



UNIVERSITY OF  
**CANBERRA**

# Sustainability@UC

## Strategic Framework for Sustainability

Version 1.0, 16 May 2024



# Contents

Executive Summary	i
Why a Sustainability Framework?	1
UC's Sustainability Aspiration	2
Our Guiding Principle: Connection to Place	3
Pathways to Impact	4
Pathway 1: Environment and Water Stewardship	4
Pathway 2: Transition to a Net Zero Future	7
Pathway 3: Embrace Indigenous Knowledges	9
Pathway 4: Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion	11
Pathway 5: Nurture Sustainability Leaders	13
Translating to Action	15
Implementation Action Plan	15
Sustainability Performance Reporting	15
Governance and Oversight	15
Appendices	16



# Executive Summary

The University of Canberra's (UC's) commitment to sustainability is grounded in a desire to serve the changing needs and challenges of our regional and globally-connected communities – students, staff, Indigenous peoples and other stakeholders – and a deep connection to our place in the Canberra region, on Ngunnawal country.

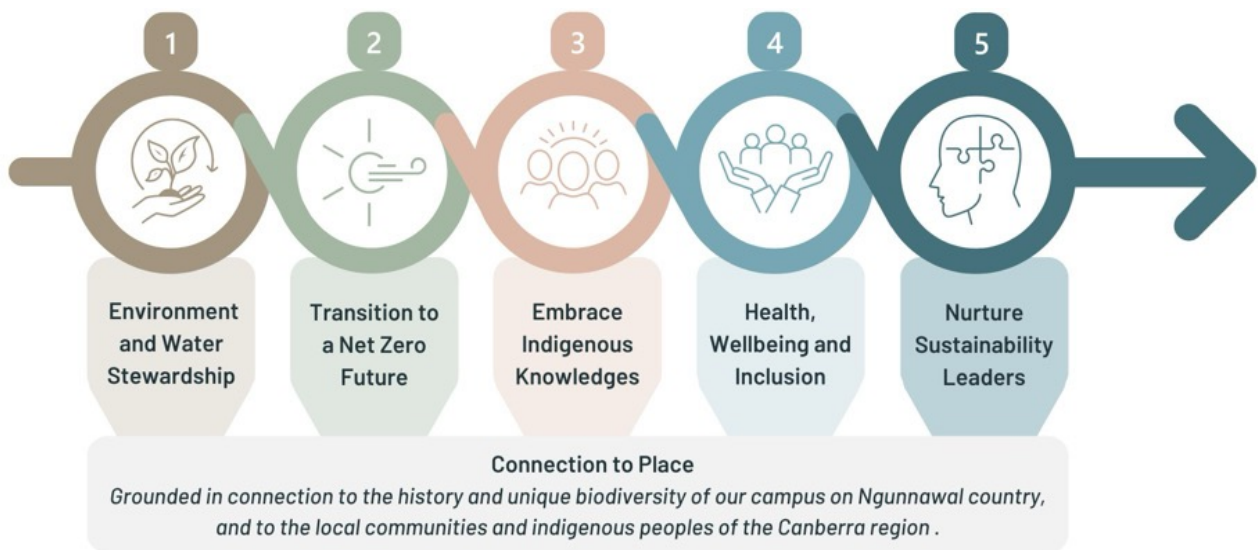
Building on UC's ambition to become a global leader in equality of opportunity, our sustainability vision is to play our part in ensuring the vitality and resilience of all people and ecosystems in the face of uncertain futures impacted by climate change, economic disruption and rising Indigenous inequality. As the university of the nation's capital, with world-class research in health,

wellbeing and environmental resilience, we are uniquely positioned to play a leading role in enabling capacity in response to key sustainability challenges through enhanced **climate resilience, community resilience** and **Indigenous empowerment**.

This Strategic Framework for Sustainability serves as a comprehensive guide to action for the university, in line with "Connected", our broader decadal strategic plan to 2032. This Framework identifies our key pathways to sustainability impact, as well as the critical objectives and targets that will provide a platform for action.

The Framework lays out five key Pathways to Impact that will unite our efforts across the university, as shown in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1: PATHWAYS TO IMPACT – UC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABILITY



Under each of these pathways, are objectives and targets that span the university's four key domains of activity: Education, Research, Operations and Community Engagement.

Our commitment to these is underscored by a set of ambitious yet realistic targets that will guide our path to impact, aligned with leading global and local frameworks and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

# Why a Sustainability Framework?

Under a global backdrop of climate change and economic disruption, as Australia continues to grapple with persistent inequality, universities can play a critical role as enablers of change, uniquely positioned to accelerate progress towards sustainability goals using a wide range of tools and strategies.

