

Sustainability Strategy

Annual Report 2023



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



The image shows a large, dark stone wall in the foreground, with the University of Sydney building visible in the background. The building is a grand, multi-story structure with two prominent towers and a central clock tower. A flag is flying from a pole on the roof. To the left of the building, there is a large, leafy tree. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

Acknowledgement of Country

The University of Sydney's campuses and facilities sit on the ancestral lands of many of Australia's First Peoples, who have exchanged knowledges for the benefit of all for thousands of generations.

These include the Gadigal, Gamaraygal, Dharug, Wangal, Tharawal, Deerabbin, Darkinyung, Guringgai, Gamilaraay, Barkindji, Bundjalung, Wiradjuri, Wiljali, Ngunawal, Gureng Gureng and Gagudju Peoples.

In respectfully acknowledging the ancient learning cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the University of Sydney declares its commitment to the continuation of this sharing through the agency of our work.

There is no place in Australia that has not been known, nurtured and loved by Australia's First Peoples, who's profound understanding of sustainability has been applied for many tens of thousands of years.

Sustainability Strategy

Annual Report 2023

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Foreword

Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor

Since the launch of our Sustainability Strategy 2020, the University of Sydney and its community's need for significant action to address environmental degradation has become more evident and more urgent.

Climate change continues to be one of the most pressing challenges of the modern age, while other forms of pollution and unsustainable resource consumption demand redress. Given these challenges, we are proud to present the University's third Sustainability Annual Report. It records progress on our journey to reducing our environmental footprint and our work to promote sustainability and honour our commitment to Caring for Country during 2023.

Reducing our direct impact on the environment through our operations remains a central component of our Sustainability Strategy, and we chalked up several significant achievements in 2023. We are well on our way to achieving one of our main emissions reduction targets, with the first full-year implementation of our renewable energy Power Purchase Agreement, which substantially reduces our Scope 2 emissions. Reducing waste is another critical aspect of our sustainability agenda. We expanded our organics waste stream 2023 and we have continued the rollout of energy, water, and waste-saving initiatives. Our important work on managing our built and natural spaces received a significant boost with the engagement of a Biodiversity Management Officer, who has overseen initiatives to monitor and manage the ecosystems on and around University properties, in addition to a Biodiversity Officer (Identified) based at our Narrabri campus.

While the environmental issues we face as part of a global community pose real challenges, they also represent opportunities for the University to cement its place as a world-class institution leading the way in forging a more sustainable future. Nothing demonstrates this better than the launch of our Horizon Fellowships – among the most generous university fellowships in the world and an Australian first – to support research into climate change, health, and sustainability. Alongside substantial

new initiatives such as our Horizon Fellowships, in 2023 our academics produced a steady stream of innovative research, from new methods of capturing carbon from the atmosphere to quantifying the cost of inaction on climate change.

In addition to research designed to address immediate environmental issues, the University plays a critical role in preparing our students to become responsible global citizens through the education we provide. The last year has seen further progress on our work to expand the learning opportunities of our students across a range of sustainability-related issues. We are particularly proud of the launch of our Major in Sustainability, which offers an undergraduate complement to our increasingly popular postgraduate Master of Sustainability.

It is crucial that we report the progress of our sustainability journey regularly, and with high transparency. This reporting commitment is embedded in our Sustainability Strategy (Strategy 16); it aligns with a core component of our Sydney in 2032 Strategy to “place trust and accountability at the heart of our values”; and it underpins our ability to meet our ethical obligation to accurately record our progress without embellishment. To this end, it is important to note that not all targets are currently on track. Due to a range of issues – from the impact of COVID to volatile economic conditions and the inevitable challenges associated with deep transformations to how we operate – we need to do more work in several areas. We remain committed, however, to the ambition of our targets and will lead with high accountability and trust to deliver progress in the years to come. For instance, we are investigating what further actions will help us meet our zero waste to landfill and net zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions targets.

Our commitment to accelerating progress towards our targets is evident through substantial changes implemented in 2023 around how sustainability is embedded into the University. A new governance structure was implemented, with our substantially expanded sustainability team now sitting within the Office of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. This represents a milestone in embedding sustainability principles and action further into our DNA – what we do and who we are as an organisation.

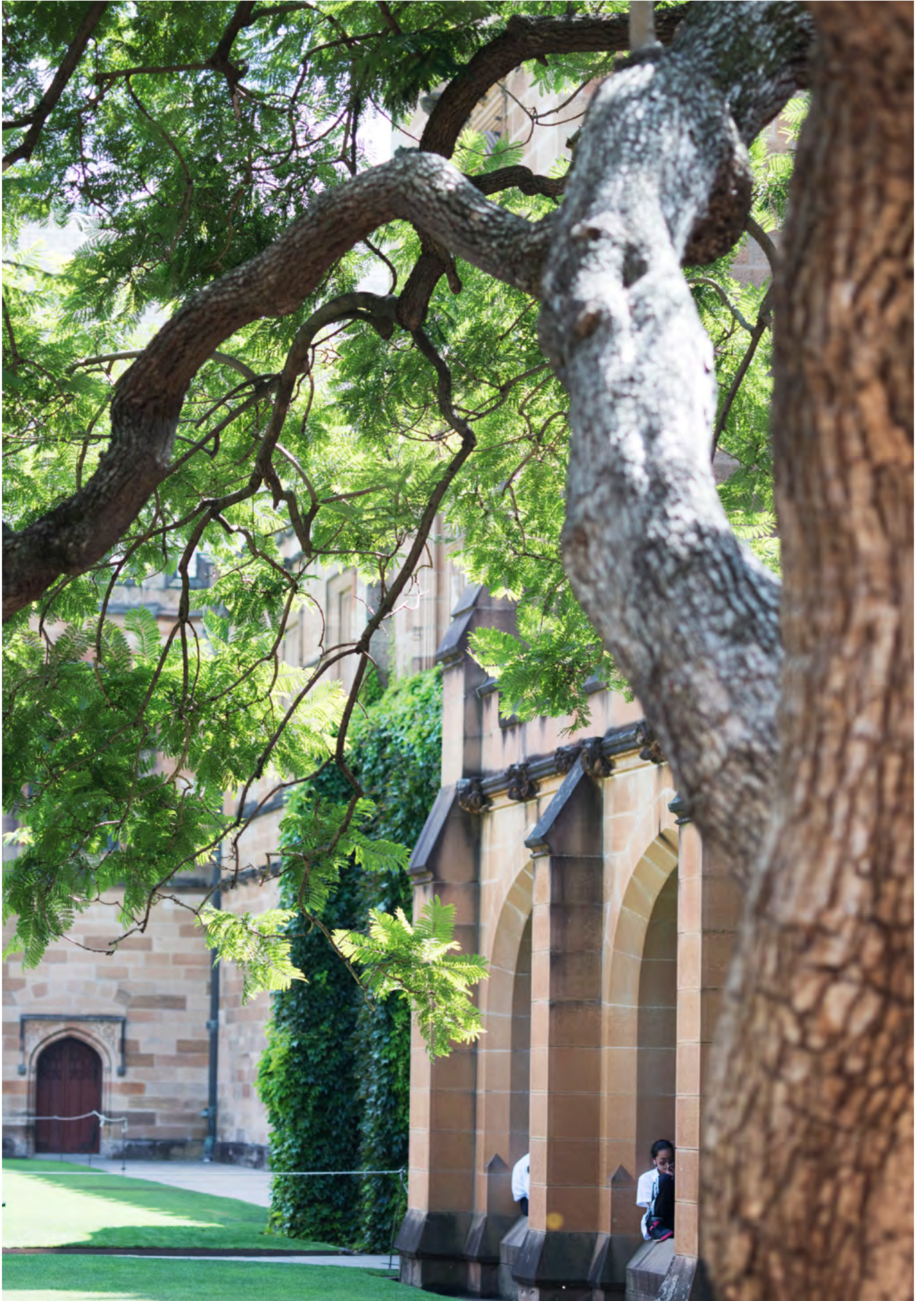
Our efforts to improve our sustainability performance continue to be recognised, most notably by our ranking first in Australia and fifth globally in the QS World University Rankings for Sustainability in 2023. Although much remains to be done in this space, such accolades, along with other achievements outlined in this report, are testament to the hard work and dedication of our staff, students, and broader community. The progress made in 2023 places us in an excellent position to reach new milestones on our sustainability journey in 2024 and beyond.



Belinda Hutchinson AC
(BEc Sydney)
Chancellor



Professor Mark Scott AO
(BA '84 DipEd '84 MA '93 HonDLitt '15)
Vice-Chancellor and President



Chair's Note

Vice-Provost and Chair of the Sustainability Program Control Board

In 2023 Australia, along with all countries in the world, experienced the accelerating climate crisis. Australia experienced its warmest winter since records began in 1910, as the country shifted from three consecutive years of La Niña into El Niño. Despite El Niño conditions, the end of 2023 saw Tropical Cyclone Jasper bring unprecedented rain and widespread flooding to far-north Queensland. This year, abundant vegetation growth is predicted to dry out through the dry El Niño Summer, driving increased risk of fire for large areas of Queensland, New South Wales, and the Northern Territory. The imperative to act on climate and sustainable practice has never been more real.

Thankfully, 2023 was also a year of change and expansion for the University of Sydney's Sustainability team. I was delighted to commence in a newly created role as Vice-Provost in the Office of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, where the Sustainability team sits as one of the University's professional service units. As Vice-Provost, I was pleased to act as Chair of the Sustainability Program Control Board, established to oversee governance of the Sustainability Strategy 2020 in June. With supportive University leadership, a new governance structure, and an expanded professional team, the University's sustainability work has become even more enabled.

One of our most significant accomplishments is the procurement of an additional 1MW of onsite rooftop solar generation capacity, scheduled for installation across Camden and Camperdown/Darlington campus into 2024. We have prioritised both renewable energy and improvements to energy efficiency in 2023, to progress towards our target of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2030. Energy efficiency measures for 2023 included LED lighting and electrical and gas meter upgrades, along with the installation of Building Management Control Systems panels and submetering for mechanical switchboards with subsequent connection to the University's Advanced Utility Monitoring System.

I am delighted to share that we awarded Living Labs funding to three new projects in 2023, with implementation to continue into 2024. The funded projects include a Microgrid feasibility study for Camperdown/Darlington campus, the creation of a sustainable vertical agriculture Green Room, and the restoration of Horse Arm Creek at Llara farm. Our researchers are leaders in their

field and are continually rising to meet new sustainability challenges. Through Living Labs funding, we support our researchers to utilise our campuses to create, pilot, evaluate, and implement innovative sustainability research.

We have also taken significant steps to protect and preserve biodiversity by signing on as a voluntary adopter of the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures, partnering with NSW Koala Strategy to capture activity at our Arthursleigh and Nowley farms, and completing our first annual 'health check' as part of our Nature Positive Pledge. Loss of biodiversity is the biggest challenge of our time, and we want to become a leader on protecting biodiversity.

And our work on, and accountability around, sustainability is now more visible than ever. This includes being clear on which areas have not experienced as much progress as we would like. It is evident that alongside our achievements, we have several targets where further action is necessary (please see progress tables for assessments of targets to date). 2023 was also a year of change towards a new global sustainability reporting system. The 'alphabet soup' of voluntary sustainability standards and framework initiatives is set to be consolidated and streamlined by the International Sustainability Standards Board's (ISSB) sustainability disclosure standards, IFRS S1 and S2, issued in June. The University committed \$1.1 million to align our sustainability reporting with the Australian Sustainability Reporting Standards, to be issued in 2024 by Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB).

Looking back at 2023, it was truly a remarkable year for sustainability at the University of Sydney. The tireless efforts of our faculty, staff, and students have laid a solid foundation for our sustainable future. Now that carbon emissions have reached historical record highs and the climate crisis is destroying ecosystems and impacting vulnerable communities, I have immense confidence that with the current strategy, dedicated team, and unwavering support of our university community, we will continue to drive positive change in a world that needs leaders and urgent action. We should all be proud of our sustainability work in 2023, and our plans for the future.

