inspires them to do the same for others.

Lachlan is already doing exactly that.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Commerce and establishing a career as an energy trader at a global commodity trading house, he now volunteers as a mentor through the University of Melbourne's alumni mentoring program.

Reflecting on the support he received, Lachlan says, "It was definitely a great gift. I'm very grateful for that. It's made me want to give back more."

This is the true power of collective giving – a ripple effect that extends well beyond graduation, inspiring students to give back and support others in turn.

257

Student Support Fund grants awarded last year



2,742

Applications for Student Support Fund grants in Semester 1 of 2026



350%

Increase in Emergency Support Grants awarded since 2024



1,049

Students supported by the Student Support Fund since 2021



2,692

Donors supported the Student Support Fund since 2021



125%

Increase in grants awarded since 2024



1 in 3

Students report skipping meals due to financial pressure



Read more online →

Your support sparks discoveries that can change lives. From advancing knowledge to addressing complex challenges, your generosity helps bring hope, progress and possibility to people and communities around the world.



Revolutionary Research

Transforming care for children with epilepsy

A \$5 million gift is expanding vital research into the most severe group of epilepsies, the developmental and epileptic encephalopathies, to help families access precision diagnoses, improve management and to lead to better treatments.

When Gemma had her first seizure at just 10 months old, her parents began an unexpected journey in search of answers. Until then, she had been a happy, healthy baby.

“She was face down on the highchair table,” recalls Leah, Gemma’s mother. “I knew it was a seizure, but I’d never seen one before.”

A month later, Gemma had a second seizure that lasted almost 20 minutes. A third followed the next week. As the seizures continued and hospital visits became more frequent, her family found themselves searching desperately for answers.

A diagnosis eventually came: Dravet syndrome, a severe developmental and epileptic encephalopathy (DEE). While it provided answers, Gemma’s diagnosis was both devastating and life-changing for the family.

Understanding DEEs

DEEs are among the most complex neurological conditions affecting children. They impact all aspects of life from seizures to development, motor skills, behaviour, sleep and they carry a high risk of death.

They are also more common than many people realise, affecting one in 590 children worldwide.

Finding effective treatments remains challenging because DEEs have an extraordinarily diverse range of causes, including more than 970 genes, with the number increasing steadily.

For Gemma’s family, the diagnosis marked the beginning of a harrowing journey and Gemma was experiencing up to 100 absence seizures every day. It quickly became apparent that Leah would need to step away from work to care for Gemma and manage her seizures, in addition to navigating a relentless schedule of appointments, hospital visits and treatment decisions.

Turning uncertainty into hope

Today, families like Gemma’s have reason to be hopeful thanks to the pioneering work of Laureate Professor Ingrid Scheffer AO and her team at Austin Health and the University of Melbourne.

Laureate Professor Scheffer leads a groundbreaking Natural History Study that tracks how DEEs develop over time. By following children and adults with DEEs over many years, they are building a deeper understanding of these devastating conditions to compare the effects of new precision therapies.

The study has now recruited 370 individuals, with individuals with DEEs undergoing regular assessments for seizures, development and all their associated conditions, including regular neuropsychology evaluations.



▲ Laureate Professor Ingrid Scheffer AO (MBBS, PhD, HonLLD, FRACP, FAES, FAES, FAA, FAHMS, FRS) with Gemma

This major study has been significantly accelerated by a generous \$5 million gift from a family whose lives were touched by Professor Scheffer’s care.

The gift has enabled the University of Melbourne’s Epilepsy Research Centre to expand the study around Australia, enrol more families and discover vital new knowledge that is helping transform the future of DEE care and research.

Building on three decades of innovation and discovery, Laureate Professor Scheffer’s research has transformed understanding of DEEs around the world.

“By discovering genes and through our vast amount of research, thanks to the support of donors, we are now perfectly positioned to take this Natural History Study forward to support the outcomes of therapeutic trials and new precision therapies.”

For families like Gemma’s, this progress is bringing hope for the future.

“We’re very lucky now that as Gemma has gotten older, we’ve had exposure to different treatments, different medications, and her seizures are relatively well controlled,” Leah says.

