

# OLGA TENNISON AUTISM RESEARCH CENTRE

School of Psychology and Public Health  
La Trobe University, Victoria, Australia

## The Olga Tennison Endowed Chair in Autism Research CANDIDATE INFORMATION BOOKLET

[latrobe.edu.au/otarc](http://latrobe.edu.au/otarc)



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# Acknowledgment of Country

La Trobe University acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded lands of many traditional custodians in Victoria and NSW. We recognise their ongoing connection to the land and value their unique contribution to the University and wider Australian society.

La Trobe University is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both as individuals and for communities, through learning and teaching, research and community partnerships across all our campuses.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and thank them for their ongoing care of the land, skies, and waterways of this beautiful country.

We acknowledge our Indigenous staff for their valuable contributions, dedication and ongoing support of our strategic objectives.

# Welcome

On behalf of the University, we warmly welcome your interest in joining the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC) within the School of Psychology and Public Health. This position represents an exciting opportunity to join a dynamic and growing research centre.

The Olga Tennison Endowed Chair in Autism Research is a Level E research-only position developed in recognition of a major benefactor, Mrs Olga Tennison, AO. The Olga Tennison Endowed Chair will be committed to progressing OTARC's mission to enrich the lives of Autistic people across the lifespan regardless of their level of ability, and those of their families and carers through high quality scientific research, innovation, and translation.

The successful candidate will play a key role within the Centre and School, contributing to research and engagement activities. The position will contribute to building on the Centre's international reputation for its research excellence.

The successful candidate should bring an outstanding record of international achievement in academia, a breadth of academic vision, strategic thinking, and demonstrable experience leading and inspiring teams. They will ensure the Centre continues to excel in the areas of research and research translation. They will be also an inspiring leader with the ability to build strategic relationships both domestically and internationally with key external partners, ranging from local communities to industry and government.

We would be pleased to discuss this opportunity with you.



**Professor Monica Thielking**  
Dean,  
School of Psychology and  
Public Health



**Professor Alison Lane**  
Centre Director,  
Olga Tennison Autism  
Research Centre

# About La Trobe University

## Our Mission

We are a university known for making a positive difference in the lives of our students, partners, and communities. We will become an even more valued and relevant university because of the way we respond to their needs at this time of great local and national change.

## Our Vision

Our aim is to emerge as a more resilient, future-focused and necessarily more efficient institution that will thrive in a post-COVID world by being more sharply focused on the needs of our community, and by playing to our strengths in teaching and research.

## Our Values

Our early reputation as a radical and challenging institution continues to influence the way we enrich the experience of our students and engage with our partners and communities. We were founded half a century ago to broaden participation in higher education in Melbourne's north and, later, in regional Victoria.

We have succeeded for many thousands of students who would otherwise have been excluded from the opportunities provided by a university education. We continue to support access, diversity and inclusivity while undertaking world class research that aims to address the global forces shaping our world and make a difference to some of the world's most pressing problems, including climate change, securing food, water and the environment, building healthy communities, and creating a more just and sustainable future. This approach is based on our values of:

- inclusiveness, diversity, equity and social justice
- pursuing excellence and sustainability in everything we do
- championing our local communities in Melbourne's north and regional Victoria
- being willing to innovate and disrupt the traditional way of doing things.

Of all Australian universities, we are the most successful at combining accessibility and excellence, and have become a place where social inclusion and globally recognised excellence come together for the benefit of our students, our staff and our communities.

Our academics and researchers achieve national and international recognition, our public intellectuals demonstrate an enduring social conscience and influence, and our alumni achieve extraordinary success and impact in government, industry and not for profit organisations.

We strive to be exemplars for the sector in our commitment to gender equity and to inclusivity for marginalised groups; and we work with Indigenous peoples and organisations to support their social, cultural and economic aspirations.

We embrace sustainable practices across all our campuses because we are committed to improving environmental, social and economic outcomes for our communities.

We contribute to economic development for our local communities, and our future activity will increasingly be international as we become a globally connected university in everything we do.

