**\*Interviewees: Prof John Rosenberg, MC, Prof Mike Ryan, staff speaker, Prof John Dewar, Vice-Chancellor, video of nine male (M) and female (F) speakers (not individually identified)**

**\*Location: WLT2, La Trobe University, Melbourne Campus**

**\*Date: 29/11/12**

JOHN ROSENBERG (MC): My name’s John Rosenberg, I’m Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor here at La Trobe and I’ll be the MC for this launch of our new Strategic Plan. And I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nations and thank them for their care of the land and pay my respects to Elders past and present. I’d like to thank everyone for coming today, it’s a rather warm day, it’s a beautiful day in Melbourne but a little warm, to this launch of the University’s new Strategic Plan Future Ready 2013 to 2017. And can I particularly welcome our Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor John Dewar, staff here in this campus in lecture theatre WLT2 and also others in WLT3 by video and in a number of groups joining us by video conference from the Franklin Street campus, from the Bouverie Centre and from the Alfred Clinical School of Nursing, which is joining us for the very first time as part of a multiple campus hook up, and so we welcome particularly the people at the Alfred. There will also be people watching this, it’s being videoed, watching this after the event and we welcome you, as well. It’s really pleasing and exciting to be here on this particular occasion, the development of a new Strategic Plan signifies a major step in the development and progress of a university and in this case the La Trobe University Strategic Plan will see us re-engage with our radical beginnings but reinterpreted and refreshed for our modern world. Future Ready really is a road map for La Trobe’s reinvention to meet the needs of this new world environment. Future Ready, of course, didn’t just happen. It’s the result of many months of hard work and consultation. Literally hundreds of people across the University have been involved in a development of this plan and have been consulted in relation to numerous drafts of the plan. This has included formal consultation meetings, conversation cafes, and contributions on line via Yammer. The plan truly does represent a wide cross-section of La Trobe’s staff. To give you a little bit more idea of the consultation process, it’s my pleasure to invite Professor Mike Ryan, Head of the Department of Biochemistry within the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering to give his personal perspective and to introduce a video featuring other staff across the university who’ve been involved, Mike.

MIKE RYAN: So thanks, John. So I think it was about six months or so ago, that I was sitting in Germany on sabbatical, having a nice time there doing and focusing on research when the … in the email came the document describing a plan for the Strategic Plan, at the time it was called the World Ready Plan. I thought I’d have some time off from La Trobe at that time to focus on my research and I thought it would actually be over and done and dusted by the time I re … I came back a month or two later, however, it wasn’t the case. There was actually ample opportunity for each and every one of us to contribute to that plan and I think many of us actually have. There were many opportunities and John mentioned this, there were places like the conversation café, and there were a number of forums and I just thought I’d tell you a few things that I was involved with when I returned. So, when I came back I organised a staff meeting with people in my department and also with people in the School of Molecular Sciences and we nutted out and went through that particular plan and we c … we put forward some suggestions for improvements to that plan and we submitted that under … on behalf of the whole school. There was also a forum for bio-scientists within the faculty and again we sat around tables and many of us discussed aspects of that particular plan and again those aspects were put together on paper and they were submitted, as well. And then finally, I was involved in a staff … another staff forum and this was a staff forum for under 45s and this was people from all over the University from not just the various research faculties and academic areas but people from right around the University and that was actually a really nice event to actually discuss particular things related to the plan that we sat around a table and then contributed to those aspects so that they were then written up and also contributed. So I thought that was the end of it by then. There certainly was ample opportunity on my behalf to do that but I was then invited to become a Chair of a brokerage group of which was a group trying to then formulate the areas of teaching and research focus which are now called the Research Focus Areas. And at that time this was … these were under consideration and there was a lot of discussion amongst the researchers about which particular areas should be put up as these Research Focus Areas. And so my group, which consisted of many people from … a number of people from around the different faculties and it was actually a really lovely group to meet these people, we actually went and walked around different areas of the faculty and talked to many people, many good researchers around the University and also by phone to the regional areas and asked them some of the thoughts they had on the Research Focused Areas. And so in the end, we’d come up with a ... recommendations that were put to an Implementation Committee and that Implementation Committee has now recommended particular Research Focused Areas and I know that they’re still under … they’re undergoing some evolution and they’ll be put forward again and hopefully be implemented in the next few months, so I think that will be a great event. So, I for one was involved in this plan and I think many of you are and now we’ve got it and I really look forward to us going forward with it and seeing what we come out of it in the next few years. So you will now see this video and that’s actually got the comments from a number of different people from the University from here and in the regions and their impressions of the plan and how they also contributed to it. So without further ado I’m going to press this button.

*Long silence during video text:*

1.‘Future Ready’ was informed by your feedback:

* + 125 individual and group submissions
  + 196 people at Conversation Cafés
  + 22 people spoke up on ‘Yammer’

2. All staff who participated in strategic planning were invited to talk about the process.

3. These are the people who wanted to tell their stories.

F: I provided feedback in the café conversations and also in an All Staff meeting format where we gave discuss … had discussions on our Strategic Plan.