Being part of the Natural History Study has also helped Leah and her family better understand Gemma’s condition and prepare for the support she will need as she grows.

“The fact that we are so close to precision medicine and we’re even doing trials in gene therapy here in Melbourne is amazing to me,” Leah says.

“We are so thankful as a family to have so many services through the Austin and through the University of Melbourne.”

“
This research is doing so much to support our families
”

“It’s changing the lives, not just for my child, but for all families and children and adults with DEEs.”

[Read more online →](#)



▲ Dr Leo Chen presenting his research into brain network therapies

Rewiring hope for mental health

With support from the Blue Sky Foundation, psychiatrist Dr Leo Chen and his team are exploring new ways to use brain stimulation to treat complex mental health conditions.

The arrival of Claire's* first child should have been a joyful new chapter. Instead, it became the beginning of an exhausting battle with postnatal depression.

After her son was born, Claire could not sleep. She was constantly overwhelmed by thoughts that she was doing everything wrong: dressing her baby incorrectly, failing him as a mother, becoming a burden to her husband.

She tried to push through. As a health professional in Melbourne, Claire knew what was recommended – to exercise, socialise, seek help from a GP. She even began antidepressant medication and worked on behavioural strategies with a psychiatrist. But she continued to feel miserable.

Hope found in TMS

Claire was eventually referred to Dr Leo Chen, Associate Professor of Psychiatry at St Vincent's Hospital, who used a technology called Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) to treat her depression. TMS uses targeted electromagnetic pulses administered through a wand about the size of an open hand to stimulate areas of the brain involved in mood, behaviour and decision-making.

For decades, TMS has presented a crucial alternative for patients with depression like Claire, who find conventional therapies or drugs do not work. After a course of treatment, and a few top-ups, Claire began to feel like herself again. She believes TMS saved her life.

In a recent podcast discussing Claire's treatment, Dr Chen reflected, "Almost in a cascading way, the depression became more manageable because it was less severe. All the other helpful treatments and strategies – getting support from families, partners, exercise, behavioural strategies, mindfulness practices – they became more accessible to her."

Expanding what's possible

Since treating patients like Claire, Dr Chen has continued to explore new ways to use TMS. Now, with support from the Blue Sky Foundation, he and his team are working to expand access to TMS, pioneering ways to use the technology to target brain networks driving other serious and treatment-resistant conditions. This research could be a game changer for psychiatric conditions as diverse as drug and alcohol addiction, chronic pain and eating disorders.

“
TMS can influence the brain in a precise, non-invasive way
”

Dr Chen says, "The opportunity now is to apply that expertise to conditions where people have had too few effective options for far too long."

The Blue Sky Foundation have played a vital role in advancing transformative research and clinical trials in brain stimulation therapies, enabling Dr Chen and his collaborators to pursue new treatments for conditions where current options are often inadequate.

One of the most significant areas of focus is anorexia nervosa. Approximately 1.1 million Australians live with an eating disorder, and anorexia is among the most severe. Despite its devastating physical and psychological impacts, effective treatments remain limited, particularly for people who have not responded to existing care.

With support from the Blue Sky Foundation, Dr Chen's team is pioneering a new approach to treating anorexia nervosa with TMS, building on an earlier breakthrough where Dr Chen and collaborators identified a brain network from brain lesions that caused anorexia thinking and behaviours.

That finding offers a new way of thinking about treatment. Rather than focusing only on the symptoms of anorexia, Dr Chen's work aims to directly influence the neural circuits that may help treat the illness, and others like it, from its source – in the brain.

"For the first time, we have a clearer biological target for some of the mental health problems that make these illnesses so difficult to treat," Dr Chen says. "That gives us a real opportunity to develop therapies that are more targeted, more effective and ultimately more hopeful for patients and families."

Blue Sky Foundation and Dr Leo Chen at the Brain Stimulation Lab



*A pseudonym has been used to protect patient identity.

Knowledge moving in both directions

A gift in Will is strengthening a reciprocal knowledge exchange between schools, universities and Indigenous communities.

Marjorie Elizabeth Wilks' visionary commitment to Indigenous education is helping teachers and researchers create pathways, connections and opportunities that extend far beyond the University.

