

RMIT NEXT

REFLECTIONS: TOWARDS OUR 2025 STRATEGY
NOVEMBER 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present.

RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

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PURPOSE



WHY WE ARE HERE

RMIT is a unique educational institution born in Melbourne in 1887, amidst dramatic economic, social and scientific change.

As a university, we have a distinctive approach to being ready for life and work, aspiring to offer an education deeply grounded and enriched by the communities we serve.

We embrace the multitude of ideas and values that arise from different fields of endeavour and sources of life experience.

RMIT's roots are in our commitment to create meaningful education for all, advancing opportunities for success through applied skills, enterprise and immersion in technology, science and art.

Founded to provide training for the workers of Melbourne after the 1850's gold rush, RMIT emerged during a time of explosive population growth and disruptive globalisation. The same period saw widespread dispossession of the Indigenous peoples of those lands, which we acknowledge remain unceded.

Over decades, RMIT has adapted and grown, facing outwards to a fast-changing world while remaining anchored in the diverse and complex urban communities that we serve in many parts of the world.

Now, we are increasingly recognised as a global university of design, technology and enterprise.

RMIT's roots are in our commitment to create meaningful education for all, advancing opportunities for success through applied skills, enterprise and immersion in technology, science and art.

RMIT's original motto – “a skilled hand, and a cultivated mind” – speaks to our purpose today as an applied institution.

We have a legacy of responding to the challenges and opportunities facing our communities. In the 21st century, we still pursue and celebrate positive impact as the measure of our success.

This is who we are proud to be today.

We create transformative experiences for our students, preparing them for life and work, and shaping the world around us through applied learning, impact-driven research and collaborative innovation, and engaging our partners across industry and the wider community.

We have achieved a lot to realise these goals, amidst disruptive change on every level of life and work.

Now it is time to reflect on our progress and purpose as we launch a conversation with the whole of our community, to understand how our environment is changing around us and how we can adapt in order to thrive in 2025.

WHO WE ARE

Every year, more than 20,000 students complete an educational credential at RMIT. Our student community exceeds 95,000 and we have more than 11,000 passionate and talented staff, working across more than ten different geographic locations.

As a whole, RMIT works at the scale of a fair-sized city. We are an applied university with a difference: our activity centres and partnerships are embedded in some of the most dynamic and diverse urban communities in the world, spanning four continents.

We organise learning programs, impact-driven research and community activities at locations in Melbourne, Vietnam, Singapore, Barcelona, Hong Kong and beyond.

This range of activity creates an amazing mix of skill and culture, linked by technology, travel, community and partnership. The fundamental role of mutual respect and cultural understanding in all the places and communities where we live, work and learn, also drives our focus on creating trust and

mutual respect across our global network of activity.

We also reflect on and acknowledge our landmark history. The unceded lands of the Woi wurrung

and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations, on which our Melbourne City campus stands, have for thousands of years been an important meeting place between nations and cultures.

Our appreciation of what we can learn from the people and the culture of the traditional custodians of this land drive our dhumbali (commitment) to Reconciliation.



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dhumbali (commitment) to a shared future with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, grounded in their self-determination and sovereignty.

Our identity is reflected in our values: passion, courage, agility, inclusion, imagination and impact.

Our students come to RMIT from all lands and at every stage of life. We create a place for everyone from school leavers to lifelong learners who bring with them their own experience of life and work.

Students from across the globe join us for a few weeks, a few months, or a few years. Many of those who arrive with us start a new life, and as RMIT alumnus, join a growing community of lifelong learners.

An RMIT education can include Foundation Studies, senior secondary, vocational certificates, diplomas and advanced diplomas, associate degrees, bachelors, honours, masters, higher degrees by research, short courses, Executive Education and micro-credentials.



OUR STRATEGY

In 2015, the whole of the RMIT community shared its expertise, knowledge and ideas to create *Ready for Life and Work*, our strategic plan to 2020.

The project, #shapeRMIT, explored RMIT's roots, identity and current activities, and asked 'what should a university like ours set out to achieve over the next five years?'

The answer is laid out across three directions, seven goals and 28 priorities that define our objectives, aspirations and shared accountabilities.

Ready for Life and Work declared our dhumbali (commitment) to being a global university of technology, design and enterprise.

Creating life-changing experiences, combining passion with purpose and shaping our world through impact-driven research, collaborative innovation, community and industry engagement, established a set of aspirations for our whole institution.

OUR GOALS 1

TRANSFORMATIVE
STUDENT
EXPERIENCES

2

CONNECTED
PATHWAYS

3

SUPPORTING AND
EMPOWERING
OUR PEOPLE
WITH SMARTER,
SIMPLER SYSTEMS

4

MANAGING
RESOURCES
FOR LONG-
TERM VALUE

5

RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION:
CREATING IMPACT
THROUGH
COLLABORATION

6

INDUSTRY AND
ENTERPRISE
EMBEDDED IN
EVERYTHING
WE DO

7

GLOBAL REACH
AND OUTLOOK



Being ready for life and work is about combining deep knowledge and relevant, up to date expertise with cutting edge learning skills and contemporary, inclusive values.

As a public institution, RMIT is dedicated to deep understanding, freedom of inquiry and expression, and the inherent value of ideas and evidence. As an applied institution, we are equally committed to applying knowledge, insight and passion to the world around us.

Since 2015, the strategy has come to life in many ways. To name a few, we established RMIT Activator, RMIT Online, and grew RMIT Europe. We established a new Indigenous portfolio and Reconciliation goals, set ourselves a more ambitious research agenda and prioritised a strong, clear focus on student experience across the whole of RMIT.