M: I provided feedback in the early stage when I watched John give his … one of his video presentations and I was just quite encouraged to give a response ‘cause I felt like it was touching some important points for me as a staff member.

F: I had the opportunity to provide feedback on the Strategic Planning document through both email and also the Vice-Chancellor had a consultation with the professoriate that are not on academic board.

F: I had the opportunity to provide feedback through a video conference in the café conversation, we work with a group in Melbourne and there was some staff here who had some input.

M: I provided feedback as part of both school and faculty responses and also in a forum for staff members under 45.

(silence)

M: Well, I provided it generally but I’ve particularly focused on the issues around Bendigo and the role of the University in the regions of Victoria which of course is a focus that I have here at La Trobe.

F: I provided feedback on the overall aim and the plan for the University. I was keen to make a contribution around the social justice component of that and the social inclusion and how we support students.

M: I provided feedback on this section of the document where it looked at how our campuses engage in its local community, whether it’s Bundoora or Bendigo here, as I reside here in Bendigo, and I … both had important aspects that I thought were of value to give feedback on.

F: I provided feedback on research, on the research element, because that’s my main area that I work in.

(silence)

M: Well, I think the consultation process was very extensive. I think it provided the opportunity for anyone to participate who wanted to and it provided it in a range of ways in which good … would meet the needs of particular people.

F: I’ve been at La Trobe for about 16 years now and I think the process of consultation here was probably one of the best that I’ve been involved in and I felt that there, no matter who you were or how you preferred to communicate, there were actually opportunities for people to have that input.

F: The consultation process was fairly broad. I appreciated the opportunity to put in an individual submission and to contribute to discussions from in our division around a group submission, as well as the café conversations, they were really … gave us an opportunity to burrow into things although certainly not nearly enough to really get to the nitty gritty of some issues.

M: I felt the consultation process was quite transparent and very extensive.

F: I think the consultation process has been excellent and there really was genuine consideration as to the different feedback by the strategic working group. We looked through all of the comments and considered them, incorporated them where we could and really debated their merit, so it was a very thorough process.

(Silence)

F: In five to 10 years I think I’d see the University as having a great reputation for being a university for the people as taking a broad range of students and really building the capacity of those students. I think I’d like to see the University improving its reputation in terms of the quality of its courses, particularly the areas that we’re doing really well in already and that we could really further enhance.

F: I see La Trobe University as being vital to this community for the University to work with other educational units to provide choices for students and the community.

M: In five or 10 years I see this University engaging in its community. I was very excited about the paper work that says, engaging in its local communities, whether here in Bendigo as a really growing important regional community or particularly about Bundoora campus engaging in its north-western aspect of being in Melbourne.

F: I see La Trobe as a major player in regional Victoria, across Australia hopefully and as a key research institution.

M: I think in five to 10 years, we’d like to see La Trobe in a much stronger position. From a personal point of view, I’d like to see a stronger involvement in the regions and a research and a teaching agenda that embrace some of the regional issues that are identified in the Strategy Plan.

F: If I think ahead five to 10 years, what I see in La Trobe University is truly emotionally and socially intelligent leadership, that makes this the place that students, staff, government, industry all wants to be connected with, they see it as the first place of choice.

M: In five to 10 years’ time, I see La Trobe as being a University that’s well engaged with its community and having it being focused on particular strengths in research.

F: I’m really excited to be a lecturer at La Trobe University. In the next 10 to 15 years, I can see a great amount of growth in the way that we do things and I’m really excited to be a part of it, it’s a wonderful opportunity.

F: I see La Trobe as a global university and engaged with innovation and creativity and excellence in learning and well-known for its learning and involvement with game-changing partners.

JOHN ROSENBERG: Thanks very much, Mike. And can I also thank all of the people who took part in that video and of course, that was a very small cross‑section of the people who’ve been involved in the consultation. It is now my very great pleasure to introduce the Vice-Chancellor of La Trobe University, Professor John Dewar to present and Launch the Strategic Plan Future Ready 2013 to 2017.

JOHN DEWAR: Thank you very much, John and thank you, Mike and thank you to all of our colleagues who took part in that video and thank you to those on whom … on whose behalf they spoke, namely all colleagues across the University who’ve played a part in shaping the Strategic Plan that we’re launching today. And thank you to you for being here and for taking the time and showing the interest in the future of the University in the way that you have.