Professor Susan Rowland
(BSc Hons '91 Sydney PhD '96 Sydney GCEd (Higher Ed) '07
PFHEA GAICD)
Vice-Provost

Highlights of 2023



**Ranked 1st in Australia
and 7th globally**
in the QS World University
Rankings for Sustainability: 2024



**2023 Australasian
Green Gown Award**
in Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion in Sustainability



Launched a new
multidisciplinary undergraduate
Sustainability Major



Co-hosted the
**Group of Eight annual
Sustainability Forum** with UNSW



**Launched Horizon Fellowship
program** with \$100 million to
support leading researchers
in the fields of climate change,
health, and sustainability



Funded three
Living Labs projects



21 staff and 39 students
certified as 'Carbon Literate'
in our Carbon Literacy
Training pilot



Supervised
**11 Master of Sustainability
capstone projects**



**Sustainability Action
Grant stream** funded
11 student-led projects



Generated 1,435 MWh solar electricity in the 2023 financial year across our campuses (10.8% increase from 2022 financial year)



Installation of additional 14 Hydrowise stations (47 in total) saving over 14.5 million litres of potable water



Signed on as voluntary adopter of Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures



15 buildings on main campus upgraded with energy-efficient LED lighting



Installed 36 external smart bins, including new food waste bins



10kg of pens, razors and oral care products diverted from landfill via our hard-to-recycle Enabler Wall



World Vegan Day activation with Forum Cafe and Love BUDS



Established new Sustainability governance structure



Expansion of Sustainability team with hiring of Biodiversity Management Officer, Biodiversity Officer (Identified), Project Administrator, Sustainability Program Leads, Data and Reporting Officer



Sustainability at Sydney

Third year of implementation

Since the launch of our Sustainability Strategy in August 2020 through to December 2023, staff and students across the University have worked together to embed and enhance sustainable practices in our research, education and operations.

Our strategy aims to use the University's strengths to accelerate our efforts to become more sustainable while being mindful of the footprint our campuses make on the planet. It also aims to find creative ways to enable our 70,000+ students and staff to increase their positive handprint in a disrupted world.



Strategic Vision and how we measure progress

Our Sustainability Strategy addresses our key priorities through 16 strategic areas under three pillars, guided by our foundation of Caring for Country. We have identified commitments and targets which will guide our actions and initiatives to support and realise our strategic intent in each area.

Pillar 1

Enriching lives through research and education

The University will be a place that drives social and environmental change and where sustainability is integrated into our campus life by implementing world-leading research and education in our everyday lives on campus.

Pillar 2

Enabling resilient places and a responsible footprint

We acknowledge our significant impact on the Country where our campuses reside, and accept the moral and social obligation to leave a responsible footprint where we tread.

Pillar 3

Empowering good governance and coordination

Lessons from our peers show that institutional support for sustainability is crucial. An enduring commitment to incorporating sustainability through our research, education and operations to enact change will be critical to its success.

Foundation: Caring for Country

Caring for Country underpins the strategy, framing our intent and actions. Our work to become a more sustainable university must observe multiple knowledge systems – including those of our First Nations communities – that will continue to build long-term sustainability.

Progress key

We have included 'progress tables' in this report for each of our three Pillars to help visualise our progress towards our suite of targets. The tables utilise the following key:

Not started	Work towards progressing target not yet started
Progressed, not on track	Progress toward achieving target made but target at risk of not being achieved by specified date
Progressed, on track	Progress toward target made and target is on track to be achieved by specified date
Completed	Target has been achieved

Sustainable Development Goals icons

The following icons are included alongside each of our Strategies to indicate which of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) they relate to:





Strategy Foundation: Caring for Country

“Through this strategy, we want everyone to understand that no matter where we are in Australia, we are on Country. We must appreciate the complexity of the natural environment as it shifts and emerges over time and minimise negative human impact on it.”

Sustainability Strategy 2020

Our commitment

Caring for Country underpins this Strategy, framing our intent and actions, and guiding the work we do on land shaped for thousands of years by the knowledge and practice of our First Peoples' cultures and environmental practices. Our third annual report outlines the real progress we have made towards this commitment across the strategy foundation of Caring for Country.

Highlights

- Employment of a Narrabri-based Identified Biodiversity Officer role.
- Biodiversity Month collaboration with DVC-ISS (Deputy Vice-Chancellor - Indigenous Strategy and Services) and Koori Kinnections – sharing Indigenous perspectives on Biodiversity.
- First Nations representation on Living Labs Expression of Interest committee.
- The University was awarded the 2023 Australasian Green Gown Award in the *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Sustainability* category for the Mapping, protecting and enriching Aboriginal Cultural Heritage landscapes project (see Case Study).
- The Library collaborated with IndigiGrow to install native planter boxes on the new roof terrace. Twenty species of the local Eastern suburbs banksia family have been planted, including the *Clerodendrum floribundum*, known as the “lolly bush”.
- The Library launched the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Protocols to deliver services that make their diverse clients' experiences more welcoming and inclusive.
- A series of new Gadi trees were introduced at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, as an expression of the Walanga Wingara Mura Design Principles.
- The ‘Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research’ education module was launched as a partnership between the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the University of Sydney, and the University of Queensland. The module aims to improve ethical standards in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research and strengthen individual and institutional cultural competency.

Case study: Mapping, protecting and enriching Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

The University of Sydney won the 2023 Australasian Green Gown Award for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for work to engage traditional Gamilaroi custodians in recording and assessing the cultural landscape of Llara Farm, part of the Plant Breeding Institute near Narrabri.

The award resulted from heritage assessments commissioned by DVC-ISS at Camden and Narrabri. The success of this project reflects the effective relationships developed between professional staff located in Central Operations Services, academic staff in Faculty of Science, and local communities. The process employed built capacity within the University community and strengthened connectivity and relationships with communities where the University has substantial operations. The heritage assessments themselves are intended to inform research, teaching, and governance practices into the future.



Professor Lisa Jackson Pulver, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services), said the collaborative project demonstrates the University's commitment to respecting the environmental knowledge and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

"Our goal is to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledges, skills, concepts and ways of life across our teaching and research; to strengthen our knowledge and co-practice of caring for Country and foster a sense of custodianship and responsibility towards the environment for the benefit of future generations."

Funding

Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Indigenous Strategy and Services)

Project partners

Narrabri Local Aboriginal Land Council (NLALC)
and ARC Heritage

University of Sydney project team

Associate Professor Rosanne Quinnell, Dr Rebecca Cross (Faculty of Science), and Rachel Gale (Open Spaces – Central Operations Services)



Left: Assessing Llara Farm by
Associate Professor Rosanne Quinnell.



Pillar 1: Enriching lives through research and education

“Under this strategy, we will work to bring our researchers, students and professional staff into an interface of research–education–operations that will be a unique driver and demonstration of our sustainability work and, ultimately, contribute to a positive long-term sustainable future for our nation.”

Sustainability Strategy 2020

Our commitment

Pillar 1 of our Sustainability Strategy challenges us to be a place that drives social and environmental change and where sustainability is integrated into our campus life. We will seek to achieve this by implementing our world-leading research and education in our campus operations, to nurture more sustainable and resilient campuses and inspire a culture of shared responsibility.

Our third annual report outlines the real progress we have made towards this commitment across the suite of strategies forming Pillar 1. In addition, it also highlights where we still have progress to make. As we look to the fourth year of our Strategy, we have gained important knowledge and experience in identifying where we need to improve which will place us in a strong position to continue to build on our efforts over the last three years.



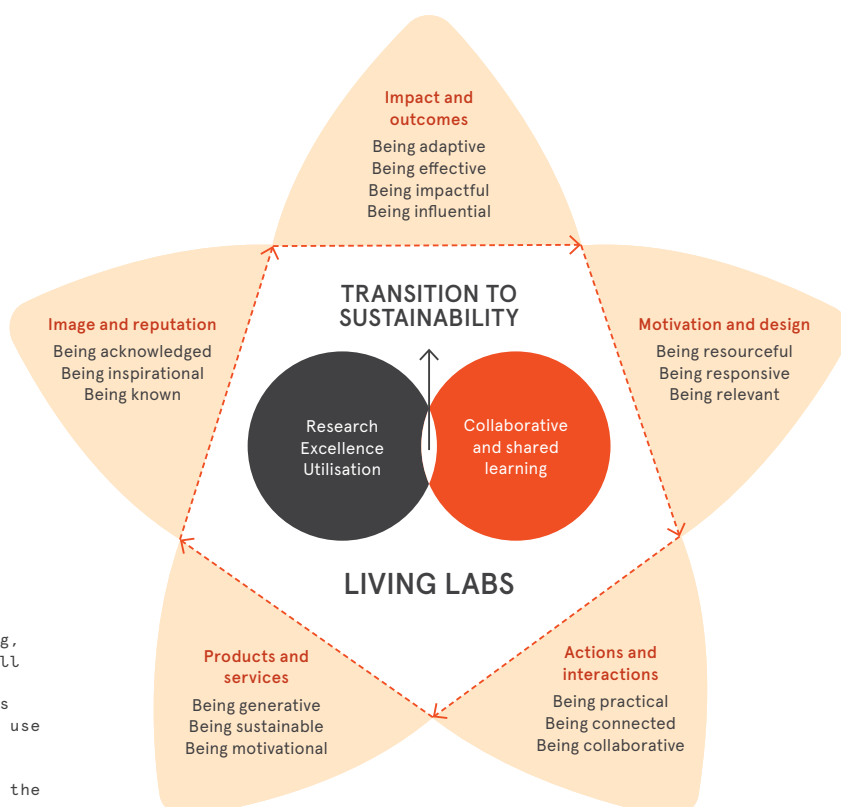
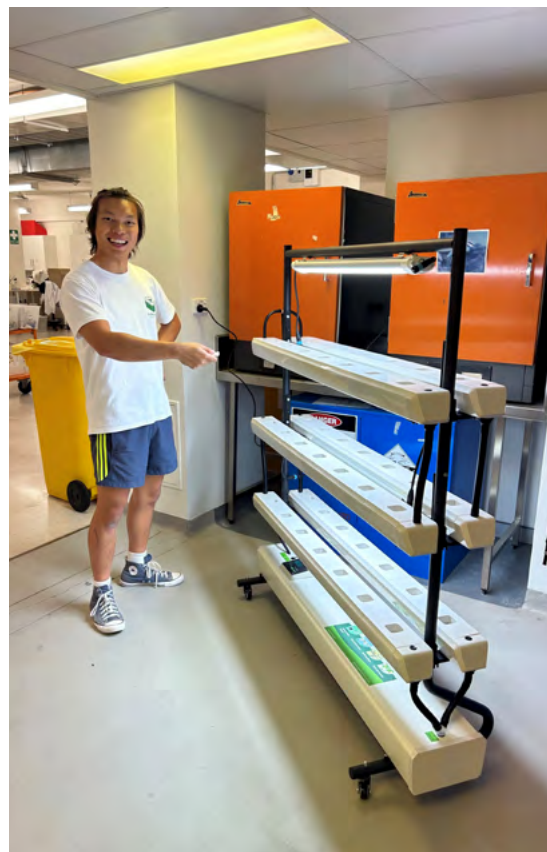
Strategy 1: Put research excellence into practice through living labs on our campuses

We are supporting our researchers and students to utilise our campuses as 'Living Labs' to create, pilot, evaluate and implement innovative sustainability research.

In 2023, a dedicated Living Labs Project Officer commenced, allowing us to further develop the Living Labs program and the overarching framework. This included defining 'Living Labs' and a Living Labs ethos at the University, and identifying key stakeholders, lessons learnt from former projects, and recommendations for the future pathway. Further, we progressed the capability building program and explored the potential for a Living Labs Community of Practice at the University.

Three new Living Labs projects were funded in 2023, with delivery to continue in 2024. These include:

- Microgrid feasibility study: Research feasibility study for a microgrid on campus (Camperdown/Darlington), in partnership with Vellocet Clean Energy and the School of Electrical and Information Engineering.
- Green Room: Creation of sustainable vertical agriculture system on campus.
- Restoration of Horse Arm Creek: Restoring fencing surrounding a dam at Llara farm to improve water and vegetation quality.



Top Right: PhD candidate in Agriculture, Oscar Wang, building one of four mobile vertical farms that will be used to teach students about plant physiology, plant production and vertical agriculture. Oscar is researching food waste-based fertilisers and their use in controlled environment agriculture.

Right: Draft framework of capabilities involved in the Living Labs program by Joseph Tupe.