As we approach 2020, we can see that our shared dhumbali (commitment) over the past five years has helped RMIT build a stronger foundation in a fast-changing world.

Now, the question is – where next?

JOIN US AND READ ON!

PROGRESS



DIRECTION 1:

LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES

RMIT is dedicated to creating life-changing educational experiences through the changes in perspective and ambition sparked in our students by studying, working and belonging, and through the pathways and connections opened up by these experiences. This transformation in perspective and opportunity is at the heart of being ready for life and work (*Ready for Life and Work – RMIT to 2020*).

At the durrung (heart) of our current strategy is RMIT's dhumbali (commitment) to the power of learning experiences for our students – shared and personal, formal and informal, campus-based and work-based, face to face and online.

This influenced the first two goals of *Ready for Life and Work*; this is how we expressed them.

At the (durrung) heart of our current strategy is RMIT's dhumbali (commitment) to the power of learning experiences for our students.

We focused on 'transformative' because we heard from many people how educational experience can change and shape an individual's perspective for the rest of their life.

An RMIT education offers a chance to be influenced by diverse ideas and people in ways that we may never have anticipated.

At the same time, we put transformative experience and connected pathways together. Education does not only have the power to alter our perspective, it can also materially alter our opportunities in life.

A changing global economy, driven by knowledge and technology, requires us to maintain relevance. Education is too often the difference between poverty and prosperity, life-chance and marginalisation.

So RMIT's ability to offer pathways that engage a learner, wherever they might be, and offer a structured series of steps towards a valued destination, remains important.

GOAL 1 – A TRANSFORMATIVE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

RMIT offers a transformative experience to all students from all backgrounds. The experience integrates learning, campus, social and work connections.

HOW DID WE WANT TO BE KNOWN IN 2020?

- RMIT students are proud to be part of RMIT and proud of their credentials which are widely recognised and sought after
- RMIT graduates are widely recognised for their work-ready skills and sought after by recruiters and employers
- RMIT is known for its great teaching and teachers
- Students can access information and resources when and how they need them
- Graduates are resilient and can adapt to changing job markets
- Work-integrated learning is fundamental to the design, delivery and review of every program

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Since 2015, our student community has grown to more than 95,000 people.

Over the last five years, RMIT teams have worked hard to improve the quality and breadth of the programs and experiences we offer our students to support their resilience and wellbeing, and to keep growing a community that everyone can belong to. There are positive signs that the student experience is becoming more satisfying for many, but we know there is still more to do.

Our students' needs and expectations are constantly evolving. We aim to offer an experience that is personalised, welcoming, and makes the best of digital and face to face learning.

To do this, enhancing the design and quality of taught programs has been a high priority.

Seizing the opportunities created by digital technology and learning infrastructure is another.

RMIT has introduced Canvas as a system to underpin quality in learning and teaching for all of our students and educators. It aims to make the experience of blended learning more intuitive, simpler and more enjoyable for students and staff. All students begin their studies with our “Welcome to Learn” video, produced by Indigenous Elders in Residence to share greater understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

Launched in 2016, RMIT Online offers short courses in future-relevant skills and postgraduate degrees through digital channels, with around 19,000 students enrolled with RMIT this year.

Alongside this digitally fuelled learning growth, RMIT has been working to encourage a sense of belonging and strengthen our community of students.

Since RMIT serves such a diverse range of student backgrounds and experiences, how do we reflect these and make sure we offer an appropriate mix of support and opportunity to everyone?

Working with the Victorian Government’s free TAFE policy, we have seen a large increase in vocational education enrolments.

RMIT fosters student support networks by creating

opportunities for thousands of students to share their experiences and knowledge in our peer mentoring program, SLAMS.

RMIT has also encouraged and witnessed extraordinary growth in student involvement and leadership across co-curricular activities, clubs, associations and entrepreneurial networks.



Surrounding the actions we’ve taken to inspire the minds and passions of our students are the physical spaces RMIT has designed and created. Over the last five years, awareness of the role that physical space can play to excite, inspire and support community and creativity has increased significantly.

An appreciation of our diversity is built into our architecture, from different expressions of culture, to gender, mobility and more. We are particularly

proud to incorporate Indigenous architecture, language, culture and heritage across our campuses.

Students have been involved in our Reconciliation journey through two Reconciliation Action Plans and an RMIT-wide dhumbali (commitment) to a shared future with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT?

Looking on the bright side, many aspects of the student experience seem to be improving and becoming more satisfying at RMIT.

So what else should we be thinking about as we journey another five years into the future?

How can the diverse needs of our learners be best supported by disruptive digital trends and tools?

How can we learn to support the wellbeing and resilience of our students, help them develop skills for life and learning and respond to risks and pressures in the best way possible?

How do we support awareness and navigation across the full spectrum of opportunities for every student, across a truly global network of opportunities?

There is still work to be done to create the student experience we aspire to, and reduce the barriers to education faced by many people across our global community through poverty, disadvantage or discrimination.

Since RMIT serves such a diverse range of student backgrounds and experiences, how do we reflect these and make sure we offer an appropriate mix of support and opportunity to everyone?

How are the life experiences of our students changing? What challenges are created for our university, and how are these challenges being experienced by our community across our different locations?

DID YOU KNOW?