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## Our Culture

### La Trobe Cultural Qualities

Our cultural qualities underpin everything we do. As we work towards realising the strategic goals of the University we strive to work in a way which is aligned to our four cultural qualities:



#### We are accountable

*We strive for excellence in everything we do. We hold each other and ourselves to account, and work to the highest standard.*



#### We are connected

*We connect to the world outside – the students and communities we serve, both locally and globally*



#### We are innovative

*We tackle the big issues of our time to transform the lives of our students and society.*



#### We care

*We care about what we do and why we do it. We believe in the power of education and research to transform lives and global society. We care about being the difference in the lives of our students and communities*

# About the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre

The Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC) at La Trobe University was established in 2008 and is the first centre dedicated to autism research in Australia. Since that time, OTARC has grown and established itself as Australia's leading autism research centre, made possible with the extraordinary generosity of the late Mrs Olga Tennison AO. Through her personal philanthropy, Olga Tennison AO has ensured OTARC will continue and expand upon its work in perpetuity, for the benefit of the Autistic and autism communities.

OTARC is committed to researching topics of the greatest relevance to the Autistic and Autism communities, across the lifespan of Autistic people and across the full spectrum of abilities, to deliver knowledge and tools that have the greatest impact on the lives of Autistic people, their families and carers. The Centre provides a vehicle for research activities, knowledge translation, evidence-based supports and practices, training and collaboration between community services and research centres/universities involved in autism research both in Australia and overseas.

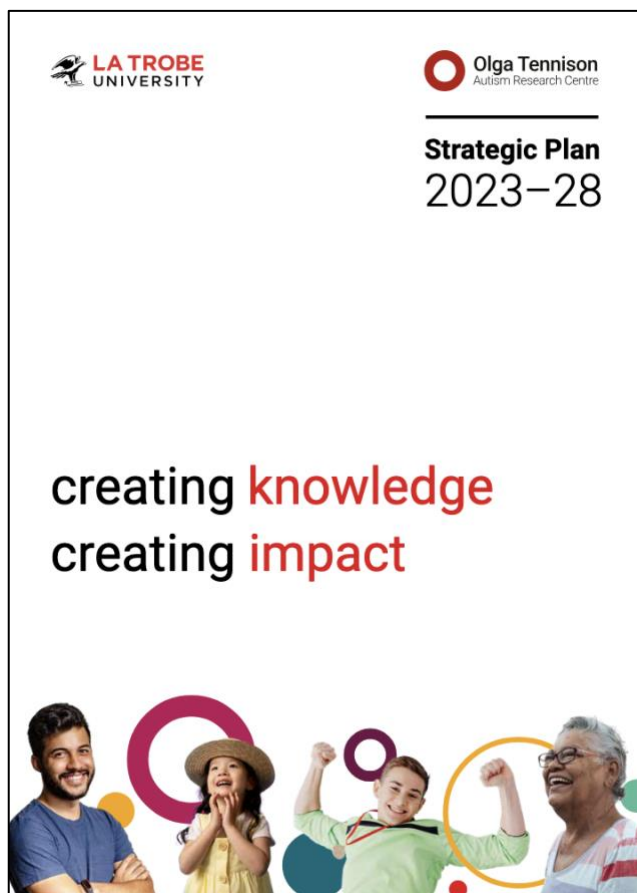
OTARC is committed to implementing and sustaining genuinely neuroinclusive recruitment and retention processes that reflect the neurodivergent identity of the majority of our staff across all areas of the Centre's operations. We aspire to an organisational culture that is ambitious, creative, collaborative, respectful, and inclusive, and one that strives for excellence.



# OTARC's Strategic Direction

[\*Creating Knowledge, Creating Impact\*](#), OTARC's 5-year strategic plan (2023-28), aims to create and translate the highest quality research evidence by teaching, training and delivering supports and practices suitable for Autistic people from infancy and across their lifespan. The key features of OTARC's Strategic Plan include:

- A focus on four inter-related research program areas which are aligned with the research priorities identified by national and international Autistic and autism communities – Identification and Diagnosis, Supports and Practices for Daily Living, Educational and Vocational Engagement, and Health and Wellbeing.
- A focus on building our research-to-practice capabilities to create impact, offering exemplar service programs with reach across metropolitan and rural and regional Victoria and beyond.
- A focus on research that improves outcomes for Autistic people across the whole lifespan, from infancy to adulthood and across the full spectrum of abilities.
- A commitment to ensuring that our work is informed by and involves those with lived experience of autism (Autistic people, their parents and carers).