For UC, our commitment to sustainability, equality and our community are undeniable parts of our core identity and values. We are a young, vibrant and pragmatic university that embraces ideas and creative approaches. We are resourceful, not afraid to think beyond our size, while also forging paths to progress that are realistic and promote action. Our collective passion for sustainability has led us to where we are, with the organic growth of many grassroots sustainability initiatives across our Bruce campus and neighbouring communities.

Going forward, we want to be even more intentional about harnessing our collective efforts and resources for greater impact. Across UC, we have many different channels and opportunities to accelerate progress towards a more sustainable region and world. This Framework details opportunities across each of UC's four major domains of activity:

- **Education** - our curriculum and education offerings
- **Research** - our research priorities and activities
- **Operations** - the operations of UC and our campus footprint
- **Community Engagement** – our activities to engage and collaborate with the community and industry

By aligning existing cross-institutional strengths and efforts in pursuit of community interests, the University can position itself as a key sustainability partner in the region, aligning with the ACT governments sustainability agenda to make a lasting contribution from our place in the Canberra region, to the world. This Framework will also provide the platform for us to celebrate our connection to our place in Ngunnawal country, fully embracing the potential of our Indigenous communities' cultures and knowledge systems in our approach to advancing sustainable outcomes.



# UC's Sustainability Aspiration

UC's sustainability aspiration is to play our part in driving a local and global movement towards a more sustainable world. We are resourceful, not afraid to think beyond our size, while also forging paths to progress that are realistic and promote action. In doing this, we seek to mobilise the grassroots passion and leadership of UC staff, students and our broader community, to drive us forward.

We also seek to leverage UC's distinctive identity and strengths to make the best possible contribution to sustainability efforts. This includes:

- **A deep commitment to fairness and equity** – with one of the highest proportions of first-in-family students of any university in Australia, our commitment to equity is reflected in our work at every level of the institution.
- **The progressive values of Canberra and its region** – we work collaborative with the ACT Government and broader community to help

realise our community's progressive values. Among other things, this is reflected in nation-leading policies around the ACT's transition to a clean energy future.

- **World-leading expertise in key areas of sustainability research** – our researchers are world leaders in key areas of sustainability research that reflect our location and our community's priorities. This includes, but is not limited to, public health and wellbeing, water governance and biodiversity preservation.

Our aspirations embrace a broad definition of sustainability that considers environmental, economic and sociocultural aspects of sustainability, as recognised by the United Nations in the **Sustainable Development Goals**<sup>1</sup> (SDGs). We have referenced the SDGs throughout this Framework, believing that UC's work in this area must remain relevant to global efforts - as described in Figure 2 below.

FIGURE 2: THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)



UC is already well positioned to leverage the SDGs through its Framework, with the SDGs providing a key framework of reference for UC's existing **Sustainability Policy**<sup>2</sup>, **Campus Master Plan**<sup>3</sup>, **Indigenous Leadership Strategy**<sup>4</sup> and Curriculum and Research focuses.

With six years left to deliver on the SDGs, UC is well positioned to respond to the United Nations call to greater leadership through contribution to global dialogue, and to mobilisation of local action, through embedding in academia and civic partnerships.

1 [un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals](https://un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals)  
 2 [canberra.edu.au/Policies/PolicyProcedure/Index/558](https://canberra.edu.au/Policies/PolicyProcedure/Index/558)  
 3 [canberra.edu.au/campus-master-plan/plan/sustainability](https://canberra.edu.au/campus-master-plan/plan/sustainability)  
 4 [canberra.edu.au/about-uc/indigenous-leadership/indigenous-strategy](https://canberra.edu.au/about-uc/indigenous-leadership/indigenous-strategy)

# Our Guiding Principle: Connection to Place

Our commitment to sustainability is deeply rooted in our connection to our place on Ngunnawal country and the local communities and the Indigenous peoples of the Canberra region. Embracing the principle of “Galambany,” which translates to ‘Together we work to empower, connect, and share knowledge with our people, cultures, and places,’ we recognise the significance of our presence on Ngunnawal country, within the heart of the nation’s capital.

Our sustainability vision is not merely a set of goals but a reflection of our ethos, shaped by the wisdom passed down through generations of Indigenous peoples. We understand that true sustainability encompasses more than just the physical; it encompasses the head and the heart—the emotional and the spiritual—fostering holistic health and wellbeing within our community.

Guided by UC’s purpose and values, we are committed to strengthening our connection to place through tangible actions:

- **On campus:** We embrace place-making experiences that celebrate the unique biodiversity of our campus while promoting health and wellbeing. By honouring the cultural values of our landscapes, waterways, flora, and fauna, we create spaces that showcase our commitment to sustainability, reflected in our [Campus Master Plan](#)<sup>5</sup>.
- **In Canberra and its region:** We deepen our understanding of the unique needs of our ecosystems and communities. Through collaborative approaches, we strive to make a positive impact for the collective benefit of our region, recognising that sustainability is a collective endeavour.