One of the key initiatives supported by Marjorie's gift is *Djambatj Dhukarr*: Road to Excellence, the Yolŋu Team Teacher Exchange Program.

The ongoing aim of *Djambatj Dhukarr* is to build local capacity through strengthening existing Yolŋu bilingual teacher education strategies at the Yambirra Schools of Yirrkala and

Laynhapuy Homelands in Northeast Arnhem Land, while increasing the capacity for Yolŋu leaders to become qualified teachers.

It is led by Bernadette Murphy, a Lecturer Specialist and Research Fellow from the Faculty of Education, and Professor Yalmay Yunupingu, a much-loved and respected Yolŋu leader and educator from Yirrkala and 2024 Senior Australian of the Year. This interdisciplinary project is also run in collaboration with Associate Professor Kristen Smith from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health.

Professor Marek Tesar and Professor Yalmay Yunupingu at a panel event in Melbourne



Reciprocal learning across classrooms and Country

Professor Yunupingu observes, "Many [teachers from Melbourne] returned after graduation to take up a teaching position, with many staying for longer than three years, some as long as 10. These students-turned-teachers now help guide the next generation, creating a continuous circle of learning."

“
This is what Yolŋu call Ba la ga fili – to give and take
”

Professor Yunupingu's vision for a similar experience for Yolŋu Team Teachers came to fruition with support from the late Marjorie Elizabeth Wilks through a gift in her Will. The companion pilot bringing Yolŋu Team Teachers to Melbourne has now been expanded and consolidated through to 2028, extending the Road to Excellence.

Each year, six to eight Yolŋu Team Teachers travel to Melbourne for a week-long school placement in a partnering primary and secondary school where they observe diverse approaches to student engagement and wellbeing strategies. Spending a week embedded in the school allows Team Teachers to observe different teaching practices closely, then consider how these might align with Yolŋu priorities. They then share their rich cultural knowledge and perspectives, noting where Melbourne practices align with Yolŋu values such as *gurruṯu*: kinship system.



Yolŋu educators joined staff and students at Sydney Road Community School (SRCS) in Brunswick

Walking together between knowledge systems

Professor Yunupingu says, "Our [Yolŋu Team Teachers] travel to look, listen, question and then come home stronger for their families and school communities. This strength is more than skill-building; it is about identity, belonging and the authority that comes from walking confidently between Yolŋu and Western worlds."

"*Djambatj Dhukarr* is not about leaving Country to learn – it's about carrying Country with you."

Their visit includes a presentation at the University of Melbourne, sharing Yolŋu culture and their own educational knowledge and expertise. For teaching students enrolled at the University of Melbourne, collaboration with Yolŋu Team Teachers opens a door into Yolŋu education as a sophisticated, relational and place-based system. It reframes this system from a 'perspective' to be added to a Western curriculum, to a world of knowledge in its own right.

Reflecting on the 2026 gathering, Professor Marek Tesar, Dean of the Faculty of Education, commented, "*Djambatj Dhukarr* is a pathway, not a destination. It asks us to walk with humility and courage. Education becomes something different when knowledge moves in both directions."

A vision carried forward

Behind this exchange is a shared belief in the power of Indigenous-led education, and a legacy shaped by that belief.

Marjorie Wilks' connection with the University's Indigenous priorities began in 2022, after hearing a radio segment about the University's work in this space. Curious to learn more, she reached out to discover how she could support initiatives that create opportunities for Indigenous communities.

Her interest in supporting Indigenous communities was also deeply personal. Throughout her extraordinary nursing career, Marjorie spent time flying to remote communities in northern Australia to provide care. She spoke fondly of this period of her life and the people and communities she came to know.

Through the gift in her Will, Marjorie Elizabeth Wilks' commitment to Indigenous education will continue through new connections, shared learning and opportunity. Its impact will reach from Northeast Arnhem Land to Melbourne and beyond, supporting teachers, students and communities for generations to come.

[Read more online →](#)

Your generosity strengthens the ties that connect us. By nurturing culture, fostering belonging and creating opportunities for people to learn from one another, you are helping build stronger, more vibrant communities.

