We are proud of RMIT's contribution to building healthy and cohesive communities by combining the latest advances in technology and design with innovative practices in teaching and learning

— PROFESSOR MARGARET GARDNER AO
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT
ABOUT RMIT

RMIT is a global university of technology and design focused on creating solutions that transform the future for the benefit of people and their environments. RMIT University enjoys an international reputation for excellence in professional and practical educational programs and high quality outcome-oriented research.

RMIT prides itself on the strong industry links it has forged over its 124-year history. Collaboration with industry is integral to the University's leadership in applied research and education, and to the development of highly skilled, globally focused graduates. As a result, RMIT graduates are valued by employers around the world for their leadership skills and work readiness.

All RMIT educational programs include work or clinical experience, industry projects, internships and opportunities for overseas study and placements, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the skills and insights that employers value in the ever-changing global economy.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES OVERVIEW

RMIT has made, and continues to make, a significant contribution to the health and community sectors. RMIT is a longstanding and internationally recognised provider of education for key health professions in the fields of nursing, medical science, disability, psychology, social work, chiropractic and osteopathy, and more recently Chinese medicine. The University also brings IT and engineering expertise and innovation to research partnerships in areas such as e-health solutions, biomedical electronics and disease management.

Health and community education

RMIT is Australia’s largest tertiary institution, offering an extensive range of postgraduate, undergraduate and vocational programs. This means we have the scope to provide education for a wide range of health and community service workers, and to offer pathways from traineeships through to postgraduate qualifications. RMIT continues to expand its offerings within the health and community sectors, including new programs in Biomedical Engineering and Pharmacy. Industry leaders play an important role in shaping education programs through program advisory committees, which operate in each academic school.

Partnerships

RMIT has numerous active research partnerships ranging from collaborations with local health and community groups to global alliances with the World Health Organisation and other multilateral organisations. In 2010, RMIT established Australia’s first Chinese Medicine Confucius Institute in a collaborative project with Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine. The University also has an ongoing partnership with the Guangdong Provincial Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences for pioneering research into the treatment of chronic pulmonary disease.

Research excellence

The 2011 Excellence in Research Australia publication, the first Australia-based analysis of research quality, underscored RMIT’s expertise in the health and community services sectors. RMIT achieved well above world standard in Human Movement and Sports Science and above world standard in Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences, as well as being assessed as at or above world standard in Chemical Sciences, Medical and Health Sciences, and Physical Sciences.

Innovative solutions

RMIT’s Health Innovations Research Institute uses a cross-disciplinary approach to addressing contemporary health challenges. It draws on strengths within the University to develop research capacity in identified areas of socio-economic health burden. The Institute has been very successful in translating biomedical discoveries into therapeutic outcomes for diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, insulin resistance and diabetes, obesity, arthritis, mental health diseases and stroke.

We are proud of RMIT’s ongoing contribution to the wellbeing and sustainability of the communities we live in. Actively partnering with industry and the community is integral to the ongoing effectiveness and relevance of our work.
HEALTH SOLUTIONS

RMIT’s research and innovation in health is firmly based on a commitment to excellence, relevance and benefit to the community.

Nanoparticle research in medical radiations

RMIT medical radiations research has identified two types of nanoparticles as having a positive clinical impact in the near future—gold and iron oxide. Gold nanoparticles have been used to successfully demonstrate, in vitro, that radiotherapy doses are enhanced locally at the tumour site, thus delivering more effective radiotherapy treatment of cancer patients. Iron oxide nanoparticles, together with magnetic resonance imaging, may act as an imaging agent for the detection of the sentinel lymph node, which is the first to capture malignant cells once a cancer begins to spread.

Nano-chip to detect malaria

RMIT has received a $US100,000 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant to help develop a nano-chip biosensor for detecting malaria. The project will use a nanobiotechnology-enabled transformation approach to develop a low-cost, disposable nano-chip biosensor that can be non-invasively used to detect malaria and other infectious diseases with ultra-high selectivity and sensitivity. The next stage is to develop a battery-powered, non-invasive finger scanner that will potentially revolutionise the way infectious diseases are currently diagnosed, particularly in the developing world.

Lab-on-a-chip

RMIT Microplatforms Research Group’s capabilities include lab-on-a-chip technologies that bring together biomedical, microfluidic and microfabrication researchers to create novel devices that enable the study of biological processes in liquid media. This technology is enabling scientific breakthroughs in biosensors, blood research, and cellular kinetics.

The lab-on-a-chip devices mimic physiological processes and microscopic structures allowing in vitro fundamental and applied research.

FINDING A CURE FOR MS

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society, a leading US research and lobby group, has invested $500,000 in multiple sclerosis research being done at RMIT’s Health Innovation Research Institute. The NMSS said in a statement that its members, people with MS in the US, were keen for the society to support the best research, wherever in the world it was conducted.