# About the School of Psychology and Public Health

OTARC is housed in the School of Psychology and Public Health. The School is one of the larger schools within the University, and undertakes teaching and research across a broad range of disciplines, including: Neuroscience; Psychology; Counselling; Rehabilitation Counselling; Art Therapy; Family Therapy; Public Health; Digital Health and Analytics; Health Information Management; and Ergonomics, Safety and Health.



The School comprises six academic units: the Department of Public Health, the Department of Psychology, Counselling and Therapy, the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), the Centre for Alcohol Policy Research (CAPR), The Bouverie Centre and the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre (OTARC). The School also has a collaboration with the Academic and Research Collaboration on Health at Alfred Health.

Our goal is to transform health and wellbeing education, research and practice, and the student experience is at the heart of all we do.

We are proudly training the next generation of psychologists, counsellors, therapists, and public health experts in a variety of disciplines including public health, occupational health and safety, digital health and health information managers, and health services management.

We offer accessible undergraduate and postgraduate courses to students of all backgrounds. We serve regional communities across Victoria and graduate students that fill critical workforce gaps in health. And, we work closely with inter-sectorial stakeholders to ensure our graduates make a difference, and impact, in their careers and the communities they serve.

We believe in work-readiness, and our students benefit from outstanding placement opportunities that expose them to a range of health environments.

We also offer short courses across a range of psychology and public health areas, where professionals can upskill, reskill, advance into leadership roles or pursue research as part of our lifelong learning community.

# About the Position



The Olga Tennison Endowed Chair is awarded based on international recognition of sustained, distinguished and original contributions to research and scholarship in the field of autism. The incumbent will provide research leadership in this field and foster excellence in participatory inclusive research practice, research translation, research policy and research training within OTARC at La Trobe University and within the scholarly and general community.

The Endowed Chair will contribute to establishing OTARC's reputation as world leading by conducting autism scholarship and research of the highest quality aligned with one or more of OTARC's research program areas – Identification and Diagnosis, Supports and Practices for Daily Living, Educational and Vocational Engagement, and Health and Wellbeing. The Endowed Chair will also promote the work of the Centre nationally and internationally, establishing OTARC as a research partner of choice by developing and maintaining high-level strategic external partnerships. They will provide national and international leadership in autism research and influence developments relating to autism scholarship and research. The Endowed Chair will act as an ambassador for the Centre and University nationally and internationally. The Endowed Chair will also be a key member of the leadership team at OTARC that advises the Director of OTARC regarding research and strategy for the Centre. The successful candidate will be expected to mentor OTARC researchers across all levels and supervise OTARC research students completing higher degrees.

The Endowed Chair is an academic member of the School of Psychology and Public Health. A Professorial Level E research-only academic is expected to have achieved international recognition through original, innovative and distinguished contributions to their field of research. They will be expected to provide leadership in their disciplinary field and foster excellence in research, research policy and research training within the institution and within the scholarly and general community. All Professors are members of the University's Academic Board and are expected to contribute to the leadership not only of their Academic Unit and School, but also of the University as a whole.



### Duties at this level will include:

- Foster excellence and advancement in autism research by playing a major role in all elements of major research projects including management and leadership.
- Obtain external research funding, produce conference and seminar papers and publications arising from research.
- Build research partnerships and collaboration (including commercial opportunities) with industry and government.
- Provide advice and mentorship in obtaining external funding, and in the preparation of research proposal submissions to external funding bodies, particularly large bids.
- Support the development of researchers across all levels including neurodivergent scholars by taking on a senior mentorship and leadership role in the discipline, centre, school and university.
- Supervise Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students.
- Contribute to high level strategic planning for the Centre and encourage and promote a robust and innovative research culture within the Centre and the University.
- Support fundraising for research conducted by the Centre, capital and operating funds, including working with the Alumni and Advancement Office in fundraising initiatives.
- Provide leadership and foster excellence in research and policy development in the field within La Trobe and the scholarly and/or general community.
- Participate in community and professional activities related to autism, including involvement in commercial sectors where appropriate.
- Promote and represent the University and Centre by participating in appropriate local, national and international organisations and events.
- Undertake other duties commensurate with the classification and scope of the position as required by the Director, Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre.

