

Climate and Nature
Transition plan
2026–2032



Contents



Cover: *Alloxylon flammeum*
“Waratah Tree”, Madsen Building,
Eastern Avenue, Camperdown Campus.

Inside front cover: *Canna annei-rubra*,
Chemical Engineering Building,
Darlington Campus.

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available on our [Sustainability website](#).

This document has been designed to be
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03

Introduction

Acknowledgement of Country	03
Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor’s foreword	04

06

Our transition plan

What is a Climate and Nature Transition Plan?	06
Risk, opportunity and the climate-nature relationship	08
Our place and responsibility	10
Connected to our core business	11
How this plan creates change	13

14

What we plan to do

Our focus areas	15
Our targets and ambition	16
Climate mitigation	17
Climate adaptation and resilience	21
Nature	24
Circularity	27

30

How we plan to do it

Enabling the transition	31
Governance and accountability	33
Glossary	35
References and further information	36

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, Cammeraygal, Dharug, Wangal, Dharawal, Deerubbin, Darkinjung, Guringgai, Kamilaroi, Bundjalung, Wiradjuri, Wiljali, Gundugurra, Bailai, Gooreng Gooreng, Gurang and Taribelang Bunda 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, whose profound understanding of sustainability has been applied for many tens of thousands of years.

Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor's foreword

Investing in a resilient, sustainable future through an integrated approach

The institutions that thrive over the coming decade will be those that successfully navigate the climate and nature transition.

Climate change, biodiversity loss and increasing pressure on natural resources are reshaping the world around us. They are changing how organisations operate, how communities build resilience and how economies create long-term value. For universities, these challenges present both a responsibility and an opportunity.

The University of Sydney has a long history of contributing to solutions for society's most complex challenges. Through our education, research and engagement, we help shape the ideas, technologies and leaders that will influence the future. At the same time, we must ensure our own operations evolve to meet the demands of a changing world.

Our inaugural Sustainability Strategy 2020–2025 established a strong foundation for this work. It strengthened governance, accelerated action across our campuses and deepened our understanding of climate and nature-related risks and opportunities.

It also positioned the University as an early adopter of climate-related financial disclosures and nature-related assessment frameworks, helping us better understand the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The Climate and Nature Transition Plan builds on this foundation.

Aligned with our Sydney in 2032 strategy, the Plan provides a clear pathway for how we will strengthen our operations across four interconnected areas: climate mitigation, climate adaptation and resilience, nature, and circularity. It reflects our belief that environmental sustainability and operational excellence are increasingly inseparable, and that the institutions best prepared for the future will be those that successfully integrate both.



Pictured: David Thodey AO (right) and Mark Scott AO (left), Quadrangle, Camperdown Campus

While this Plan is focused on our operational transition, its impact extends far beyond our estate. The University is uniquely placed to connect operational challenges with world-leading research, student learning and innovation. Through this work, we have an opportunity to complement our academic strengths, creating new pathways for collaboration, applied learning and real-world impact.

We also recognise that responding to climate and nature challenges requires us to learn from diverse knowledge systems. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cared for Country for tens of thousands of years, developing deep understandings of stewardship, resilience and the interconnectedness of people and place. These perspectives have much to contribute to how institutions navigate the transition ahead, and we are committed to creating opportunities for Indigenous knowledges and Caring for Country approaches to inform our journey.

The Climate and Nature Transition Plan is our renewed commitment to building a more resilient, future-ready University: one that aligns its operations with its purpose, supports the ambitions of Sydney in 2032, and contributes meaningfully to the transition taking place across Australia and the world.

David Thodey AO

BA Anthrop/Eng, HonDSc Deakin '15,
HonDBusUTS '18, HonDBusSyd '23
Chancellor

Professor Mark Scott AO

BA '84, DipEd '84, MA '93,
HonDLitt '15
Vice-Chancellor and President

“The Climate and Nature
Transition Plan is our renewed
commitment to building a
more resilient, future-ready
University”

David Thodey AO Chancellor
Professor Mark Scott AO Vice-Chancellor and President



Our transition plan

*A credible and transparent
roadmap to tackle our climate
and nature challenges*

What is a Climate and Nature Transition Plan?	07
Risk, opportunity and the climate-nature relationship	08
Our place and responsibility	10
Connected to our core business	11
How this plan creates change	13

Pictured: *Calliandra haematocephala*,
Camperdown Campus



What is a Climate and Nature Transition Plan?

Adopting an integrated approach to tackling our great global challenges

We are laying whole-of-university foundations for long-term resilience and sustainability leadership, grounded in our physical environment and shaped by our university community.

Pictured:
Solar on Chau Chak Wing Museum, Camperdown Campus



More than a strategy

A strategy sets a direction. In contrast, a Transition Plan sets a pathway.

This Climate and Nature Transition Plan is the University of Sydney's roadmap for a defining challenge of our time. It sets out what will be delivered, who is accountable, when it will happen and how success will be measured.

The plan brings together twelve clear and measurable targets, supported by defined actions, accountable owners and transparent reporting.

Most importantly, this is not a plan that sits on a shelf. It is whole-of-university driven and led.

Progress against every target will be reported publicly throughout the life of the plan, ensuring accountability and helping us track the transition from ambition to action.

Aligned to global best practice

The challenges we face are global, and our response must be credible, transparent and aligned with recognised standards.

This plan has been developed in alignment with leading Australian and international guidance on transition planning. It reflects [IFRS transition plan disclosure guidance](#), IFRS S2 and underpins the University's climate-related reporting obligations under [NSW Treasury's TPG24-33 framework](#).

It is also aligned with the [Draft Climate-related Transition Planning Guidance](#) released by Australian Treasury in 2025.

As expectations, regulation and best practice continue to evolve, the University will review and update the plan to ensure it remains relevant, credible and effective.

Connected to our core business

This transition is not separate from the University's aspirations. It is embedded within them.

The actions in this plan create opportunities to connect operations, research, teaching and community partnerships.

Our campuses can serve as living laboratories. Our farms and field stations can showcase leading practice. Students can gain hands-on experience, while researchers can test and develop solutions that support the transition beyond the University.

In doing so, this plan supports more than a sustainable University.

It helps develop future leaders, advances knowledge and enables the University to contribute to the broader transition taking place across our communities, economy and environment.

The three questions this plan answers

01

Where are we now?

Our climate and nature baselines establish the starting point for the transition.

02

Where are we going?

Twelve public targets define what success looks like by 2032.

03

How will we get there?

Clear actions, accountable owners and measurable milestones provide the pathway to delivery.

Risk, opportunity and the climate–nature relationship

Recognising and acting on deeply intertwined challenges

We recognise the interrelationship between climate and nature, and our responsibility to take action on both through our research, teaching and operations.

Why combine climate and nature?

Climate change and nature loss are often treated as separate challenges. In reality, they are deeply connected.

When vegetation, soils and ecosystems decline, their ability to store carbon is reduced, contributing to climate change. At the same time, rising temperatures, extreme weather and changing environmental conditions place increasing pressure on biodiversity and natural systems.

The reverse is also true.

Healthy ecosystems are among our most effective climate solutions. They absorb carbon, support biodiversity, improve water security and help communities adapt to a changing climate.

For the University, this relationship creates both risks and opportunities.

Climate impacts can affect our campuses, farms and research stations, while nature loss can reduce the resilience and environmental value of the landscapes we manage. At the same time, evolving regulation, reporting requirements and stakeholder expectations are increasing the importance of managing climate- and nature-related impacts in an integrated way.

A plan focused solely on climate would provide an incomplete response to the interdependent challenges of climate change and nature loss. For this reason, our plan brings both together – as interconnected pillars of a single transition.

An integrated transition plan



Our climate and nature risk and opportunity landscape

The University’s campuses, rural landholdings, research and teaching activities create a distinctive climate and nature risk profile. Across this footprint, these same forces also create opportunities to strengthen resilience, reduce emissions, restore nature and support our teaching, research and communities.

RISKS

PRIORITY SITES

OPPORTUNITIES

⚡ PHYSICAL – ACUTE

Sudden, discrete weather and environmental events such as bushfires, floods or severe storms.

- Flooding from extreme rainfall ●●
- Severe storms and extreme wind ●●
- Increased bushfire frequency and severity ●●
- Sudden loss of natural systems — flood buffering, water filtration and soil stability ●●

🕒 PHYSICAL – CHRONIC

Gradual, long-term shifts in climate and natural systems such as increasing drought frequency, rising temperatures or declining water availability.

- Increasing frequency and intensity of heatwaves ●●●
- Increased droughts and dry periods ●●●
- Water scarcity — groundwater and surface water depletion ●●
- Degraded land, soil and ecosystem quality affecting property values ●●

⚙️ TRANSITION

Risks from the shift to a low-carbon, nature-positive economy, driven by changes in policy, regulation, markets and technology.

- Regulatory pressure to decarbonise operations ●
- Changes in policy affecting the built environment, electricity supply and pricing ●●
- Non-compliant land clearing, water, soil or air pollution ●●●●
- Reputational damage from climate, decarbonisation or nature stewardship failures ●●●



⚙️ TRANSITION

The same forces driving transition risks create openings to reduce costs, grow research impact, strengthen reputation and restore nature.

- Decarbonisation drives adoption of low-carbon technologies ●
- Increased demand for renewable and low-carbon technologies ●
- Nature positive research and practice ●
- Demonstrated decarbonisation progress strengthens institutional credibility ●●●
- Indigenous-led partnerships for nature management, research and education ●●
- Land revegetation — carbon and nature credits ●●
- Demand for sustainability-aligned education and research ●●●●
- Circular economy practices drive innovation and resource efficiency ●●

Our place and responsibility

Caring for Country and building resilience across a large and diverse estate

The University of Sydney is shaped by the places in which it operates and the many roles it plays within them.

With around 70,000 students, 22,000 staff and more than 12,000 hectares of land, our campuses, farms and research stations span a diverse range of environments across New South Wales and Eastern Australia.

From the dry landscapes of Wiljali Country (Broken Hill), to the flood-affected regions of Bundjalung Country (Lismore), and the heat-exposed environments of Dharug Country (Westmead), each place faces different environmental challenges and opportunities.

This diversity of place shapes how we teach, research and operate. It also deepens our understanding of resilience – how environments, systems and communities respond to shocks and change. It shapes how we understand our responsibility to the environments we are part of.

Caring for Country sits at the heart of this responsibility. It reminds us that sustainability is not only about managing impacts, but about understanding and respecting the enduring relationship between people, land and water.

This means learning from and working alongside Indigenous Peoples and knowledge systems, recognising that every part of our University exists within a living cultural and ecological landscape.