Multiple sclerosis is an incurable, chronic and often disabling disease affecting almost 20,000 Australians and numbers are increasing. The symptoms of MS are caused by destruction of the protective insulation (myelin) that surrounds the nerve fibres in the brain and spinal cord. The RMIT research will investigate damage to the nerve fibres, or axons, that may occur before myelin damage, with the hope that the research will lead to novel treatments that may limit neurological decline in MS.

NATURAL BORN PAIN KILLERS

An RMIT research team is offering hope to people who suffer from serious chronic pain by using one of the most powerful toxins in the natural world—the venom of marine cone snails.

Currently one in five Australians of working age suffers from serious chronic pain and the options of managing that pain effectively are severely limited. One way to treat chronic pain has been through the use of morphine. However, morphine is extremely addictive and in time people develop a tolerance to it.

Peptides derived from cone snail venom are not addictive and people do not develop a tolerance to them. Using the peptides also allows for a wider safety margin than using morphine, where there is little room for error and if you overdose you are likely to die. With the peptides there are some side effects but you will survive. The research team is focused on isolating peptides that target particular receptors in pain pathways in a bid to find new treatments for chronic and neuropathic pain, as well as other possibilities such as treatments for cardiovascular conditions.

Professor David Adams, Director, RMIT Health Innovations Research Institute.
Biomedical science forms the basis of our understanding of how human bodies function and respond to various stimuli. Whether working with patients, researching new therapies, completing diagnostic tests or ensuring elite athletes perform at their best, RMIT is contributing to significant improvements to people’s lives.

Biomedical Electronics Research Group

This group’s research is aimed at promoting and maintaining good health in communities through the development of innovative frontier technologies and new knowledge in biomedical electronics. Research focuses on biomedical engineering and instrumentation, with particular emphasis on electronic products.

Projects include studying the biological effects of electromagnetic radiation on living systems (brain, skin and human electrophysiological parameters); the measurement of human electrophysiological parameters (bioimpedance and electrical properties of acupuncture points and meridians); and investigation of cell transformation and electromagnetic radiation effects on cell growth.

New Biomedical Engineering program

RMIT’s new Biomedical Engineering program is a four year degree that brings together relevant expertise from six schools at the University: Aerospace, Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering; Applied Sciences; Electrical and Computer Engineering; Computer Science and Information Technology; Health Sciences; and Medical Sciences.

Offered at two of RMIT’s campuses, City and Bundoora, the degree is designed to provide graduates with a breadth of courses from the different fields of physics, mathematics, biochemistry and medical science, as well as including work-integrated learning. It offers a variety of core courses and technical electives from science and engineering including biology, anatomy and physiology, as well as electronic engineering and mechanical engineering fundamentals.

Multidisciplinary and problem-focused research

The nature of biomedical research is evolving from discipline-based research into research that is multidisciplinary and problem-focused. While the disciplines involved in RMIT’s research include biochemistry and molecular biology, physiology, haematology, pathology, pharmacology and toxicology, many of the projects that are being carried out have either a disease focus or a problem focus. For example, there are research programs in drug development based on natural products and rational drug design.

Areas of research include toxicology, physiology, diabetes, neuroscience, wound healing, cancer, and natural products.

STATE-OF-THE-ART FLOW CYTOMETRY FACILITY

Established by RMIT and the Ian Potter Foundation, RMIT’s flow cytometry core facility and service centre offers state-of-the-art multi-parameter flow cytometry.

Located at RMIT’s Bundoora campus, the facility enables researchers to undertake complex experiments for concurrent analysis of multiple markers of cell structure, number and function, as well as to quantify dozens of soluble markers, such as cytokines or drug concentrations, all from a single drop of blood or cell culture suspension.

Flow cytometry is a technique for counting and examining microscopic particles, such as cells, by suspending them in a stream of fluid and passing them by a series of lasers and an electronic detection apparatus. It allows simultaneous multiparametric analysis of the physical and/or chemical characteristics of up to thousands of particles per second. It also has many other applications in research and clinical practice.

RMIT’s facility provides high quality services including access to benchtop analysers, drop-off analysis service, training, application development and consultancy/collaboration.
RMIT’s Health Innovations Research Institute (HIRi) uses an integrated approach to address the key health challenges facing Australia in the 21st century.

An integrated approach

Through research programs focusing on understanding how the human body functions at a molecular and cellular level, HIRi’s primary focus is to translate basic science discoveries into effective and safe therapeutic outcomes. HIRi seeks to better connect the diverse communities around health enterprise to more effectively address the changing needs of biomedical research and society. The Institute capitalises on existing RMIT strengths to build increased research and translation capacity in identified areas of socio-economic health burden. These areas include cardiovascular diseases, insulin resistance and diabetes, obesity, arthritis, mental health disease and stroke.