I know that for some of you, perhaps for many of you, there might be a feeling of deja vu all over again at the launch of yet another strategic direction for the University. One of the things that impressed itself upon me very strongly during the consultation process around this plan were two things, I said one thing, it was two things. One was a very good understanding that La Trobe does indeed need a stronger sense of direction and some clear targets and aspirations but on the other hand what they didn’t want was yet another plan that reads well on paper but that isn’t followed through and implemented. As everyone knows and as I absolutely agree, there’s nothing more wearying then change for its own sake or for change that’s announced but never amounts to very much. So one of the things I want to demonstrate to you today is that we are already following through, big and important changes have been and are in the process of being implemented already, and you’ll start to see more change happen early in the new year. This has sometimes resulted in controversy but the fact is that there’s no change without controversy and there’s no improvement without change. Now responsibility for leading and managing that change rests ultimately with me and my senior colleagues, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Pro‑Vice-Chancellors, and the Deans and Heads of School and the good sign is that all of those senior colleagues unanimously support this plan. But in the end, improving the University is everyone’s responsibility and it’s my hope that when next year begins with this refreshed strategy, everyone will see that this is going to be a big positive for La Trobe. And it’s my hope that we can build real belief amongst everyone, our teachers, our researchers, our students and our external partners that this plan is something that will get us back on track to being at our rightful place as one of the most distinctive and high‑quality universities in the country. Now I’ve already said that people understand the need for this next step, and in ways that I haven’t experienced in other universities, people who’ve been at La Trobe for any period of time have a real affinity with it, one might even say an affection for it, and I think that has a lot to do with our mission and our character which have always been slightly different from other Victorian universities. Our birth in the late 1960s and our role as the university for the neglected northern suburbs of Melbourne has given us what you might call a slightly edgy feel. The idea of La Trobe as a bastion of rebellion, La Trot is an overdone legend perhaps, but it’s not without a certain truth. In fact along the way, I’ve met a few people who can not only remember the 1960s, they can also remember being arrested and thrown in the back of a divvy van. And our role across regional Victoria as a higher education provider which has grown steadily over the years has built on a legacy of over 140 years of tertiary education and it’s a legacy of which we can be very proud. Now as we’ve talked about this plan over the last few months as Mike said, we’ve had an amazing response from Alumni and from recently retired members of staff whenever I’ve discussed this university history at university events. Now obviously the politics of all of this belong to a bygone era, even if some of the forms of activism don’t, but the willingness to be slightly different from everyone else and the sense of our mission as a university that serves our part of Melbourne and our part of regional Victoria and the first in family students that live there remains very strong indeed. And people want to save and preserve what’s good about this place and those aspects about it that they feel affection for. And I have a feeling that that’s the reason why the feedback we got in the early stages of the consultation process around the plan included comments like: we’ve been drifting for too long, we seem to be fading to grey, we don’t want to be a Claytons’ GO8 and worst of all perhaps, we don’t want to become a poor man or poor woman’s Monash. So, in drawing up this strategy we were absolutely determined that it wouldn’t be about turning La Trobe into something completely different from that which it is already. We’ve already got a mission. We just need to fulfil it with a greater sense of purpose. So that’s why I say that the basis for this renewal of the university is to make La Trobe more like La Trobe. So you can see that this isn’t really about numbers but about the reclaiming of an attitude, a sense of purpose and a sense of self‑confidence.