- RMIT's micro-credentials have been embedded in 51 RMIT Award programs. Designed with industry, the full suite of RMIT Creds covers 40 distinct skills and 12 skill sets.
- RMIT hosts approximately 23,000 work-integrated learning placements each year, across more than 3,700 organisations.
- In Australia, there are now more Millennials and Gen Y than there are Gen X and Baby Boomers.
- The OECD has recently put forward [three 'transformational competencies'](#) that all learners need to thrive and succeed by 2030. They are, 'Creating new value', 'Taking responsibility', and 'Resolving conflicts and dilemmas'.
- It is estimated that by the year 2030, [up to 46% of jobs will be automated](#). This would result in 2-5 million jobs being displaced, forcing many Australians to change occupation.

GOAL 2 – CONNECTED PATHWAYS

RMIT offers connected pathways between life, work and learning, supporting people to personalise the education that will best meet their needs.

HOW DID WE WANT TO BE KNOWN IN 2020?

- RMIT is recognised as a leader in providing access to education for diverse and disadvantaged students
- Digital technology powers RMIT alumni connections across the globe
- RMIT enjoys a mutually beneficial relationship with alumni who are strong employers of RMIT students and graduates
- RMIT students know what is required to develop their enterprise ideas, build their own enterprises and are recognised for their entrepreneurial skills

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Through the endeavour of our educators and students, investment in learning technologies, and redesign of curriculum, assessment practices and student support, RMIT is making sound progress towards creating ever more useful and meaningful learning experiences for our students.

We created digital micro-credentials – RMIT Creds. Through these digital learning modules, so far more than 50,000 learners have acquired new skills and competencies that can help them thrive in life and work and add value to their formal studies and work experience.

We expanded our networks of alumni and industry partners. Deepening the interconnectivity with RMIT and with social and private enterprise has increased the opportunities for our students across all campuses to gain meaningful, practical experience while they learn and develop as global citizens.

Even as we steadily improve, the demands of the workplace and the landscape of enterprise are changing dramatically, driven by transformation in the global economy and disruption in many parts of our society.

These ecosystems we co-create with industry increase the possibilities and platforms to extend the reach of our impact, through the work of our students, staff and alumni.

RMIT Training exists to create accessible and connected pathways for international students into the University. In 2018, Foundation Studies was consolidated into RMIT Training to create focus on those pathways and ensure students who require pre-tertiary study in English receive the pastoral care and support they need.

WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT?

Even as we steadily improve, the demands of the workplace and the landscape of enterprise are changing dramatically, driven by transformation in the global economy and disruption in many parts of our society.



Applied, work-relevant learning is in our DNA. For example, the chance to study electrical engineering alongside refrigeration, or digital commerce together with visual design, or criminal justice alongside health service design, creates many wonderful opportunities.

RMIT is one of only a few institutions in Australia that can offer programs across vocational, technical, international pathways, degree programs and research, right through to the senior secondary curriculum in Victoria. More and more universities, however, are embracing

pathways and micro-credentials. How should we use RMIT's dual-sector presence and standing to forge a new approach to lifelong learning?

In parallel, RMIT Online continues to expand our digital presence and engagement models to ensure we meet the diverse needs of lifelong learners.

How can RMIT learn to build bridges, pathways and support networks that help learners thrive in any circumstance, and find the best way to pursue whatever career path makes sense for them?

If we continue pursuing this vision, should the architecture of our education programs be renewed or redesigned? How should we approach this task?

How can we build up work-based and co-curricular learning experiences further, make them available to even more students, and link them appropriately into the structure of our programs and assessments?

What role could our alumni networks play in creating these opportunities?

DID YOU KNOW?

- More than 50,000 RMIT micro-credentials were completed by the end of 2018, with staff and students enrolling in more than 140,000 digital credentials to date.
- 14% of RMIT's international students join us by enrolling with RMIT Training.
- 66% of RMIT staff indicated that they are actively working towards incorporating Reconciliation in their daily life and work.
- Unlike Gen Z, many Millennials believe [it is the responsibility of industry rather than educators to prepare people for the next industrial revolution.](#)
- [RMIT graduate Ryan Tilley was awarded the national James Dyson award](#) for his invention that gives manual wheelchair users the choice and ability to access any terrain, through the use of a portable and affordable accessory.
- RMIT has connected students to more than 1,500 industry mentors, supporting in excess of 2,000 mentoring partnerships between students and industry professionals.

DIRECTION 2: **PASSION WITH PURPOSE**

RMIT's staff and partners are fundamental to achieving our purpose. They are highly talented and committed: engaging them effectively in renewing RMIT is critical to our success.

In 2015, RMIT chose to structure this Direction to bring together our approach to recruiting and developing people – our workforce – with the institution's long-term use of resources, systems and environments that support our mission.

This choice reflected an insight emerging from our 2015 engagement with the RMIT community: the recognition that talented, dedicated people are key to achieving our impact, and that we are continuously updating and adapting our systems and infrastructure to support them.

We therefore named this Direction *Passion with Purpose*: an aspiration to align the motivations of all RMIT's people with a sense of values-driven impact. This led to two goals:



GOAL 3 – SUPPORTING AND EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE WITH SMARTER, SIMPLER SYSTEMS

RMIT supports its people to build on their passions and pursue our shared goals: life-changing student experiences, research and innovation that shape the world for the better. In a complex world, we offer simple, more supportive organisation and service.

HOW DID WE WANT TO BE KNOWN IN 2020?

- Staff feel that their expertise is valued and see opportunities to develop their skills and careers
- Employment arrangements encourage staff to develop their passions and aspire to career development
- Staff are able to share their knowledge
- Transparency of data is the norm
- Staff work together across units to solve common problems
- RMIT invests in good ideas and scales up effective practices
- Our systems are easy to use, and decision-making is delegated

HOW ARE WE DOING?

