Men’s wellbeing program at La Trobe University
Jason Campbell, Leah Du Plooy & Esta Kanellopoulos, La Trobe University

A new and exciting pilot role is being trailed at La Trobe University, Melbourne Australia. The philosophy of the role is to provide, facilitate and research a range of different supports to male students with a focus on building resilience, affirming male strengths (while challenging less helpful masculinity norms) and engendering respectful behaviour using a positive psychology framework. In keeping with the literature, the focus is on what young men do well, highlighting the unique and beneficial aspects of masculinity and giving a space where possible to explore and challenge masculinity norms; particularly around open communication. This role will open multiple avenues (e.g., groups, forums, counselling focused specifically for young men and consultation with staff on engaging men) for the young men of La Trobe to have conversations and share their stories. This discourse will be important on a few levels. Firstly, giving men an opportunity to talk about how they feel and what they experience. A recent focus group of male student leaders stated that the experience of being a part of sharing stories with other men and witnessing vulnerability was highly valued. One example given was “I would like to hear more experiences like what is one of your most difficult challenges you got through?” Second an opportunity to explore complexities of being a man in 2019 and adhering to masculine norms. Finally improving social contact and cohesion on campus between men enabling a modelling effect from sharing and reauthoring this experience as a strength. Our focus group indicated that hearing stories and their vulnerability was welcomed but they seemed to want to hear others vulnerability first.

Learning outcomes
- Men’s mental health. A snapshot of men's issues at a community level and in the University population.
- Further understand the importance of men sharing stories and lived experiences of men in the university setting.
- To gain an introduction to the exciting new Men's wellbeing initiative at La Trobe University and the experience of the program so far, including from a student perspective.
Presenters
Leah Du Plooy, La Trobe University

I have been a qualified social worker for 25 years and have worked in various settings including acute hospitals, sexual assault counselling, child and family welfare and tertiary education. My current role is Deputy Director of Student Health and Wellbeing at La Trobe University. My previous roles at La Trobe University include Acting Senior Manager Student Wellbeing and Manager of Counselling, Bundoora Campus.

Prior to this I spent five years at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers developing an innovative in house Social Work Program providing Counselling and Case Management to clients who had sustained significant injury and seeking compensation.

I also worked at the Alfred Hospital's Trauma Unit for 10 years, as the Trauma Team Leader and Senior Clinician providing support to patients and families who had been admitted to hospital after sustaining a traumatic injury. I have worked with victims of disasters such as the Bali Bombings and the 2009 Victorian Black Saturday Bushfires. In addition, I worked for DHS in Child Protection and as an After Hours Sexual Assault Counsellor with the Centre Against Sexual Assault.

I was previously the convenor of the Trauma Social Work Special Interest Group in Melbourne for 9 years and a member of the Australian Association of Social Workers.

Esta Kanellopoulos, La Trobe University

Esta Kanellopoulos is a clinical psychologist who manages the student Counselling Service at La Trobe University's Melbourne campus. Before that she worked as a student counsellor at the university's largest regional campus in Bendigo. Esta has experience working in the private psychiatric sector as an individual and group therapist, with particular expertise in mindfulness-based therapies. She has also worked as a lawyer in commercial litigation before re-training as a psychologist.

Jason Campbell, La Trobe University

Jason Campbell is a counselling psychologist working in tertiary education and private practice. He brings a broad range of experiences to his clients gathered from his work history in the university sector, e-learning, NGO health promotion and previously 16 years in the airline industry.

He has a passion for men's mental health & wellbeing. He has been employed as a counsellor with the La Trobe University Counselling Service for 5 years and currently is working in the new role as the Men's Wellbeing Coordinator. In this role he provides person centered, strength based counselling with a ‘positive masculinity’ focus to male clients and is currently developing a range of initiatives including groups, forums and programs focused on increasing help seeking and mental health wellbeing in the young men of La Trobe.