Community



One act, a century of impact



▲ The late Sidney Myer, whose landmark gift to the University continues to shape opportunities a century later

One hundred years after a landmark gift, the Sidney Myer University Trust continues to shape opportunity, leadership and culture across the University and beyond.

In 1926, Sidney Myer made a gift to the University of Melbourne that was remarkable not only for its generosity, but for its vision.

A Russian-born migrant who built one of Australia's most successful retail businesses, Myer combined commercial success with a deep commitment to public life and philanthropy.

Rather than making a conventional cash donation, he established the Sidney Myer University Trust with 25,000 shares in Myer Emporium Ltd, creating an enduring source of support for future generations.

It was an innovative gift for its time, reflecting a belief that capital could continue working in service of education and the public good long after it was given.

As Sidney Myer himself explained, his giving was rooted in purpose rather than recognition, "I do not seek publicity, nor have I any ulterior

motive whatsoever, except my love for Australia and the Australian people."

A century later, that spirit of generosity endures.

One of the Trust's earliest contributions was the establishment of the Sidney Myer Chair of Commerce in 1927, a position now held by the Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics.

The Trust's influence also extended into Melbourne's cultural life. Early support for the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music helped establish a tradition of free orchestral concerts, later formalised through the Sidney Myer Melbourne Symphony Orchestra Trust. Open to the public, these performances reflected a belief that culture should be accessible to the wider community and embodied a view of the University as both a centre of learning and a contributor to public life.

Multigenerational commitment

Following Sidney Myer's death in 1934, his philanthropic vision continued through the Sidney Myer Fund and, later, The Myer Foundation. What began as a single gift became a multigenerational commitment, carried forward by successive generations of the Myer family.

Across the decades, Myer family philanthropy has supported the University's response to changing community needs.

Their support has advanced research into poverty and housing conditions, contributed to medical discoveries that later helped underpin the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, and strengthened Australia's engagement with Asia through initiatives ranging from Oriental Studies to Asialink.

More recently, the Myer family has helped transform the University's arts precinct at Southbank. Martyn Myer, Sidney Myer's grandson, championed the redevelopment through philanthropy, advocacy and leadership. Since opening, the Kenneth Myer Auditorium and Martyn Myer Arena have welcomed more than 39,000 attendees across more than 447 performances.

Creating opportunity

A century after Sidney Myer's original gift, the Trust continues to open doors through the Sidney Myer Centennial Scholarships in the Faculty of Business and Economics. Supporting 34 students with full fee remission and a living allowance, the scholarships help reduce barriers for students whose talent and ambition might otherwise be limited by circumstance.

For Sidney Myer Centennial Scholar Esdras, the scholarship has been life changing.

"I don't think the lack of means or the lack of opportunity should be a barrier in pursuing something you're passionate about," he says.

“
Because of this scholarship, it's actually provided me the chance to pursue commerce, which isn't readily available in regional and rural areas
”

Professor Paul Kofman, former Dean and Sidney Myer Chair of Commerce, describes the program as "one of the most generous scholarships ever given by the University ... transformational for those who receive it."

A force for public good

As the University celebrates the centenary of Sidney Myer's gift, its impact extends far beyond any single program or generation.

Today, the Trust continues to support initiatives across the University, including student wellbeing, early career researchers and PhD students, the digitisation of cultural collections, partnerships that create opportunities for emerging musicians through the Australian National Academy of Music, and international dialogue across the Asia-Pacific.

Together, these initiatives reflect the enduring strength of a gift founded on foresight, trust and a belief in education as a force for public good.



▲ The Sidney Myer Music Bowl. Sidney Myer's support for music through the University of Melbourne helped establish a tradition of free orchestral concerts

[Sidney Myer Music Bowl], n.d., [UMA-SRE-20180115] Photographs of projects by Yuncken Freeman Architects and predecessors, Unit 0004, UMA-ITE-2018011502309, University of Melbourne Archives.

Read more online →

Changing the face of Australian politics

Pathways to Politics for Women celebrates a decade of driving gender equality in political leadership.