Inevitably though, in the new university environment in which we live with its demand for measurement and ranking and comparisons as the basis for funding we can't escape numbers altogether. So we set ourselves a few numerical targets to aim for and against which we can measure and track our progress. And the first of these is what you might call the 3-12-300 target which is that we are going to be … aim to be firstly, one of the top three universities in Victoria, secondly, one of the top 12 universities in the country and thirdly, one of the top 300 universities on the most respected university rankings in the world. Now let me make it quite clear that we’re not aiming to be number three in the state of Victoria, as Bill Kelty memorably said at a Council meeting where we discussed the Strategic Plan, it would be a bit like aiming to be number nine on the ladder. The aim is to be one of the big three but is clearly ahead of the rest and the number one in some areas in which we choose to excel, as we already are in some areas. True to our origins we aim to be a great Victorian university but in our own unique style. There are some other important numbers, as well. In an era of population growth in our catchments, particularly in Melbourne’s north, and continuing demands for higher education and increased participation in higher education we have an obligation to continue to grow as we also increase the quality and financial return of our courses. So we’ve set a target of increasing our student numbers by more than 30% over the next five years to 33,000 students across all of our campuses, and we expect that this will add a further 6,000 students to this Bundoora campus and 1,800 in regional Victoria, particularly in Bendigo. We believe that this growth is achievable, we think it’s manageable but we also believe that it will transform the University’s capacity and its scale. So, the question of course is how are we going to get there? And of course, this is one of the big questions to which this Strategic Plan seeks to provide an answer, and providing that answer has been an almost year-long process that’s involved as many people in the University as has been possible in an open and transparent way. It started with the initial Directions paper called World Ready, released in June of this year, after about three months of hard work of developing that document and which received university-wide feedback and from outside the university, I might say, until about mid-August. The feedback from members of the University and from those outside the University, which as you can see was culled from a broad range of sources, informed the Strategic Plan that we’re releasing today. And I should say that when Claire Macken talked about the Strategic Working group, she was actually referring to one of four working parties that we set up earlier in the year to consider the feedback that was coming in on the initial discussion paper and which then fed forward into the further evolution of the plan. And while I can't say that everyone’s view has been accommodated or taken into account, and you may not be able to see everything that you might have said or suggested in the final version of the plan, we have responded where we can to the feedback that’s come in and where you don’t see that visible in the plan itself, I can assure you that each of those working parties looked very closely at all of the submissions that came in and some of the feedback will inform implementation rather than the plan itself. The draft of the Future Ready Plan was made available for comment across the University in October after a period of extensive discussion within the senior group of the feedback from the first consultation round and discussion with Council who have been closely involved in this process throughout and who are very strongly supportive of the directions we’re setting here. So, I’d just like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their interest in and their feedback on these two rounds of consultation, I think it is absolutely fair to say that the feedback we received added clarity, it added detail and it added realism to the final product. Now of course, a Strategic Plan isn’t just about what’s going on inside a university, it has to position the university well to respond to what’s going on around us, outside the university. And there are a number of things, of course, happening in the higher education sector of which we need to be aware and which this plan has taken into account. And if you attended some of the meetings I held earlier in the year, before we launched World Ready, you will be familiar with some of these themes. But the first is the uncapping of undergraduate Commonwealth‑supported student places. For the first time in the history of Australian higher education, the flow of government funds into universities is determined entirely by student preferences - the money follows students. That’s quite different from the allocation process that preceded it, which was a bit like a Stalinist Five Year Plan in which each university would agree load across different categories of discipline each with its own funding cluster or funding rate and that was the profile against which each university was funded. That’s no longer the case. We compete with every other university for every student who comes to us now and we need to continue to compete. We’ve been competing of course, in an uncapped environment for a long time for international students, there is no cap on international students, every university can enrol as many as it likes in whatever discipline it likes and where it can accommodate them from which ever part of the world it chooses. But as we also know that market is also extremely volatile, it’s becoming highly competitive as other countries around the world see the necessity and advantage of recruiting ever larger numbers of international students themselves. As I’m sure you know, we face particular challenges in the last three years, arising from changes to Visa rules which for a time made Australia very un-competitive compared to other countries. We’ve faced a very high Australian dollar and we’ve had some bad publicity from time to time relating to student safety, particularly here in Melbourne. Now I’m pleased to say that thanks to the hard work of John Rosenberg and Liz Stinson and others and many Deans and Associate Deans international those numbers are starting to pick up again but it is always a volatile environment and we need to make sure that the proposition we offer international students remains a compelling one and that when they get here they have a high quality experience. We are also entering an era of great uncertainty, I believe, in government funding and government policy towards higher education. Following the Bradley Review, the current government and indeed the Prime Minister, when she was Minister for Education with responsibility for universities, announced a very ambitious program of expansion of higher education through increased participation, uncapped places, and just as importantly perhaps, full funding of research. But what we’ve seen in the last year or so as the GFC has started to bite on federal government finances, is the government necessarily having to put on hold or indeed abandon some of those promises and one is now starting to hear from Canberra whisperings that the uncapped system may not last because it’s simply too expensive and that other policy settings may have to be introduced. So even if we stay with a Labor Government in next year’s election, I think it’s uncertain exactly what the funding environment might look like. If there’s a change of government, I think we will start to see some profound changes, possibly a rolling back of some of the things that the Labor Government has introduced and I suspect a return to the Nelson era of particularly fee flexibility for universities. At any rate, we are entering a period I believe, of uncertainly on that front as well. What will persist though, is the recent trend towards greater transparency in the measurement and comparison of university performance. I’m sure many of you have heard of things like ERA, the ARC’s assessment of strengths of individual universities across various fields of research; I’m sure you’ve heard of, if not actually looked at, the My Uni website which allows anyone to compare universities’ performance against each other on some key measures of quality, particularly around learning and teaching; and of course we know about the various global rankings which seem to proliferate each year; and in addition to that, universities are now asked to commit themselves through funding agreements with the Commonwealth to particular measurable targets, particularly around student participation. We’ve also got a new regulator which is asking us for lots of data as Robin knows in what may turn out to be a fairly intrusive way, we’ve yet to see. And as if all that wasn’t enough, there’s the now much talked about impact of the digital revolution in higher education, it’s hardly possible these days to open a newspaper, even the mainstream sections of the newspaper, and not read a piece on the multiple open … massive open online courses that many universities are now offering and speculation as to what this means for these thousand year old institutions of learning which may as a result of this disruptive moment, thanks to digitisation and electronic media, suddenly lose their pre-eminent status as repositories and disseminators of knowledge. So this is an unpredictable and volatile environment. But it seems to me that the best way to respond to that is to be absolutely clear about our mission, our character, our purpose and our aspiration and that’s what this new Strategic Plan seeks to do. And I might say that there’s been a really strong resonance I think across the university with the way that the plan in its various successive iterations has set out to describe that.

