

A CAREER IN COFFEE

Monika Fekete is sitting in the Melbourne sunshine sipping a locally roasted, cold-drip coffee. All in the name of research.

Just over 18 months ago, the Budapest-born scientist was coming to the end of a postdoc in chemical engineering at Monash

University during which the city's renowned café culture had her hooked. "Coffee is a Melbourne thing — you meet lots of people very passionate about it," she says. Today, Fekete runs a consultancy helping to bring scientific rigour to Melbourne's buzzing coffee making and brewing scene.

She's run double-blind tastings to test new products, and helped local specialist roasters use refractometry to consistently achieve the perfect quantity of dissolved solids in an espresso. "In Budapest, coffee

was something you drank with a couple of sugars tipped in to get you through exam revision," she says. In Melbourne, going out for coffee is an event in itself.

Melbourne's wider gastronomical and social scene is exceptional. "We've never had a bad meal," says Tina Overton, who joined Monash from the University of Hull, UK, in 2014.

"Melbourne is an easy place to enjoy yourself," she adds. "We like to go into the city, down by the Yarra River, where you can sit and admire the view. There are so many lovely places. It's a very safe, laid-back city, but there's always something going on." **J.M.C.**



TONERFOTOGRAFIA/GETTY IMAGES



VICTORIA BLAIR

Organometallic chemist Victoria Blair moved from Strathclyde University in her native Scotland to work as a postdoc at Monash University in May 2011. She started her own research group in 2014 and gained Australian citizenship the following January.

How did you find the move to Australia?

We touched down in May — in the Australian winter, which has the same temperatures as a Scottish summer. After I got on Australian time, I started my postdoc. Since then I've applied for my own funding and set up a research group through the Australian Research Council. I came here thinking I'd be here for a year or two, but I fell in love with the city.

What do you love about it?

It's vibrant. Melburnians are so outdoors-oriented; they've got nature trails and cycling trails all over the city. Melbourne has been voted by The Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Ranking as the most liveable city in the world for six years running. Australians are friendly and speaking the same language was helpful. It didn't take long to make friends. The food is some of the best I've had. When I moved here six years ago, I told myself that, although it was the other side of the world, I could be back home in 24 hours if it doesn't work out.

What's the scientific environment like?

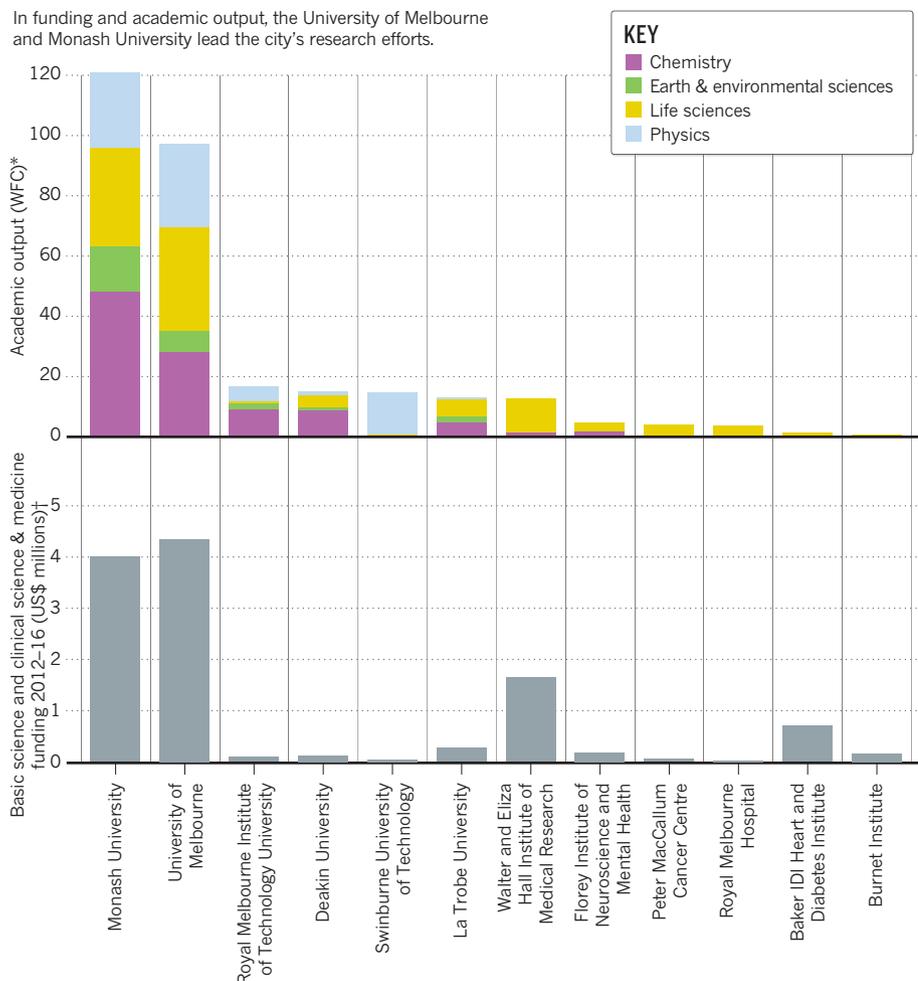
There's a lot of collaboration. We have joint conferences regularly with other universities, and there are many partnerships between medical and non-medical researchers and institutes in Melbourne. There are also grants across Australia that encourage links between professional teams. That helps to progress the field really quickly. The culture is geared towards that.

Interview by Jack Leeming

VICTORIA BLAIR

AHEAD OF THE PACK

In funding and academic output, the University of Melbourne and Monash University lead the city's research efforts.



* Weighted fractional count (WFC) accounts for the relative contribution of authors to papers in high impact journals and applies a weighting to balance subject coverage. Data from 2016 calendar year. Source: Nature Index.

† Funding from competitive grants obtained by researchers listed as working at Melbourne institutions from 2012-2016. Non-competitive finances, such as the funding behind the Australian Synchrotron, are excluded. Source: Dimensions/ÜberResearch.