▲ Pathways to Politics for Women National Co-Convenors
Dr Meredith Martin, Sarah Buckley, and Founder Carol Schwartz AO

Ten years ago, the face of Australian politics looked very different. Women held fewer than 37 per cent of seats in Federal Parliament and just 31 per cent of local government councillor positions. The corridors of power remained dominated by men, and too many talented women saw politics as a place they didn't belong.

Carol Schwartz AO refused to accept that reality. In 2013, frustrated by the glaring absence of women in Australia's political leadership, she transformed concern into action.

Together with the Trawalla Foundation, Women's Leadership Institute Australia and founding university partner, the University of Melbourne, she helped create Pathways to Politics for Women, launching the inaugural program in 2016. Through practical training, mentoring and career-long support, the non-partisan program equips diverse women with the confidence, networks and practical skills to pursue public office.

What began in Victoria soon became a national movement. Today, through partnerships with eight universities – the University of Melbourne, QUT, UNSW, Charles Darwin University, Adelaide University, the University of Canberra, the University of Western Australia and the University of Tasmania – Pathways to Politics has supported hundreds of women to step forward as political leaders.

The results speak for themselves. Since 2016, alumni have celebrated 97 electoral successes – and counting – across the political spectrum and at every level of government. Seven alumni now serve in the Victorian Parliament, representing five different political parties, demonstrating the program's cross-partisan impact.

Today, Australia has achieved gender parity in Federal Parliament – progress made possible by many forces, including the women who found their political pathway through the program.

As the late Dr Katie Allen, the first Pathways alum elected to Federal Parliament, reflected,

“*You can't be what you can't see. That's why the Pathways to Politics program is so important*”

Ten years on, the program continues to build momentum. As Carol Schwartz reflects, “Pathways to Politics is genuinely changing the face of Australian politics. And we're only just getting started.”

[Read more online →](#)

Creating brave spaces

The Courageous Conversations pilot is creating opportunities for students to explore challenging ideas, listen to different experiences and develop the confidence to contribute positively to their communities and the wider world.

In an increasingly complex world, universities play a unique role in fostering thoughtful dialogue, critical thinking and the skills young people need to engage in respectful, courageous conversations and develop the leadership skills needed to navigate our interconnected global society.

Recognising the importance of creating spaces for meaningful dialogue, donors Matt Goldberg (MA 1996) and his wife Elizabeth approached the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Jennifer Balint with a bold idea: to create 'brave spaces' where students could express their views, disagree respectfully and build understanding across difference.

“We wanted to support students to develop the confidence and skills to engage with ideas different from their own. The ability to listen, understand and have respectful conversations is essential for the leaders of tomorrow,” says Matt Goldberg.

What emerged was the inaugural Courageous Conversations pilot program, a series of student workshops and experiences through the University's Initiative for Peacebuilding.

The pilot reflects the University's broader commitment to fostering inclusive communities, respectful engagement and the exchange of ideas across difference, equipping students with the skills to navigate complex issues, listen deeply and approach challenging conversations with respect and openness.

The pilot, by application only, was significantly oversubscribed. 30 undergraduate and graduate students were selected, learning how to engage in meaningful dialogue, listen deeply, challenge assumptions and seek solutions collaboratively.

Students gave strong feedback, valuing constructive and challenging discussions as essential for building connection and understanding others' views. A student participant shared, “In this experience, I learnt that effective leadership is not to persuade others of my beliefs but rather to encourage respectful conversations and understanding.”

Reflecting on the impact of the Goldbergs' visionary gift, Professor Balint says, “The opportunity for students to develop skills that promote deep listening and understanding of diverse perspectives on local and global challenges is so critical.”

“Our ambition is to roll these out more widely. We see a clear opportunity for the University of Melbourne to lead in the Asia-Pacific region, bringing students through our partner universities and across our University to have these critical conversations and develop these skills together.”

▼ Students engaging in discussion at the Old Arts building



[Read more online →](#)

Exploring what's possible through science and art



▲ Jesse Chambers, Deputy Head of Learning Programs at Science Gallery Melbourne, with students from the Victorian College for the Deaf

A visionary gift from Peter McMullin AM and Ruth McMullin is helping Science Gallery Melbourne inspire curiosity, creativity and confidence in the next generation of innovators and thinkers.