World class

HIRi is located in a purpose-built 3,000 square metre bioscience research building at RMIT’s Bundoora campus, with state-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities. Since its inception in 2009, HIRi has invested significantly in world-class technologies to enable innovative research and development capabilities with research and industry partners. The Institute carries out a broad range of activities from electrophysiology, molecular biology and cellular imaging, to whole body pharmacology and physiology.

The research

HIRi brings together key researchers and groups from a range of schools at RMIT involved in the following discipline areas: biophysics, biotechnology, cell biology, chemistry, exercise metabolism, biomedical engineering, herbal medicine, complementary therapies, nanotechnology, physiology and pharmaceutical sciences. Interdisciplinary and cross-institutional research programs are coordinated with industry partners and other stakeholders. The Institute seeks to achieve a deeper understanding of the pathophysiology of diseases and to develop new ways to treat the changes that occur as these diseases progress.

Traditional and Complementary Medicine

The Traditional and Complementary Medicine (TCM) program consists of six multidisciplinary research groups with an excellent international reputation in using scientific validation and modern methodologies for evaluating the efficacy, safety and quality of TCM. The program embraces the latest biomedical research breakthroughs in elucidating the mechanisms of therapeutic action of TCMs for major clinical conditions including diabetes, pulmonary disease and pain management.

Ion Channel and Transporters program

Ion channels and membrane receptors underpin many, if not all, fundamental physiological processes. They allow cells to communicate with one another, underlie secretion and absorption, and trigger intracellular signalling pathways. The primary goal of the Ion Channel and Transporters program is to study the mechanism of ion channels and membrane receptors in health and disease using electrophysiological, molecular biological and cell imaging techniques.

Biophysics and bioengineering

Biophysics underpins all biological processes and provides the knowledge necessary to understand the structure and function of biomolecules. The Biophysics and Bioengineering program comprises theoretical and experimental studies whose aim is to provide a biophysical foundation for the development and engineering of novel materials and technologies for health and medical applications.

Metabolism, exercise and disease

Physical activity is a key modifiable factor that controls the body’s energy metabolism, regulates body weight and is a major determinant of health. Many modern diseases arise from physical inactivity. The impact of physical inactivity includes obesity and cardiovascular disease, which leads to low level chronic inflammation of vital organs including the heart, blood vessels and central nervous system. Obesity and inflammation prevents the natural action of insulin to lower blood glucose leading to Type 2 diabetes, and an elevated risk of cardiovascular disease manifests as premature heart attacks and strokes.

Using an integrated approach, the Metabolism, Exercise and Disease program applies the latest techniques in biochemistry, cell biology and physiology to animal models of disease and human studies of exercise and metabolism.
Equipment and facilities

Molecular and cell biology suite
The suite is well-equipped for protein purification and analysis, identification of genes and proteins, and cell-based testing. Routine equipment and facilities for cell and tissue culture include laminar flow hoods and Class II biological safety cabinets.

Computational molecular modelling facilities
Computational facilities are dedicated to modelling and simulation of time-dependent behaviour of biomolecular systems and their interactions at the atomic level.

Histology and immunohistochemistry facilities
These facilities are used for routine sectioning and immunostaining.

Electrophysiology suite
The electrophysiology suite can support electrophysiological technologies alone or in combination with Ca2+ imaging for drug screening, ion or ligand-gated channel pharmacology, toxicology, functional expression, mutant screening and lead optimisation.

Imaging suite
The Institute has outstanding facilities for imaging and analysis of cells and intracellular events.

Animal in-vivo facilities
Facilities include a recently refurbished animal house, with transgenic and quarantine capabilities and equipment dedicated to physiological, metabolic and sensory monitoring.

Human biosignals and sensors facilities
Enabling technologies and software are available for non-invasive acquisition, measurement and identification of physiological and sensory biological signals.

Clinical trials facilities
The Institute has expertise in conducting Phase II and III randomised controlled trials in purpose-built clinical trial facilities for complementary medicine and other therapeutic interventions.

Biosciences Building, Bundoora.
REACHING GLOBALLY

RMIT has a global attitude, action and presence, offering its students a global passport to learning and work.

A global focus

RMIT has a proud history of bringing knowledge to people from many countries, cultures and backgrounds, and of working in partnership with professions, industries and organisations in education and research on every continent.

Becoming a truly global educator calls for more than the delivery of education programs. RMIT has integrated internationalisation into all aspects of its teaching and research activities, enabling the University to deepen its engagement with the region and the world and to produce graduates and researchers who are global in both outlook and action. As a result, RMIT qualifications are accepted around the world as evidence of graduates’ professional ability.