RMIT is a place where people are proud to work. Since 2015, we have strived to support our people and their development, in ways that reflect our values and long-term purpose.

We are making good progress. Two Enterprise Agreements have been successfully endorsed by an overwhelming majority of RMIT staff.

New criteria for academic career decisions have been implemented, creating clearer opportunities for development and promotion related to teaching, research and engagement. New Research Services are being developed, along with a Researcher Portal.

Canvas and Office 365 have been rolled out across the whole institution, providing new tools and support for thousands of workers, including new ways to share information.

Our staff website, *WorkLife*, was created in 2017 and now serves as a platform for news, discussion, celebration, essential staffing processes and much more. Through our platforms, online forums and live events, we have helped enhance and grow the engagement of RMIT people with communications, community activities, and therefore, each other.

Be Ready, our program to develop leadership potential and help prepare people to take on leadership roles and responsibilities, has been introduced with widespread support.



RMIT's approach to Reconciliation is unique, evolving our focus away from cultural awareness of Australia's First Peoples, towards everyone understanding and acknowledging our responsibility to be in a relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as sovereign peoples.

The percentage of women in senior leadership roles at RMIT is steadily increasing towards our goal of equal employment and we have been recognised in the community for our inclusive employment practices.

This year, many of our staff engaged in considering how RMIT's values are perceived and lived, generating valuable feedback about how those values – courage, impact, agility, inclusion, passion and imagination – are experienced and brought to life.

We have strengthened our dhumbali (commitment) to Reconciliation and our connection to place. RMIT's approach to Reconciliation is unique, evolving our focus away from cultural awareness of Australia's First Peoples, towards everyone understanding and acknowledging our responsibility to be in a relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as sovereign peoples.

WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT?

Operating as one RMIT across so many places and systems is challenging.

We are still working hard to grow the links across our own community, foster student mobility and develop our diverse workforce in appropriate ways.

RMIT is committed to big and ambitious changes. For example, preparing to use the *WorkDay* platform as the backbone for our finance, human resources and procurement work through Project Pi. For a big institution, this is a huge effort.

A lot is happening and there are many examples and indicators of progress. Staff and team collaboration across different organisations and work units is growing. Different teams have delivered some amazing outcomes and results in recent years.

We know there are still frustrations, delays and blockages in our culture, our organisational processes and perhaps, in our approach to change.

During this period, while we are considering RMIT NEXT, is a chance to reflect and be honest with ourselves about what gets in the way, what we can learn from recent experiences, and what we can realistically do together to build an adaptive institution with a collaborative, high-performing culture.

So what makes work life at RMIT meaningful or enjoyable? In what areas have we been making progress?

How do the work and learning opportunities provided to RMIT students relate to the career opportunities and workforce development that we undertake as an employer?

Is our goal of simpler, smarter systems being realised? What can we learn from other places of work, other education institutions and other sectors? What goals are appropriately realistic and ambitious?

ACADEMIC PURPOSE AND ENDEAVOUR

The identities and impact of our academic staff are crucial. *Ready for Life and Work* identified how important all of our people are to RMIT's long-term success. In this rapidly changing environment, we aim to use RMIT NEXT to consider how the nature of our academic endeavour is evolving, and what that could mean for our culture, workforce structure and dhumbali (commitments) to development and freedom.

We aim to use RMIT NEXT to consider how the nature of our academic endeavour is evolving, and what that could mean for our culture, workforce structure and dhumbali (commitments) to development and freedom.

RMIT is proudly an *applied* institution. We are embedded in the communities we serve and pursue impact through cross-disciplinary collaboration and partnership with industry, students and alumni.

We have outstanding educators, researchers and engagement specialists, supported by a talented wider workforce.

As our environment changes, could we be embracing further opportunities to work in different ways, to adapt some of RMIT's longstanding traditions, like studio-based projects and apprenticeship-based supervision, to work settings and technology applications, that have the potential to transform learning possibilities?

How might we transform our ways of knowing, combining or applying Western and non-Western knowledge systems to generate greater understanding, and use them to extend our impact in the diverse communities we serve?

How should we be developing the opportunities, specialisations and support structures for academic careers?

How should we articulate and develop the identities, engagement and potential of our academic workers in order to make powerful contributions to the future?



DID YOU KNOW?

- RMIT has 11,331 employed staff in total, of whom 7,270 are on fixed term contracts or employed as casuals (2018 data). RMIT staff in Vietnam, Singapore and Barcelona make up 10% of this total.
- This year, [three RMIT researchers from STEM](#) have been named among 60 Australian women recognised for outstanding contributions to their fields.
- [The areas of work forecast to be most affected by automation](#) include office staff, financial services and drivers. Education is one of the sectors where overall employment is expected to be reduced least, partly because it has such a high concentration of human competencies.
- Amazon has recently announced a [global program to offer lifelong learning to 100,000 of its workforce](#).

GOAL 4: MANAGING RESOURCES FOR LONG-TERM VALUE

Our use of resources is driven by our goals. Our management of financial, physical, social and environmental resources is focused on improving long-term performance and delivering value for money.

HOW DID WE WANT TO BE KNOWN IN 2020?

- Resource allocation is effectively designed to achieve long-term value in our operations
- Financial information and decision-making will be clear, rigorous and timely
- Student services, amenities and facilities are well-designed and provide good value for users
- RMIT offers students a rich and immersive digital experience
- Digital technology makes processes simpler, quicker and more reliable to enable creativity and collaboration
- RMIT prioritises sustainability in every part of the university and is highly regarded by students, staff and our community

HOW ARE WE DOING?