Since opening in 2021, Science Gallery Melbourne has inspired and transformed 350,000 curious minds through the intersection of art and science.

The transformational opportunities it has created for teaching, research and student experience have been made possible through the generosity and vision of donors Peter McMullin AM (BCom 1974; LLB 1974) and Ruth McMullin, who have supported Science Gallery Melbourne since its inception.

Part of the international Science Gallery network and based at Melbourne Connect, Science Gallery Melbourne is the only gallery of its kind in Australia.

It draws on the full breadth of the University's teaching and research expertise to inspire young people through exhibitions, learning initiatives and research. Together, these experiences encourage visitors to think creatively, question assumptions and imagine new solutions through science, technology and art.

Science Gallery Melbourne is also a STEM Centre of Excellence that delivers world class scientific and artistic inquiry programs for 25 partner schools through the Victorian Department of Education. Through these programs, Science Gallery Melbourne is expanding access to STEM for underrepresented young people, including young women and girls, First Nations students, and students from low-socioeconomic, regional and rural communities. These opportunities build the confidence, skills and curiosity to imagine new futures.



◀ Students from Coburg High School participating in the Merri-Bek Interschool Innovators Program at Science Gallery Melbourne

Co-designing inclusive learning

An example of this work is the outstanding partnership with the Victorian College for the Deaf (VCD). Together, Science Gallery and VCD have co-designed bilingual STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) programs in Auslan and English, creating an inclusive learning environment that reflects students' strengths, interests and lived experiences.

The partnership has led to more than 40 visits and over 1,000 student engagements. Interactive workshops in chemistry, physics and 3D printing encourage D/deaf and Hard of Hearing students to explore STEAM through experiential learning while building confidence, curiosity and independence.

The partnership also extends beyond the classroom, creating opportunities for connection and celebration within the wider Deaf community. Students have collaborated with Deaf artists on exhibition projects, including works developed for the 2026 exhibition *EMERGENCE[Y]*, exploring how accessibility and technology can reshape experiences of emergency situations through creative practice. Since 2022, Science Gallery Melbourne has also hosted the Victorian College for the Deaf graduation ceremony, welcoming more than 100 members of the Deaf community each year.

Deputy Head of Learning Programs Jesse Chambers says, "What started as a one-off pilot workshop has developed into an ongoing commitment: one that centres the needs, interests and futures of Deaf young people."

Robert Harrow, Secondary School Leader at the Victorian College for the Deaf, says, "These activities provide real-world applications of STEAM, allowing students to develop independence in scientific thinking and gain confidence."

The impact is also reflected in the experiences of students themselves. As Sam, a student participant, says, "I felt excited to be learning about technology with my friends."

Through Science Gallery Melbourne, young people and communities from diverse backgrounds are finding new ways to connect with science, creativity and the University, opening minds to new possibilities and pathways for the future.

Learning experiences that transcend borders

Science Gallery Melbourne continues to expand opportunities for young people locally and internationally. Through their annual interdisciplinary Future Careers Forums, the Gallery has reached more than 41,000 students from 18 countries.

A new Global Classroom initiative is connecting young people across cultures through mixed-reality learning experiences, expanding access while equipping the next generation to work creatively and collaboratively to meet the environmental, economic and social challenges of today and our future.

Reflecting on the global Science Gallery network, Peter McMullin AM and Ruth McMullin say, "We recently visited Science Gallery Bengaluru and discussed our shared vision with their founding donor Dr Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw. Being part of the Science Gallery network provides young adults with access to world-leading science and arts concepts on a global scale."

"We believe Science Gallery Melbourne will continue to have a lasting impact on the future and Australia's next generation of scientific and creative trailblazers."

Peter and Ruth's commitment to access at the University also includes generous support for the learning program as part of the 65,000 Years – A Short History of Australian Art exhibition at the Potter Museum of Art and their founding support of the Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness.

[Read more online →](#)

Cultivating a sustainable future at Burnley

Rooted in history and driven by innovation, the University's Burnley Campus brings together teaching, research and philanthropy to shape the future of urban environments.