Strategy 2: Prioritise the development of high-quality sustainability research at the University

Recently, an independent group of scientists, including Professor Jaime Miranda, Head of the School of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of Sydney, appointed by the United Nations' Secretary General, António Guterres, found that the world is falling behind on achieving its SDGs, and that urgent action is needed to turn the tide.

During 2023, the University continued to prioritise the development of high-quality sustainability research through internal funding schemes, empowering the world's most talented researchers to undertake innovative research to address some of the biggest challenges of our time. Highlights in this space include:

- The launch of our Horizon Fellowships, a \$100 million investment to support early to mid-career researchers with a focus on sustainability, climate change, and health.
- The Office of Global and Research Engagement supported twelve multidisciplinary projects, ranging from achieving carbon neutrality to cracking gender bias, and announced its new funding round for 2024 for the International Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Collaboration Program, an initiative for collaborative research projects.
- The Office of Global and Research Engagement also launched its Ignition Grants, a new initiative to support researchers from the University of Sydney and its strategic partner universities to facilitate collaborative projects that develop multidisciplinary cutting-edge research to create academic and societal impact. Projects which seek to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals are highly encouraged.

University researchers continued to tackle the complex challenges of sustainability and climate change in their work. Examples of this essential work led by some of the University's multidisciplinary initiatives (MDIs), Centres, Faculties, and Schools include:

- Faculty of Science researchers helped to count the global cost of climate inaction and underperformance on the United Nation's sustainable development goals.
- The Net Zero Initiative released its Path to Net Zero report, which identifies the challenges – and potential solutions to these challenges – associated with Australia's transition to net zero emissions.
- Researchers from the Faculty of Engineering have developed new methods to solve a major source of future waste from the automotive, aerospace, and renewable industries.
- Multi-faceted research from the Sydney Environment institute (SEI) is investigating how a more sustainable future requires transitions across a range of institutional spaces including politics, economics, food, finances, and energy.
- An international team of researchers at the University of Sydney and the University of Toronto have developed a new acid-based electrochemical process for the conversion of CO2 captured from emission sources or directly from air.
- A multidisciplinary team of researchers have developed a biological growing process that uses mushrooms to turn organic waste into compostable products as a low-cost, sustainable solution to plastics.
- Research from the Heat and Health Incubator informs a new Google search feature, sharing important health and safety tips to millions around the world.
- The University of Sydney will share in \$40 million granted by the Australian Government to combat the plastic waste crisis and create a circular economy that gives financial value to end-of-life plastics.
- The School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering and the Sydney Knowledge Hub commercialised a fish-free omega 3 supplement, which has the potential to help alleviate pressure on the world's fish stocks.

We have identified funding schemes in support of sustainability-related research as an area requiring additional focus to progress the related target.

“The SDGs need to be seen as a collective responsibility by the world.”

Professor Jaime Miranda



Case study: Greenhouse gas emissions and the healthcare sector

The Sydney Environment Institute is undertaking a multidisciplinary project, led by Professor Danielle Celermajer (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences) and Professor David Celermajer (Faculty of Medicine and Health), investigating the intersection of health care emissions and climate change. The healthcare sector is responsible for 7% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. This project seeks to measure emissions from medical procedures to enable the carbon cost of different procedures to be included in decision making, while also exploring barriers to environmental change in healthcare, and identifying pathways for policy development.

The pilot study in 2022-2023 compared emissions from cardiovascular procedures and revealed significant differences between two common treatments. In 2023, \$1.56m in funding was secured to extend the project for another three years. The collaborative project brings together researchers from health, environmental science, and policy backgrounds, to ensure translation of findings and benefits to government, the healthcare system, healthcare professionals, and patients.

The ongoing project will generate emissions data, create a medical procedure carbon footprint calculator, develop pilot interventions, and empower healthcare practitioners to reduce emissions. The project seeks to influence policy in response to growing concerns about climate action and sustainability in healthcare.

In 2023, SEI partnered with Sydney Ideas on Greening Healthcare, an event featuring project findings.

Funding

\$1.56m from external foundation

Project partners

Sydney Environment Institute, Charles Perkins Centre, Faculty of Medicine and Health

University of Sydney project team

Professor Danielle Celermajer, Professor David Celermajer, Dr Fabian Sack, Dr Amanda Irwin, Mr Raymond van der Zalm





Strategy 3: Develop global and local partnerships and practice

Our local and global partnerships with other universities, industries, and networks continue to open new opportunities for innovation, scalability, and the application of research outcomes to promote sustainability goals:

- In partnership with Sydney-based renewable technology company Sun-Drive, University of Sydney researchers were awarded \$2.78 million in research funding from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to develop and commercialise perovskite-silicon cells, a significantly more advanced solar technology than present options on the market.
- With support from the NSW Government, Australian Grain Technologies, Grains Research and Development Corporation, and the NSW Wheat Research Foundation, the University opened the International Centre of Crop and Digital Agriculture at Narrabri. The centre sits at the forefront of global agricultural research, teaching, and industry engagement.
- In collaboration with Licella and Griffith University, the University of Sydney will form a new government-funded research centre, to combat the plastic waste crisis and create a circular economy that gives financial value to end-of-life plastics.
- Our Office of Global and Research Engagement partnered with the Indian Institute of Technology Madras through a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) funded Australia Award Fellowship program. This program resulted in the creation of a research and development map: *Accelerating clean energy transition in partnership with India*. The Office of Global Research Engagement also collaborated with the Asia Society to host a roundtable in Mumbai: 'Challenges Across Borders: Climate Action in India and Australia'.
- Our biodiversity work is founded in partnership, working with the NSW Koala Strategy to monitor Koala populations on our Arthursleigh Farm (see Strategy 9).
- Our key partnerships with other universities nationally strengthened. In 2023, we co-hosted the G08 conference with UNSW, and partnered with UQ to deliver the Carbon Literacy Training pilot (see Case study) and UNSW for the SDG toolkit project.
- Internally, we strengthened our partnership with Faculties, Schools and Professional Service Units (PSUs), hosting workshops to understand sustainability priorities and programs within the University of Sydney Business School, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and Library portfolio.



- Globally, we strengthened our partnership with the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) initiative, hosting a training seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for academics. In October, we welcomed higher education leaders and renowned experts from around the world at the Sydney Summit III, to discuss how universities can work to tackle the global challenges of our age.

Additionally, the Sydney Environment Institute (SEI) continued or initiated several significant partnerships in 2023. Highlights include:

- The commencement of a project, in partnership with the Office of Global and Research Engagement, to coordinate, narrate and supercharge climate and biodiversity research at the University. This project aims to create an effective and structured climate and biodiversity research ecosystem that improves research impact, increases funding, and accelerates partnerships both internally and externally.
- A collaboration with the National Museum of Australia to run ‘Living on the Edge: Caring for Australia’s Threatened Places’, a public engagement program examining Australia’s threatened ecological communities and endangered species.

- The hosting of a symposium production of a four-part podcast series inviting experts to discuss critical mineral supply chains, compare mining industries internationally, and explore renewable energy regulation. These initiatives were undertaken as part of the Critical Minerals research project, which is jointly funded by SEI, the Australian Research Council, and the Canadian Humanities and Social Sciences Research Council.
- The launch of a new Climate Adaptation series of talks and podcasts exploring the strategic measures needed to protect individuals and communities from the adverse impacts of climate change. This series features leaders across research, business, policy, and communities, exploring opportunities in climate change adaptation across different scales. Events to date include: Financing adaptation or adapting finance, just adaptation and the role of social capital, and adapting food systems.



Case study: The University of Sydney Business School

The University of Sydney Business School is a signatory member of the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), an initiative of the UN Global Compact. The work of the Business School's PRME core team was recognised through their receipt of the PRME Faculty Recognition Award for Excellence in SDG Integration, at a United Nations Headquarters reception in New York, in June 2023.

A major project for the PRME core team in 2023 was the completion of a Current Practice Review into the integration of responsible business, sustainability, and the SDGs across the Business School's teaching and research activities. The Current Practice Review report made several recommendations for advancing PRME and SDG related work, demonstrated initiatives which had been delivered or are in progress, and is serving as a blueprint for the next phase of the Business School's SDG integration implementation.

Some additional achievements by the PRME team in 2023 include:

- The integration of SDGs and associated targets into the learning outcomes and assessment of the core Master's unit of study: Responsible Business Mindset (BUS5220), taken by approximately 2000 students each semester.
- The implementation of processes designed for tagging and mapping SDG-related research and curricula. The Business School Publication Submission form has been upgraded to include an SDG mapping feature. Through collaboration with the USBS Curriculum and Quality Team and Educational Innovation, the PRME team has successfully integrated SDG mapping into Sydney Curriculum, the University's central curriculum management system.
- Advocating for PRME and the SDGs through engaging with a variety of stakeholders (including the central Sustainability team – see [Carbon Literacy Training project Case Study](#)), students (including through the University Scholars Leadership Symposium (USLS) Student Funding Award), and through journal publications and a bi-annual PRME Sharing Information on Progress report.

The Business School's commitment to PRME and the SDGs was reflected in the new Business School Strategy 2023–27, which places sustainability and responsibility at the core of its strategic priorities. In alignment with the new strategy, the PRME team was restructured. In addition to the Academic Lead, a PRME Professional Lead role and a PRME Project Officer role were established. Additionally, the PRME Steering Group has evolved into a PRME Committee, comprising academic, professional and student representation, to coordinate and support PRME activities.

Funding

The University of Sydney Business School

Project partners

The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), an initiative of the UN Global Compact

University of Sydney project team

Associate Professor Chris F Wright (current PRME Academic Lead) and Fiona O'Sullivan (current PRME Professional Lead), Dr Anna Young-Ferris and Professor Betina Szkudlarek (2023 PRME leads), Maria Hernandez Ramos (PRME Project Coordinator)



Strategy 4: Increase our capacity for sustainability education across the University

As part of our strategy, we strive to inspire and equip our graduates to embrace social responsibility – thinking critically, collaborating productively, and positively influencing the world – and recognising themselves as custodians of the future. While real progress has been made across many of our targets within Strategy 4, some targets will require additional work to achieve, as identified in our [Pillar 1 progress table](#).

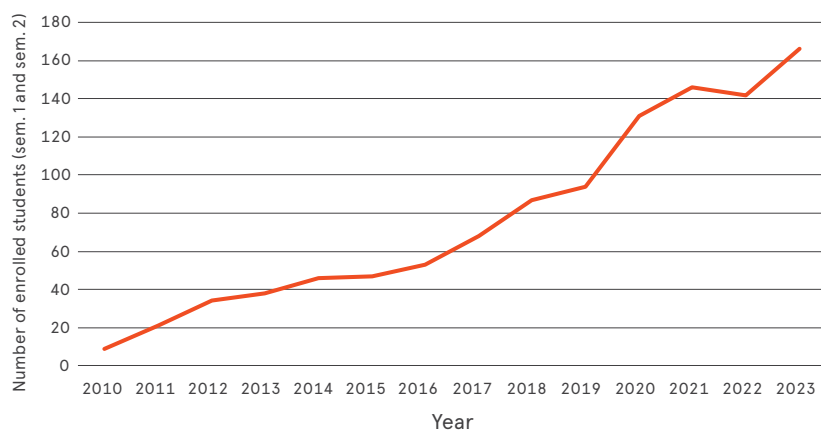
In 2023, the University launched a new Sustainability Major, an interdisciplinary offering with over 60 units of study, attracting 35 enrolments in the foundational unit SUST1001. Our Master in Sustainability program continues to grow in popularity, with 166 enrolments in 2023. Other sustainability-focused degrees include the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Advanced Studies (Taronga Wildlife Conservation), Master of Environmental Science, and Master of Architectural Science (Sustainable Design). These education offerings, among many others at the University, open diverse career opportunities in a range of fields, including government, law, consulting, policy and planning, journalism, architecture and business.

With a dedicated Sustainability Program Lead for Pillar 1 starting in 2023, the Sustainability Team were able to progress additional sustainability education offerings. We partnered with the University of Queensland and the University of Sydney Business School to pilot a Carbon Literacy Training course (see [Case study](#)).

In partnership with UNSW and the University of Sydney Business School's PRME and Co-Design teams, we progressed work to develop a Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) toolkit, providing educational resources for teaching academics to increase awareness and integration of the SDGs in curriculum.