Partnership with leading Chinese university

RMIT has entered into an agreement in the field of psychology that will lead to collaborative research with Chinese academics.

The agreement with Peking University, a major research university in Beijing, will also involve staff and student exchange, as well as a jointly taught Masters in Applied Counselling (one year in China and one year in Australia).

Psychology is a developing discipline in China, for which there are fewer international links than in other disciplines. The collaboration will allow Chinese students to become familiar with Western approaches in psychology and counselling in Australia, while developing their skills in China.

RESEARCH CENTRE TAKES INDIA LINKS TO NEW LEVELS

In the International Year of Chemistry, RMIT has opened a joint Research Centre with the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT), one of India’s premier research institutes.

The Centre, based in Hyderabad, will focus on environmental and industrial research. It will host three top-level scientists and up to 20 PhD candidates who will concentrate on developing new technologies for water and wastewater treatment, renewable energy, resource reuse and air pollution control.

Researchers at RMIT and IICT have worked together on projects in relation to nano-engineered materials, methods for the removal of mercury from industrial air effluents, and green chemistry processes.

The new joint facility will allow researchers to work on projects including catalysis for green chemistry, advanced materials and renewable energy, processes for water quality monitoring and wastewater treatment, control of greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, and bio-nanotechnology.

On the domestic scale, cheap nanocomposite clays and liners for clay pots are being developed to remove pollutants from drinking water.

Professor Suresh Bhargava (right), Deputy PVC International, Science, Engineering and Health — leading the RMIT research group.
VIETNAM—BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

The Dien Ban Disability Day Centre is a proposed health and educational facility designed to meet the pressing needs of disability support and services in the region surrounding Hoi An in Central Vietnam. Dien Ban was heavily bombed during the Vietnam War and has the biggest proportion of physical and intellectual disability in the province. The Disability Day Centre will be the first of its kind in the region and aims to address the gap in health services as well as set a benchmark for sustainable building principles in central Vietnam.

Between 2009 and 2010, a group of architectural students from RMIT Melbourne joined with students of RMIT Vietnam in an integrated practice studio model using the development of the Disability Day Centre as a ‘live project’. This was able to deliver real world teaching, research and community service outcomes for RMIT students and staff—and a tangible outcome for an external client. This collaboration between RMIT students from Melbourne and Vietnam provided a dynamic cultural learning experience for both groups.

AFTER THE DELUGE

Researchers from RMIT and the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability led an international team in March 2011 to produce one of the first detailed reports analysing the Japanese nuclear crisis. Concentrating on the volatile situation at Fukushima 1 power plant, the rapid response report contained an in-depth analysis of the damage to the six nuclear reactors, and considered the lessons that could be learnt in Japan and world-wide on the benefits and risks of nuclear power.

RMIT and Nautilus worked with a team of researchers from Australia, Japan, the US, China and South Korea on the study. The report raised several important questions which will be the subject of further examination as the situation evolves and more information becomes available.

ENGLISH TRAINING FOR MEDICAL STAFF IN VIETNAM

RMIT Vietnam provides an English language training program for doctors and nurses at the National Hospital of Paediatrics in Hanoi, sponsored by the Australian International Health Institute. The program is tailored to meet the English language requirements specific to the paediatric field by applying a dual focus on general and medical English language skills and vocabulary.

RMIT Vietnam operates one of the largest English language training programs in Vietnam, drawing on the high calibre of its English language teachers and its state-of-the-art facilities. Participants develop their English and study skills through interactive teaching and a combination of print and electronic learning activities. Ninety doctors and nurses from the hospital have completed the course, leading to qualifications with the International English Language Testing System, which is the world’s leading test in English for higher education and employment.

CUBA’S HEALTH ‘MIRACLE’: LESSONS FOR AUSTRALIA

Dr Elizabeth Kath, of RMIT’s Global Cities Research Institute, spent five years conducting research into the social and political underpinnings of Cuba’s widely applauded public health system, revealing a complex story that carries potential lessons for the industry in Australia. This story, which unveils both the means by which Cuba produced its unusually positive health indicators and some of the rarely-discussed problems inside the system, is told in her book, *Social Relations and the Cuban Health Miracle*, which was released in late 2010.

Cuba’s health indicators outperform all nations at similar levels of economic development, with some of its health statistics rivaling those of wealthy industrialised countries. Dr Kath’s qualitative research, which included nine months’ fieldwork in Cuba, was aimed at unravelling the puzzle of how the nation was able to achieve such excellent health outcomes in the face of poverty and major external crises.

The research produced unique and often unexpected findings revealing dimensions of the Cuban health story that have often been overlooked due to a common fixation on quantitative measures of health care quality.
TRADITIONAL AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE

Traditional and Complementary Medicine is playing an increasingly significant role in Australia's health care system, with herbal medicine firmly established as a potential source of new drugs and dietary supplements.