## Essential skills and knowledge required for the position

- Completion of a PhD or equivalent accreditation and standing, together with substantial research experience.
- Evidence of an international reputation in autism research and demonstrated significant national and international influence on their profession.
- Distinguished record of original, innovative and internationally recognised research in autism, with evidence of its impact and significance.
- Outstanding record of publications, including papers in top-tier and high-impact journals, conference papers, reports and/or professional and/or technical contributions in autism.
- Demonstrated track record in brokering, establishing and maintaining strategic relationships with collaborators and funding sources, including government, community, and industry partners.
- Demonstrated effectiveness in the preparation of research proposal submissions to external funding bodies and a substantial record of external research funding through national and international competitive grants, and/or large industry grants or consultancies.
- A sustained record of successful supervision of Honours, Masters and PhD students to completion.
- Superior analytical skills and a demonstrated ability for strategic thinking at an organisational and community level, with an ability to communicate complex information clearly both orally and in writing.
- Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively and productively with staff and students from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- Lived experience of autism and/or another neurodivergence and/or relevant workplace experience in a neurodiverse workplace would be highly regarded.

## Capabilities required to be successful in the position

- Uphold a high level of personal commitment, contribution and achievement at an internationally distinguished level in research and scholarship in autism.
- Ability to build unified teams, support others, and gain enjoyment from other's successes.
- Ability to manage self in complex, high pressure situations, and assist others to do the same.
- Ability to collaborate in creative processes, and to respectfully challenge new ideas or existing practices.
- Ability to recognise and be responsive to customer and stakeholder needs, and to respectfully add value where possible to their vision.

## Essential Compliance Requirements

To hold this La Trobe University position, the occupant must:

- hold, or be willing to undertake and pass, a Victorian Employee Working With Children Check; AND
- take personal accountability to comply with all University policies, procedures and legislative or regulatory obligations; including but not limited to TEQSA and the Higher Education Threshold Standards.

## Other information

The position description is indicative of the initial expectation of the role and subject to changes to University goals and priorities, activities or focus of the job.

## Position Flexibility

La Trobe University is committed to providing a diverse, inclusive, and respectful working environment for all staff. We offer flexible work arrangements that can assist you in balancing your work and other responsibilities.

La Trobe University is a proud member of the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) Athena SWAN program to increase the number of women in science.  
[www.sciencegenderequity.org.au/](http://www.sciencegenderequity.org.au/)

## Why La Trobe

- Develop your career at an innovative, global university where you'll collaborate with community and industry to create impact.
- Enjoy working on our inspiring and stunning campuses – the perfect hub for industry, students and academics
- Help transform the lives of students, partners and communities now and in the future.

This is more than just a job. Working at La Trobe offers opportunities to demonstrate excellence and transform lives.

Here, you'll join exceptional people, partners and communities, who power our operations with ambition and purpose.

We are forward-looking and culturally inclusive. We continuously review, improve and transform our processes to embrace new, flexible approaches. That means you'll always have the opportunity to succeed and make a difference.

# How to Apply

All Applications should be submitted via [\*\*latrobe.edu.au/jobs\*\*](https://latrobe.edu.au/jobs)

When submitting your application, the following information is required:

## Curriculum Vitae

Please include the following:

- Details of your education, professional training and qualifications with year of completion.
- Positions you have held, including relevant dates, titles, responsibilities and key achievements.
- Other relevant information such as your research output and performance, contributions to professional associations and learned societies, and community activities.

## Response to the Essential Criteria

Please respond to the essential skills and knowledge criteria for the role.

## Indicative Commencement Date

Candidates are asked to provide an indication of the earliest date on which they would be available to commence in the position.

As part of the application and appointment process, candidates may be requested to provide proof of their identity, and give permission for verification of their tertiary qualifications and an Australian Federal Police check.



# One University, Many Communities

## Albury-Wodonga

Albury-Wodonga delivers strong manufacturing, tourism, agriculture and service industries to a huge area of Victoria, NSW and the ACT. Our campus attracts students from across the region, offering a wide range of courses from arts, sports management and business to nursing, allied health and science. It is one of Australia's three leading campuses for industry engagement, including freshwater ecology at the Centre for Freshwater Ecosystems, and regional and rural ageing through the John Richards' Centre for Rural Ageing Research.



## Bendigo

Bendigo is one of the fastest growing regional cities in Victoria. It is a major centre for government services, has vibrant local industries, and an outstanding arts and cultural sector. Our Bendigo campus is the largest of our regional campuses with more than 4,500 students. It offers a full range of courses, including education, allied health, dentistry, law and engineering. Bendigo graduates enjoy a 94 per cent employment rate after graduating, and our plan is to continue building the Bendigo campus to become Australia's leading regional university town.