The [Service Learning in Indigenous Communities \(SLIC\)](#) program of DVC-ISS integrates the completion of priority projects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations into a specially designed curriculum delivered through the [Industry and Community Partnership Unit of Study \(ICPU\)](#). In semesters 1 and 2 of 2023, students from all Faculties of the University worked with Aboriginal leaders from the North Coast Aboriginal Development Alliance (NCADA). Their brief in 2023 was to listen to community members and housing-related organisations and draw out potential solutions to address policy, funding, and climate barriers to safe, affordable, and environmentally protective housing. The students produced two reports exploring these issues and providing a strong evidence base for NCADA to use to progress a new way of gaining ground for Aboriginal voices on what is rapidly becoming a national crisis with social and ecological consequences.

Master of Sustainability enrolment numbers



Graph: Master of Sustainability enrolment numbers from 2010-2023.

The SLIC program continues to offer unique learning opportunities to students:

“For me, this program reinforced that Indigenous people are the experts on the issues that affect them and their communities. They already have the solutions; they’re just not being listened to [...] Being on Country and hearing directly from the communities on the historic issues that affect them was profoundly impactful.”

Eleanor Lindsay
Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Advanced Studies

We supervised a Master of Sustainability capstone project, researching sustainability education initiatives and providing further recommendations for implementation at the University in 2024 and beyond. We also supervised a Master of Sustainability capstone project related to the University’s Biodiversity Management Plan and nature-related risk and opportunity, making recommendations to align the plan with leading practice.

Examples of sustainability education units, awards and initiatives led by the University include:

- The University of Sydney and Taronga Conservation Society Australia were awarded the Silver Award in the QS Reimagine Education The Power of Partnerships Award for the innovative degree Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Advanced Studies (Taronga Wildlife Conservation).
- The Sydney Environment Institute supported three Honours students as part of its Honors Research Fellowship program. Thesis topics covered issues of wild law and the rights of nature, urban sustainability and biodiversity, and the governance of disaster resilience planning.
- The Sydney Southeast Asia Centre hosted field schools on real-world problems including social justice in Indonesia and disaster risk and resilience in the Philippines.

- Postgraduate students doing Environmental Science, Sustainability, and Development Studies travelled to Indonesia as part of postgraduate field school, Sustainable Development (ENVI5903), to explore the contested notions of sustainable development and sustainability through real-world development dilemmas in Southeast Asia.
- The University of Sydney Business School supported two students to attend the UN University Scholars Leadership Symposium to engage in SDG advocacy work.
- Multiple units in the Master of Architecture, such as Regenerative Design Technologies (MARC5330), integrate the SDGs and sustainability into lectures, assessments and learning outcomes. In particular, this unit relates to the SDGs of Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) through architectural and urban design, Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3) through biophilic design, Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) through circular construction materials, Life Below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15) through water-sensitive and biodiversity-sensitive design.
- As part of the Global Engagement Law Program (LAWS3526/LAWS5226), Sydney Law School students travelled to Port Vila, Vanuatu to engage in a comparative study of the management and regulation of environmental law issues in the Pacific region.
- In Engineering for a Sustainable Society (CHNG1106), students explore sustainable development, including technical and economic efficiency, environmental stewardship and social responsibility from an engineering perspective. At the postgraduate level, students can enrol in a Master of Engineering (Sustainability and Environmental Engineering).



Case study: Carbon Literacy Training

Being Carbon Literate is having “an awareness of the carbon dioxide costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis” (Carbon Literacy Project, 2023).

In 2023, the Sustainability team partnered with the University of Queensland Business School to deliver a pilot of Carbon Literacy Training for staff and students during Global Climate Change Week. The University of Sydney Business School’s PRME and Co-Design teams supported the development of a Canvas site for the course.

Highlights:

- 21 staff and 39 students certified as Carbon Literate.
- Support gained for the development of a University of Sydney-specific course and further roll-out in 2024.



"Looking to transition into working in climate adaptation, I found this course greatly beneficial to my understanding of how climate change impacts all aspects of society. The content was engaging and completing it with a diverse group of peers added valuable perspectives to the discussion. Writing the pledge felt particularly beneficial as it made me think in every-day terms about what I had learnt. I would recommend this course to anyone seeking to learn more about climate change and those who want to feel empowered to take action to make a positive difference."

Kate Pickard
Master of Philosophy student

Funding
Sustainability team

Project partners
The University of Queensland Business School, the University of Sydney Business School and Educational Innovation

University of Sydney project team
Emma Holland and Alice Hill (Sustainability), Dr Anna-Young Ferris (University of Sydney Business School), Dr Stephanie Wilson and Bénédicte Rokvic (Educational Innovation)





Strategy 5: Enhance the student experience of sustainability

The Sustainability Strategy aims to develop a culture of sustainability that empowers students to undertake sustainable actions beyond the campus.

In collaboration with Student Life, the Sustainability Action Grant stream awarded 11 student-led projects that aim to enable and embed sustainability across our campuses and within our community. Projects included the installation of a beehive on Camperdown campus, the establishment of vegetable gardens and compost facilities at Broken Hill campus and various sustainability workshops including food saving, composting, paper making and sewing (see [Case study](#)).

The Sustainability team supervised 11 Master of Sustainability capstone projects in 2023, providing opportunities for students to contribute to implementation of the strategy through their studies.

Projects included investigating climate resilience, rooftop gardens, sustainability education, [reducing staff air travel](#) and [sustainable and ethical food on campus](#). Two graduates subsequently commenced in casual Project Officer roles to further develop and implement their findings.

Three student representatives were selected to act as members of the Sustainability team's Sustainability Working Groups for Pillars 1, 2 and 3 of the strategy (see [Case study](#)).

In collaboration with the University of Sydney Union (USU) and other partners, we created opportunities throughout the year to enable a holistic campus experience of sustainability for our students. Welcome Week, Enviro Week, Green Impact, Biodiversity Month, Student Life workshops and Sustainability Trail Tours all provided an opportunity to participate in extra- and co-curricular activities that enhance the student experience of sustainability.

Case study: Sustainability Action Grants – Fashion Revolution

One of the Sustainability Action Grants funded in 2023 was a series of sustainable sewing workshops, delivered by the USU Fashion Revolution Society. The workshops aimed to promote slow fashion and waste reduction and teach students hands-on making and repair skills. The project team provided materials for participants to sew their own tote bags, and engaged an instructor, a PhD student from the University of Technology Sydney, to teach two introductory sewing workshops. Workshop participants learnt the basics of construction and sewing, and were able to take their tote bag home, as a reusable alternative to single-use bags. The workshops offered a valuable opportunity for students to connect with a likeminded community, and to learn how much work goes into creating even a seemingly simple item, to encourage more socially and environmentally sustainable consumption choices.

Funding

Sustainability team

Project partners

Student Life

University of Sydney project team

USU Fashion Revolution Society, Maddie Parker (Student Life), Madeleine Culp and Ysobel Cranfield (Sustainability)



Case Study: Student representatives – Sustainability Working Groups

In 2023, three University of Sydney students were selected to act as student representatives for each of the three Sustainability Working Groups (SWG) for Pillars 1, 2 and 3 of the Sustainability Strategy. The SWGs meet monthly and engage subject matter expertise to guide implementation towards meeting the ambitious targets committed to in the strategy.

“In my capacity as a student representative of the Sustainability Working Group for Pillar 1, I had the opportunity to engage in sustainability initiatives that profoundly impact the University’s approach to environmental stewardship. The Carbon Literacy Training pilot stands out as a highlight. Additionally, I enjoyed helping to shape the Living Labs program.

The monthly meetings, attended by a multidisciplinary panel of academics and experts from various schools and faculties, had a collaborative environment that enabled us to approach sustainability from diverse perspectives, ensuring holistic and impactful solutions. The opportunity to engage as a student representative deepened my understanding of sustainability and helped shape my career aspirations.”

Kunal Ostwal

Computer Science Undergraduate student

Funding

Sustainability team

University of Sydney project team

Gillian Graham-Crowe, Armando Aragon, Emma Holland, Laura Minchella and Alice Hill (Sustainability)



Strategy 6: Support understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of living in harmony with the environment and each other

2023 saw our collaboration with the DVC-ISS deepen to understand priorities and alignment between the *Sustainability* and *One Sydney Many People* strategies. Plans to develop and embed a Caring for Country foundation within Carbon Literacy Training arose from this consultation and engagement, progressing work to develop content that centres and champions understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's ways of living in harmony with the environment and each other.

In partnership with DVC-ISS and Indigenous-owned business, Koori Kinnections, we delivered an event during National Biodiversity Month for staff and students to better understand and appreciate the intricate connection and deep understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with the environment.

The Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous (Academic) released an education module, now available via our HR platform, to strengthen researchers' understanding of ethical and responsible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. The e-learning module was developed over the last two years through a partnership between the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the University of Sydney, and the University of Queensland.

The University was awarded the 2023 Australasian Green Gown Award for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Sustainability category for the Mapping, protecting and enriching Aboriginal Cultural Heritage landscapes project (see [Caring for Country](#)).



Pillar 1 progress at a glance

Pillar 1 commitments

1	Put research excellence into practice through living labs on our campuses*	2023 status
1.1	Develop new opportunities to facilitate the use of our campuses as living labs, including establishing clear protocols for living lab projects and how they scale across our footprint	Progressed, on track
2	Prioritise the development of high-quality sustainability research at Sydney	
2.1	Directly support sustainability as one of the core foci in the research strategy of faculties and MDIs and as one of the core foci in all Research Portfolio-led funding schemes	Progressed, on track
2.2	Incorporate a sustainability focus into internal funding schemes and supplemental support for external grant schemes	Progressed, not on track
2.3	Explore using the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a common language and framework to map research and inform the development of new external partnerships	Progressed, on track
3	Develop global and local partnerships and practice	
3.1	Retain our best scholars in sustainability and recruit emerging leaders in a range of fields to support new ways of exploring and addressing the challenges faced by humanity	Progressed, on track
3.2	Support researchers to build strong links with communities, industry, NGOs, other universities and governments to develop leading sustainability research into real-world application	Progressed, on track
3.3	Provide research support to University contributions to global efforts	Progressed, on track
4	Increase our capacity for sustainability education across the University	
4.1	Embed sustainability themes and practices into curricula and learning activities across all disciplines, based on a range of cultural and social perspectives	Progressed, on track
4.2	Integrate cross-disciplinary sustainability knowledges and practice within graduate attributes	Progressed, not on track
4.3	Broaden the range of Industry and Community Project Units (ICPUs) and Open Learning Environment (OLE) units that engage and explore sustainability themes and ideas	Not started
4.4	Establish new opportunities for undergraduate students to embark on a rich sustainability education through a multidisciplinary major and minor in sustainability	Completed
4.5	Determine the viability of micro-credentialing and other specialised postgraduate and executive training in sustainability	Progressed, on track
4.6	Support innovation and excellence in sustainability education and increase opportunities to share these ideas and experiences among University staff	Progressed, on track
4.7	Draw on global best practice to develop how we reward and recognise sustainability-related teaching, exploring areas such as education fellowships and grants, awards and exchanges	Progressed, not on track
4.8	Enable students' ability to learn across different dimensions of sustainability through greater transparency of sustainability-related units, majors, degrees, and other opportunities	Progressed, on track
4.9	Make teaching opportunities available to Higher Degree by Research students and early career researchers in sustainability research roles	Not started
5	Enhance the student experience of sustainability	
5.1	Develop mechanisms to support sustainability leadership for students, such as sustainability internships and placements, development of student sustainability leadership programs, and publicising student sustainability research	Progressed, on track
5.2	Work with the USU and other partners to enable a holistic campus experience of sustainability	Progressed, on track
6	Support understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of living in harmony with the environment and each other	
6.1	Coordinate sustainability activities within the One Sydney, Many People Strategy	Progressed, on track

*Funded by the Sustainability Strategy in 2023.



Pillar 2: Enabling resilient places and a responsible footprint

“Through this strategy, the University will nurture more sustainable and resilient campuses, and develop a culture of shared responsibility in our approach to sustainability.”

Sustainability Strategy 2020

Our commitment

Pillar 2 of our Sustainability Strategy outlines our commitment to reducing the direct environmental and social impact of our everyday operations. With tens of thousands of staff and students at any one time, our immediate community is equivalent to the size of a small city. Sustaining our day-to-day activities (spread across several rural and urban locations) requires significant flows of energy and resources and results in substantial quantities of waste and emissions. Reducing our consumption of resources, generation of waste, and overall environmental footprint is an essential component of our Strategy and our commitment to Care for Country.