Chinese medicine

Over an 18-year period, RMIT has developed its position in Chinese medicine education and research to one of international leadership. This was recognised in 2005 when the University’s Chinese Medicine Division was designated as a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine.

RMIT was the first Australian university to offer a double degree in Chinese medicine, and is now the largest national provider, having trained more than 800 practitioners. These include graduates of a successful program in Hong Kong.

Victoria is the only state to register Chinese medicine as a primary health care profession, with a national registration scheme set to begin in July 2012.

Chiropractic

RMIT is a leader in Chiropractic tertiary education, having offered the world’s first government-supported chiropractic program in 1975. The University now has one of the world’s largest chiropractic programs, with 480 students in Melbourne and many more studying offshore with partner organisations.

Major areas of research interest include:

- clinical neuroscience
- clinical trials of effectiveness, outcome measures and safety
- competency-based professional standards and assessment
- nutritional aspect of health care
- psychosocial aspects of clinical practice

Osteopathy

RMIT was the original provider of higher education in osteopathy in Australia, its programs dating back to 1986. Osteopathy at RMIT has always worked closely with the Australian Osteopathic Association, the professional body which represents 85 per cent of practising osteopaths in Australia.

Osteopathy staff have special interests and expertise in osteopathic clinical practice, osteopathy in the cranial field, and investigation of the primary respiratory mechanism. The Osteopathy Unit at RMIT is actively increasing its research activities and has facilities to support research in clinical practice, applied neurophysiology, applied basic science and current issues affecting the profession.

Wellness

The wellness field is emerging through a coalescence of sectors such as the spa and fitness industries, complementary healthcare and health promotion, nutrition and workplace wellness. RMIT’s Master of Wellness program seeks to develop the knowledge and skills essential for graduates to gain employment (including self-employment) in this rapidly expanding field.

Work opportunities are evident through the international demand for quality graduates who can offer wellness teaching, coaching advice and support in a range of clinical, corporate and community settings.

Teaching clinics

RMIT is a national leader in clinical and field experience and work-relevant learning. This directly benefits the community and ensures our graduates are fully equipped to meet the demands of their profession. The University operates teaching clinics that are open to the public in:

- Chinese Medicine (Bundoora campus)
- Chiropractic (Bundoora campus and Bulleen)
- Osteopathy (Bundoora campus)
- Psychology (Bundoora and City campuses)
- Remedial Massage/Myotherapy (City campus)

RMIT’s Health Sciences clinics register more than 50,000 patient visits per year.

Chiropractic also operates clinics in St Kilda and Collingwood in partnership with Hands on Health Australia, which provides chiropractic care to people who are socially or financially disadvantaged.
AUSTRALIA’S FIRST CHINESE MEDICINE CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE

RMIT’s teaching and research strengths were recognised internationally in 2010 when the Chinese Vice-President opened Australia’s first Chinese Medicine Confucius Institute at RMIT.

This was the culmination of a collaborative project between RMIT and Nanjing University of Chinese Medicine, supported by the Confucius Institute Headquarters in Beijing. His Excellency Xi Jinping, Vice-President of the People’s Republic of China, launched the Institute which will promote the study of Chinese culture and language, with a focus on Chinese Medicine.

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS IN RMIT ACUPUNCTURE TRIAL

RMIT researchers are investigating the use of acupuncture for pain management in emergency departments, after receiving funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council for a three-year clinical trial.

Patients in the emergency departments of the Epworth, Alfred and Northern hospitals are to be involved in the trial, with acupuncture used to alleviate pain from acute migraines, backache and ankle injuries.

Acupuncture is known for its pain-relieving benefits, and the preliminary research that RMIT has done shows it may be a valuable tool for practitioners in emergency settings.

CHINESE MEDICINE RESEARCH BOOSTED BY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

Research into the benefits of herbal medicine and acupuncture for treating the symptoms of respiratory diseases has been boosted through a partnership between RMIT and the Guangdong Provincial Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences. The Guangdong Academy, China’s leading traditional Chinese medicine research facility, is contributing $1.05 million to a pioneering study into the effectiveness of herbal medicine for treating chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

The partnership will foster research exchanges and enable RMIT to deepen its existing collaborative networks with key education institutions in China.

The collaboration with the Guangdong Academy has already led to the development of the International Research Network for Traditional and Complementary Medicine to support large-scale clinical trials on chronic respiratory diseases and to expand research into the use of acupressure for hay fever.