Our campuses are not just places of learning and discovery. They are places where we can learn what it means to care for land and water in practice, and where Caring for Country strengthens the resilience of the environments and communities we are part of.

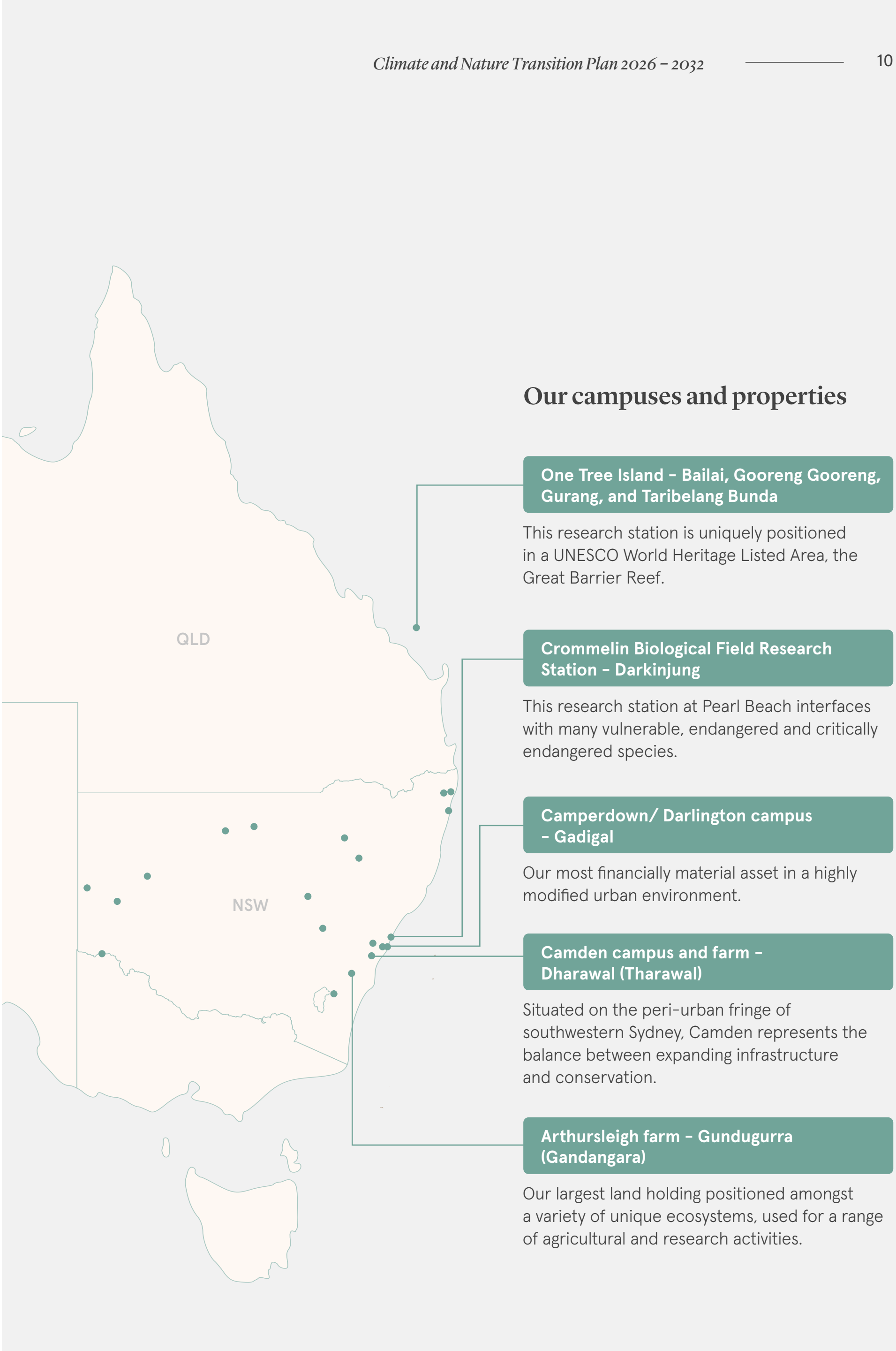


Education provider



Research institution

Property manager | Food and retail provider | Infrastructure developer
Agricultural landholder | Healthcare provider | Financial Manager | Investor



Connected to our core business

Creating more sustainable, resilient and efficient campuses, services and operations

We will deliver this Transition Plan in collaboration with our University community, leveraging our academic, research and physical assets.

The Climate and Nature Transition Plan supports the University's broader aspirations for Sydney in 2032, recognising that climate and nature are not separate from what we do. They shape how we teach, research, operate and engage with our communities.

The plan directly contributes to our aspiration of “a better place to work and a place that works better” by helping create more sustainable, resilient and efficient campuses, services and operations.

The University contributes to climate and nature transition in many ways through its research, education and partnerships. This plan does not seek to direct or replicate that work. Instead, it focuses on our operations and uses implementation of the plan as an opportunity to support and showcase the expertise that already exists across the University.

Our campuses, farms and operations provide opportunities for applied research, student learning and community collaboration, positioning the University itself as a living laboratory for transition.

This approach is also consistent with the University's *One Sydney, Many People* Indigenous Strategy. It reflects how the two strategies are closely aligned and mutually reinforcing in supporting collaboration, shared responsibility and inclusive participation across the University community.

Implementation commitments

To ensure delivery of the plan continues to support research, education and community outcomes, implementation of the plan will facilitate, at a minimum:

- one applied research project or field trial each year
- four student projects, capstones or experiential learning opportunities each year
- one Indigenous partnership or project each year

The University will engage students, faculties, portfolios, and operational teams in [enabling the Transition Plan](#), creating opportunities for local leadership, collaboration and action across the institution.

Pictured: Physics Road, Camperdown Campus



Climate and nature shape how we teach, research, operate and engage with our communities.

Progress to date – 10 years of Sustainability

2015

- Environmental Sustainability Policy 2015 enacted
- Introduced the Solar PV standard for new buildings

2016

- Sydney Environment Institute launched as a Multidisciplinary Initiative
- Solar PV installed on 14 buildings (2016/17)

2017

International Conference on Environmental Justice; Looking Back, Looking Forward

2018

Baseline year for Net Zero established

March 2019

UE endorse a plan to develop a new Environmental Sustainability Strategy

May 2019

Consultation and development starts on an institutional wide Sustainability Strategy

July 2021

Biodigester for organic waste arrives and commissioning begins

June 2021

Launch of the Sustainable Investment Strategy with a target of Net Zero by 2050

April 2021

- Green Impact program launched
- From 25th to 2nd globally in THE Impact ranking

November 2020

AFR Award for Higher Education, Sustainability for the living lab Maschmeyer Gelion project

October 2020

SDG-themed *Connect For: a better world* festival to showcase research and engage students

August 2020

Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Statement endorsed by University Executive and Senate

October 2021

COP26 used to showcase the University's sustainability research and achievements

November 2021

Rated Silver in first Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) report

February 2022

Onsite biodigester called 'Chester the Biodigester' launched

May 2022

First Sustainability annual report released

July 2022

Moved to purchasing 100% renewable electricity three years ahead of schedule

September 2022

- Green Labs engagement program launched
- Sustainable Action Grants funding streams launched

December 2025

39% of targets met by the close of the Sustainability Strategy period

July 2025

- First voluntary Climate-related Financial Disclosure published
- First University globally to publish a TNFD-aligned Nature-related financial disclosure
- Net Zero program scoped and pilot funded

2024

- Launched Net Zero Sprint executive education course.
- Installed an additional 723kW of on-site solar generation capacity

December 2023

- 1st in Australia and 7th globally in the QS World University Rankings for Sustainability
- Launched a new multidisciplinary undergraduate Sustainability Major

October 2023

- Australasian Green Gown Award winner for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Sustainability.
- Adopted the recommendations of the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures

July 2023

Launched hard-to-recycle Enabler Wall

June 2023

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



How this plan creates change

Driving change through an adaptive, outcomes-focused plan

Many organisations can describe the future they want to create. The challenge is showing how they will get there.

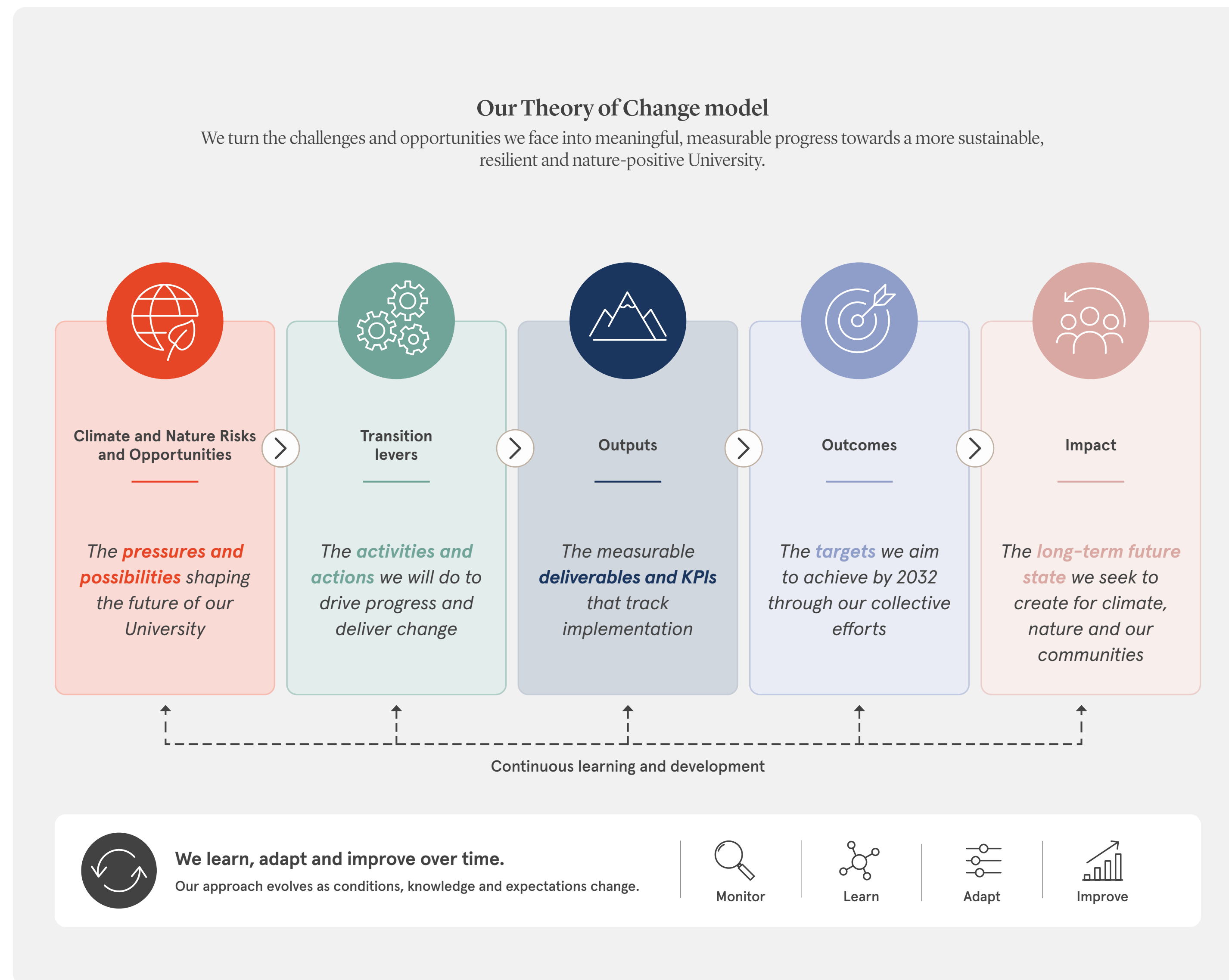
This plan is designed to bridge that gap for our institution.