In line with our ambition to be the most accessible university in Australia, we are committed to learning from and partnering with all of our communities, both locally and globally, and embracing multiple knowledge systems as we strive to establish a culture of sustainability accessible to all. Through individual and collective action, we aspire to be stewards of our place and of our cultures, fostering a sustainable future for generations to come.



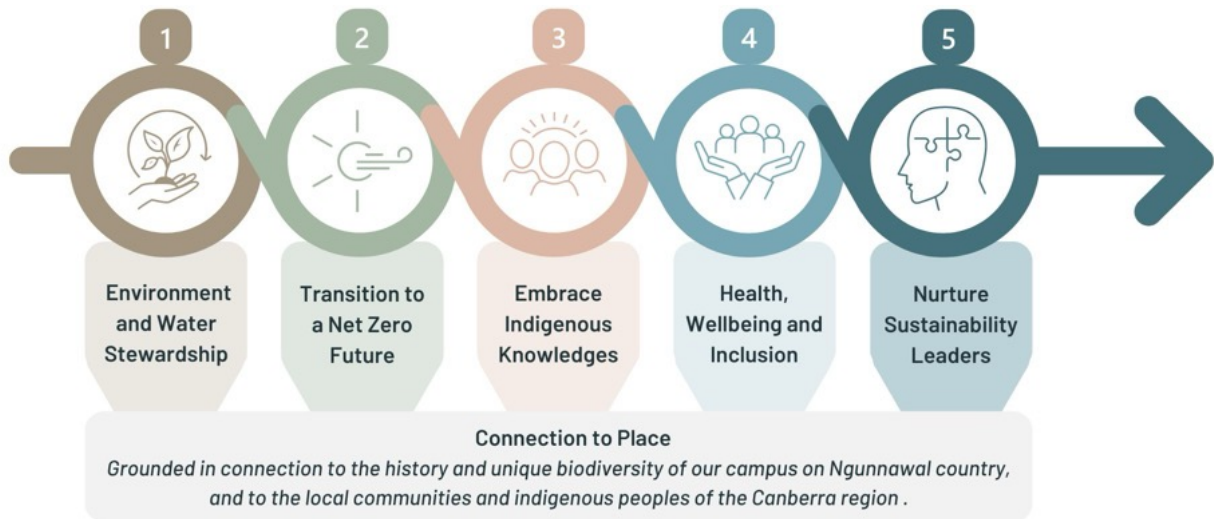
5 [canberra.edu.au/campus-master-plan](http://canberra.edu.au/campus-master-plan)

# Pathways to Impact

To deliver against our sustainability vision, UC has set out a strategic framework that identifies five major 'pathways to impact', underpinned by strong connection to place and with a focus on engendering lived

sustainability practices across our campus, and beyond. Each of these pathways to impact defines a key category of activity that will drive forward UC's sustainability vision.

FIGURE 3: PATHWAYS TO IMPACT – UC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABILITY



## Pathway 1: Environment and Water Stewardship

UC is dedicated to making best use of circular economy, biodiversity protection and water management practices, to be effective stewards of our campus environment and beyond. This includes enhancing the unique biodiversity of our campus and the surrounding natural landscapes, including the diverse water systems of the Canberra region.

By advancing regenerative practices through the application of leading research, UC seeks to not only preserve but also enrich the ecological balance of our surroundings. Through collaboration with Indigenous knowledge holders and academic experts, we aim to identify and protect significant ecosystems across our campus and its environs, fostering continuous habitat connections from Black Mountain, Gossan Hills through to Lake Ginninderra.

## Advancing SDGs



## Objectives

- 1. Achieve best practices in circular resource management:** Partner with on-campus retailers, suppliers, and waste management contractors to expand campus-wide valuable material collection and processing capability, and reduce use of consumables through reduction and reuse initiatives and education programs.
- 2. Enhance habitat connectivity:** Identify significant ecosystems across the campus and surrounding areas, focusing on creating continuous habitat connections in collaboration with academics and Indigenous knowledge holders.
- 3. Document and showcase ecological research:** Showcase UC's world-leading ecological research and its impact across the region through the advancement of key institutes such as the Centre for Applied Water Science to serve as hubs of leading thinking and practice in sustainability.
- 4. Water management and development controls:** Develop a comprehensive campus water management plan and integrate water-sensitive urban design principles into the Master Plan to enhance ecological water flows and capture water for reuse.
- 5. Cultivate campus-based regenerative ecosystems for applied learning:** Harness UC's unique campus biodiversity to create a living example of leading regenerative land management practice, with a focus on enabling adaptation to a changing climate using regenerative approaches in urban settings, engaging staff and students in applied learning experiences through coursework and research.