It’s worth just looking briefly at some data. I could give a three hour presentation on performance data on its own, but I’ve restrained myself, I promise. But it is worth just looking at some of the things that we’re doing really well but also at some of the things where we’ve still got some challenges ahead and you’ll have seen a lot of these slides already if you’ve come to previous sessions I’ve been delivering. This shows our share of first and total preferences through VTAC over the last six years. Really an important period, given that it was the period in which the uncapped demand‑driven system was progressively introduced, although formally the legislation to introduce it didn’t come into force until January of this year. In fact most universities had started anticipating the arrival of the demand-driven system up to two years before that. So we’ve really been in this competitive environment for at least two or three years. And I’m pleased to say that the University has not just held its own in that environment but has actually improved its market share quite significantly. So you can see that year on year since 2009, we’ve gradually but steadily increased the total perfor … percentage of first and total preferences coming to us. Now, we’ve yet to finalise the 2013 data, we’re in the middle of going through as so many of you know that VTAC process now, but the early signs are that although there’s been a slight dip we’re still ahead of where we were in 2011. Not every university could say that. So on the whole that’s a really positive trend and it’s the result of a lot of hard work that have been done in the faculties in renovating curricula and coming up with new programs to offer and closing down old ones that are no longer … or have lost their appeal to students and it’s also the result of the hard work of marketing and engagement in promoting and communicating what it is we’re doing. But we can't sit back and rest on our laurels, that slight dip this year tells us a very important message and that is that it’s ferocious competition out there and we need to be ke … maintaining our attention on what we offer and how we communicate it. Another great success of the University is the number of students we take who are the first in their family to come to university. This has always been an important part of La Trobe’s mission to take higher education into communities who’ve not previously had access to it. And you can see just how well we’re discharging that mission, particularly in regional Victoria, where at campuses like Shepparton for example, over 60% of our enrolling students are the first members of their families to come to a university. We’re really engaged in what you might call a quiet revolution, a quiet social revolution of lifting aspiration and life chances of communities for whom this had previously simply not been possible. And that’s a great achievement for this University to claim. Related to that of course, is the fact that we are Victoria’s largest regional University. We teach more regional students than any other university in Victoria and there’s a nice symmetry in the data here in that about one in four, just under one in four of regional Victorian students are La Trobe students and about one in four of La Trobe’s students are regional students. Either way the regions are a really important part of what we do and as the previous slide suggested are an important part of the University’s mission. This is a chart showing the outcomes of the most recent ERA exercise, the next one is imminent and this chart may look different after that, but what this is telling us is two slightly different stories, I think. One is that we undoubtedly have some world‑class areas of research strength, there’s no question, particularly in areas of science and areas of humanities and social science. But we also and this is the slightly darker side to this slide, we have too many areas of research that are not just below world average or world standard, they’re even below national standard and that’s a clear indicator of something that we need to address. And related to that, is this slide which shows that in comparison with other innovative research universities, which are the universities in the sector most like us and you can see the group named there, they’re all universities that were founded around about the same time as us, they, on the whole with a possible exception of Charles Darwin University, were founded as universities, they weren’t something else that became universities. That again shows a slightly mixed picture. It shows a picture of increasing research income but also a picture in which we haven’t really shifted our position greatly relative to other universities. All boats are rising and there are some that are rising much faster than ours. So while we’ve improved, we haven’t improved as fast as some other institutions. But the good news in this slide is that there are universities like us who have bolted from the pack or who are in the process of bolting from this pack, particularly Newcastle, who are doing this I suspect, mainly on the back of the medical school and the engineering faculty and Griffith University, who in the last three or four years in particular, have really shown that a university of this vintage and with this mission, they are very like us in lots of ways, can really lift their game quite dramatically and start to break out. We can do the same. We have to do the same.