RMIT began with 63 enrolled students and one building. Our students and staff now total more than 105,000 people, based at eight campuses and a number of operational centres around the world – an institution on the scale of a city.

Our financial turnover in 2018 was more than \$1.4bn AUD. We partner with national governments and global corporations, as well as with local community organisations and student startups.

Since our founding in 1887, RMIT has been an innovator in urban places. Our growth across Melbourne and in other major cities around the world reflects a living tradition, generating education that is valuable, relevant and accessible to people living and working in the communities around us.

This approach has built up campuses and precincts that, in turn, help to shape the cities they are home to.

Since 2015, this approach has continued. In the durrung (heart) of our Melbourne City campus, RMIT opened the transformed student precinct, designed around a New Academic Street linking Swanston and Bowen Streets and transforming an earlier generation of buildings into a buzzing urban precinct.



RMIT has forged new partnerships and approaches to urban innovation. For example, creating the Melbourne Innovation Districts partnership to build new shared ways to improve the flows of talent, entrepreneurship and social innovation into our surrounding ecosystems.

This approach is spreading rapidly, joining up with our creative partnerships in Brunswick and sparking new collaborations in Barcelona and Vietnam.

We have also taken strides in our environmental sustainability. The Sustainable Urban Precincts Program (SUPP), through reducing energy and water use, has led to RMIT achieving our carbon emissions reduction target (25% by 2020) five years early.

Our students and staff now total more than 105,000 people, based at eight campuses and a number of operational centres around the world – an institution on the scale of a city.

The University has joined in the commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and will track progress through our annual sustainability report.

Underpinning these activities is our broader contextual dhumbali (commitment) to Bundjil's Statement and to working lawfully and respectfully on Kulin country. Bundjil's ngarn-ga (understandings) provide us with a frame for how we govern and regulate ourselves and our behaviour on place, in a responsible, sustainable and future-focused way.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Every era comes with deep change, creating fresh challenges to established orders and methods across different institutions and cultures. In the current period, we face multiple shocks, disruptions and threats that demand transformative responses.

As we look around us and ahead, the stability of our wider environment, especially the natural environment, will become increasingly dependent on

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Awareness of our inter-dependence with the natural world and the many impacts of climate change is

growing. Increasingly, our wider community observes the conflict between understanding and collective action on this issue, leading to multiple forms of political conflict and activism.

Economic challenges and financial constraints are also inevitable, but the complex pressures placed on our operating systems leave us facing uncertainty. RMIT is here to do all we can to enable flourishing futures for the people that we serve. What does this mean for how we balance and prioritise our actions in relation to the economic, social and natural environments we operate in?

As a public university, we carry important responsibilities to our students and the community, as well as formal obligations to comply with the regulations and rules that come with public funding. The basis of our obligations is the RMIT Act 2015. As the world changes and the funding and regulatory environment become more complex, meeting these obligations effectively becomes even more important.

WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT?

How can we go further and deeper in remodelling ourselves as an institution and as a sustainable, long-term anchor for economic and community life in the locations where we operate? What models of partnership, collaboration and long-term investment could we learn from? What aspects of sustainable development should we prioritise, and what is best left to others?

How should RMIT adapt and contribute to climate transition?

What role should RMIT play in the fast-transforming cities where we operate?

What are the most important financial drivers and opportunities for RMIT working as a global, multi-sector institution?

At a time when public funding and sources of finance are constrained, how should we handle pressures for growth in RMIT's cost base?

What do the impacts of technology on the markets for lifelong learning and workforce development mean for us?

How can we use workforce development to empower our workers in equitable ways?

What will help RMIT become more adaptive and impactful over time?

DID YOU KNOW?

- [RMIT won the Green Gown Award for Continuous Improvement Institutional Change](#). RMIT is the only university in Australasia to have received this award twice.
- Vietnam, having one of the fastest rates of urbanisation in South East Asia, is looking to [transform several of its urban areas into smart cities](#); prioritising growth that is inclusive and green.
- [Australia's CO2 emissions are increasing year on year](#), as simultaneously, our subsidies for fossil fuels have continued to rise since 2012.
- RMIT University is part of [three major new Cooperative Research Centres](#) that are investing more than \$420 million to tackle the critical challenges of food waste, future fuels and digital health.
- [RMIT is committed to sourcing 25% of its electricity from the recently opened Crowlands Wind Farm](#). Partnering with the City of Melbourne and other public institutions, this is helping fast track renewable energy development in regional Victoria.

DIRECTION 3: **SHAPING THE WORLD**

We shape the world by developing knowledge and people, and by applying what we know to shared problems through collaborative innovation. RMIT pursues these goals through a global group of students, staff, digital networks, facilities and partnerships spread across key urban centres around the world.



In 2015, our strategy created some big ambitions for our future as a global university of technology, design and enterprise.

Any major university sees research, engagement and international activity as fundamental parts of its identity. For RMIT, these take a distinctive form: impact-driven research, collaborative innovation, deep industry and community engagement, and global outlook and operations all contribute hugely to our cumulative impact.

Since 2015, we have made great progress.



GOAL 5: RESEARCH AND INNOVATION: CREATING IMPACT THROUGH COLLABORATION

Research at RMIT is a source of inspiration for our students, a catalyst for innovative solutions and a driver of impact.

HOW DID WE WANT TO BE KNOWN IN 2020?