Our third annual report outlines the real progress we have made towards this commitment across the suite of strategies forming Pillar 2. In addition, it also highlights where we still have progress to make. As we look to the fourth year of our Strategy, we have gained important knowledge and experience in identifying where we need to improve which will place us in a strong position to continue to build on our efforts over the last three years.



Strategy 7: Demonstrate leadership in waste reduction and management

Our staff and students identified waste as a top priority during the consultation process undertaken while developing our Sustainability Strategy. To date, we have progressed towards several of our main waste targets (see Table 2.1). However, our waste generation rates over the last few years have been substantially impacted by the disruptions to campus life caused by COVID-19 lockdowns. We are expecting waste levels to increase in response to the return of campus life and that achieving our target of zero waste to landfill by 2030 will require additional funding and initiatives. Several of our other waste targets will likewise require further actions to meet. As we continue to investigate actions required to meet our various waste targets, we are continuing the roll-out of waste-saving initiatives.

In 2023, we expanded our organics waste stream, installing 36 external smart bins along Eastern Avenue on our Camperdown Campus. We also continued our rollout of FOGO (food organics and garden organics) bin caddies across several staff kitchen spaces within our Camperdown and Darlington campuses to capture more of our organics waste. Our efforts to divert this portion of our organics waste from going to landfill is dependent on the full operationalisation of our on-site biodigester. Technical and operational issues with our biodigester have prevented the production of usable compost to date. We are working on resolving these issues to ensure the biodigester can contribute to the diversion of organics waste going to landfill and help progress several of our waste targets.

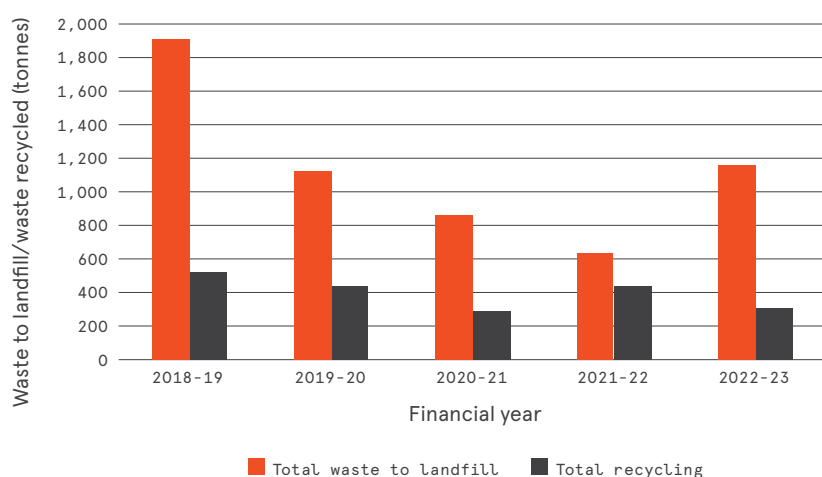
We launched our hard-to-recycle Enabler Wall in the Wentworth Building, providing a dedicated place for our community to recycle items that are difficult to do so in normal waste streams such as face masks, disposable razors, batteries, dental products, pens, and e-waste. In 2023, the wall diverted 10kg of pens, razors, and oral care products from landfill.

In the waste reduction space, the Green Caffeine Program was expanded to our Northern Clinical School campus. Since 1 May to 31 December 2023, the Green Caffeine Program across 5 campuses prevented 9,743 disposable coffee cups from going to landfill. We embedded 'circular economy' principles within our University-wide Student Grants, reducing number of new resources purchased for approved student-led projects. We also undertook several engagement activities including a clothes swap and circular economy promotion at Welcome Week in partnership with waste reduction initiatives Rosella Street, Good from the Hood, and our USU Fashion Revolution society.

We are also currently working with NSW Universities and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) on a solution to support the sustainable management of compostable packaging.



Waste to landfill and recycling



Below: 36 new external smart bins installed across Camperdown and Darlington campuses.



Waste target spotlight

Table 2.1

Waste target	2018-19 baseline ¹	2020-21 totals	2021-22 totals	2022-23 totals	% progress towards target from baseline	Notes
Send zero waste to landfill ² by 2030	1,903.2 tonnes to landfill ³	858 tonnes to landfill	638 tonnes to landfill	1,150.18 tonnes to landfill	40% reduction from baseline	Progress to date is predominantly due to impacts of COVID-19
Achieve a 20% reduction in waste generated per person (aligned to FTE/ EFTSL ⁴) by 2030	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Progress towards target to be determined once appropriate data is obtained.
Recover 80% of organics waste on campus by 2025	0 tonnes recovered	0 tonnes recovered	12,454kg of organics were loaded into the biodigester	6,567.4kg of organics were loaded into the biodigester	TBD	Total organics waste is not currently captured and measured separately, impacting ability to track progress towards this target. Due to technical issues, our biodigester was inoperable for part of 2022 and much of 2023. As a result, the volume of organics loaded into the biodigester was substantially lower compared to the previous year.
Achieve 60% recycling by 2025	518 tonnes of recycling = 21% of total waste recycled	287.72 tonnes of recycling = 25% of total waste recycled	437.39 tonnes of recycling = 41% of total waste recycled	307.15 tonnes of recycling = 21.08% of total waste recycled	35.13% of target	Progress towards target impacted by lower waste to landfill rates due to impacts of COVID-19.
Enable 'single use plastics free' campuses by 2025	No roadmap. No ban/ restrictions in place for single use plastics	Roadmap completed Projects identified	Waste audits to be completed in 2024 as part of roadmap	Target currently on hold	Target currently on hold	Single-use plastics target on hold due to EPA restrictions impacting use of compostable packaging.
Compost 80% of food waste by 2025	No usable compost produced	No usable compost produced	No usable compost produced	No usable compost produced	TBD	Total food waste is not currently captured and measured separately, impacting ability to track progress towards this target. Due to technical and operational issues, no usable compost has been produced by the biodigester to date. Compost figures reported in the 2022 Annual Report for 2021-22 financial year were incorrect in terms of biodigester output. Current recorded figure reflects the lack of usable compost produced during this period.
Ensure 100% of food/beverage packaging on campus is compostable or recyclable by 2025	0 out of 20 University owned or leased outlets use compostable packaging.	13 out of 20 outlets use compostable packaging	13 out of 20 outlets use compostable packaging	Target currently on hold	Target currently on hold	Compostable packaging rollout on hold due to EPA restrictions.

¹ Baseline and annual totals by financial year. 2018-19 baseline (derived from Tertiary Education Facilities Management (TEFMA) reporting) used to better reflect 'business as usual' figures prior to impacts of COVID-19 restrictions.

² Total landfill waste encompasses Camperdown and Darlington campuses and Student Accommodation, and Concord, Nepean, and Camden Campuses.

³ Figure differs from what has been reported in previous Sustainability Annual Reports due to an error in previous waste data.

⁴ FTE: Full-time equivalent (Staff), EFTSL: Equivalent Full-Time Student Load. EFTSL calculated at census date – end of week 4 each semester (March and August).



Above: On-site solar generation along Eastern Avenue, Camperdown campus.

Strategy 8: Reduce our energy emissions

The 2023 financial year represented a milestone as the first year for which our 100% renewable energy Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) was in effect. With more than 97% of our campuses and properties covered by our PPA, we are now looking to create a roadmap, and seek further funding, to close the remaining gap to achieving our target of net zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030.

While the identification of further actions required to meet our Scope 1 and 2 emissions target progresses, we are continuing the rollout of energy and emissions initiatives, including increasing our total rooftop solar capacity. With 1.2MW of solar capacity currently installed across our campuses and student accommodation buildings, we are over a third of the way to reaching our 3MW target. In the 2023 financial year, we generated 1,435 MWh of solar electricity across our campuses, representing a 10.8% increase from the previous year.

In 2022, a multi-year Business Case was developed and approved, which outlines and funds specific initiatives to achieve Sustainability Strategy targets, including a 10% reduction in energy intensity per Usable Floor Area/Gross Floor Area (UFA/GFA) by 2025. One of these initiatives is a significant lighting efficiency and LED upgrade. In 2023, this project audited 17 buildings for capacity to upgrade to

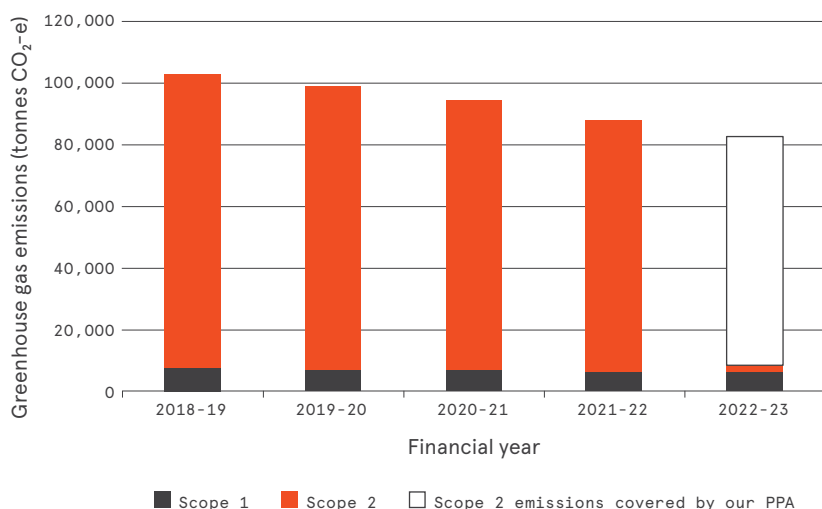
LED fittings, which will facilitate a phased installation from 2023-2024. Fifteen buildings have been upgraded to date.

We are currently working towards improving our utilities data and monitoring abilities. Providing building-level measures of consumption of electricity, gas, and water across our campuses supports reporting and identification and implementation of efficiency initiatives. In 2023, installation of new building level metering for utilities usage began, with electrical meters upgrades completed in 6 buildings, gas meter upgrades in 20 buildings, and water meter upgrades in 18 buildings.

In 2023, our heating and cooling efficiency project also included the provision of submetering for mechanical switchboards in seven buildings, with subsequent connection to the University's Advanced Utility Monitoring System (AUMS). New chillers and a Building Management Control Systems (BMCS) panels have also been installed, replacing existing outdated controls in seminar and lecture rooms, and associated central plants.



Scope 1 and 2 emissions



Energy target ¹	2018-19 baseline	2020-21 totals	2021-22 totals	2022-23 totals	Progress towards target	Notes
Achieve Net Zero Emissions from Scope 1 and 2 sources by 2030	102,993 tonnes CO ₂ -e	94,813 tonnes CO ₂ -e	88,225 tonnes CO ₂ -e	82,580 tonnes CO ₂ -e (location-based method) / 8,207 tonnes CO ₂ -e (market-based method)	92.03% reduction	A 'location-based' method for calculating Scope 2 emissions uses the average emissions intensity of the grid from which electricity is sourced. Our location-based figure aligns with our reporting to NGERs. A 'market-based' methodology takes into consideration mechanisms, including our PPA, designed to support renewable energy generation. Calculation of our market-based Scope 2 emissions utilises the methodology outlined in the Australian National Greenhouse Accounts Factors 2023 . Progress towards target calculated from the market-based emissions figure.
Source 100% of electricity from renewable sources by 2025	0% of additional renewable energy sourced	0%	0%	97.64%	97.64% towards target	The University's renewable energy PPA came into effect in July 2022 and covers more than 97% of our campuses and facilities. We are working towards reaching 100% coverage for our next reporting period.
Have 3 MW on-site renewable electricity by 2025	0.87MW	1.13MW	1.2MW	1.2MW	Capacity currently 40% of target	Additional 1MW of capacity planned to be installed in 2024

¹ Baseline and annual totals by financial year, derived from The National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER). 2018-19 baseline data used to better reflect 'business as usual' figures prior to impacts of COVID-19 restrictions.



Above: Kangaroo paw at our Camperdown campus.