So big changes like this and big aspirations of this sort require a major response and I haven’t met anyone who thinks the University should stay exactly as it is or that is shouldn’t try to improve, and indeed even if the world around us wasn’t forcing change on us, I believe that we would have to do this anyway. But as I’ve said in doing so, I think we have to chart a direction that remains fundamentally true to La Trobe’s history, its traditions and its culture. We have to build on the strengths we’ve got, we have to work on our weaknesses and be honest about where they exist, we have to realise the potential that there is in the institution which I believe is very considerable and as I’ve said already, we have to set, track and meet clear external benchmarks and measures of progress. So, I’ve said that we’re going to do this by get … by remaining true to our founding purpose and our ideals. We’ve always stood at an oblique angle to the society around us. We’ve always looked outwards. We’ve always asked questions and sometimes provided answers, but we’ve always, always pushed for change. And I think that retaining that stance and that tradition in a modern environment means three things: it means refocusing our commitment to public engagement and social change; it means differentiating ourselves through our willingness to attend to the most pressing issues facing the global community; and it means being known for our world‑view, our independent thinking, our creativity, our willingness to take risks and to innovate; in other words, a slightly edgier university than many others. And I want us to gain a distinctive reputation as the university for people with something to say about the world and a burning desire to change it; a university that’s known for its excellence in innovation in relation to the big issues of our time and for its enthusiasm to make a difference to them; a university that looks to the world and acts and thinks globally but which also plays a deep and rich part in the local communities surrounding it. And today, given the issues facing the world, the communities we serve and our research strengths, we must focus our teaching, our research and public engagement to take account of a number of critical areas related to things like climate change, especially how it affects water, water management, agriculture, and biodiversity, the revolution in medical sciences, the Asian sanctuary the resilience of societies in the face of change, and education and especially the potential of education to tackle social exclusion. So, how are we going to do all of these things? Well, it will be obvious to anyone, I believe, that a university like ours will benefit greatly from a concentration of our research effort around its areas of strength. Doing this provides us with the necessary scale to compete successfully for large grants and really to capitalise on significant infrastructure now in place such as AgriBio, the La Trobe Institute of Molecular Sciences which is taking beautiful shape just next to the library, the Research and Development Park here at Bundoora which is one of the largest university-owned R & D Parks in the country, the Northern Biosciences Precinct which it is a state government designated precinct that it takes in AgriBio limbs and the R & D Park, the Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre and the La Trobe Rural Health School, based at Bendigo. To do that, we will identify and develop a small number of cross-disciplinary Research Focus Areas that build on those existing and potential research strengths but which at the same time address some of the most pressing questions affecting the future of human societies and their environments. These will be the areas in which we will lay claim to being one of the best universities in Australia and amongst the best universities in the world and which will attract the best students, the best staff, the best researchers and perhaps most importantly of all, the best external partners because if we are going to realise our aspirations in research we are going to have to work with what the plan calls some game-changing partners to realise our aspirations.

If it’s true to say that the 19th Century was about arts and humanities and that the 20th Century was about sciences, we believe that the 21st Century will necessarily focus on bringing disciplines together to focus on these pressing global problems and I want La Trobe to be one of the best universities in Australia and in the world in how well we do that. Now as Mike’s alluded to there has been a lot of discussion about what these Research Focus Areas should be and I’d just like to acknowledge the work that Mike and his group did in getting us to this point, there is still more work to be done, but the areas that we’ve identified to this point are: securing food water and the environment; sport, exercise and rehabilitation; understanding disease; building healthy communities; and population movement and human security. These are the areas in which we aim to be the best in the country and amongst the best in the world. These cross‑disciplinary research programs will be complemented by about 20 smaller disciplinary‑focused research programs, built around existing and emerging high performance research groups that will be funded through a venture capital‑like process. To make this happen we are going to ask all La Trobe academic staff to at least aspire to being established productive researchers. We will create a pipeline of talent, of young talent to refresh the academic workforce by investing more in post‑graduate research students and early career researchers and their career development. Staff will be supported through greater clarity of expectation of performance and through individual development and support plans to help them achieve those goals. And staff who want to get involved in commercialisation and engage in external research collaborations with partners will be supported to do that too. For those staff for whom research is not a big part of their career at La Trobe but who are really excellent teachers, we will support them to take on more specialised teaching roles, such as the Teaching Scholar that is referred to in the Plan, which brings me to learning and teaching because our learning and teaching must also reflect these priorities, and the last thing I believe we want is for our research, and our teaching curriculum and the student experience to become separated from each other. On the contrary, we believe that our research and our research strengths should feed back into our learning and teaching and reinvigorate it in various ways. We need to develop attractive and relevant curriculum or continue to develop attractive and relevant curriculum. (Telephone ringing) Someone else with a late point on (all chuckling) one of the early drafts. I’ll take that call later. (All chuckling) We need to continue to develop relevant and attractive curriculum and student experiences that will bring to La Trobe those creative and independent thinkers from all walks of life, cultures and backgrounds with a passion for challenging the status quo and driving change.