- RMIT is recognised as a leader in innovation and applied research, and partners are proud to work at RMIT
- RMIT will be an influential contributor to public policy conversations
- Research groups and teams are appropriately located amid wider clusters of teaching and engagement
- Collaborative industry research is well-established in all sectors where RMIT is active
- RMIT develops more practice-based models of research and training, such as our widely respected architecture PhD program

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Through *Ready for Life and Work*, we have strengthened RMIT's reputation for applied, cross-disciplinary innovation and developed a wide range of working methods and collaborative structures to extend our impact.

In all of RMIT's Schools and Colleges, research teams are taking forward projects and partnerships that are contributing to research metrics and growing success in multi-partner collaborations like Cooperative Research Centres.

Our research profile and impact are supported through eight Enabling Capability Platforms (ECPs), clustered around multidisciplinary knowledge with high relevance to our changing economy and society. RMIT's research community is also supported by a translation function that aids work to identify and follow through on other opportunities for impact and application of research knowledge and expertise.

Since 2015, RMIT's standing in the Times Higher Education World University rankings has moved up more than a hundred places into the highest 400 ranked universities in the world.

International rankings are not the driver of our strategy. Rather, these improvements reflect RMIT's determination to deliver purposeful, high quality research and collaboration that contribute to solve important, contemporary problems in our society.

This challenges us to cultivate our networks and to curate innovation ecosystems that can effectively translate these ideas and discoveries into scalable, long-term impact.

Our partnership with governments from the City of Melbourne to the Government of Vietnam and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, are flourishing.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

RMIT was established on the working premise that impact arises from applying knowledge to real challenges *in practice*, by combining quality with relevance.

As an applied institution, interdisciplinary practice is nothing new to us. Supporting our research teams to explore the intersections and convergent opportunities between different areas of specialist expertise, knowledge and talent is part of our edge.

This challenges us to cultivate our networks and to curate innovation ecosystems that can effectively translate these ideas and discoveries into scalable, long-term impact.

At the same time, our international cohorts of students, staff and alumni could be a formidable resource to help RMIT extend our positive impact and global reach.

Increasingly, institutional partners in all sectors are looking for similar kinds of solution, joining together to meet challenges or seize opportunities that cut across sectoral, geographical or disciplinary boundaries.



Looking across the wider landscape, competition for research funding is becoming more intense. Constrained by fiscal pressures and often by political uncertainty, governments are shifting towards 'impact-driven' criteria.



Demand for technical and societal solutions is broadly shifting in ways that match RMIT's pattern of expertise: urban solutions, complex infrastructure systems and projects, creative and design fields, the social need for elder care, mental health, disability and justice services. Around the world there is growing emphasis on STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics.

During the same period, we have seen a shift from publicly dominated funding of research and innovation, towards much more complex and hybrid approaches, with various forms of private, philanthropic and purpose-driven players helping to shape innovation ecosystems.

Grass roots and community-led innovation efforts are also growing rapidly. Growing demand for social entrepreneurship seems to align with RMIT's purpose and values. How should we be positioning ourselves and contributing to these changing fields?

WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT?

What kinds of solutions to public policy problems, and what forms of thought leadership should RMIT be offering?

How should we champion the intellectual freedom of our academic staff whilst aligning our research to our purpose, community needs and government constraints?

How could we magnify the possibilities for RMIT researchers to create meaningful impact, intertwined with teaching and industry engagement?

How should we champion the intellectual freedom of our academic staff whilst aligning our research to our purpose, community needs and government constraints?

What is it that makes RMIT's research distinctive, and what opportunities can we see to differentiate and strengthen our efforts further?

What should our research ambitions be for the years beyond 2020?

What aspects of our culture and capability do we need to grow further in order to make the most of the connections and collaborations across our diverse research community?

What are the best interconnections between research, entrepreneurship and other forms of impact-driven innovation?

In which innovation ecosystems should RMIT be making our strongest plays?

DID YOU KNOW?

- [RMIT will lead a major new research centre](#) that will investigate how rapidly emerging autonomous decision-making technologies can be used safely and ethically for all Australians.
- RMIT's research group CAST (Contemporary Art and Social Transformation) produces arts research that critically engages with social and public spheres.
- RMIT University's European hub has partnered with Vall D'Hebron University Hospital in Barcelona to [pilot an innovative MedTech device](#), developed by RMIT researchers, that will assist with brain injury rehabilitation.
- This year, [three RMIT engineering research projects](#) have been awarded grants totalling over \$780,000 to help modernise the Australian automotive industry.
- RMIT Alumni and co-founder of VicHyper, Zac McClelland, is [using robotics and machine learning to re-engineer recycling and tackle Australia's escalating waste management crisis](#), which produces 64 million tonnes of waste every year.
- Hanoi, Vietnam, the location of one of RMIT's global campuses, has been named as one of [66 Creative Cities by UNESCO](#).

GOAL 6: INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE EMBEDDED IN EVERYTHING WE DO

Our student experiences, research, staff, partnerships and management are connected to industry, enterprise and community.

HOW DID WE WANT TO BE KNOWN IN 2020?

- RMIT works effectively with industry partners to shape our programs and bring students cutting edge curriculum design
- RMIT uses industry partnerships to engage lecturers and tutors to provide greater opportunities for students, enhancing their graduate outcomes
- RMIT has built a wide range of proven methods and structures through which we work with other institutions and partners
- Industry partnerships are embedded in program design and assessment processes
- RMIT students and staff have authentic Indigenous experiences that respect and acknowledge the Kulin Nation on which RMIT stands

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Industry is part of RMIT's DNA. The range and depth of our industry collaboration, across diverse fields and sectors, from fashion and textiles to aerospace, family violence and Blockchain, is incredible.

This reflects RMIT's history and origins. Founded as a joint effort between philanthropy and the labour movement, meeting the needs of working people and working closely with industry have always formed part of our approach.