Strategy 9: Sustainably develop and manage the built and natural environment on our campuses to support people, plants, animals and the planet

Planning commenced for the construction of three new Green Star buildings on Camperdown and Darlington campuses. Two of these buildings are planned to achieve a 5 Green Star rating and the third planned to achieve 4 Green Stars (planning for this building was initiated before the implementation of our Sustainability Strategy). The landmark Sydney Biomedical Accelerator is to be the first building on campus to achieve a 5 Green Star rating, an internationally recognised sustainability metric for the built environment, including climate mitigation planning.

Additionally, a climate risk and adaption assessment pilot was initiated in 2023, which examined two sites on Camperdown campus in relation to climate resilience and risk mitigation. We have plans to develop a framework from this pilot to assess all buildings on campus in relation to climate resilience.

The recruitment of a dedicated Biodiversity Management Officer in 2023 allowed for a busy and productive year of biodiversity initiatives. The team grew further in November 2023, when a new Biodiversity Officer (Identified position) was created and filled. This position is based at our Narrabri campus and will prioritise stakeholder engagement with the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) in Narrabri and Gunnedah to investigate the potential and scope for Aboriginal participation and guidance on biodiversity management principles at our Llara and Nowley farms. The role also involves monitoring and reporting biodiversity projects at our Narrabri and Gunnedah farms to determine priority species and identify areas for conservation.

Some highlights from our biodiversity work in 2023 include:

- Joining the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) Forum, a global multi-disciplinary consultative group of institutions intended to promote the TNFD's work on the reporting of nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities by organisations.
- Signing on as voluntary adopter of TNFD recommendations with the intention to submit a voluntary report in 2025.

- Engaging with several TNFD Forum events and initiatives throughout the year.
- Undertaking data collection for the establishment of environmental accounts at our Arthursleigh, Nowley, and Llara farms. These environmental accounts can be used for TNFD reporting recommendations and data collection for these sites will contribute to first year undergraduate coursework.
- A successful joint CAPEX application for \$80,000 worth of equipment to be utilised for environmental monitoring (including acoustic and camera trapping) at the Arthursleigh farm. Data will contribute to the first year science degree coursework, commencing in 2024.
- Collaborating with the NSW Koala Strategy and WIRES to monitor and conserve koala populations at our Arthursleigh and Nowley farms (see Case Study).
- Completion of a gap analysis and report on nature-related financial disclosures by a Master of Sustainability Capstone student that will become applicable to the business operations of the University.
- Scheduling the installation of artificial nest boxes on Camperdown campus for brush-tail possums and sulphur-crested cockatoos to increase habitat complexity and encourage the return and persistence of native species. Further nest boxes (for microbats, eastern rosellas, native bees, and ringtail possums) were acquired to support a Student Life Grant project to increase habitat complexity at our Camden campus. These additional nest boxes were constructed by the local Tahmoor Uniting Men's Shed to support and activate the local community in working towards biodiversity goals.
- Identifying key pest and weed species at our Arthursleigh, Badgery's Creek, Llara, and Nowley sites. This work is required to determine threats to biodiversity and to inform site management plans and appropriate control measures.

- Completing our annual 'health check' as part of our Nature Positive Pledge.
- Hosting and participating in several events and initiatives for Biodiversity Month (September), including a Koori Kinnections biodiversity talk and native foods tasting, a Biodiversity Panel (in collaboration with Sydney Environment Institute), and the creation of the USYD Atlas for transparent monitoring and accountability for identified priority species.

To progress our canopy cover target and principles of the 2021 Biodiversity Management Plan (including habitat connectivity and staff and student activation), students completing capstone projects as part of their Master of Sustainability degrees produced reports on the feasibility of achieving this goal from three perspectives: infrastructure and planning, movement and place, and the urban environment. Another capstone student produced a report on the suitability and potential to utilise our campus rooftops and balconies as urban green spaces and for farming practices with commercial or social aims.

While important work has been conducted in the biodiversity and land-use spaces, much remains to be done. For instance, funding will be required to meet the principles and targets of the our Biodiversity Management Plan and new actions will be necessary to preserve, and begin to add to, the existing canopy cover across our campuses.



Case Study: Collaborative koala conservation

In 2023, we collaborated with the NSW Koala Strategy to place acoustic monitors on our Arthursleigh and Nowley Farms (near Marulan and Gunnedah, respectively) to locate koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) populations in these areas. This collaboration is part of an ongoing project to survey for, and ultimately catch, koalas to determine their health and state priority conservation actions for these populations. Additionally, we won a grant to install four 'Tree Troffs' (designed by University of Sydney researchers and WIRES) at Arthursleigh Farm, and a further two at Nowley Farm, to support koalas and other native wildlife in the coming El Niño season. Additionally, in 2023 we applied for a Local Land Services grant for Arthursleigh Farm to manage blackberries (*Rubus fruticosus* species aggregate). Blackberry is an invasive species and 'Weed of National Significance' that can grow into dense impenetrable thickets that prevent wildlife and stock from accessing essential water sources, including farm dams. On Arthursleigh farm it is preventing access to the Wollondilly River. The outcome of our grant application will be announced early in 2024.

Funding

NSW Koala Strategy, WIRES

Project partners

NSW Koala Strategy, WIRES

University of Sydney project team

Dr Eliza Middleton (Sustainability), Stephen Burgun (Arthursleigh Farm), Chris Watts (UI)



Above: Our Biodiversity Management Officer Dr Eliza Middleton with a Tree Troff at Arthursleigh. (Photo by Stephen Burgun)

Strategy 10: Require responsible procurement practices to enable ethically and sustainably sourced products at all stages of our supply chains

We progressed and initiated several projects designed to improve the sustainability and ethical standards of our supply chains. However, additional initiatives will be required to achieve our targets in this space. In 2023, we initiated a pilot project to embed ESG considerations within ICT, furniture reuse, digital services, and marketing products contracts. We are currently investigating and planning for the transition to Electric Vehicles (EVs) within the University's vehicle fleet.

The Sustainability and Central Operations Services (COS) teams collaborated with the Modern Slavery Unit (MSU) to ensure our decarbonisation targets also reflected our commitment to respecting human rights. In 2023, Sustainability, COS, and the MSU assessed the University's solar panel installation project (one of the ways through which solar panels are installed on campuses) to identify and address any modern slavery risks. The solar industry relies on the Xinjiang Region in China for raw materials and module manufacturing, where there have been well documented reports, including by the [Government of the United States](#) and the [United Nations](#), of human rights violations, such as arbitrary detention, political re-education, and high levels of surveillance of Uyghur and other ethnic minorities. Xinjiang-based suppliers account for approximately 45% of the world's supply of polysilicon, a key component in solar panels. Credible [reports](#) have indicated all Xinjiang polysilicon suppliers have been involved in labour transfers of ethnic minorities, widely reported to be a form of forced labour.

Several solar panel providers proposed by the suppliers who tendered for the University of Sydney solar installation project were reportedly linked to forced labour in Xinjiang by publicly available and reputable sources. As part of the assessment of this project, MSU, Sustainability, and COS:

- Provided an in-depth modern slavery risk assessment and mitigating actions for the two shortlisted suppliers to Procurement Services and the University's Tender Board.
- Worked with the preferred supplier to source panels that were not manufactured, or had components sourced, from the Xinjiang Region. We required the supplier to demonstrate traceability of the panels through providing a complete list of suppliers down to raw materials.
- Included bespoke modern slavery clauses into the supplier's contract, tailored to solar-specific risks.

Overall, the project demonstrated the effectiveness of focused actions within our circle of control despite the challenges of the region-wide and state-sponsored nature of forced labour in Xinjiang, where working with suppliers to remediate modern slavery is not possible. The project also increased staff awareness of risks in the solar supply chain, demonstrated by a request to provide support on an additional campus construction project sourcing solar panels and plans to integrate human rights considerations into solar procurement in 2024.



Strategy 11: Reduce our water use

Tracking our Strategy 11 water target will require additional data gathering to identify per capita water usage estimates. However, several water-saving initiatives were progressed during 2023.

In 2023, we installed Hydrowise stations at an additional 14 sites, taking our total number to 47 across Camperdown and Darlington campuses. Hydrowise is a smart irrigation system, which uses real-time local weather data to adjust sprinkler-based watering. Hydrowise saved around 14.55 million litres (14,550 kilolitres) of potable water in the 2023 financial year.

We also progressed other water saving measures, including installing water-efficient tapware and shower fittings at seven buildings across Camperdown and Darlington campuses. At our Narrabri farm, we installed 11 new polytanks to increase drought resilience.



Strategy 12: Provide affordable, healthy and culturally acceptable food and beverages that are accessible to all and aligned with recognised sustainable procurement practices

In 2023, we produced a draft project roadmap to increase the procurement and uptake of sustainable and ethical food on campus, with implementation in 2024. We also engaged Master of Sustainability Capstone students to analyse the University's food system and complete a carbon Input-Output Analysis for the University's Forum Restaurant. Looking forward, we aim to embed sustainability considerations within a new retail and food strategy, in partnership with University Infrastructure. While progress has been made, achieving our target within this Strategy will require additional work, including identifying how target specifications can be introduced to leased food and beverage outlets.



Case Study: World Vegan Day

In celebration of World Vegan Day in November 2023, we partnered with Forum Restaurant and LoveBUDS Grill to provide exclusive all-day vegan menus, encouraging our staff and students to try new foods and reflect on how their food choices impact the planet. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive from both the customers and outlets involved. The success of this initiative sets a positive precedent for future engagement with our food outlets, to increase the availability of affordable, healthy and culturally acceptable foods with sustainable procurement practices.

Funding

Sustainability team

Project partners

Forum Restaurant and LoveBUDS Grill (USU)

University of Sydney project team

Roberto Prestia (Forum Restaurant),
Sofia Balingit, Ysobel Cranfield
and Laura Minchella (Sustainability)



Top: Forum Restaurant exclusive all-day Vegan menu items;
Bottom: Miscellaneous and Kimchi melt.

Strategy 13: Reduce impacts associated with unsustainable travel to, from and around our campuses

After the travel restrictions of 2020–2021, university-related travel increased incrementally, with transport to and from the campus and the uptake of domestic and international flights. Fully achieving our targets within Strategy 13 represents an ongoing challenge given the behavioural changes required and the necessity for sufficient sustainable alternatives to private vehicle use. Nevertheless, progress was made over the last year.

In 2023, with our travel target and aims in mind, we collaborated successfully with partners and conducted surveys and research. This enabled us to understand better the travel choices, decisions, and actions of staff and how best to support them in adopting sustainable travel practices and behaviours. Key takeaways were that staff commuting to work opted to use private cars for convenience, cost savings, and health reasons, while flying resumed for academic and business travel, with virtual meetings still being used.

Travel Choices surveys were conducted, led by academics from the Institute for Transport and Logistics Studies at our Business School to better understand staff and student commuting habits. We held several workshops to discuss opportunities to increase awareness of sustainable travel practices and engaged in a productive collaboration with Transport for New South Wales. Together, we have explored behaviour change initiatives and priority infrastructure upgrades to better support active travel. In addition, we hosted two free guided bike rides from Camperdown campus with the City of Sydney, and we partnered with e-bike company Sparque to enable staff to salary package an e-bike under a lease scheme.

Additionally, we have progressed preparation for action on our flight reduction target and engaged a Master of Sustainability Capstone student to research and report on the University's travel patterns. The report included focused interviews with staff and a high-level review of universities within the Group of Eight and others in Europe, the US, and New Zealand. Several recommendations were proposed, such as developing a 'Five Reasons to Travel' framework, a dedicated resource intranet page, and high-level mapping of four traveller personas to determine pain points, gains, and customer journeys.



Strategy 14: Improve environmentally, socially and financially responsible investment practices

The latest consultant review of the University's investment portfolio determined that we are on track to meet our sustainability obligations included in our Investment Policy 2022. Our policy outlines our approach to embedding environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations into our investment decisions. For instance, the investment portfolios must be "aligned with and supportive of" the UN SDGs by 2030 and net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

In 2023 the investment team focused on extending the process of excluding non-compliant investments to pooled funds (investment vehicles consisting of capital provided by multiple investors) to endeavour to meet our end of 2025 deadline for this process early. Where possible, positions in pooled vehicles which do not have the University's exclusions process included have been moved to mandates so that the exclusions process can be complied with. Funds unable to meet the exclusions process have largely been sold and the team expects to have met our exclusions obligations by the end of the first quarter of 2024, nearly two years early. In one case a pooled fund has adopted the University's exclusions approach as standard.