It starts with the climate and nature-related risks and opportunities facing the University and translates them into practical actions and measurable public targets. Together, these elements create a line of sight between the challenges we face today and the impact we want to achieve by 2032.

The plan is deliberately outcomes-focused. Rather than prescribing every activity in advance, it identifies the transition levers that will drive change while allowing implementation to evolve as technologies, regulations, evidence and community expectations change over time.

This approach provides both accountability and flexibility. The outcomes remain fixed. Progress is measured through public targets. The actions we take can adapt as we learn, innovate and respond to emerging opportunities.

In this way, the plan is designed not only to set direction, but also to guide delivery.



What we plan to do

Four integrated focus areas to address risks, build resilience and capture opportunities

Our focus areas	15
Our targets and ambition	16
Climate mitigation	17
Climate adaptation and resilience	21
Nature	24
Circularity	27

Pictured: *Anigozanthos* sp., Kangaroo Paw, Anderson Stuart Building, Camperdown Campus



Our focus areas

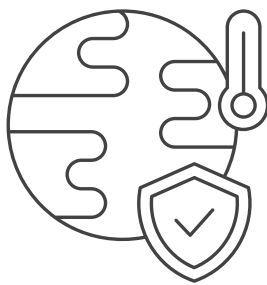
Climate mitigation · Adaptation and resilience · Nature · Circularity

The transition to a low-carbon and nature-positive future requires action on multiple fronts. Informed by our community and an assessment of material risks, these four focus areas define where we will concentrate our efforts and resources.

Together, they address the interconnected challenges and opportunities facing the University, from reducing emissions and building resilience, to enhancing biodiversity and rethinking how we use materials and resources.

Our targets and ambition

The measurable commitments that will guide our transition to 2032^{1,2}

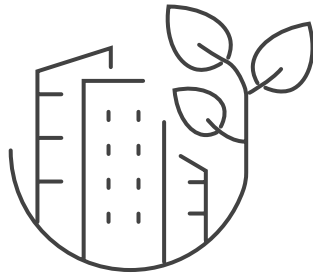


Climate mitigation

Achieve net zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030³

Reduce purchased energy intensity by 10% by 2032

Implement category management plans covering at least 70% of Scope 3 emissions by 2032



Adaptation and resilience

Complete climate risk and vulnerability assessments across all critical asset categories and campuses by 2032

Achieve a minimum 5-Star Green Star rating for all qualifying new builds and major refurbishments

Establish and test climate preparedness and support capability at all priority sites⁴ by 2032

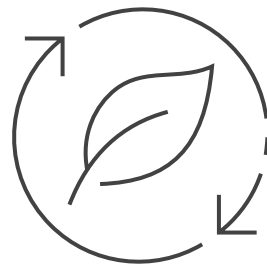


Nature

Develop water stewardship and ecosystem resilience plans for all priority sites⁵ by 2032

Increase tree canopy cover across the University’s estate to 25% by 2032

Deliver at least five co-funded nature regeneration programs across University-managed sites by 2032



Circularity

Reduce total waste generated per person by 10% by 2032

Implement reuse systems for five priority product categories by 2032

Divert at least 70% of total waste from landfill by 2032

1 Unless otherwise stated, targets apply to activities and assets within the University’s operational control boundary.
2 The Scope 1 and 2 emissions target is measured against the University’s 2018/19 baseline. Other reduction targets are measured against a 2025 baseline.
3 The Net Zero baseline has been recalculated to include refrigerant and livestock emissions, aligning the net zero boundary with the University’s greenhouse gas reporting requirements. The base year remains 2018/19, restated to incorporate these sources.
4 The Adaptation and resilience priority sites are: Arthursleigh, Camden, Gunnedah (Nowley), Lidcombe, Lismore, Camperdown and Darlington campus, Narrabri and One Tree Island.
5 The Nature priority sites are: Arthursleigh, Camden, Gunnedah (Nowley), Camperdown and Darlington campus, Narrabri and One Tree Island.

Climate mitigation

Reducing emissions is the foundation of our transition

The University has already reduced direct greenhouse gas emissions by more than 83% since 2018/19 through renewable electricity procurement and sustained decarbonisation efforts across our operations. But our transition is not complete.

The next challenge is more complex: eliminating remaining operational emissions, improving energy efficiency and influencing emissions beyond our direct control. As a leading research institution, our campuses should reflect the ambition and innovation we bring to climate research and education. Every tonne of emissions avoided reduces future climate risk, strengthens resilience and helps protect the ecosystems on which our communities depend. This focus area sets out how we will continue that progress through three targets focused on operational emissions, energy efficiency and value chain engagement.

Our footprint today

The University measures and reports greenhouse gas emissions across Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 in accordance with the [GHG Protocol](#).

Since establishing our 2018/19 baseline, direct emissions have fallen substantially through renewable electricity procurement and operational decarbonisation. As a result, most of our remaining footprint now sits beyond our immediate operations, arising from the goods and services we purchase, the infrastructure we build and the investments we hold.

This shift marks an important transition in focus: from reducing emissions within our own operations to influencing emissions across the broader systems we participate in.



Our Impact: To strengthen the alignment between our operations and our leadership in climate research and education



Expanding our understanding of emissions

As reporting standards and data quality have improved, so has our understanding of the University's emissions footprint.

The University's Net Zero Scope 1 and 2 target was originally established using emissions sources reported under the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) framework. Since then, we have expanded our emissions inventory to include material sources that were not previously measured, including refrigerants, livestock and cropping emissions and other land-based activities.

To reflect this improved understanding, we have re-baselined our Net Zero target while retaining the original 2018/19 baseline year. This provides a picture of the University's operational emissions and aligns our reporting with emerging disclosure expectations and improved measurement practices.

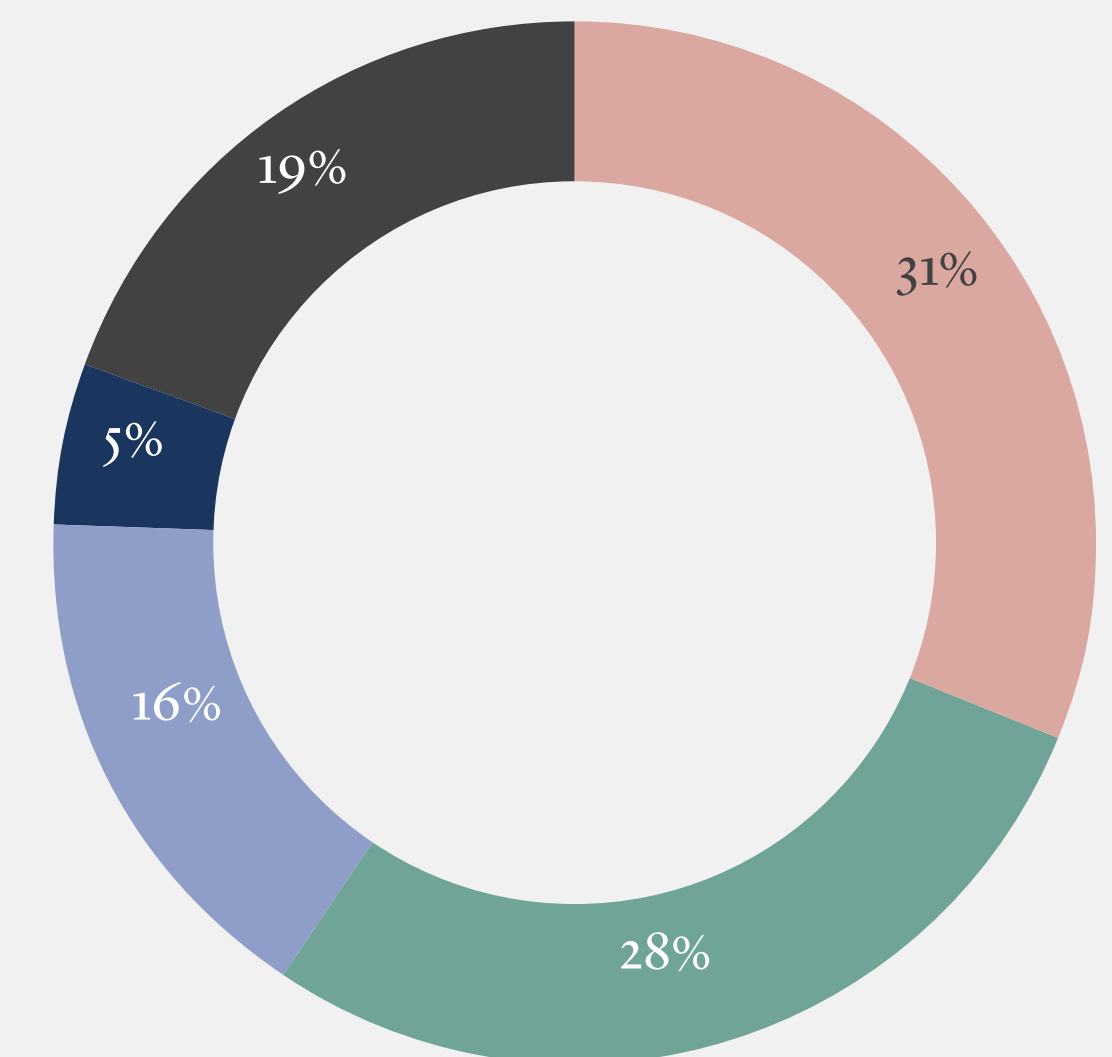
Importantly, re-baselining does not change our ambition. It strengthens the evidence base underpinning it.