The clinical study is being conducted simultaneously in China and Australia, to examine whether traditional herbal medicines could improve sufferers’ quality of life and reduce their dependence on medication. By helping patients manage their symptoms better and reduce the impact of exacerbation, the study has the potential to enhance the day-to-day life of those who suffer from these often debilitating diseases.

Professor Charlie Xue, Head of School, Health Sciences and Director, RMIT’s Chinese Medicine Confucius Institute.
ENRICHING COMMUNITIES

RMIT works in partnership with industry, community service organisations, government, service providers and policy-makers in Australia and internationally. The University is proud of its track record in providing solutions to the key issues facing today’s communities.

Australian Centre for Human Rights Education

RMIT is playing an essential role in human rights education. The Australian Centre for Human Rights Education (ACHRE), established by RMIT in 2007, helps people and organisations across all sectors of the community understand and exercise human rights in their daily lives. ACHRE offers postgraduate programs in applied human rights, as well as supporting high quality applied research undertaken from a human rights perspective.

Dr Diane Sisely, inaugural ACHRE Director, comes to RMIT after ten years of leading Victoria’s Equal Opportunity Commission. With an emphasis on empowerment through learning, ACHRE works towards a vision of a society in which people flourish and fully participate as active and engaged citizens. Dr Sisely said: ‘ACHRE aims to influence long-term cultural change by promoting greater application of human rights on a day-to-day basis.’

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute is a national, not-for-profit organisation that funds, conducts and disseminates high quality research on housing, homelessness and cities to inform the policies and practices of governments, industry and the community sector, and to stimulate debate in the broader Australian community.

The AHURI-RMIT Research Centre draws on skills from economic, social, environmental and cultural disciplines. Areas of expertise lie in housing policy and economics, labour and housing, homelessness, sustainable housing, urban policy, sustainable urban planning and transport planning.

International nutrition research packs muscle

Scientists from RMIT are part of an international research project investigating connections between nutrition and exercise to reduce the effects of ageing. The project, including researchers from the Australian Institute of Sport, McMaster University in Canada and the Nestlé Research Center in Switzerland, is investigating whether the combined impact of nutrition and exercise can enhance the quality and quantity of muscle mass in both young and ageing adults. Each institution brings individual competencies and perspectives, without which the full scope of the research would be impossible.

Community-research partnership

Early in 2011, the Handbury Fellowships marked 10 years of support for innovative research projects across western Victoria.

The fellowship program, named after Southern Grampians residents Helen and Geoff Handbury, was launched at RMIT in 2002 to support projects that provide direct and tangible benefits for the sustainability of the western region. Priority areas for research projects are economy and livelihoods; community health; cultural diversity; food security; and ecology benefits for the region. Financial support of up to $10,000 is provided to successful applicants.

Since 2002, 20 fellowships have funded local projects ranging from the development of strategies for addressing skills shortages in the red meat and wool industries, to evaluating the benefit of arts festivals to community wellbeing.

Centre for Applied Social Research

RMIT’s Centre for Applied Social Research (CASR) undertakes nationally significant research and promotes public debate on key areas of social change and social policy. Since its establishment in 1989, the Centre has been committed to the belief that effective and equitable policy choices need to be founded on insightful public debate, which in turn is based on historically and theoretically informed applied research.

CASR undertakes projects funded by the Australian Research Council, as well as projects for state government departments, community agencies, the union movement and local government.

Research groups are currently focused on the changing character of paid work and employment relations, and related policy issues; welfare provision for various disadvantaged groups; and policy and practice in health and wellbeing. The Director of CASR, Professor Chris Chamberlain, has co-authored eight state and territory reports on homelessness released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
PARTNERSHIPS IN COMMUNITY SERVICE

The ageing of Australia’s population poses an immediate challenge for the community services industry: to invest in a well-trained management workforce.

RMIT’s Community Services program is working closely with partners focused on building the capability of frontline managers, with the aim of boosting high quality, person-centred services that are the measure of this industry’s success.

These partners include Villa Maria, a large aged care and disability services provider, which gained recognition for its staff training and development in the 2009 and 2010 Victorian Government Fair and Flexible Employer Recognition Awards. Thirty-five Villa Maria managers have completed a Diploma of Management with RMIT.

The hallmarks of RMIT’s approach are also apparent in the design and delivery of the Advanced Diploma of Disability Work for Sunnyfield Independence, an NSW-based specialist in intellectual disability support services.

WEIGHT TRAINING TO CONTROL DIABETES

Two emerging researchers, Mr Brett Gordon and Dr Amanda Benson have commenced a study into the effect of weight training and aerobic exercise on glucose and insulin—key markers in Type 2 diabetes.

Exercise has been shown to be as effective as medication in controlling the condition, which is reaching the rate of one in every ten people. The study has focused on finding the minimal effective dose of exercise to control glucose levels and improve the way the body produces and uses insulin.