So to do this, we’ll be putting in place the La Trobe Framework. It in … this will involve a thorough refresh and renewal of the courses we teach and the way we teach them. The goal is to create a recognisably La Trobe degree which prepares students to understand the world in which they will be living and the world in which they will be seeking careers and it will be taught using the latest thinking about technologies and pedagogy informed by the Radical Learning Project that I’ll say more about in a moment. This La Trobe Framework has three features. The first is the Hallmark program. Alongside our existing degrees, we’ll develop this Hallmark program which will consist of courses closely aligned with the Research Focus Areas I’ve just mentioned addressing those significant global issues. This is how we want our research strength to feed back into and reinvigorate teaching and learning and the student experience. You can think of them, if you like, as the areas where La Trobe will clearly be ahead of the rest. They will be creative in subject matter, inter-disciplinary in approach, offer significant op … enrichment opportunities to the students enrolled in them and be highly selective, although I want us to be innovative in thinking about how we select and get away, if we can, from the tyranny of the ATAR and instead of identifying students with high achievement, find selection instruments that allow us better to identify students with high potential. To be the best in these disciplines you will simply have to come and study here and walk right past all the other universities. The second feature of the La Trobe Essentials, these will be features common to all of our degrees that make their … the courses relevant to the big picture. Their aim is to ensure that students graduate with knowledge that is broad, modern and relevant to the world in general. We fixed on three of these areas: global citizenship, innovation and entrepreneurship and sustainability thinking. The third component of the La Trobe Framework are the La Trobe Enrichment programs. These will be opportunities for students, either for credit or outside formal curriculum to participate in work experience and work placements, study abroad and to become involved in research projects. This is something of course, that we already do really well but it’s a light we comprehensibly hide under a bushel and I think we need to take it out from that bushel and make it much more visible and celebrate it ‘cause I think students are attracted to those sorts of experiences. Underpinning this curriculum framework will be the continued implementation of design for learning, as well as the Radical Learning Project which will report I think in the next week or so, which was given the mandate to look 10 or 20 years ahead and ask the question, how is university teaching and learning going to change over that time? What implications does that have for the way in which we design our lear … our physical learning spaces and the way in which we design our virtual learning spaces, and the professional skills and knowledge that our academic and professional staff are going to require in order to deliver that pedagogy and that student experience? Claire and her colleagues have done a great job of depicting that future. We need to start preparing for it, right now, and that will be a big part of next year’s job when Jane Long arrives, in fact Jane arrives next week as DVC (Academic), this is an area of great passion and expertise of hers and she will be very ably supported by Claire and the Radical Learning Project. This brings me to the third strand of the plan which is to do with our engagement with our communities. This is already one of our strengths but we want to deepen that engagement even further. For example, we have an unmatched reputation I believe, for thought leadership through our renowned public intellectuals and we intend to keep stimulating and irritating the national conversation through activities such as the Ideas and Societies Program. In fact, we do a lot of activities of this sort, you can see them scattered around our website, I don’t think we orchestrate them and present them to the outside world as sharply as we could and we’re currently working on a project that’s provisionally called the Ideas Hub, that will create a single point in which anyone who’s interested in ideas and La Trobe’s contribution to them can come and engage with what we’re doing. That might include an iPhone App, for example, a single portal through which all of this will be available. Within the university, we’re going to bring more life to our campuses and try and reverse the trend of students spending less rather than more time on campus. I think (single applause, all chuckling) in this era of hustle bustle and competing attention … competing demands on student’s attention, we’re convinced that there remains a place for a great campus experience still. And if there’s one community we haven’t been effectively communicating with at any time in the University’s history, it’s our Alumni. This is odd, given that our Alumni are some of the most influential members of their generations. If I mention Tim Flannery, Don Watson, Bill Kelty, just three names that are instantly recognisable as shapers of modern Australia and there are 154,000 more where they came from, and indeed we had an event last night to launch this Plan to those on Capital Hill, and in the audience was Ian Watt, La Trobe Alumnus, currently head of the Australian Public Service, a pretty significant person and deeply, deeply attached to La Trobe, as he made very clear to me last night. So an important element of the Strategic Plan is for the Alumni and advancement office better to identify and engage with our Alumni and friends who can advocate on our behalf and it will be the same story with individual and corporate philanthropy. So our newly established La Trobe University Foundation will be engaging our communities of support in a series of fundraising initiatives to underpin this plan. And a lot of our engagement of course, takes place at a local level and here I believe La Trobe is quite inseparable from the communities it serves. Melbourne’s north, Bendigo, Greater Shepparton, the Murray‑Darling Basin and the Asia Pacific region from which we draw so many of our students. They support us strongly and we owe it to them not just to educate their young people but to show real community leadership through conducting research of pressing relevance to them. So for example, where the Murray‑Darling Basin is concerned, we know that it’s facing huge challenges relating to water management, the environment and the economic restructuring that that’s likely to bring in its train. With our role in the Murray‑Darling Freshwater Research Centre and our campuses in Mildura and Albury-Wodonga, we’re uniquely placed to contribute to the leadership that’s needed; three million Australians live in the Basin, they need our involvement and we need to prove to them what we’re capable of doing. Bendigo has the potential to become a great university city. We want to help make that a reality by being to higher education in Bendigo, what the Bendigo Art Gallery has become to culture in that city, an iconic institution that attracts students from all over the country, and we’re already doing that as you could have seen if you’d read the articles in yesterday’s … in Sunday’s Age which talked about the number of La Trobe students who are actively choosing to study at our Bendigo campus, moving to Bendigo and actually discovering it’s a pretty good place to live, and then even better, a pretty good place to work. Melbourne’s north, of course, is expanding rapidly. It’s the second‑fastest growing region in Australia. It’s becoming a magnet for a young and highly creative generation attracted to the area’s lifestyle and affordable housing. This campus is beautifully placed to provide access to educational, cultural and recreational opportunities for those communities and their families, as well as providing for the first in family members who want to come into a university. Our link with Melbourne Heart, the outreach we do with schools, are just two examples of many. We want this community in Melbourne’s north to choose to send its best and brightest to study with us but we have to be more visible, we have to turn this very inwardly focused campus outwards so that we can better engage with that community that surrounds us. And very soon you will be seeing an early draft of a new Campus Master Plan for Bundoora that will take these principles and enshrine them in a new Campus Plan.