Over the decades, as we have grown our partnerships across sectors, RMIT's reputation is closely associated with work-integrated learning, industry alignment and enterprising opportunities.

Our dhumbali (commitment) to vocational education remains as strong as ever, providing a spectrum of qualifications that help lifelong learners to be work-ready, and working with industry players, government and sectors to develop new solutions for workforce development.

These partnership approaches can increasingly be scaled to work with the growing demand for workforce solutions across different industry sectors. RMIT Online is forging new alliances with industry players to offer fresh, workforce-relevant skills in areas like SWIFT coding and Blockchain technology.

Our dhumbali (commitment) to vocational education remains as strong as ever, providing a spectrum of qualifications that help lifelong learners to be work-ready.

In 2016, we established RMIT Activator to grow our innovation and enterprise capability, creating opportunities for thousands of students to gain enterprise experience, learn directly from entrepreneurs and innovators at

work, and receive Cred recognition for enterprise skills.

Entrepreneurship is growing in our degree programs too, with units of study across a growing range of schools and fields. RMIT's Graduate School of Business and Law is driving creative approaches to service design and business problem solving.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Demand for industry and community engagement is growing strongly, enabled by rapid change and new digital technology applications. RMIT is in a strong position but facing in many directions and working across very diverse sectors is also challenging.

The impacts of disruption and industry transformation mean that finding effective, scalable ways to work together, share knowledge and draw on the expertise of our partners and alumni who are widely distributed across the world, is a compelling opportunity.

Spurred on by the impacts of automation and global restructuring, we are seeing greater willingness among many industry players to build and invest in their own workforce learning solutions; training and developing their workers independently of formal education providers.

How should we connect and align RMIT learners with entrepreneurial ecosystems and multiply the opportunities available to them?

Multi-sector institutions like RMIT can be part of this transformation.

We are working together with industry partners in multiple ways, and have the scale and presence to partner, co-invest and develop new working approaches, combining digital and face to face learning.

WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT?

How should RMIT learn from our efforts and experience in deepening capabilities and scaling the methods that work in industry partnership and community engagement, including among our dynamic and diverse alumni?

How should we connect and align RMIT learners with entrepreneurial ecosystems and multiply the opportunities available to them?

How should we develop entrepreneurs for different sectors of society?

How should we grow and scale opportunities for work-integrated learning across the RMIT student experience?

DID YOU KNOW?

- RMIT has recruited close to 300 industry mentors globally, providing mentoring experiences to more than 900 international students.
- [This year, RMIT has launched its Activator experience in Vietnam](#), creating global networks for Australian enterprise founders and Vietnamese startups.
- In a world-first, RMIT and Amazon have joined forces to create the concept for an Artificial Intelligence Digital Assistant (AIDA), with plans to assist students to get the help and support they need in navigating university life.
- RMIT Activator has created eight online micro-credentials, co-designed with industry partners, supporting nearly 8,000 students this year in building enterprise skills alongside their degree.
- [RMIT is a key partner in a revolutionary biomedical research centre, the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery](#), bringing health professionals, academics and industry together to take bionic research to the next level.
- [RMIT has just launched a new course](#), developed in partnership with industry, to address the cyber security skills and talent gap as Australia is forecast to require more than 17,000 additional cyber security professionals by 2026.

GOAL 7: GLOBAL REACH AND OUTLOOK

We are a leading global institution, preparing students for life and work and extending our research impact in key urban centres around the world.

HOW DID WE WANT TO BE KNOWN IN 2020?

- Our students successfully develop cross-cultural skills and competencies
- RMIT graduates are attractive to employers and recognised for their creative, collaborative and entrepreneurial edge
- Digital technology brings RMIT students in all locations to work and learn together
- RMIT is sought after globally by leading research and industry partners
- RMIT has seamless and supportive organisational processes and systems across all our locations

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Since 2015, RMIT's global standing and engagement has grown, with our key international operations also continuing to develop amidst turbulent times.

RMIT's campuses in Vietnam are a well-established and widely respected part of the education landscape. Our long-term partnership with the Government of Vietnam is growing, with new opportunities to embed RMIT into Vietnam's innovation ecosystem and contribute to the region's digital transition. In 2019, RMIT supported the successful bilateral meeting between the leaders of the Vietnamese and Australian Governments and the further economic and social development of the region.



RMIT Europe has gone from strength to strength, locating itself in the durrung (heart) of the 22@ Barcelona Innovation District, forging new industry partnerships and applied research investments, and creating innovative student experiences that can influence the future design of our programs and partnerships around the world.

RMIT's Australian APEC Study Centre renewed its partnership with the Australian Government to support the APEC Business Advisory Council, an important source of capacity building and policy influence in our region.

Regional rivalry, national politics, cultural diplomacy, more restrictive trade and investment policies, the so called 'trade war' and cyber security challenges, all impact on universities, creating risks for our institution and very real challenges for our students and staff.

International student mobility continues to grow, and RMIT's position as one of the leading institutions for students coming to Australia from overseas has been further strengthened in recent years.

Our global partnerships with policy, corporate and non-profit institutions around the world are also growing as RMIT explores and extends our leadership in digitally enabled education.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The diverse global outlook of our RMIT community continues. The growth of student and staff global experiences, stronger relations with our global alumni, development programs for cultural responsibility, and ongoing reforms to our operating systems and structures, supports us in achieving more consistent and effective working across the whole of RMIT's global network.