Pictured: Calf at the Corstorphine Dairy Farm, Camden Campus

2025 emissions profile

Scope 1 and 2 emissions included in our Net Zero target

- Livestock**
Enteric fermentation and manure management are our largest source of emissions.
- Natural Gas**
Combustion for heating and operations – a key lever for decarbonisation.
- Cropping**
Cropping Emissions from agricultural activities, including fertiliser use, biogenic methane and land use change.
- Other**
Includes stationary fuel combustion and vehicle fuels.
- Fugitive**
Fugitive emissions from leakage of refrigerants used in refrigeration, air conditioning and cooling equipment.
- Electricity**
Net zero via our Power Purchase Agreement – 100% renewable.



Scope 3 emissions across our value chain

The University’s emissions profile has changed significantly over the past decade.

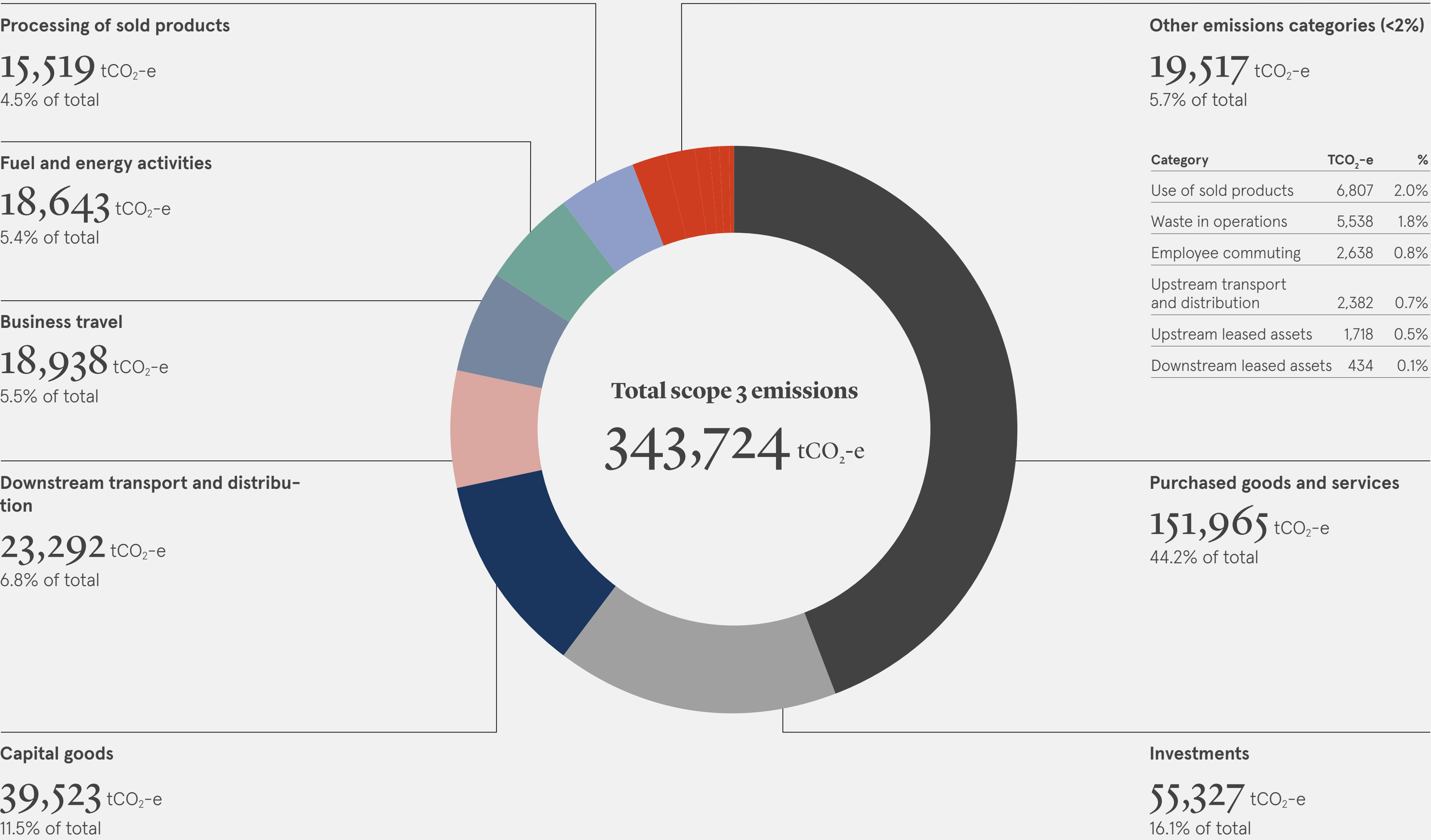
As direct emissions have fallen, Scope 3 emissions have become the largest component of our greenhouse gas footprint and our most significant emissions challenge.

These emissions occur beyond our direct operations, arising from the goods and services we purchase, the buildings we construct, the investments we hold and the activities of suppliers and partners throughout our value chain.

While Scope 3 emissions span a wide range of activities, they are concentrated within a relatively small number of categories. Purchased goods and services, investments and capital goods account for the majority of the University’s footprint.

This concentration provides an opportunity. Rather than spreading effort across every category, we can focus on the areas where we have the greatest influence and the greatest potential impact.

For this reason, the Climate and Nature Transition Plan adopts a category management approach to Scope 3 emissions, prioritising action across the highest-emitting areas of our value chain.



Climate mitigation continued

Target 1: Achieve net zero Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2030

Target type: Absolute reduction

2028 milestone: Building electrification pilot completed. Scope 2 maintained at ~zero (market-based) with new PPA.

Our remaining direct emissions arise primarily from natural gas, refrigerants and agricultural activities across our diverse estate. Achieving net zero will require continued investment in electrification, renewable energy and the careful management of residual emissions.



TRANSITION LEVERS	
Building electrification program We will progressively replace fossil fuel systems with electric alternatives, prioritising the buildings responsible for the greatest emissions and creating a pathway to eliminate natural gas from our operations over time.	Fleet transition program As vehicles reach the end of lease we will transition to electric alternatives and expand supporting infrastructure, reducing emissions from day-to-day operations.
Agricultural and fugitive emissions reduction program We will continually improve our understanding of emissions from refrigerants, livestock and land management activities, then work with operational teams and researchers to identify practical opportunities for reduction.	Renewable electricity procurement We will maintain our renewable electricity through long-term purchasing arrangements, ensuring our electricity supply remains aligned with our net zero ambition.
Residual emissions management For emissions that are difficult to eliminate by 2030, we will apply a transparent and responsible offsetting approach guided by the University’s Carbon Offset Integrity Principles.	

Target 2: Reduce purchased energy intensity by 10% by 2032

Target type: Intensity reduction

2028 milestone: ≥5% reduction from baseline.

Alongside decarbonisation, we are also focused on reducing the amount of purchased energy consumed across our operations. Since 2018/19, the University has already reduced purchased energy intensity by 16%, exceeding its previous target through LED lighting upgrades and investment in on-site solar.

Future gains will become increasingly challenging as many remaining opportunities sit within laboratories, research facilities and specialist teaching environments where energy demand is closely linked to the University’s core functions.



TRANSITION LEVERS	
Smart lighting upgrades We will continue upgrading lighting across our campuses, replacing older systems with high-efficiency alternatives that reduce energy use while improving building performance.	On-site solar expansion We will identify opportunities to expand solar generation across our estate, increasing the amount of renewable energy produced on-site.
Building energy optimisation Through smarter controls, automation and data-driven management, we will improve how buildings operate and reduce energy consumption without compromising functionality.	Energy storage opportunity assessments We will explore battery storage and other technologies that help maximise the value of renewable energy and improve energy resilience.

Climate mitigation continued

Target 3: Implement category management plans covering at least 70% of Scope 3 emissions by 2032

Target type: Coverage/completion

2028 milestone: ≥50% of Scope 3 emissions covered by active management plans.

Beyond our own operations sits the larger challenge. Scope 3 emissions account for the majority of the University’s greenhouse gas footprint at around 343,700 tCO₂e and are concentrated within a handful of categories, including purchased goods and services, investments and capital goods.

Unlike Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, these emissions occur across our value chain and are not directly controlled by the University. While we can influence them through procurement, capital planning and investment stewardship, meaningful progress depends on collaboration with suppliers, partners and investment managers.

For this reason, the University has adopted a category management approach, focusing effort on the areas where we have the greatest influence and potential impact.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Supplier emissions transparency

We will work with suppliers to improve emissions reporting and build a clearer understanding of the impacts embedded within the goods and services we purchase.

Embodied carbon in capital projects

We will integrate embodied carbon considerations into planning, design and construction decisions, helping reduce emissions associated with future development.

Low-carbon procurement

We will focus on the categories responsible for the largest share of emissions and use procurement processes to encourage lower-carbon alternatives over time.

Investment stewardship

We will leverage our role as an investor to encourage alignment with sustainability objectives, supporting transparency, accountability and emissions reductions in the real economy.

Pictured: Bike parking along Manning Road, Camperdown Campus



Adaptation and resilience

Preparing for the unavoidable impacts of climate change on our sites and operations

Climate change is no longer a future challenge. It is already shaping how the University operates.

Across our campuses, farms and research stations, we face increasing exposure to extreme heat, flooding, drought, bushfire, severe storms and sea level rise. These hazards can disrupt teaching, research, infrastructure and the wellbeing of our communities.

