

Equipment Solutions

La Trobe

University



**Building a learning environment
that reflects the future of dentistry**

La Trobe University in Bendigo, Australia, is redefining dental education through a strong commitment to community impact, interdisciplinary learning, and technological advancement. With recent investments in a new state-of-the-art learning facility featuring Planmeca solutions, the university is equipping students with the tools and mindset they need to keep up and succeed in dentistry

82

Planmeca Compact i Sim
Simulation Units

16

Planmeca Compac i3
Dental Units

128

Planmeca Lumo
Stools

16

Planmeca ProX intraoral
X-Ray Units

4

Planmeca ProX™
Simulation Cabinets

La Trobe University's dentistry and oral health programs are housed within the La Trobe Rural Health School, the largest rural health school in Australia. According to Prof. Santosh Kumar Tadakamadla, Discipline Lead for Dentistry and Oral Health, the school's mission is deeply rooted in improving the health and well-being of people living in regional and rural areas.

This commitment is reflected across all aspects of the activities, from teaching and research to clinical placements. Students are trained in regional and rural settings, and the university actively recruits students from these areas to ensure the programs remain closely aligned with the needs of the communities they aim to serve - students with rural backgrounds are more likely to end up practicing in rural locations.

Prof. Tadakamadla notes that there has been a significant shift in student demographics over the years. While the intake once consisted largely of metropolitan students, today around 80% of those enrolled in dentistry and oral health programs come from regional areas, most of them from regional Victoria. In addition, the proportion of international students has increased, with just around 15% now coming from abroad.

Having grown up in a small regional town, Prof. Tadakamadla witnessed first-hand the challenges associated with accessing timely healthcare in rural areas. This personal experience contributed to his interest in becoming a health practitioner, with dentistry emerging as a natural focus. Today, he channels his passion for improving health outcomes in regional and rural communities through both education and research.

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Prof. Tadakamadla,
Discipline Lead for Dentistry and Oral Health
at La Trobe Rural Health School

Preparing students for the digital evolution of dentistry

Prof. Tadakamadla acknowledges the growing importance of integrating new technologies into the dental curriculum. With the rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital tools, it is difficult to predict exactly what technologies will be in use five or ten years from now. However, La Trobe University is proactively preparing students to be adaptable and open to innovation.

“While you cannot predict what’s going to happen in the next five years, what we can do is prepare students to be more adaptable - to be open to take any new digital technologies in,” Prof. Tadakamadla says.

With ongoing advancements expected in the next decade, he emphasises the importance of preparing students through a curriculum that embraces digital dentistry. He also highlights the relevance of digital dentistry for regional practitioners, who may face limited access to technicians and dental laboratories: “So we want to train practitioners who are ready to go and practice in regional areas and are able to fabricate their own dentures, have their own milling machine etc.”



The new simulation units come equipped with a host of practical features.

This forward-thinking approach is reflected in La Trobe University’s recent investment in an advanced new facility with Planmeca simulation units, and other cutting-edge equipment, designed to deliver a better student experience and allow students to undergo training in a similar setting they are likely to encounter when they move on to their clinical placements.

Interdisciplinary learning also plays a valuable supporting role in enhancing students’ overall educational experience. La Trobe Rural Health School’s diverse offering of 12 health disciplines creates a unique setting for students to collaborate across fields and learn from one another. For instance, dentistry and oral health students can participate in medical emergency simulations alongside paramedicine students, gaining valuable experience in teamwork and a deeper understanding of complex, real-life scenarios. La Trobe also has plans to further expand interdisciplinary activities in the future.

Early reflections on the upgraded learning environment

As a result of the recent upgrades, the new facility at La Trobe University houses 82 Planmeca



Students gain experience with equipment they are likely to encounter in their future work.

Compact™ i Sim simulation units, 16 Planmeca Compact™ i3 dental units, 16 Planmeca ProX™ intraoral X-ray units, 4 Planmeca ProX™ simulation cabinets, and 128 Planmeca Lumo™ stools. In addition, Planmeca Romexis® software is available to support the workflow.

According to Prof. Tadakamadla, the upgrades have already enhanced the day-to-day learning experience for students. The new Planmeca simulation units offer a highly realistic environment that mirrors clinical practice, making the transition from preclinical to clinical settings smoother and more intuitive.

“That transition is probably easy for them now, just because they can relate the equipment they have in their pre-clinic to what they would see in the clinic. In the old learning environment, we had those very bulky units and a bulky mannequin which are not very relatable to what a student might see in their clinical placements,” Prof. Tadakamadla explains.

Highlights of the new Planmeca solutions

Prof. Tadakamadla remarks that the team and students have been generally impressed with the new equipment because of its sleek design

and practicality. So far, it has proven very easy to work with and maintain.