Let me finish off with some nuts and bolts about enabling strategies and implementation because we’re going to have to do a lot to in parallel with the plan to ensure that we deliver on these major changes for the University. Things like getting commute times down to Bundoora from the CBD is going to be really important. Sounds trivial, technical, but actually critical to the University’s future that students are physically able to get to us easily. We are closer to Melbourne’s CBD than Clayton is at Monash and yet it takes students 20 minutes longer by public transport to get here than it does Monash students to get to Clayton from the CBD. That’s crazy and we’re working hard to fix that as quickly as we can. We know that we’re going to have to invest in new learning and teaching technologies and that will be in … those investments will be informed by the outcomes of the Radical Learning Project. We know that we’re going to have to increase the proportion of our revenue coming from non-government sources, that’s why external partnerships will be so important, they are the things above all that will help us to transform our scale and our capacity. Our partnership with the Department of Primary Industries around the AgriBio facility is a perfect example of that, we could not have done that on our own and yet our researchers will be in that building as part of a huge research group working together solving issues to do with food security into the future. But all of this is going to require changes to the way we behave. We’re going to have to get faster moving, more nimble, better at working together across the University, get out of our silos, and we’re going to have to expect to produce high quality in everything we do. And this will involve changes in our administration and our business processes. It will include better marketing which nobody likes spending money on, of course, but is an essential in this competitive world. But it will really take a mind‑change from all of us. In the new higher education environment with its emphasis on research performance, uncapped places and full‑fee paying students all of us will have to take responsibility for lifting our research performance and increasing our focus on students. We can maintain the ideal of La Trobe as the sort of university we want it to be, I’m absolutely convinced of that, but we can't preserve it in every detail and that’s really what this plan is about, its taking the past and the great traditions of the past and projecting them forward into a confident and healthy future for the University.

Now, I said at the beginning that most people acknowledged the need for plans like this but what they really want us to do is follow through. If there’s one thing I’ve heard more often than any other, it’s a scepticism about the University’s willingness actually to do this. So let me close by just giving you a snap‑shot of some of the things that are already happening in implementation of this plan and the things that you can expect to see start happening early next year. The first is AgriBio and limbs which I’ve already mentioned, those great new pieces of research infrastructure and the La Trobe Rural Health School facilities in Bendigo and of course, these were initiated and com … construction commenced well before this plan was even talked about but they will form an absolutely central part of it … the plan’s implementation. They are visible expressions of those areas of strength around which we intend to build. Soon we’ll be opening a new City Centre campus on Collins Street to run business programs particularly aimed at fee-paying graduate students and those interested in executive education. We’ve launched a new scholarships program to increase our attractiveness to high achieving students but also to increase the dollar support we’re able to give students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Our Bachelor of Arts is being comprehensively re‑designed and will be launched next year. Our online courses through iTunes U are amongst the most downloaded in the world, 10 million downloads, over 4.5 million courses downloaded, an astonishing statistic, we need to figure out how we can take that level of interest in the quality of what we have to offer and make it more coherently accessible and part of everything we do. The budget sets aside 75 million dollars over the next five years, that’s a big investment by this University in its own future. We will be spending that as wisely as we can. That’s another reason why we need a plan to guide those investments to effective use. Early in the new year, you will see starting to roll out a University‑wide recruitment program to draw in a new generation of young, mid and established academics to help us achieve this plan. As I’ve mentioned the Bundoora Master Plan is already being … in the process of the being revised and when we finish that we’ll start on Bendigo and as Mike has mentioned, we are already well‑advanced in identifying our Research Focus Areas. So the key message I want to leave you with is that we’re already following through on this and we will continue to follow through and I will report back to you twice a year, we’ll have six‑monthly Town Hall meetings and I will provide you with a report card on how we’re travelling against the objectives in the plan and the implementation of the actions under it. So this isn’t another round of talk, it’s about doing stuff, it’s about the 3‑12‑300, about being one of the top three in Victoria, one of the top 12 in the country, and one of the top 300 in the world, but most importantly it’s about being the best in the areas that we choose to prioritise, those cross-disciplinary areas of research excellence, the La Trobe Framework, our community relevance and engagement and our capacity to attract and retain students from families who’ve never sent anyone to a university before. So I urge you, as people that I know who’ve given your careers and your affections to La Trobe, to get behind it and make it a success. Thank you very much. (Applause)

End of recording