## Melbourne (Bundoora)

Bundoora has served Melbourne's North and beyond since our inception in 1967. It is our largest campus with over 26,000 students and a comprehensive range of generalist and specialist undergraduate and postgraduate courses across 10 schools. We have ambitious plans to develop our 235 hectare land base (1.5 times the size of Melbourne's CBD) into a global exemplar of a digital university city of the future. Our Master Plan envisages a multi-stage development including sport, innovation (R&D), education, commercial and residential precincts, with student numbers increasing to approximately 40,000 by 2040. According to a recent report by Oxford Economics, the Melbourne campus supported 6,860 jobs and contributed \$505 million in GDP to Melbourne's North in 2016. By 2026, these figures will rise further, meaning that La Trobe will contribute an additional 3,680 jobs and \$371 million in GDP to the economy in Melbourne's North in that year, relative to 2016. Our 2016 research and development expenditure is expected to contribute \$377 million to Australia's GDP in real present value terms over the next 50 years.



## Shepparton

Shepparton is a culturally diverse city lying at the heart of the Goulburn Valley – a centre of horticulture, dairy, logistics and manufacturing. Our campus, located in the centre of the city, is meeting a growing demand for courses in areas like the arts, business and agribusiness, education, nursing, allied health and social work. Our strong community links present opportunities for research in agriculture, community development, health, cultural diversity and Indigenous affairs.

## Mildura

Mildura is the service centre for northwest Victoria, and a centre for horticulture and irrigation. Our campus is deeply embedded in the business and cultural life of the local community, and delivers a skilled workforce for our local schools, health services and businesses. We provide access for many of our students who are first in family, low SES or Indigenous. Since 2006, we have graduated approximately 100 nurses, 220 teachers, 120 business or accounting graduates, and 60 social workers at the campus. Around 95 per cent of our Mildura graduates get jobs after graduating, and 85 per cent stay in the Mallee region. Working with the local community, we generate world class events and opportunities for research in community development, water and ecology, agriculture, arts and Indigenous affairs.





# About Victoria and Melbourne

## Experience Melbourne

Melbourne is the capital of the state of Victoria, and Australia's second largest city. It's a multicultural hub with 4.5 million people from more than 153 countries, it's one of the best sporting cities in the world, and it is Australia's art and culture capital.

Melbourne is a safe, well-serviced city in which to live and the main campus of the University at Bundoora is close to many world-class hospitals, schools, research centres, shopping centres, bike paths and parklands. People living in Melbourne enjoy affordable healthcare, world-class education, reliable infrastructure, business opportunities and a healthy environment – all of which are unrivalled anywhere else in the world. You'll find the world's masterpieces on the walls of the city's 100 plus galleries and some of the world's best examples of street art along its famous laneways. Melbourne's theatres and live venues stage blockbuster productions, international and local opera, ballet, comedy and live music by some of the world's most popular artists. Melbourne is also a UNESCO City of Literature.

When it comes to sport, Melbourne is a city like no other. Each year, the city hosts major international sporting events like the Australian Open Grand Slam tennis tournament, the Formula One Grand Prix, the Rip Curl Pro surfing championship, the Australian Masters golf tournament and the Melbourne Cup (horse racing). The city also hosts the Grand Final of Australian Rules Football every year, which includes a parade in the city.

Melburnians love their food. Many of the world's top chefs have set up in Melbourne and you'll find just about every cuisine on the planet here: French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Chinese, Malaysian, Indian, Thai, Japanese, Moroccan and plenty more.

More than 2500 festivals and events are held in Victoria throughout the year. Major events in the city include the Melbourne International Arts Festival, Melbourne International Film Festival, Melbourne International Comedy Festival and the Melbourne Spring Racing Carnival.

**Find out more:** [liveinmelbourne.vic.gov.au/discover](https://liveinmelbourne.vic.gov.au/discover)

## Victoria: The Garden State

Victoria is Australia's smallest mainland state – at 227 416 square km, it is about the same size as the United Kingdom. Once known as 'the garden state', it has many notable gardens and 36 national parks covering two and a half million hectares. Among the State's many attractions are the Great Ocean Road, where you'll see stunning coastal views and the world-famous Twelve Apostles, the Grampians and the High Country.

**Find out more:** [visitvictoria.com](https://visitvictoria.com)