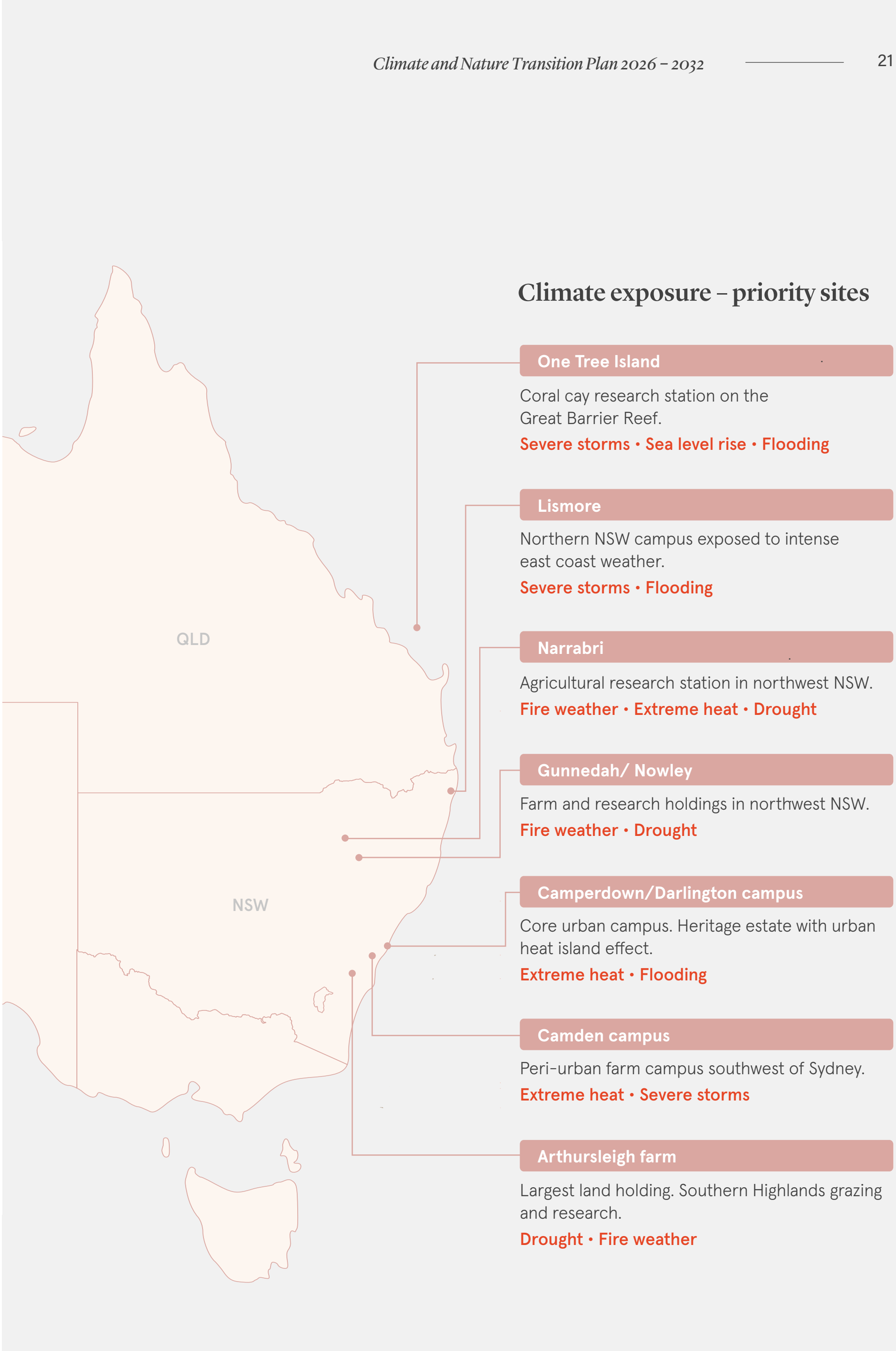
While climate mitigation focuses on reducing future climate change, adaptation and resilience is about preparing for the impacts that are already happening and can no longer avoid.

The University operates across a diverse portfolio of urban campuses, regional properties and specialised research facilities. Building resilience means understanding our exposure to climate risks and strengthening our processes, places and people. This includes improving our preparedness for climate-related disruption, ensuring

our buildings and infrastructure are fit for future climate conditions, and supporting our broader University community to build resilience alongside us.

By 2032, we aim to be a more resilient institution: one that can anticipate disruption, respond effectively and recover quickly when climate-related events occur, while supporting the resilience of the communities and places in which we operate.

Our Impact: *To foster a resilient University where our people, places and communities thrive in a changing climate*



Adaptation and resilience continued

Target 4: Complete climate risk and vulnerability assessments across all critical asset categories and campuses by 2032

Target type: Coverage/completion

2028 milestone: ≥40% of assets assessed and integrated into planning.

Understanding risk is the foundation of resilience. We cannot prepare for hazards we do not understand.

This target focuses on the processes needed to identify, assess and manage physical climate risks across our campuses, farms and facilities. By understanding where our greatest vulnerabilities lie, we can make more informed decisions about investment, maintenance and long-term resilience.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Climate adaptation and resilience framework We will establish a consistent approach for building resilience across the University’s diverse estate, helping ensure climate risks are considered in planning, investment and operational decision-making.	Adaptation planning and integration For assets and locations facing the greatest risks, we will develop targeted adaptation plans and integrate resilience actions into existing planning and investment processes.
Climate risk and vulnerability assessments We will assess critical campuses, farms and facilities to understand how climate hazards may affect operations, infrastructure and service delivery over time.	

Target 5: Achieve a minimum 5-Star Green Star rating for all qualifying new builds and major refurbishments

Target type: Coverage/completion

2028 milestone: 100% of applicable projects compliant.

The buildings we design today will operate in a different climate tomorrow.

This target focuses on ensuring our places can withstand the challenges of a changing climate. By embedding resilience into planning, design and investment decisions, we can better protect our campuses, buildings and infrastructure over the long term.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Green Star We will integrate climate resilience criteria, including leading design principles of the Green Star program, into new builds and major refurbishment projects.	Climate-informed capital planning We will embed climate risk and sustainability considerations into capital business case development and investment decision-making processes, helping ensure future projects support long-term resilience.
Resilient design standards We will embed climate adaptation and resilience considerations into the standards that guide future capital and maintenance projects.	

Adaptation and resilience continued

Target 6: Establish and test climate preparedness and support capability at all priority sites by 2032

Target type: Coverage/completion

2028 milestone: ≥40% of priority sites tested.

Even the most resilient assets can be affected by extreme weather. Preparing our people and systems is just as important as preparing our infrastructure.

This target focuses on strengthening the University’s capacity to respond to, recover from, and adapt to climate-related events. By building preparedness, capability and support networks, we can help our communities remain safe, connected and resilient during times of disruption.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Emergency preparedness planning

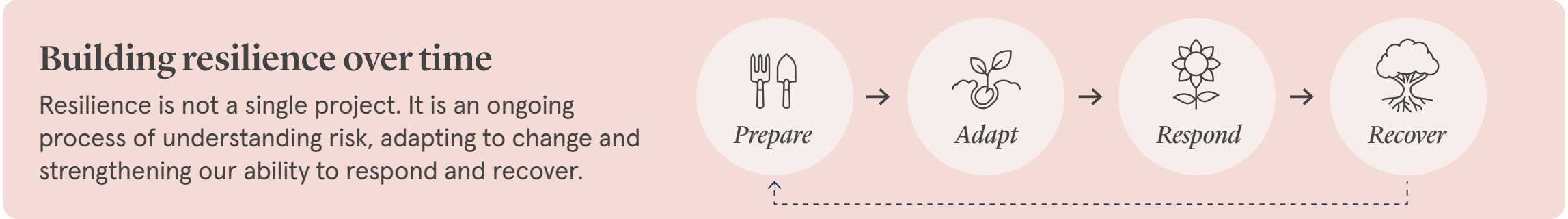
We will review climate-related risks and integrate them into emergency management and recovery processes across the University.

Climate resilience capability

We will improve awareness, preparedness and resilience skills across the University community through capability-building initiatives and engagement activities.

Resilience support hubs

We will identify facilities that can provide support and continuity during extreme weather events and periods of disruption.



Pictured: Agricultural robot, Narrabri



Nature

Nature is integral to the University’s future

Across our campuses, farms and research stations, we depend on healthy ecosystems for water, biodiversity, climate regulation and the resilience of the landscapes we steward.

These natural systems also support our teaching, research and the wellbeing of our communities. In 2025, the University became the first University in the world to publish a Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)-aligned nature-related financial disclosure. Our assessment identified a consistent pattern across our estate: the most significant nature-related risks are linked to water availability, ecosystem condition and biodiversity loss.

These challenges also present some of our greatest opportunities to create positive impact.

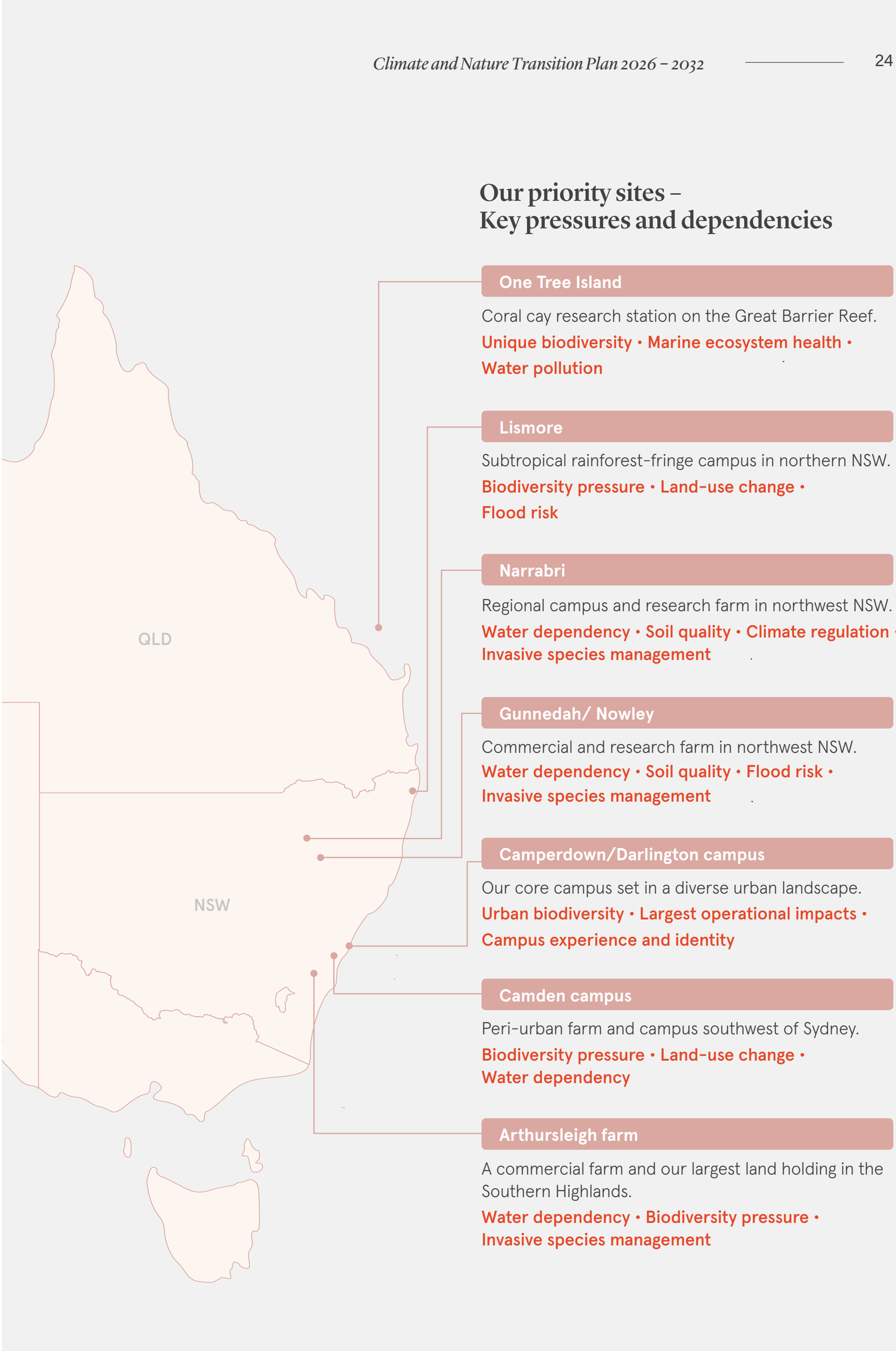
This focus area translates our nature assessment into action through three priorities: improving ecosystem and water stewardship, increasing canopy cover and biodiversity outcomes, and leveraging partnerships and co-investment to accelerate nature regeneration.