Overall, our investment portfolio's carbon footprint continues to decline on both a relative and absolute basis when measured per \$1m invested.



Below: Staff and students on a guided bike ride from Camperdown campus to Sydney Park with the City of Sydney for Welcome Week.



Pillar 2 progress at a glance

Pillar 2 commitments

7	Demonstrate leadership in waste reduction and management	2023 status
7.1	Send zero waste to landfill by 2030	Progressed, not on track
7.2	Achieve a 20% reduction in waste generated per person (aligned to FTE/EFTSL) by 2030	Progressed, not on track
7.3	Recover 80% of organics waste on campus by 2025	Progressed, not on track
7.4	Achieve 60% recycling by 2025	Progressed, not on track
7.5	Enable 'single use plastics free' campuses by 2025	Progressed, not on track
7.6	Compost 80% of food waste by 2025	Progressed, not on track
7.7	Ensure 100% of food/beverage packaging on campus is compostable or recyclable by 2025	Progressed, not on track
8	Reduce our energy emissions	
8.1	Achieve Net Zero Emissions from Scope 1 and 2 sources by 2030	Progressed, on track
8.2	Source 100% of electricity from renewable sources by 2025	Progressed, on track
8.3	Have 3 megawatts on-site renewable electricity by 2025	Progressed, on track
8.4	10% Reduction in energy intensity per UFA / GFA by 2025*	Progressed, on track
9	Sustainably develop and manage the built and natural environment on our campuses to support people, plants, animals and the planet	
9.1	Ensure a minimum 5 Star Green Star rating for all new buildings and 4 Star Green Star for major refurbishment projects in current buildings by 2025	Progressed, on track
9.2	Assess 100% of eligible buildings and core infrastructure for climate resilience by 2025, including sustainability standards in the University's asset management planning	Progressed, not on track
9.3	Establish a Biodiversity Management Plan and baselines to set biodiversity targets by 2025	Completed
9.4	Enable 30% canopy cover by 2030	Not started
10	Require responsible procurement practices to enable ethically and sustainably sourced products at all stages of our supply chains	
10.1	Ensure 100% of Unibuy catalogue content adheres to ethical buying guidelines by 2025	Progressed, not on track
10.2	Include appropriate consideration of sustainability during the sourcing process or in contract delivery for 100% of contracts with a total contract value over \$250,000 (excl GST) by 2025	Progressed, not on track
11	Reduce our water use	
11.1	Reduce our reliance on potable water per person (aligned to FTE/EFTSL) by 30% by 2030	Progressed, not on track
12	Provide affordable, healthy and culturally acceptable food and beverages that are accessible to all and aligned with recognised sustainable procurement practices	
12.1	Have 100% of food and beverage items sold in University owned or leased outlets to be ethically and sustainably sourced by 2025	Progressed, not on track
12.2	Reassign 100% of safe, unsold food from non-composting and landfill sources by 2025	Progressed, not on track
13	Reduce impacts associated with unsustainable travel to, from and around our campuses	
13.1	Reiterate and implement a Sustainable Transport Action and Mobility Plan (STAMP)	Progressed, not on track
13.2	Reduce to 10% of staff and 5% of students travel to campus by private motor vehicle by 2025	Progressed, not on track
13.3	Reduce the number of kilometres flown on University business by 20% by 2025	Progressed, on track
14	Improve environmentally, socially and financially responsible investment practices	
14.1	Review the University's existing investment portfolio principles and strategy, and present a recommendation to the University's Senate by 2021	Completed

*Target added subsequent to original Sustainability Strategy.

Pillar 3: Empowering good governance and coordination

“Through transparent and open communication, the University will be honest about our progress and demonstrate an enduring commitment to sustainability at all levels.”

Sustainability Strategy 2020

Our commitment

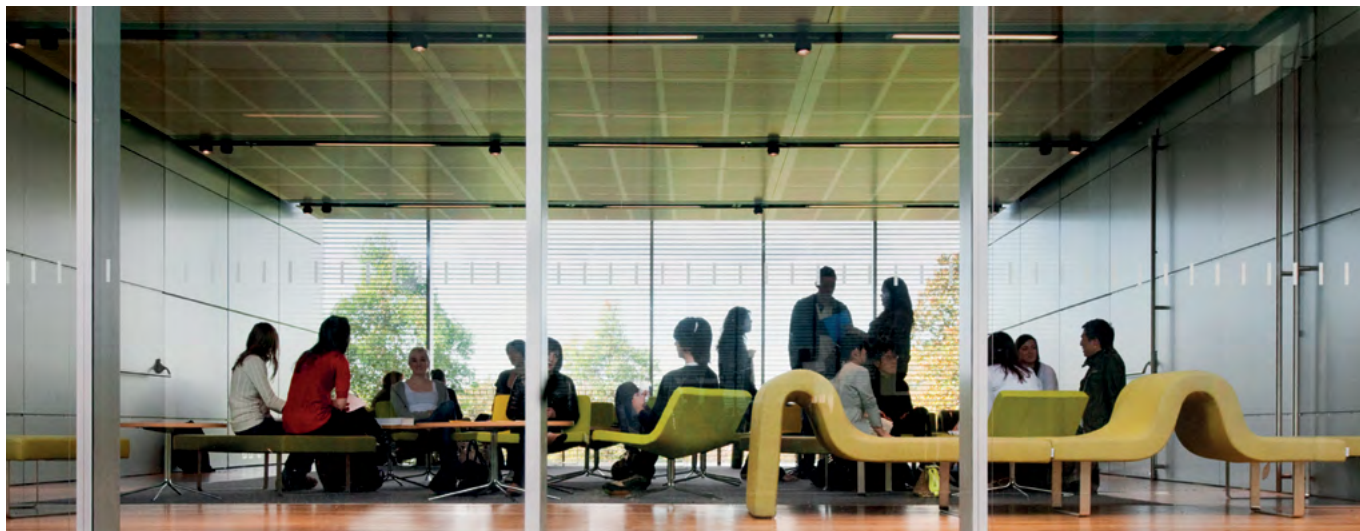
Pillar 3 of our Sustainability Strategy outlines our commitment to empowering good governance and coordination, to incorporate sustainability into our research, education and operations and ultimately enact change.

Our third annual report is part of our commitment to transparency and open communication. As a large, complex organisation, good governance is central to fostering sustainability, creating sustainable values and ultimately helping our University community achieve these values. Efforts to provide transparency will better inform our community on the important connection between governance and sustainability.

We recognise the dedication and efforts made by our colleagues and peers across the University, who have embraced the Strategy from inception, and have sought to carry out its vision for a better future. Academic and professional staff on our governance committees are committed to ensuring our University continues to progress towards sustainability targets and remains true to its founding principles.

Our third annual report outlines the real progress we have made towards this commitment across the suite of strategies forming Pillar 3. In addition, it also highlights where we still have progress to make. As we look to the fourth year of our Strategy, we have gained important knowledge and experience in identifying where we need to improve which will place us in a strong position to continue to build on our efforts over the last three years.





Awards and recognition



1st in Australia and 7th Globally
2023 QS World University Rankings for Sustainability ranks 700 institutions globally on how their research, teaching and community engagement tackles the world's greatest environmental, social and governance challenges.



Green Gown Award for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
2023 Australasian Green Gown Award from Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability for the Mapping, protecting and enriching Aboriginal cultural heritage landscapes project (see [Case study](#)).



Silver STARS rating
Inaugural submission in 2021 to the Sustainability Tracking and Reporting System to measure sustainability performance, with our rating valid until 2024.



Bronze EcoVadis rating
The University was rated as Bronze for EcoVadis in 2023, based on scores across four themes, including Environment, Labor and Human Rights, Ethics, and Sustainable Procurement.

Strategy 15: Establish effective governance

The Steering Committee established in 2020 to guide the creation and early implementation of the Sustainability Strategy was disbanded in March 2023, after endorsing a new governance structure. In June 2023, the Sustainability Program Control Board (PCB) commenced to oversee strategy rollout through to 2025. The PCB meets quarterly and is chaired by the Vice-Provost, with the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor remaining as executive sponsors.

Reporting to the PCB are three Sustainability Working Groups (SWGs) for each Pillar of the strategy. The SWGs were established in 2023 and include faculty representatives, professional staff, and student representatives (see [Case study](#)) who have contributed subject matter expertise from across the University.

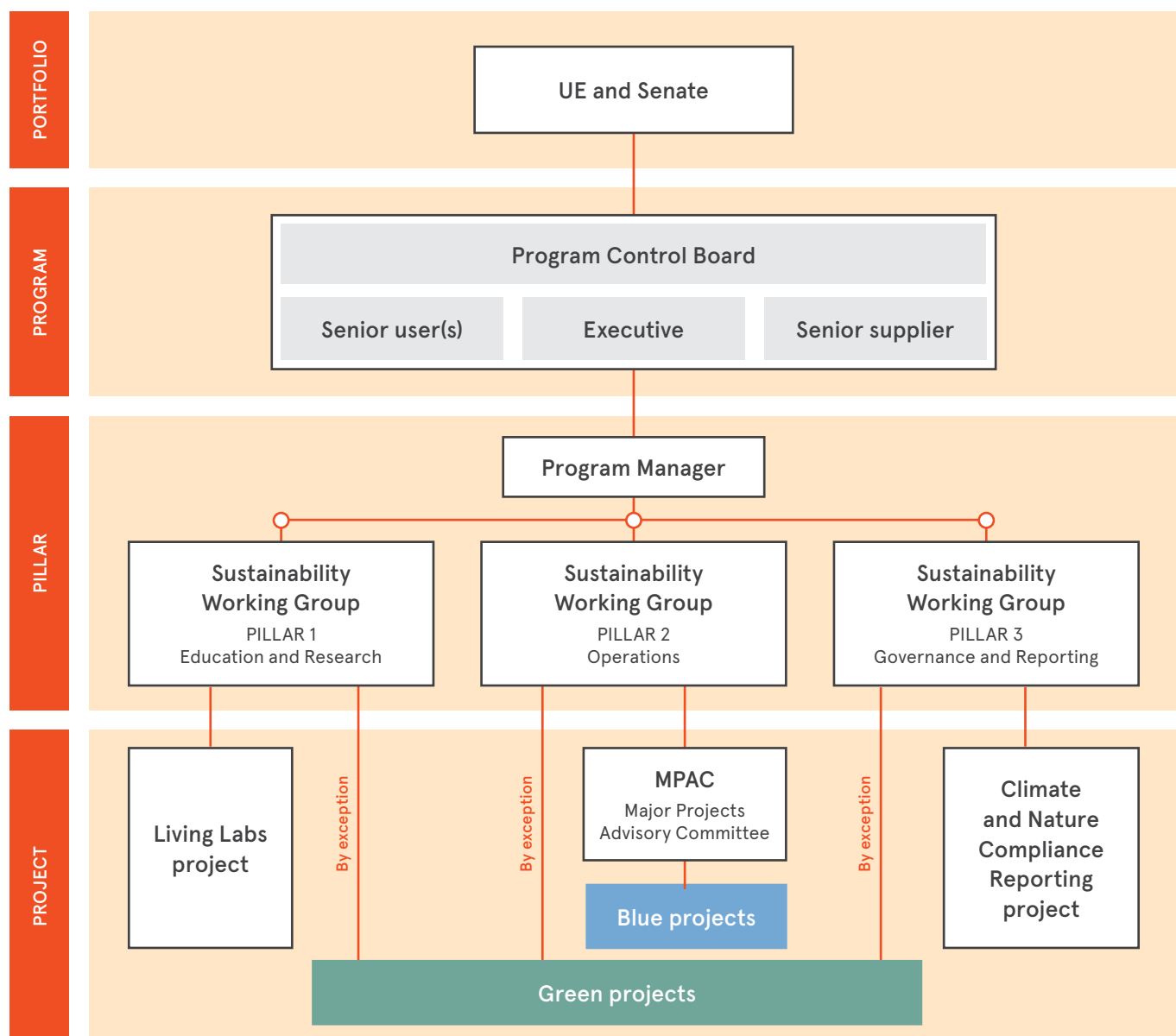
The Major Projects Advisory Committee (MPAC) reports to the SWG for Pillar 2. This committee provides expert advice to ensure that major projects progress according to plan. The MPAC includes professional staff from Sustainability, Central Operations Services (COS) and University Infrastructure (UI).

