

## **Re. Official Statement by The University of Melbourne to the Habitat III Plenary**

*--- Statement to be delivered by Professor Carolyn Whitzman, Chair of Urban Planning ---*

On behalf of the University of Melbourne, I would like to express our congratulations to all of the partners who have contributed to the New Urban Agenda and our appreciation to the City of Quito and UN-Habitat for the work that has gone into hosting 50,000 participants at Habitat 3.

The University of Melbourne is the top ranked university in Australia, and #33 in the world. Half of our students are graduate students, and over a third are international students. Along with two other Melbourne-area universities, RMIT and Monash, we have one of the largest concentration of international students in the world. We are in the centre of a city that is celebrated as one of the most liveable. We are therefore in an excellent situation to support training the next generation of urban scholars and practitioners.

Our 14 person delegation reflects that youthful diversity. Over half are PhD students or early career researchers who have recently completed their doctoral studies. Their research ranges from integrated planning for health to mapping the environmental impact of buildings, from comparative studies of informal settlements, to climate change mitigation and adaptation in rapidly urbanising cities of the Pacific. Their countries of origin include Poland, Iran, Lebanon, Chile and Canada, reflecting the international community of thought that together can inform more resilient, inclusive and liveable cities.

In conjunction with other universities, in Melbourne and around the world, we see the role of universities in implementing the New Urban Agenda through three mechanisms. First, our interdisciplinary research explores a range of industry and policy relevant questions. These include: how collaborative partnerships can increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing, ways to create walkable and safe public spaces, and what political and social transitions might be necessary for carbon neutral cities. We work with local, regional and national governments, the private sector and grassroots community organizations to ensure that this research is informed by the needs of all those who would be affected.

Second, we teach students from around the world in settings from around the world – health promotion professionals, planners, architects, engineers – all the actors who need to work together with appropriate skills, knowledge and theory informing their work. We engage in problem-based learning and engage multiple publics in critiquing and engaging in our results.

Third, we see our role as advocates for evidence-based policy that is informed by participatory democracy. We see universities as convenors of ‘safe spaces’ where people from differing perspectives can engage in productive dialogue towards change.

As a university, we commit to:

- First, assist in supporting and monitoring the success of localities and national governments in implementing the New Urban Agenda
- Second, create partnerships with governments, the private sector and civil society to ensure that infrastructure planning and financing decisions align with the New Urban Agenda, prioritizing for example environmental sustainability and social justice.
- Third, develop innovative approaches, through research and teaching, to address the complex challenges of global climate change and worsening inequalities in the face of rapid urbanisation.

Thanks to the Habitat III Secretariat for the opportunity to speak with you today.