Working in collaboration with the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute and the Austin Hospital, the researchers have accessed funding from the Australian Technology Network’s Centre for Metabolic Fitness to enable the use of new technology in continuous glucose monitoring to provide better insight into glucose control than a one-off ‘snapshot’ blood test.

WOMEN’S HEALTH RESEARCH

RMIT academic Margaret Heffernan OAM has contributed 20 years as a women’s health activist, focusing on gynaecologic oncology. She successfully lobbied government for a mobile health unit in Central Australia and has been instrumental in the initiation of several large scale cancer related projects, including organising the petition that led to a Senate inquiry into gynaecological cancer.

Ms Heffernan recently completed a PhD on cross-cultural attitudes towards the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines which led to funding from the Northern Territory Government for the development of HPV vaccine resources in five languages. Her research has increased our understanding of health issues in the Indigenous and mixed cultural populations, resulting in cross-cultural collaborations, additional resources and ongoing research into community health.

INDIGENOUS FESTIVALS BOOST WELLBEING

RMIT’s recognised expertise in community wellbeing, combined with many years’ engagement with the Yothu Yindi Foundation in Arnhem Land, led to a three-year study into the benefits of Indigenous festivals.

Working with Telstra Foundation, RMIT’s Globalism Research Centre completed research into festivals around Australia and overseas, providing an opportunity to favourably influence the policy framework and industry support for this increasingly significant sector.

The research report revealed that cultural festivals have powerful effects on Aboriginal Australian communities. RMIT’s Dr Peter Phipps said: ‘There are now more than 100 Indigenous festivals taking place across the country. The study proved that they promote an experience of social inclusion, positive institutional engagement and broadened opportunities for Indigenous Australians.’
**E-HEALTH**

E-Health is the electronic management of health information to deliver safe, efficient and high quality healthcare. RMIT is committed to e-Health and is facilitating the transition of paper-based clinical record keeping to electronic means for better information exchange.

**Superior healthcare solutions**

RMIT has expertise in the area of healthcare and technology in various areas relating to the strategic application and management of technology for effecting superior healthcare solutions. This includes all types of healthcare information systems as well as e-Health initiatives.

RMIT’s Professor Nilmini Wickramasinghe is one of the leading experts in the area of applying the tools, technologies and tactics of the knowledge economy into the healthcare sector spanning all areas from aged care, chronic disease management, intensive and acute care, ambulatory care, lab and radiology, billing and practice management, community care as well as alternative and allied care.

**Rehabilitation through virtual reality technology**

An Art-Science collaboration based at RMIT is unlocking the potential of virtual reality-based environments in rehabilitation. Called ‘Elements’, the design and development agenda was to develop a multi-modal interactive workspace that would help rehabilitate patients with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

TBI is the main cause of death and disability in adolescents and young adults, and has immense social and economic costs—in excess of $3 billion per year in Australia. Being a predominantly young disability group, the use of multimedia environments was a good fit.

Using off-the-shelf technologies, the system presents a virtual tabletop workspace that enables both assessment and treatment of upper-limb function in patients. A number of journal and conference papers have described the results of successful intervention studies at the Epworth Hospital. Notably, these studies show generalisation of the benefits of virtual reality-based training beyond the clinic.

The Elements system is a step forward in rehabilitation. Development of virtual rehabilitation systems at RMIT has received a boost by additional ARC Linkage funding, commencing June 2011. This work will explore the use of co-located virtual environments in rehabilitation.

**INVALUABLE WORK EXPERIENCE**

RMIT students in Healthcare Information Systems are gaining practical experience through an industry collaboration with Epworth Hospital.

Students worked on a post-implementation review of a digitally scanned medical records system recently implemented at Epworth Hospital. The review gave students first-hand experience and the opportunity of objective insight into the challenges and benefits involved in migration to an electronic approach within a healthcare context.

Work-integrated learning experiences such as this enable RMIT to ensure that its programs are practical and industry-relevant, and further strengthen the University’s capacity for strong graduate employability outcomes.

**DIABETICS TO BENEFIT FROM WIRELESS HEALTH CARE**

Managing a chronic disease like diabetes could be as simple as sending an SMS, thanks to new developments in the integration of technology into healthcare delivery in Australia.

RMIT is collaborating with INET International in Canada on a new interactive health application that takes advantage of the ubiquity of mobile phones and wireless technology to help patients improve their self-care. Patients will be able to test their blood sugar before or after a meal, send the data to a healthcare provider via their mobile phone and receive instant feedback. The advice will detail what kind of exercise they should do or how they should eat, to maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

The research is part of RMIT’s Healthcare Technology Cluster. Researchers collaborate internationally with leading healthcare organisations throughout the US and Europe to investigate how information communication technologies can improve health, and to find cost-effective ICT solutions for healthcare systems.
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

RMIT has a long-established reputation of working closely with industry partners to provide workforce development solutions that meet the needs of today’s rapidly changing and complex work environment. This is achieved through customised training and professional development that offers a blend of learning options such as intensive workshops, workplace delivery and e-learning.