Our Impact: To contribute to a future where ecosystems and biodiversity are protected, restored and strengthened



Pictured: Plant Breeding Institute, Camden Campus



Nature continued

Target 7: Develop water stewardship and ecosystem resilience plans for all priority sites by 2032

Target type: Coverage/completion

2028 milestone: ≥40% of priority sites implemented.

Healthy ecosystems and reliable water resources are fundamental to the University’s long-term resilience. More than half of our estate is exposed to water stress, and that exposure is expected to increase as the climate changes.

This target focuses on understanding our impacts and dependencies, improving ecosystem condition and embedding nature considerations into planning and decision-making.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Water stewardship planning

We will assess priority sites based on water-related impacts, dependencies and ecosystem sensitivity, and develop tailored stewardship plans.

Nature-based resilience projects

We will deliver nature-positive projects that improve ecosystem condition and strengthen resilience across the University’s estate.

Ecosystem monitoring and reporting

We will establish biodiversity, vegetation and land condition baselines to inform priorities and track progress over time.

Target 8: Increase tree canopy cover across the University’s estate to 25% by 2032

Target type: Coverage/completion

2028 milestone: ≥22% of canopy coverage reached.

Tree canopy is one of the most visible and effective ways the University can improve biodiversity, create cooler and healthier campuses, enrich the experience of students and staff, strengthen ecosystem resilience and support carbon sequestration.

This target focuses on protecting existing canopy while identifying opportunities to expand tree cover across both our urban and rural estate.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Urban canopy expansion

We will protect existing canopy and identify opportunities to increase tree cover across urban campuses.

Landscape restoration and carbon sequestration

We will develop restoration opportunities that support biodiversity outcomes while contributing to carbon sequestration and ecosystem resilience.

Rural biodiversity and canopy mapping

We will establish baseline canopy data across rural sites and monitor changes over time to inform future action.

Nature continued

Target 9: Deliver at least five co-funded nature regeneration programs across University-managed sites by 2032

Target type: Count

2028 milestone: ≥3 programs established and delivering by 2028.

The University’s landholdings, research capability and partnerships create a unique opportunity to attract investment into nature regeneration.

By bringing together researchers, operational teams, Indigenous partners, government and external funders, we can accelerate restoration outcomes while creating opportunities for research, learning and collaboration.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Nature seed funding program

We will provide targeted seed funding to catalyse nature-positive projects and support collaboration across the University.

Co-investment partnerships and grants

We will work with government, industry, philanthropy and communities to attract investment into nature regeneration and restoration projects.



Pictured: Student at edible balcony garden workshop, Darlington Campus

Circularity

Nothing starts as waste

Every day, thousands of products, materials and resources flow through the University. From food and packaging to furniture, equipment and building materials, much of this follows a linear path: take, make and dispose.

Circularity keeps materials and resources in use for as long as possible. By avoiding waste at the source, we reduce what needs to be recovered later. The less we consume, discard and replace, the more value we retain within our system.

As one of Australia’s largest universities, the materials flowing through our operations represent a major opportunity to avoid waste, introduce reuse, recover value through recycling and composting, and demonstrate circular operations at institutional scale.

This focus area concentrates on the University’s most significant material flows, particularly procurement, buildings and refurbishments, and food and beverage operations. The actions that follow apply circular principles across these flows.



Our Impact: To create a University that values resources, uses them wisely and treads more lightly on the planet

2025 baseline

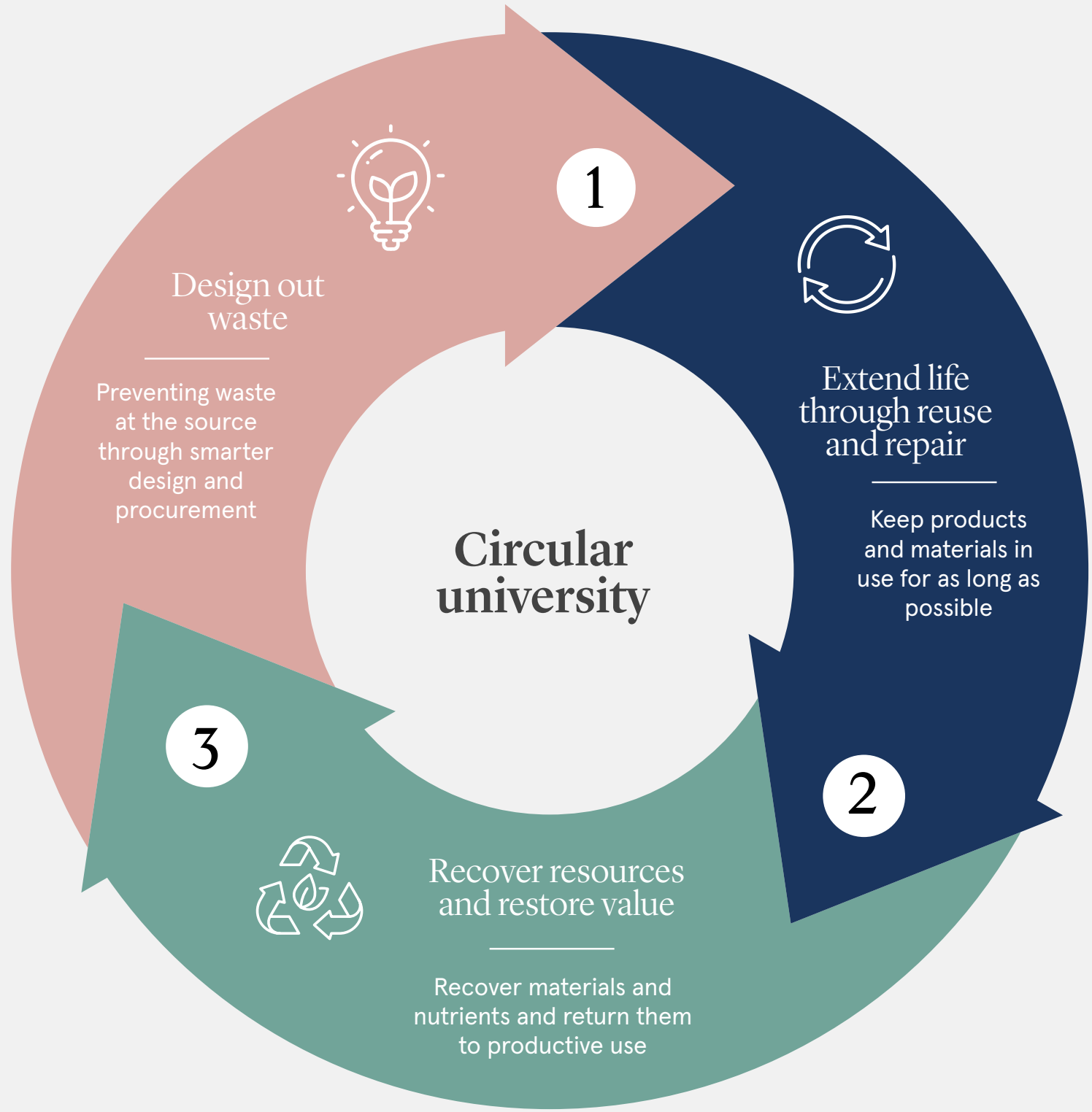
1,711t
to landfill (2025)

30%
of operational waste
currently diverted
from landfill

32kg
waste per person



Pictured: Waste Ambassadors on Eastern Avenue, Camperdown Campus



Applied across priority material flows
Circular principles are applied across the University’s most significant material flows.



Procurement
What comes into the University and is embedded in our contracts.



Food and beverage
From low-waste operations to organics recovery.



Building and facilities
From waste-minimised design to reuse and material recovery.

Circularity continued

Target 10: Reduce total waste generated per person by 10% by 2032

Target type: Intensity reduction

2028 milestone: ≥3% reduction in waste per person from baseline.

The University will reduce waste at source by embedding circular principles into procurement, contracts and operations across its estate. This includes improving how we purchase, use and recover materials, with a focus on high-impact streams such as food and retail operations, single-use items and the built environment.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Circular procurement standards

We will introduce circularity requirements into procurement guidelines and supplier contracts for priority product categories.

Single-use elimination program

We will progressively replace single-use items with reusable or lower-waste alternatives across operational activities.

Low-waste food and beverage operations

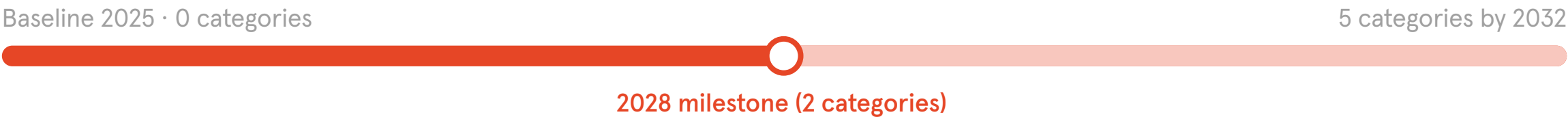
We will reduce waste through initiatives such as food donation pathways, packaging reduction and improved operational practices.

Target 11: Implement reuse systems in five priority categories by 2032

Target type: Count

2028 milestone: Reuse systems operational across ≥2 priority categories.

We will increase the reuse of materials and equipment across the University by establishing systems that extend product life and avoid single-use.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Asset reuse and repair platform

We will establish systems that enable sharing, repair and redistribution of surplus materials and equipment across the University.

Furniture reuse program

We will create pathways that maximise furniture reuse and redistribution before disposal.

Reusable food service systems

We will transition retail food and beverage operations towards reusable service models as the default option across campuses.

