**Vice-Chancellor’s welcome message for new students 2013**

Welcome to La Trobe University.  I’m Professor John Dewar, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, and I’d like to start by congratulating you for choosing La Trobe for your education.  Whether you are at the beginning of your academic journey, or part way through that journey for your postgraduate study you are now part of a truly unique community.

La Trobe is a great university.  We began life back in the 1960s, more than 45 years ago, with a mandate to be complementary to, but different from, the other large Victorian universities.  Since the beginning we have pushed the envelope; been slightly edgier, more ‘radical’ even than many other Australian universities.

La Trobe was then, as it is now, a university deeply committed to making a difference to the world around us.  We have a proud history of public engagement and social change and we are known for our world view, our independent thinking and our creativity and innovation. Our alumni are some of the most influential people their generations have produced.

We also have an unbending commitment to the pursuit of academic excellence.  We are home to some of Australia’s foremost public intellectuals, and La Trobe’s researchers are producing some of Australia’s best research across a vast number of fields.  High quality teaching and research is at the heart of everything we do.

You are joining us at a time when we are setting a clear aspiration for the future of La Trobe, as set out in the ‘Future Ready’ five year Strategic Plan which is on our website.  It sets out how we plan to play a leadership role in the big issues crucial to the future of Victoria, Australia and human societies in general – things like climate change, water, biodiversity, agriculture, human health, aged care and Asian engagement.  La Trobe is the top-ranked research university in the country in many of these fields and third-ranked in Victoria across all of them.

We are also actively building on our high quality curriculum and student experience. In order to help make you world ready, work ready and future ready, we will be providing some unique opportunities for students to participate in innovation and application in the workplace, to study abroad, and to become involved in research and development projects.

Your learning experiences will also be enriched by our ‘Radical Learning Project’ which will see an increased use of technology and online learning, blended with more traditional face-to-face learning.

La Trobe is already known for its proud history of serving communities in Melbourne’s north and regional Victoria by providing access to excellent higher education. The University is committed to a set of values that are reflected in the way we operate and what we achieve.

So as a member of the University community we will encourage you to consider the ways you can demonstrate these values in your studies and in your interactions with others both on and off campus.   We encourage you as La Trobe students to take a world view, to pursue ideas with excellence and energy, to treat people with respect and work together, to be open, friendly and honest, and to hold yourself accountable for making great things happen.

So throughout your time here you will have opportunities to make a difference to the University, to your learning and to your future as a La Trobe University graduate. Perhaps more importantly your educational experience at La Trobe will equip you to make a difference to your communities and to the world.

So ask questions, get involved, be curious and engage with your teachers, your peers and with your University.

The first year at university can be a daunting experience, but La Trobe offers you a range of resources and services to help you to find your feet, make great friends, and to succeed.

The Ready4Uni website offers you advice and answers on how to prepare for your role as a student, and Orientation Week is the official start to your academic year, where you will meet your Connect Mentor. We have over 650 students across the University volunteering as Connect Mentors, to help guide you through your first 6 weeks. These Connect Mentors are students who are already active members of the La Trobe community, so make the most of them by asking questions, meeting up outside of class, and joining in with them in campus life.

La Trobe’s enduring reputation is for offering a friendly, energetic student experience, where everyone is welcome. I have no doubt that you will find this to be true.  I wish you well for the year and look forward to seeing how you, as a future La Trobe graduate, will make a difference to the world in which we live.