A prescription for success

Launched early in 2011, the RMIT Bachelor of Pharmacy program is the first new pharmacy degree in Melbourne in 129 years. The Australian Pharmacy Council has granted approval for the program as a qualification leading to a career as a pharmacist in Australia and New Zealand. The program provides cutting-edge training in areas of increasing demand such as pharmaco-vigilance and clinical trials, offering graduates a wide range of pharmacy-related skills and outcomes in research and the pharmaceutical industry.

To support the program, innovative teaching and learning spaces have been completed at RMIT’s Bundoora campus. The new facility, constructed using the highest sustainable building principles, has been equipped with state-of-the-art technological features to allow interactive teaching and active student learning. Future pharmacists can gain retailing experience at a mock dispensing counter and consultation rooms, through which student participation can be captured and streamed live to interactive whiteboards.

Executive education

RMIT has extensive experience in the design, development and delivery of customised professional development programs. Our programs integrate management theory with practical management skills, and include the latest technology, research and education concepts.

RMIT also offers a full range of postgraduate business programs that address the challenges of today’s fast-paced and increasingly complex business environment. They are designed to foster leadership and strategic thinking and to help participants maximise their personal and professional capabilities.

Workforce solutions

RMIT has a proven track record of working with partner organisations to upskill their workforce, using e-learning resources and training expertise to develop customised and flexible delivery modes to meet different industry needs. RMIT’s range of health, medical and business vocational education and training programs include:

- Aged Care
- Business-related programs
- Community Services
- Disability
- Facilities Management
- Human Rights
- Justice
- Laboratory Technology
- Languages
- Nursing and Allied Health
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Project Management
- Training and Assessment
- Translating and Interpreting
- Youth Work

Enhanced facilities for dental education

RMIT’s Vocational Dental Education Centre, located at the Royal Dental Hospital in Melbourne, provides training for dental health support services including dental technology, prosthetics and dental assistance. Funding of $1.35 million from the State and Federal Governments supported the redevelopment of the University’s facilities. The Centre now boasts a new state-of-the-art dental laboratory, a computer laboratory and a clinical simulation and oral radiography room. The redevelopment also includes a 70-seat lecture theatre and two 30-seat flat floor classrooms.

The Royal Dental Hospital is the leading referral centre for specialist dental care and trains nearly 1,000 students each year to become dentists, dental technicians, dental therapists, dental prosthetists and dental assistants.

OUTSTANDING TRAINING FOR ARMY MEDICS

Since 2009, RMIT has been working with the Australian Defence Force to train military personnel. The Army and RMIT discussed how best to build and maintain the extensive skills and knowledge medics require in a short but comprehensive training program.

The result was an 18-month training course for Army medical technicians which involves completion of a Certificate IV in Defence Health and a Certificate IV in Nursing leading to registration as an enrolled nurse. From there, medics complete a five-month hospital placement prior to the pre-hospital critical care phase. Nearly 200 medics have embarked on the Medical Technician Training program.
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RMIT programs are accredited by external organisations including:

- Australian and New Zealand Society of Nuclear Medicine
- Australian Institute of Medical Scientists
- Australian Institute of Radiography
- Australian Pharmacy Council
- Australian Psychological Society
- Australian Psychology Accreditation Council
- Australian Research Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
- Chinese Medicine Registration Board of Victoria
- Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia
- Dental Practice Board of Australia
- Nurses Board of Victoria

Professional associations and organisations

RMIT graduates can become members of the following organisations, depending on the degree program they graduated in:

- Acupuncture Association of Victoria
- Ausbiotech
- Australasian Pharmaceutical Science Association
- Australasian Society for Human Biology
- Australasian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability
- Australasian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists
- Australian Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine Association
- Australian and New Zealand Society for Cell and Developmental Biology
- Australian Association of Clinical Biochemists
- Australian Natural Therapists Association
- Australian Physiological Society
- Australian Society for Medical Research
- Australian Society for Microbiology
- Australian Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
- Australian Society of Cytology
- Chinese Medicine Registration Board of Victoria
- Council on Chiropractic Education Australasia
- Disability Professionals Victoria
- Federation of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture Societies of Australia
- General Chiropractic Council (Britain)
- Genetics Society of Australia
- Human Genetics Society of Australasia
- Mutagenesis and Experimental Pathology Society of Australia
- New Zealand Chiropractors Registration Board
- Osteopaths Board of Australia
For further information or any enquiries, please contact:

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