Circularity continued

Target 12: Divert at least 70% of total waste from landfill by 2032

Target type: Intensity reduction

2028 milestone: New campus waste contract implemented for Camperdown/Darlington and Camden campuses.

By embedding circularity principles into our operations, we will increase landfill diversion through improved recovery systems, stronger service contracts and expanded recycling pathways across all campuses.



TRANSITION LEVERS

Recovery-focused service contracts

We will design waste contracts that prioritise resource recovery outcomes, improve reporting and expand recovery pathways.

Standardised recovery systems

We will improve consistency and accessibility of recycling infrastructure and recovery systems across the estate.

Organics recovery expansion

We will expand food and organic waste collection and recovery programs across University campuses.

Pictured: Food organics waste stream, Camperdown Campus



How we plan to do it

Enabling the transition

Enabling the transition	31
Governance and accountability	33
Glossary	35
References and further information	36

Pictured: Jacaranda, Physics Rd, Camperdown Campus



Delivering this Transition Plan

Bringing together the human, physical and economic resources to operationalise our vision

Achieving the University’s climate and nature ambitions will require sustained investment in people, systems, partnerships and operational initiatives over time.



The Climate and Nature Transition Plan has been developed using an indicative implementation investment model of approximately \$41 million between 2026 and 2032. This modelling was used to inform planning assumptions and identify potential delivery pathways to support the Plan’s public targets and implementation pathways. It does not represent an approved funding commitment beyond currently endorsed investment periods.

The University has approved funding for the first implementation phase (2026–2028). Funding requirements for subsequent phases (2029–2032) will be considered through future governance, planning and budget processes, informed by progress against targets, emerging risks and opportunities, evolving regulatory requirements, and institutional priorities.

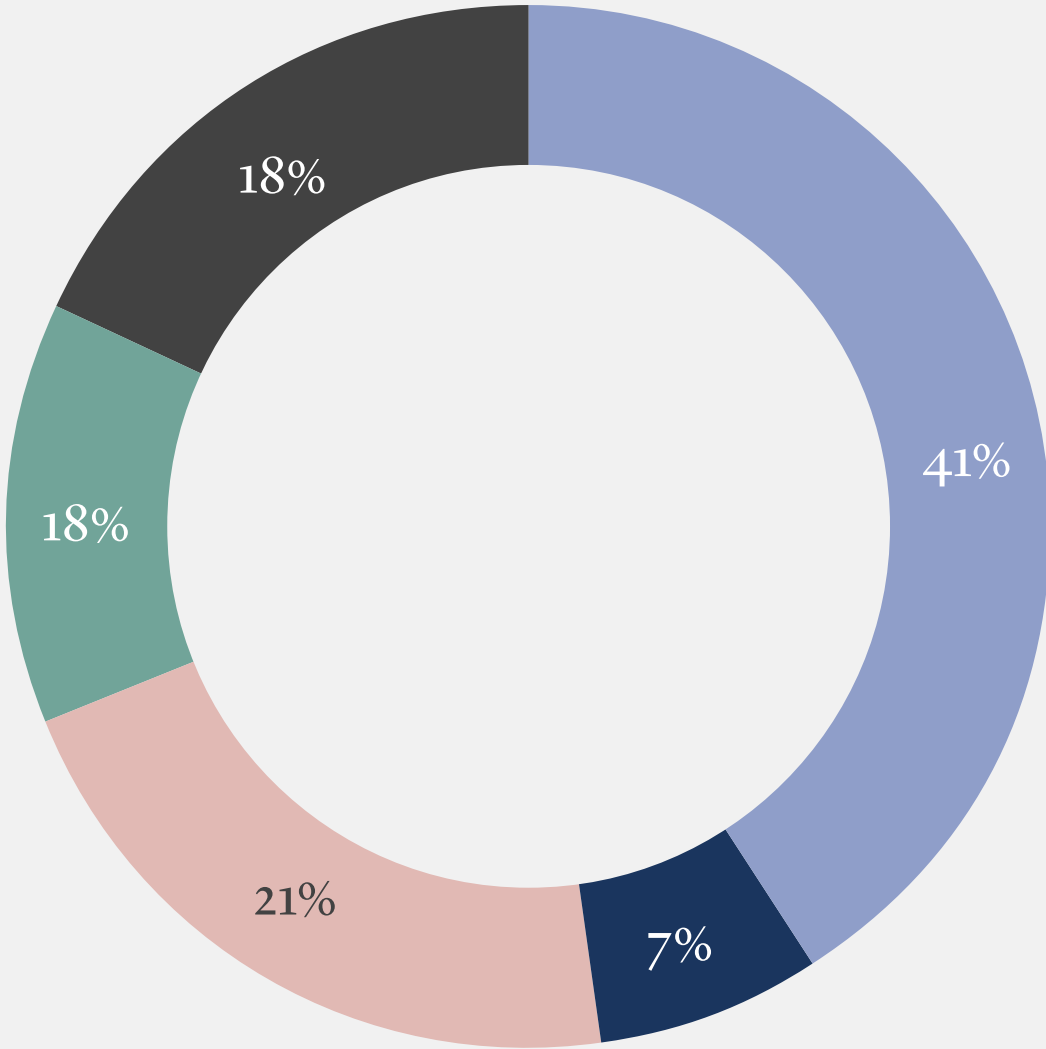
Pictured: Staff and students at low waste cooking demonstration, Darlington Campus

This phased funding approach supports adaptive implementation while maintaining accountability for delivery. Progress, funding requirements and target trajectories will be reviewed through established governance processes and disclosed through annual climate- and nature-related reporting.

Program investment 2026-32

Proportional shares shown

- Climate mitigation
- Adaptation and resilience
- Nature
- Circularity
- Enabling functions



Social infrastructure

Alongside investment in physical infrastructure, systems and operations, the University will invest in the social infrastructure that enables transition.

Our community of more than 80,000 staff and students is central to the transition. While the Transition Plan sets direction, change is enabled through everyday decisions, practices and leadership. It is shaped by the behaviours, priorities and influence of individuals within their teams, disciplines and communities.

Extending beyond traditional engagement activities, our social infrastructure approach focuses on building the capabilities, behaviours and connections that help climate and nature action spread, endure and scale across the University.

This approach is guided by three outcomes:

Climate and nature action embedded in systems and culture

Climate and nature action will become embedded in how the University works. Through local implementation, behaviour change and peer-led initiatives, staff and students will be supported to turn ideas into action. Climate and nature considerations will be actively integrated into everyday processes, decisions and ways of working. This will reduce barriers and support climate and nature-positive planning and behaviours as standard practice.

Informed and empowered people

Delivering the transition requires a workforce and student community equipped with the right skills, knowledge and confidence. Through engagement, storytelling and capability building, staff and students will build confidence to act in their contexts and apply sustainability in practice.

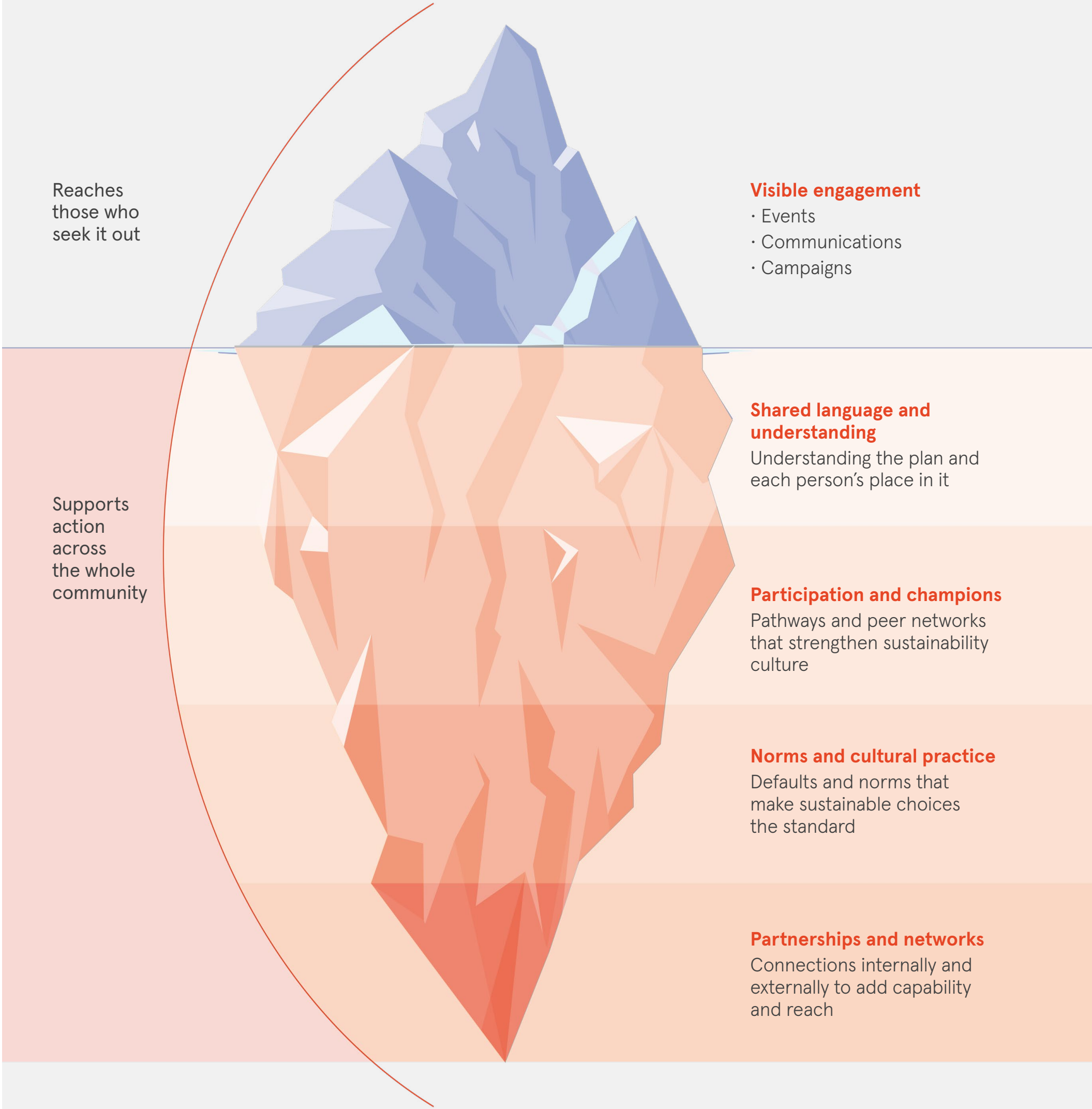
Connected communities and partnerships

Strong relationships across and beyond the University are critical to success. We will build and strengthen networks, partnerships and collaborative initiatives that connect staff, students, researchers, industry, government, Indigenous partners and communities. These connections will enable shared action on climate and nature outcomes, extend impact beyond campuses and support strengthened collective agency for system-wide change.