Our global environment has clearly become more complex and volatile since 2015. Regional rivalry, national politics, cultural diplomacy, more restrictive

trade and investment policies, the so called 'trade war' and cyber security challenges, all impact on universities, creating risks for our institution and very real challenges for our students and staff.

Most of these challenges, however, also reinforce the importance of education contributing to sustainable prosperity and meeting the needs of changing global communities.



In 2019, Vietnam as the region's 'tiger economy' was named as one of Australia's most important relationships in South East Asia. Prime Ministers of Vietnam and Australia have since jointly announced a target to double bilateral trade and investment, building on a strategic partnership entered in 2018.

Applied learning, impact-driven research, and innovative solutions are growing across the South East Asia region. The priorities and policy settings of different national governments make a significant difference to the nature of the opportunities for RMIT in each country.

Yet across very diverse communities and locations, people and institutions are grappling with common challenges of adaptation and transformation.

WHAT SHOULD WE THINK ABOUT?

The environments that we work and live in can seem ever more complex, driven by the proliferation of information and knowledge, and spurred by the impacts of technology.

As the connections across our planet, region, cities and communities keep growing, so must work life contend with this complexity and find better ways to support workers and learners to thrive in this networked environment.

RMIT operates in many places simultaneously, with multiple funding systems, governance structures and markets. The increasing complexity of the regulatory and funding systems that we work with adds further to this challenge.

Wider public debates and controversies may reflect deeper shifts and conflicts over the control of data and knowledge, and the impact of technological change on society's ability to mediate and interpret the flow of information.

All of these pressures, in a highly interconnected environment, challenge us to be ever more adaptive as an institution, building up a capacity to adjust, innovate and learn across our own organisations.

Pressure arising from public governance to meet regulatory standards, deal with unpredictable risks and respond to issues arising from social and geopolitical change, may continue to grow.

The issues include freedom of speech, foreign interference and cyber security, all creating complex new demands of our organisation and posing new questions for our culture and our positioning in the wider community.

Universities play a special role in these processes, with their basic dhumbali (commitment) to freedom of inquiry and expression, their influential place in the public realm and their manifold contributions to technical, social and institutional innovation.

All of these pressures, in a highly interconnected environment, challenge us to be ever more *adaptive* as an institution, building up a capacity to adjust, innovate and learn across our own organisations. How can we best meet this challenge over the next five years?

How will we maximise our 20-year relationships and reputation in Vietnam to position RMIT as a regional thought leader focused on the region's future workforce and industry needs?

How fast and how far should RMIT seek to extend our global presence?

How do we maximise the opportunities for inter-cultural learning between different

countries and locations as the region adapts to transformative changes?

How will we maximise our 20-year relationships and reputation in Vietnam to position RMIT as a regional thought leader focused on the region's future workforce and industry needs?

How might changes in the European Union impact on the priorities and relationships forged by RMIT Europe?

As the Treaty process with Victorian Aboriginal peoples advances, how can we support our community as we transition into the relationship between Australia's non-Indigenous and First Peoples?

DID YOU KNOW?

- Today, more than 210 million students are enrolled in tertiary education around the world. [This number is projected to rise to 660 million by the year 2040.](#)
- Higher Education is one of the [ten most likely sectors to adopt Blockchain at scale.](#)
- An interdisciplinary team of RMIT students are the only finalists from the southern hemisphere in the [SpaceX Hyperloop Pod Competition](#), revolutionising the future of transport.
- [Cyber security attacks are highest in the Asia Pacific region.](#) 33% of organisations in Australia deal with 100,001-150,000 alerts each year. This is higher than the global figure of 10%.
- The number of RMIT students studying across our Vietnam campuses has grown to nearly 8,000.



WHAT'S NEXT

WHAT'S NEXT?

As the next horizon comes into view, we have a great opportunity to ask, 'what have we learned, what could we do differently, and what should we take seriously among the myriad of pressures and possibilities for RMIT's next five years?'

Many of the values and dhumbali (commitments) that we co-developed in 2015 are long-term; they are not going to disappear in the years to come, but their emphasis and definition could evolve.

Other pressures – and disruptors – may play a much greater role during the next five years. We need to be ready for that.

2020 is the fifth year of our *Ready for Life and Work* strategy. Our work continues to deliver in areas that matter for RMIT's future resilience: Program Transformation, Academic Talent, Industry Relationship Management, Project Pi and Quality Assurance.

For 2025, we are working to maintain the traits that made *Ready for Life and Work* a success as a shared strategy – being bold, open and transparent, engaging our diverse groups of students, staff and partners across our community.

Our thinking is influenced by the drivers of change reshaping our communities, creating new sources of disruption and generating fresh opportunities.

The role of our strategy is to articulate our direction and purpose, to make clear what matters most and to enable actions and decision-making to realise a version of the future that best reflects who RMIT is and what we are capable of in a disrupted landscape.

What comes next is a period of open, reflective discussion, when everyone in the RMIT community is invited to think, talk, listen and be stimulated by new ideas and the perspectives of others.

The dialogue will happen on campus, online, and through workshops, forums and celebrations.



New goals, values and challenges may emerge from the conversation.
New solutions might come into view.

We are all encouraged to join in. Share your thoughts about the questions that matter for RMIT's future. Through your engagement, together we'll write our institution's next chapter.

Over the next few months, a dedicated project team will work with the wider RMIT community to turn the conversation and analysis into a strategy that will set out our values, goals and priorities, guide our actions and frame our accountabilities to each other and the communities that we serve.

**IT'S TIME TO START SHAPING
THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR RMIT
— WHAT'S NEXT IS NOW!**

**VISIT US AT
NEXT.
RMIT
TO LEARN MORE**