In 2023, the core Sustainability team expanded to include a Biodiversity Management Officer, Biodiversity Officer (Identified), Project Administrator, Sustainability Program Leads, a Data and Reporting Officer and a Change Manager.

Under the new governance and operating framework, 2023 saw the progression of opportunities for the broader University community to participate in grassroots action that contributes towards the goals of the strategy, including a pilot of My Green Lab (see [Case study](#)), the first year of Sustainability Action Grants (see [Case study](#)) and the third year of Green Impact (see [Case study](#)).

We further engaged the University's academic expertise through Sustainability workshops with the University of Sydney Business School and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. In addition, we engaged the Library Portfolio with a view to embedding more sustainable practices into Library operations and initiatives.

We continued work to rescind the existing Environmental Sustainability Policy 2015 and develop a new policy supporting the strategy.



Above: Sustainability Strategy Governance structure.

Case Study: Engagement – My Green Lab

In 2023, we finalised the My Green Lab Accreditation Program, guiding 4 labs from different disciplines and faculties through an international accreditation process designed specifically for improving sustainability in laboratory spaces. The labs began their journey with a baseline assessment across 14 categories and the results provided a starting point for implementing change in their specific lab environments. We worked through challenges and implemented change, with some labs adopting hard to recycle collection points to divert waste from landfill and others transitioning to glassware or multiuse plastic. In all labs, the program sparked intention and awareness of sustainability actions, creating a stronger sense of community and purpose. In October, the labs completed their final assessment surveys. All labs achieved improvements from their baseline scores, seeing the average score of participating labs increased from 54% to 84% compared to the baseline assessment performed one year prior. Three labs received a Green Certification, and one lab received a Platinum Certification – the highest and second highest certifications provided by My Green Lab. This improvement corresponds to an overall jump from Bronze to Green Certification.

Funding

Sustainability team

Project partners

My Green Lab

University of Sydney project team

Madeleine Culp, Ysobel Cranfield and
Maverick Millican (Sustainability)



Right: Representatives from the Virus Evolution/Save Sight Institute Research Groups receive their Green Level Certification.



Above: The Central (Patyegarang) Precinct Team attending a community planting event.

Case Study: Engagement – Green Impact

Our staff and student sustainability action program, Green Impact, ran for the third time in 2023. Green Impact is a global initiative, with 13 organisations in Australasia hosted by Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS). 9 teams from across 5 campuses worked for 6 months to complete 474 sustainable actions. 12 student auditors were recruited to verify these actions, providing an additional opportunity for students to develop critical skills and a deepened interest in sustainability on campus.

A snapshot of the breadth of actions completed include:

- The Sydney Nursing School Green Team built possum and bird boxes, installing them around their local communities
- Nepean Clinical School established an arrangement with a local lab supply company to reuse their delivery packaging, diverting it from landfill
- Northern Clinical School introduced the Green Caffeine program at the most popular café at Royal North Shore Hospital
- The Student Life Team purchased preserved floral arrangements to be used all year long for events, minimising waste
- The Science Road team worked to increase plant diversity at the back of the A12 Maclay building
- The Broken Hill Team introduced a “share” basket in their communal area for staff and students to encourage reduce, re-use and re-purpose principles
- The Central (Patyegarang) Precinct Team hosted a fundraising trivia night, with all proceeds going to Anti-Slavery Australia

- Western Sydney Baludarri Precinct Team re-purposed tables and chairs for use in the student accommodation space
- The Recruiting Green Team participated in walking meetings, mindfulness courses, and the 'Conqueror Challenge' to walk, cycle, and swim the length of the Great Wall of China

For the first time, our teams won challenges in the Green Impact Cup, an annual inter-program competition. Throughout the month of July, 49 teams from 11 universities across Australia and New Zealand participated in the competition, completing weekly challenges to earn cup points. Broken Hill and Science Road both won in Week 2 for healthy ecosystems. 3 teams placed in the overall top 4, with Science Road placing 2nd, Broken Hill equal 3rd and Nepean Clinical school 4th.

Funding

Sustainability team

Project partners

Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS)

University of Sydney project team

Madeleine Culp and Ysobel Cranfield (Sustainability)



Strategy 16: Be transparent about our progress

The University's Sustainability Strategy set a target to be rated 'Gold' in STARS by 2025. STARS is used by more than 1,000 tertiary institutions globally and stands for the international Sustainability Tracking and Reporting System, designed and overseen by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). In 2023, a Data and Reporting Officer commenced with the Sustainability team. In 2023, we commenced plans to build on our Silver STARS rating achieved in 2021 for our next submission in 2024.



We continued to develop sustainability communications through the University [website](#), monthly [newsletter](#) to 403 active subscribers, and to 1,552 [Instagram](#) followers to raise awareness of the University's Sustainability Strategy, reporting and related initiatives. We also shared our progress with staff and students on 26 Sustainability Trail Tours of Camperdown campus. Sustainability Trail Tours were delivered to staff, students and alumni and included tours for specific events, such as the 2023 Welcome Fest and the Alumni Festival on Saturday 2 December 2023.

We co-hosted the Group of Eight annual Sustainability Forum with UNSW on the 9 and 10 November 2023 to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange on sustainability initiatives. The focus of this year's Forum included sustainable lab practices, flight and travel strategies, carbon and biodiversity footprints, greenwashing, and the circular campus.



Left: Sustainability Trail Tour of Camperdown campus co-hosted with the Alumni Office on 6 June 2023.



Above: Group of Eight Sustainability Forum delegates at UNSW on 9 November 2023.

Pillar 3 progress at a glance

Pillar 3 commitments

15	Establish effective governance	2023 Status
15.1	Implement a governance and operating framework by end 2020 to support our strategic ambition for the University community to be more sustainable on campus through research, education and collective and individual action.	Completed
15.2	Develop methods to engage the University's academic expertise through a community of practice that advises on how best to pursue the targets and commitments in this strategy, and to provide opportunities for the broader University community to participate in grassroots action that contribute towards the goals of this strategy.	Progressed, on track
15.3	Rescind the existing Environmental Sustainability Policy 2015 and develop a new policy reflect the vision, guiding principles and commitments of this strategy.	Progressed, on track
16	Be transparent about our progress	
16.1	Report annually to the University community and broader public during the life of this strategy, transparently reflecting on progress towards our sustainability targets and commitments, showcasing achievements and presenting an action plan for the following year.	Progressed, on track
16.2	Sign up to the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS), used by more than 1,000 tertiary institutions globally, and achieve a 'gold' rating by 2025.	Progressed, on track



2024 Action Plan

Strategy		What we plan to do in the next 12 months
#1	Put research excellence into practice through living labs on our campuses	We will launch and EOI for seed funding for our researchers to conduct further research and living lab trials on campus. We plan to further work on a Living Labs Community of Practice and potential collaborations across the University.
#2	Prioritise the development of high-quality sustainability research at the University	The University will support 40 local and international researchers with a focus on sustainability, climate change and health as part of the Horizon Fellowships. The Office of Global Research Engagement is continuing its investment in research partnerships connected to impact towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will progress discussions on opportunities to embed sustainability into research within the Faculties and Schools.
#3	Develop global and local partnerships and practice	We will progress discussions around sustainability-related partnerships and research in the context of the University's new strategic plan development process.
#4	Increase our capacity for sustainability education across the University	Develop a University of Sydney branded Carbon Literacy Training course and launch online registrations for both staff and students. Launch a toolkit of resources focused on the SDGs. We will progress discussions around sustainability-related education in the context of the institutional strategic planning process.
#5	Enhance the student experience of sustainability	Provide opportunities for student representatives to take part in Sustainability Working Groups. The Sustainability team will collaborate with the Student Life team and USU to participate in the extended Welcome Week program, Enviro Week, and to develop new initiatives and events to engage with students.
#6	Support understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of living in harmony with the environment and each other	We will progress plans for providing educational resources on Caring for Country as part of the development of Carbon Literacy Training and the SDG toolkit project.
#7	Demonstrate leadership in waste reduction and management	Completion of additional waste audits and assessments to better understand the current waste generation patterns on different campuses. Complete behaviour change analysis on reducing contamination levels in waste streams, to guide action plan implementation initiatives. Changes and improvements to waste collection services, infrastructure, and signage to guide users on waste sorting. Collaboration with new waste management contractor to enhance waste disposal and recycling capabilities.

Strategy		What we plan to do in the next 12 months
#8	Reduce our energy emissions	Mapping and analysis of our Scope 1 and 3 emissions. Upgrade of the University's Advanced Utility Monitoring System (AUMS) and meters to better measure the utilities consumed and solar energy generated. Installation of 1MW of solar across University's urban and regional campuses. Installation of additional efficiency measures, including LED lighting.
#9	Sustainably develop and manage the built and natural environment on our campuses	Development of a framework for climate risk and resilience assessments of University infrastructure. Development of procedures to enable new major refurbishments to be 4-star Green Star accredited. Progress work into developing biodiversity baselines for monitoring and reporting. Support MSUST capstone projects partnering with UTS and Pocket City Farms to explore the potential of urban agriculture and urban green roofs/spaces. Progress our koala monitoring project in collaboration with the NSW Koala Strategy. Prepare summary reports and priority actions for our remote locations, assessing each in terms of developed Biodiversity Profiles.
#10	Require responsible procurement practices to enable ethically and sustainably sourced products at all stages of our supply chain	Development of procurement pipeline dashboard to increase visibility and prioritisation of tenders to include ESG, Modern Slavery, and Sustainability Strategy target considerations.
#11	Reduce our water waste	Continue rollout of water-efficient taps and fixtures upgrade. Increase the number of rainwater tanks in use.
#12	Provide affordable, healthy and culturally accepted food and beverages that are accessible to all and aligned with recognised sustainable procurement practices	Implementation of Green Leases to increase the accessibility and availability of sustainable food options and practices. Conduct a review of the UniBuy System to help categorise food options and help give visibility to suppliers that are sustainable and ethical.
#13	Reduce impacts associated with unsustainable travel to, from and around our campuses	Provide a dedicated staff intranet page on sustainable travel procurement with resources and online workshops. Upgrade end-of-trip facilities (showers, bike-lockers, etc) to facilitate active travel to our campuses. Development of workshops and resources for University staff to support sustainable travel planning.

Strategy		What we plan to do in the next 12 months
#14	Improve environmentally, socially and financially responsible investment practices	Continue process to ensure University investments adhere to ESG exclusions guidelines.
#15	Establish effective governance	Continue to engage the University's academic expertise to advise on how best to pursue the targets and commitments in this strategy, through an established governance structure. Continue to provide opportunities to the broader University community, for example, through additional rounds of Green Impact and Sustainability Action Grants. We will progress work to develop a new policy reflecting the vision, guiding principles and commitments of the Sustainability Strategy.
#16	Be transparent about our progress	Update the Sustainability at Sydney website to support transparent reflection on progress towards our sustainability targets and commitments. Completion of our fourth annual report to meet our commitment to report annually to the University community for the life the strategy. Completion of our second report to the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS), with the aim of achieving a 'gold' rating by 2025.

University Sustainability Reports and Strategies Reference List

Pillar	Document link
ALL	Sydney in 2032 Strategy
ALL	Sustainability Strategy 2020-25
ALL	Sustainable Development Goals Update 2020
ALL	Sustainability Annual Report 2020-21
ALL	Sustainability Annual Report 2022
ALL	Climate Action Progress Report 2022
Foundation, Strategy 6	One Sydney, Many People Strategy 2021-2024
Foundation, Strategy 6	Ngarangun: 'we learn, think and listen together'
Foundation, Strategy 6	Indigenous Procurement Strategy
Foundation, Strategy 6	Walanga Wingara Mura Design Principles
Strategy 1 – 4	UN Principles of Responsible Management Education Report – 2021-22
Strategy 5	Sustainability Action Grants, Student Life
Strategy 8	National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) 2021-22
Strategy 8	Path to Net Zero – The Net Zero Initiative White Paper
Strategy 9	Biodiversity Management Plan 2021-25
Strategy 10	Modern Slavery Statement and Policy
Strategy 12	USU Sustainability
Strategy 14	Investment Policy 2022
Strategy 16	Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) 2021 Report

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