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VUWC 18/62



## COUNCIL PAPER

TO	Members of Council
FROM	Professor Grant Guilford, Vice-Chancellor
DATE	22 May 2018
SUBJECT	<b>Name Simplification</b>
REF TO STRAT PLAN	All
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### Executive Summary

This management team is working through a research and consultation process to decide whether to recommend to Council a simplification of the name of Victoria University of Wellington.

The principal objectives of name simplification would be to improve the University's name recognition internationally, to reduce confusion with the many other tertiary institutions that are similarly named, and to better align the University's name with that of our city, Wellington.

The name simplification proposal is one element of a raft of steps being taken to achieve the University's vision to be a world-leading capital city university and one of the great global-civic universities. Central to achieving this vision is an enhanced global reputation and clear alignment with the capital city.

This paper updates Council on the findings to date of the research and consultation.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council notes this paper.

### Assessment of University's International Reputation

Careful analysis of the University's international reputation has shown that we are thought of very highly by individuals and organisations who have had direct experience of the very high quality of teaching and research at the University. However, more broadly than our own alumni and collaborators, we have a less than

satisfactory international prominence and name recognition. The consequences are significant and include: reduced international influence of our research; reduced 'degree equity' for our graduates; impeded international careers for our staff; fewer desirable international collaboration opportunities; and reduced ability to attract leading international staff and typical numbers of international students.

### Observations and Analysis to Date

Analysis to date of this lower-than-deserved international prominence and name recognition has revealed a number of opportunities to improve our international reputation. One of these opportunities is to consider the simplification of our name from Victoria University of Wellington to the University of Wellington.

Research has shown that the "Victoria" element of our name is not distinctive and that the word 'Victoria' is increasingly associated with geographic regions such as the State of Victoria in Australia rather than with Queen Victoria. No evidence has been found that the word 'Victoria' is intuitively linked to Wellington or New Zealand by people living overseas. In contrast, New Zealanders do make this association - comfortably associating Victoria with Wellington as befits our strong local brand.

Evidence has accumulated that our achievements are regularly attributed to the many other institutions (see below) with which we share the name Victoria.



Analysis has shown that our staff regularly use as many as eight different variants of the University's name adding to the confusion. Several of our leading scholars determinedly attribute their work to "Victoria University" – a new university in Melbourne. Many other staff and students routinely forget to include the word 'Wellington' in the name of the University.

Estimation of the marketing budget that would be required to promote the often used alternative names such as 'Victoria', 'Vic' and 'VUW' and to link them to our university and to Wellington in the 100 countries from which we draw international students has clearly demonstrated this would be unaffordable let alone a poor use of public money. In contrast, *consistent* use of the word 'Wellington' in the University's name inherently aligns the University with the city of Wellington and leverages the significant destination marketing spend already being made by WREDA.

Market research on university names by us and other universities has revealed that two words are better than three and one of the two words must be 'University'. This research has also shown that the best choice for the second word is your city, especially if the city – like Wellington - has reasonable prominence and momentum. It is clear from this research – and from a moment of introspection - that the use of any additional words in the name of a university reduces the perception it is the main university in its city.

Market research with over 2,800 potential students in seven countries (China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Viet Nam and the USA) did not show any preference for the name 'Victoria University of Wellington'. The name that performed most consistently was University of Wellington, New Zealand. More ambitious names such as the University of New Zealand performed inconsistently – perhaps because of a perceived lack of authenticity.

Historical research has revealed that the first choice name by the University's 'founder', Premier Robert Stout as revealed in his failed 1887 bill was 'The Wellington University College', Three further attempts have been made by the University to change its name to the University of Wellington (1955, 1972, and 1992). Research has also revealed a number of other universities around the world have abandoned the word 'Victoria' including the universities of Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool.

Consultation to date with university management and staff has revealed strong but not unanimous support for name simplification. However, if name simplification proceeds, it is important to many staff that ways are found to honour the heritage of our prior name and to keep the word 'Victoria' alive in the life of the University. Professor Jane Stafford who teaches Victorian literature has kindly agreed to lead a working group to develop approaches to honouring this heritage if the decision is made to retire the word Victoria from the University's name.

Consultation to date with Toi huarewa, Te Aka Matua and Māori beyond the University has revealed support for the name simplification and enthusiasm for a concurrent

change of the University's Māori name to Te Herenga Waka – a name shared by our marae and with deeply meaningful symbolism for the university community.

Consultation with the VUWSA Executive has revealed support for the name simplification with the Executive particularly concerned to optimise the degree equity of graduates as they search for employment in New Zealand and further afield. Consultation with other student executive groups is on-going. Student feedback on the proposal has been at a very low level with the small number of submissions received having mixed views. Salient has not taken a strong view one way or the other.

The Trustees of the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation have been consulted and are strongly supportive of the name simplification. Alumni groups consulted in alumni events offshore in London, New York, Edinburgh, and San Francisco have been nostalgic about the name but supportive of a change given the accumulated evidence. Feedback from alumni via email has been mixed with some saying 'just do it' and some keen to retain the name and its heritage. Not surprisingly, alumni living and working in Australia are particularly interested in dropping the word Victoria because it regularly links them to Victoria University in Melbourne – a university that they do not wish to be associated with. A point of discussion with alumni has been the importance of differentiating loyalty to the present name from loyalty to the institution and its role in society.

Current and former Mayors as well as other civic leaders have been consulted and are also strongly supportive. Wider consultation is beginning soon with two forums planned for the wider public and for stakeholders. The public meeting has currently attracted very low levels of interest and advertising is on-going.

### **Timeframe for a Decision**

Management aim to complete consultation with students, staff, alumni, stakeholders, government and members of the public over the next month and be in a position to make a recommendation one way or the other to Council by its June meeting.