Students and educators alike have praised the Ultra Relax™ upholstery of the new units for its supportive memory foam and easy maintenance. “While it looks delicate, it’s not delicate, and the team that has been responsible for managing and cleaning the units says that it’s very easy to manage,” Prof. Tadakamadla notes.

Another highly appreciated feature of the new units is the inclusion of a plumbed water system. Previously, students and lab staff were required to refill the water bottles every time, which they found frustrating. With the new units, the need for manual refilling has been eliminated, reducing maintenance responsibilities.

With regard to Planmeca ProX intraoral X-ray units and simulation cabinets, Prof. Tadakamadla says that expectations are high, based on the positive feedback received from other institutions. He expects them to be particularly useful in endodontics during preclinical training, where close supervision is typically required when students take X-rays. With the cabinets in place, the chance of unintentional exposure is almost impossible, which helps from the supervision perspective.

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The new simulation units come equipped with a host of practical features.

Another welcome addition that the educators at La Trobe are eager to start using is Planmeca Solanna® Vision, which they believe will bring added value to both teaching and learning. The teachers' station is now equipped with this cutting-edge operating light with two fully integrated cameras and a microphone. It can be used for video streaming, capturing still images, and recording videos.

While Prof. Tadakamadla says they have not explored the full potential of the camera system yet, he is enthusiastic about the possibilities it entails, as it will allow dental demonstrations to be broadcast across the facility or even to practitioners in rural areas.

Choosing Planmeca for smart design and real-world relevance

According to Prof. Tadakamadla, the decision to choose Planmeca's products was driven by their advanced features and modern design, aligning with the goal of providing students with

an optimal learning environment. Feedback from both education providers and local practitioners supported the choice, emphasising the importance of familiarising students with equipment they are likely to encounter in real-world practice.

Additionally, the compact and adaptable design of Planmeca products made them especially suitable for environments where space is limited, allowing to maximise functionality without compromising on quality.

"You want to make the best use of the limited space you have and create a state-of-the-art facility within the space you have. From that perspective, I think Planmeca does very well."



La Trobe Rural Health School has 82 Planmeca Compact™ i Sim simulation units.

Trusted partnerships that deliver

For this university project, Henry Schein & Planmeca formed a dedicated team that worked closely with the dental school from initial planning to equipment delivery and maintenance to ensure a successful outcome. The staff involved in the project at La Trobe University were highly impressed with the quality of service provided.

Prof. Tadakamadla notes that La Trobe University has a long-standing partnership with Henry Schein Australia, making them a natural choice when planning the new teaching environment and equipment. What truly set Henry Schein apart, however, was the team's exceptional responsiveness and attention to detail. He describes the collaboration as smooth and genuinely supportive.

Another aspect the La Trobe staff greatly appreciated was the high level of communication. They felt there was always someone available to help, and no question

was too small or too complex to be addressed promptly. Rather than focusing on making a sale, Henry Schein's representatives took the time to understand the school's specific needs and offered tailored recommendations.

According to Prof. Tadakamadla, working with Planmeca and Henry Schein was a pleasure. He adds that the experience was further enhanced by the fact that the work was completed ahead of schedule, sometimes even weeks before the agreed deadlines. "It felt like while it has been a massive project - it did not feel like a very great effort," he concludes.

Text: Katja Kurki

Images: Courtesy of La Trobe University



Setting a New Benchmark

In Dental Care Technology

The team behind this pioneering project have transformed an ambitious vision into a state-of-the-art facility that sets new standards in integrated dentalcare technology.

At the heart of this achievement lies the Technical Service Team, whose exceptional dedication and expertise turned a bold concept into a world-class learning environment that truly embodies the future of dentistry. This milestone required meticulous planning, precise coordination across multiple teams, and countless hours of preparation.

Seamless Integration with Planmeca Romexis

The team's ability to integrate diverse equipment and digital platforms within the Planmeca Romexis software ecosystem ensured that every solution was seamlessly connected and future-ready.

About Planmeca Romexis Dental Software

Planmeca Romexis® is the one of most powerful dental software platform in the world. It offers a rich selection of tools and features for all needs and specialities, supporting both 2D and 3D imaging as well as CAD/CAM in a single software. Powered by AI, Romexis optimises daily tasks, streamlines treatment planning and boosts patient communication.

A Showcase of Innovation

The result is a powerful demonstration of how technology and human ingenuity come together to:

- Establish a fully integrated dental workflow
- Enhance clinical efficiency
- Provide a scalable foundation capable of supporting evolving dental care needs



118
Units Installed



ALL in 1
Dental Software

From Planning to Perfection

From the earliest planning stages to the final connections, the Technical Service Team was pivotal. Beyond their advanced technical expertise, they demonstrated high-level project management capabilities—drawing insights from engineers, digital imaging specialists, brand managers, and professors to optimise every aspect of the facility.

This facility stands as a testament to what can be achieved when vision, expertise, and technical excellence converge - leading to a new chapter for dental education and patient care.

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