Pictured: Cyclists on Eastern Avenue, Camperdown Campus

Social infrastructure



Governance and accountability

Making the transition a part of University governance responsibilities and accountability frameworks

Delivering this plan requires clear accountability, oversight and shared ownership across the University.

All targets are jointly owned by the Vice-President Operations and the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, with accountability for delivery shared across the organisation. Every transition lever has a designated delivery partner within the portfolio, faculty or institute best placed to deliver it. Localised risks and opportunities will be identified and addressed through local implementation.

Rather than creating new governance structures, implementation will be embedded within existing University governance processes, creating clear reporting lines from delivery teams through to the University Executive and Senate. Governance of the Plan is supported through three formal decision-making tiers: the Sustainability Program Control Board, University Executive governance forums and Senate governance forums. This approach ensures climate and nature considerations are integrated into University-level decision-making while supporting transparency, external reporting and assurance requirements.

- **Tier 1 program oversight:** The Sustainability Program Control Board (SPCB) is the primary delivery and coordination forum for the plan. Meeting quarterly,

the SPCB oversees implementation progress, performance against targets, risk management and delivery of the plan's work program. Four cross-functional working groups support implementation across the focus areas.

- **Tier 2 executive oversight:** The University Executive Operations Committee (UE OC) provides six-monthly oversight of implementation and acts as the primary executive governance forum for the plan. Where required, matters may be escalated to other University Executive committees or the University Executive for decision and direction.
- **Tier 3 Senate:** The Senate Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee (SEN ARCC) and Senate Finance Committee (SEN FC) receive annual reporting on implementation progress, climate-related risks, financial impacts and disclosure obligations, prior to reporting to Senate.

Together, these governance arrangements provide clear accountability for delivery and support oversight of climate, nature and resilience considerations across the University's operations.

Reporting and assurance

As a NSW public sector entity, the University is subject to mandatory climate-related financial disclosure requirements under [NSW Treasury's TPG24-33 framework](#). Climate-related disclosures are now a formal component of annual reporting and must be prepared within the same reporting and audit timeframes as other annual reporting information.

The University has been an early adopter of both climate-related and nature-related disclosures, including voluntarily obtaining independent limited assurance over its Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions inventory. From 2026, the University's climate-related financial disclosures will also be subject to limited assurance by the NSW Audit Office as part of the NSW Government's phased implementation of mandatory climate-related reporting.

The initial assurance program includes governance disclosures, climate-related risks and opportunities, and Scope 1 and Scope 2 greenhouse gas emissions.

Pictured: Law Lawns, Camperdown Campus



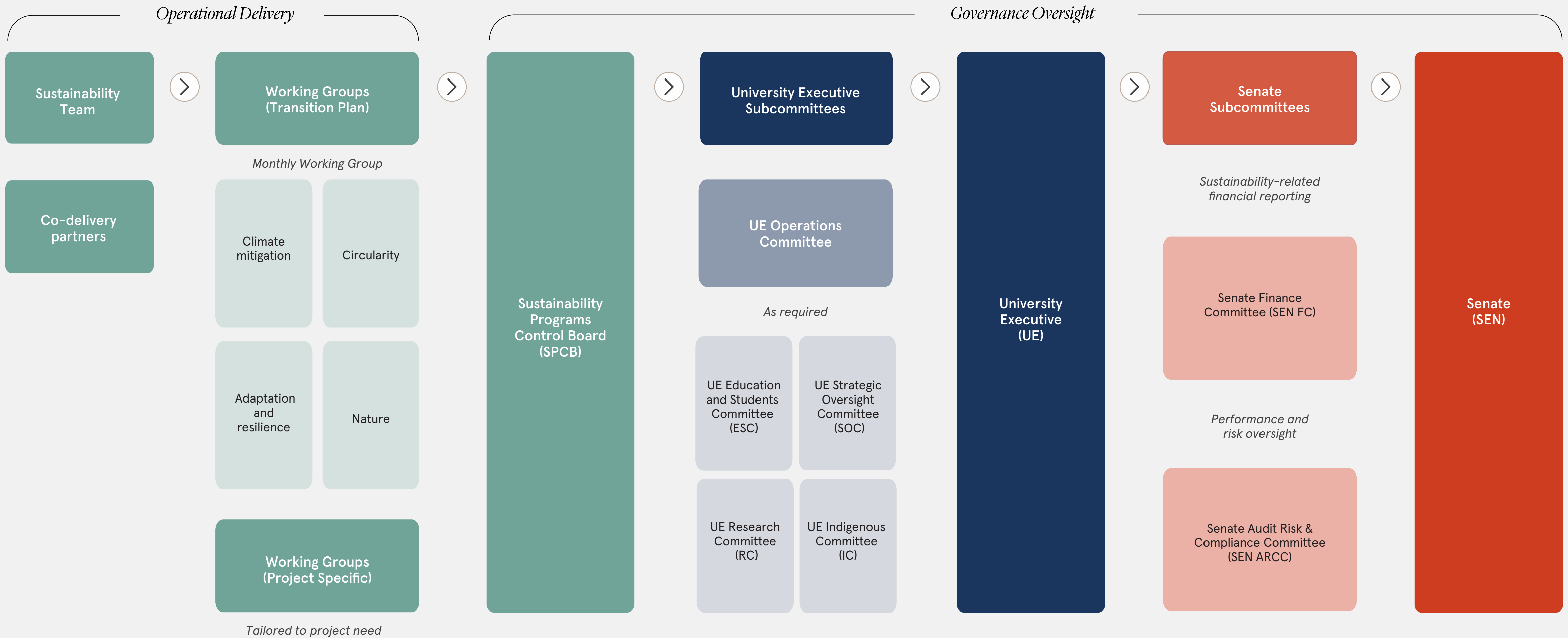
The governance arrangements established through this plan support these requirements by providing clear accountability, defined ownership of targets and metrics, and structured reporting pathways from delivery teams through to the University Executive and Senate. These arrangements are supported by the University's Environmental Management System (EMS) and broader risk management framework, helping ensure climate and nature-related information is robust, traceable and capable of external assurance.

Progress against the plan's targets will be monitored and reported through the University's annual reporting and disclosure processes, supporting transparency, accountability and continuous improvement over time.

Plan review

This plan will be reviewed every three years or on material change to the University's operations, emissions profile or regulatory context. The first formal review is planned for 2029.

Governance Structure



Glossary

TERM	DEFINITION
Adaptation	Actions taken to prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change, reducing harm and improving resilience.
Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU)	A tradable carbon credit issued by the Australian Government representing one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO ₂ -e) avoided, reduced or removed from the atmosphere.
Baseline	The reference point used to measure change and track progress towards a target. Baselines may represent a specific year, dataset or environmental condition.
Biodiversity	The variety of living organisms, including plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms, and the ecosystems they form.
Canopy Cover	The proportion of land covered by the crowns of trees when viewed from above.
Carbon Sequestration	The process of capturing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in vegetation, soils and other natural systems.
Caring for Country ⁶	An Indigenous-led, holistic approach to stewardship that recognises the interconnected relationships between people, land, water, culture and Community, and the responsibility to care for them for future generations.
Circularity	An approach that seeks to reduce waste and resource consumption by keeping materials in use for as long as possible through reuse, repair, refurbishment and recycling.
Climate Mitigation	Actions that reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions and help limit climate change.
Climate Resilience	The ability of people, assets, systems and ecosystems to prepare for, withstand, respond to and recover from climate-related impacts.
Embodied Carbon	Greenhouse gas emissions associated with the production, transport, construction, maintenance and disposal of materials and infrastructure.
Ecosystem Condition	The overall health and functioning of an ecosystem, including its biodiversity, ecological processes and resilience.

TERM	DEFINITION
Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions	Emissions that contribute to climate change, including carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide.
Green Star	Australia's leading sustainability rating system for buildings and communities, administered by the Green Building Council of Australia.
Natural Capital	The stock of natural assets, including land, water, air, biodiversity and ecosystems, that provide benefits to people and organisations.
Net Zero	A state where greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced as far as possible, with any remaining residual emissions balanced through high-integrity carbon removals or offsets. The University's Net Zero target applies to Scope 1 and Scope 2 market-based emissions.
Priority Sites	Locations identified through the University's climate and nature assessments as requiring focused stewardship, resilience and environmental action.
Re-baselining	The process of updating a baseline to incorporate improved data quality, additional sources or revised methodologies, providing a more complete basis for measuring performance.
Scope 1 Emissions	Direct greenhouse gas emissions from sources owned or controlled by the University, including natural gas, refrigerants, fleet fuels and agricultural activities.
Scope 2 Emissions	Indirect greenhouse gas emissions associated with purchased electricity consumed by the University.
Scope 3 Emissions	Indirect greenhouse gas emissions occurring throughout the University's value chain, including purchased goods and services, construction activities, investments and travel.
Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)	An international framework that helps organisations identify, assess, manage and disclose nature-related risks, opportunities, impacts and dependencies.
Water Stewardship	The responsible planning and management of water resources, considering environmental, social and operational impacts and dependencies.

⁶ This definition was developed in consultation with the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy & Services, drawing on the concepts of Country and Caring for Country articulated in the NSW Government's [Caring for Country Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2024–33](#) and [Connecting with Country Framework](#) (Government Architect NSW, 2023).

References and further information

The Climate and Nature Transition Plan is supported by a range of University strategies, disclosures, methodologies and external frameworks.

University strategies

- [Sydney in 2032](#)
- [One Sydney, Many People Strategy](#)

Reporting and disclosures

- [2025 Climate-related Financial Disclosure Report](#)
- [2025 Sustainability Annual Report, including TNFD-aligned Nature-related Financial Disclosure](#)

Supporting methodologies

- [Climate and Nature Transition Plan Basis of Preparation](#)

The Basis of Preparation provides detailed information on target boundaries, methodologies, baseline calculations, assumptions and reporting approaches used throughout this plan.

Policies and supporting documents

- [Environmental Sustainability Policy 2026](#)
- [Carbon Offset Integrity Principles](#)

External frameworks and standards

- [NSW Treasury TPG24-33 Climate-related Financial Disclosures Policy and Guidance](#)
- [IFRS Transition Plan Taskforce resources](#)
- [Greenhouse Gas Protocol](#)
- [Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures \(TNFD\) Recommendations and Guidance](#)

Pictured:
Darlington Campus





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Produced by the Sustainability team, the University of Sydney, September 2026. The University reserves the right to make alterations to any information contained within this publication without notice.

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