For alum, horticultural botanist and donor Rob Cross (BSc Monash, 1976; BAppSc(Hort) Melb, 1986), Burnley is more than a campus. It is where his connection to the natural world – shaped by biology, conservation and his mother's passion for gardening – grew into a career in horticulture and a lasting commitment to the field.

Celebrating 135 years of horticultural education, Burnley remains a living campus where teaching, research and practice come together.

Established in 1891 and set within the heritage-listed Burnley Gardens beside the Birrarung, the campus has evolved from Australia's first horticultural school into a leading centre for urban horticulture and green infrastructure research.

Today, Burnley's researchers are responding to some of the most pressing challenges facing cities: urban heat, stormwater management, biodiversity loss and the need for greener, more resilient public spaces.

Shaping sustainable cities

Burnley's living laboratories, including green roofs, raingardens and experimental plantings, allow students and researchers to test how vegetation and ecological design can create more sustainable urban environments.

Launched in 2012, the Burnley Green Roofs facility is Australia's first dedicated platform for studying plant survival on rooftops. Testing more than 200 species and 3,000 plants, researchers have demonstrated how green roofs can reduce urban heat, retain stormwater and support biodiversity.

More recently, Burnley researchers have developed Woody Meadows, an innovative approach to low-maintenance urban planting that replaces typical low-diversity gardens with diverse shrub communities of Australian plants designed to withstand heat, drought and changing climate conditions.

Alongside this, more than 1,000 plant species are being tested to support the redevelopment of the Melbourne Arts Precinct, helping identify resilient plants that can thrive in one of Melbourne's most significant cultural precincts.

Associate Professor Claire Farrell, Director of Burnley Campus, says, "Burnley's living laboratories allow us to test and translate research into practical solutions for cities, connecting teaching, research and practice to create greener, more resilient and liveable cities."

A lasting connection

While Burnley's research is helping shape the future of cities, its impact is also reflected in the people whose lives and careers are shaped by its gardens and classrooms. Rob's journey is an example of this lasting connection.

Inspired by an open day at Burnley, he enrolled as a mature-age student to study horticulture at the University. Recognised as dux each year of his Bachelor of Applied Science (Horticulture), he went on to build a career in applied plant science and landscape practice, including over three decades as a horticultural botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria.

After completing his degree, Rob returned to teach Plant Form and Identification in 1987 and 1988, beginning a long association with the campus through education, presentations and horticultural knowledge-sharing.

He also continued to champion collaboration between Burnley and the broader horticultural community, including through plant science symposia at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. His co-authored book *Sustainable Gardens*, written with Roger Spencer, remains one of his important contributions to the field.

Continuing this connection, and to acknowledge the significant influence Burnley Campus had for Rob, he and his wife Anne Robertson established the Cross and Robertson Family Prize for Excellence in Urban Horticulture to support the next generation of horticultural leaders.

The prize recognises two Master of Urban Horticulture students who demonstrate academic excellence: a student who has completed their first year with a passion for sustainable horticulture, and a graduating student who has demonstrated active involvement in Burnley campus life.

Together, the prizes reflect Rob and Anne's belief in the importance of supporting students as they build their own futures and contribute to the rich heritage of Burnley Campus.

Rob and Anne reflect on their gift, "The challenges facing our cities require people with deep knowledge of plants, landscapes and ecological systems."

"We hope these prizes encourage students at a pivotal point in their studies and reminds them that their work matters in shaping the future of our cities"

[Read more online →](#)

The Burnley Green Roofs are Australia's first dedicated green roofs for demonstration, training and research



Stay in touch

Your generosity is changing the trajectory of students' lives, uncovering life-changing discoveries through research and building supportive, impactful communities. There are many ways you can stay connected and continue learning just how transformative your support is.

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From its foundation in 1853, the University of Melbourne is privileged to be the beneficiary of generous philanthropic support from alumni, staff, parents and friends. Philanthropy at the University of Melbourne changes lives. Your support matters.

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Tully, the 2024 Dee and John Collier
Scholarship recipient