**Kay Souter – Work Ready Bachelor of Arts**

We developed the concept of a Work Ready Bachelor of Arts partly in response to a lot of feedback that we had had from employers. Employers made it very clear that they valued candidates that could give a succinct account of the sorts of things they had learned and how this would help them in their future career. It’s something that students can elect to do for themselves if they are interested in structuring their studies with their future working life in mind. We get students to take evidence that they have acquired those skills and store them in an e-portfolio (an electronic portfolio) – any assignment or a video or letter of commendation from a volunteer organization or something like that can go into the e-portfolio and be stored there. It provides evidence which will both help the student to think about their gains but also evidence that can be shared with employers at job interviews and things like that.

La Trobe’s BA has always had a passionate foundation in social justice issues. We pride ourselves on being we say, egalitarian and informal and we are. We have also got a very beautiful set of campuses.

We’ve got seventeen or eighteen majors that students can choose from - it’s a lot. The Work Ready BA is intended partly to help students to navigate a path through the degree so they are not just assembling disciplines or majors like a Lego set – they are actually thinking as they go through the degree, about where they might want to end up in their future life. And we also build in things like student exchanges and volunteer programs – facilitated volunteering so that students can get out and give something back to the community and get something back from the community because we think it’s a two-way process there.

Having that sort of experience which we also hope will be a social justice experience – we think that is really important to take into your future working life, and employers have told us that too.

Student exchanges, where a student studies in a foreign country for six months or a year are a lot of fun and most students are really keen to do them. They are a great life experience, a life changing experience, but they are also really valuable for employers because students learn all sorts of stuff – how to manage in a country where you might not speak the language, how to meet new people, how to manage with foreign laws and so on. All of those things are actually employability skills and we want not only to encourage students to do the exchange but while they are doing the exchange to think about how valuable the experiences will be in their future working life.

The La Trobe BA I think, repudiates that sort of distinction between the dreaming spires and the studies of the past and the ivory towers and all that sort of stuff and the modern world of rough and tumble. We want to bring these things together. We want to encourage our students to think about the wealth of learning from previous centuries and generations and current circumstances, and bring all that stuff together and to use it to build their lives and future careers on.