## Targets

- Incorporate habitat connectivity and regeneration plans into the UC Master Plan by 2025, with measurable progress towards continuous habitat connections by 2027.
- Implement campus water management plan and development controls under the Master Plan by 2025, achieving a measurable increase in ecological water flows and water capture by 2030.
- Introduce a building waste recycling policy, capturing in new construction contracts for refurb and building works by 2026.
- Implement valuable material recovery programs and practices across campus including cardboard, paper, metal, plastic and glass containers and organics composting by 2026, with measurable reduction in waste to landfill annually thereafter.
- Reduce the use of plastic consumables in teaching, research and operations, removing the availability of non-recyclable plastics through campus outlets by 2025, and demonstrating measurable reductions in consumption across other domains by 2026.

## CASE STUDY: Murray Darling Basin

### *Building climate resilience through research excellence*

**Situation:** The Murray-Darling Basin (MDB), Australia's largest and most intricate river system, demands focused research for sustainable management. Located within the MDB, the University of Canberra (UC) has a long history of work that contributes to building a positive future for the Basin in a changing climate, through its expertise in water management, climate change resilience and adaptation, and rural and regional resilience and wellbeing.



**FIGURE 4: FUTURE-READY MDB FORUM: BEYOND 2030 STRATEGY (CSIRO RESEARCH OUTPUT IN COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA)**

Sources: University of Canberra, Centre for Applied Water Science website: [canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/caws](http://canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/caws), CSIRO project website: [research.csiro.au/mwe/future-ready-mdb-forum-beyond-2030-report-released](http://research.csiro.au/mwe/future-ready-mdb-forum-beyond-2030-report-released)

## Approach

- UC engages in collaborations with a wide range of research, government and non-government organisations who work in the MDB, including leading consortia such as the Murray Darling Basin Futures CRN and the Murray Darling River Science Consortium, to address MDB's current challenges and future sustainability.
- Leveraging specialties across faculties, UC's research tackles MDB issues comprehensively, aiding in initiatives such as the Future-Ready MDB Forum Beyond 2030 strategy, the Basin Condition Monitoring Program, and supporting conversations about adapting to climate change in the Basin.
- Focusing on method development, adaptive management, and conceptual framework advancements, the Centre for Applied Water Science (CAWS) and Centre for Environmental Governance (CEG) at UC target specific MDB issues, enhancing research quality and impact.

## Key Results

- UC researchers have generated fundamental knowledge, monitoring and detection tools, and decision support frameworks that have become central to biodiversity management in the MDB.
- The CAWS at UC has played a pivotal role in guiding the Future-Ready MDB Forum Beyond 2030 strategy. This collaboration with CSIRO has focused on future science needs in the Basin, encompassing ecology, basin planning, and Indigenous science, thus contributing significantly to regional water management policies and practices.
- The CEG at UC, together with the HRI, have supported monitoring of social and economic conditions in the Basin through multiple projects, and led work discussing how Basin communities and leaders can build resilience to a changing climate for a positive future across the Basin.

## Pathway 2: Transition to a Net Zero Future

UC is committed to taking a proactive stance in response to climate change by making a clear and timetabled commitment to achieving net zero emissions. We recognise the urgency of transitioning to a sustainable future and aligning with the ACT government's vision of an electric future by 2045.

Through transparent progress tracking and decisive action, UC intends to invest in clean, affordable energy, reduce supply chain emissions, and lead by example in net zero approaches within the community. Our buildings and infrastructure will aim to showcase green building materials and design, which are responsive to their environment, climate, surrounding landscapes and occupants. Our operation and maintenance practices will ensure buildings continue to operate at optimal performance. This commitment underscores our dedication to fostering environmental responsibility and resilience, ensuring a sustainable legacy for future generations.

### Advancing SDGs



### Objectives

#### 1. Reduce and eliminate emissions – Built Environment:

Develop and implement strategies to systematically reduce, and where feasible, eliminate emissions through scope 2 and 3 emissions from energy consumption.

**2. Increase clean, affordable energy supply:** Invest in renewable energy-sources and energy-efficient technologies to reduce energy costs, minimise market exposure and mitigate liabilities associated with ageing assets.

**3. Demonstrate an affordable transition to net zero:** Develop a comprehensive transition plan that provides an affordable and actionable path to achieving net zero emissions, ensuring accessibility for all stakeholders.

**4. Encourage uptake of low and emission-free transport options:** Promote and incentivise the adoption of reduced and zero-emission transport options across the campus community, including cycle to work and ride-sharing.

**5. Support the community and influence suppliers to transition to net zero emissions:** Promote and incentivise the adoption of reduced and zero-emission transport options and develop policies to guide sustainable investment and procurement practices.

### Targets

- Achieve 100% renewable energy electricity supply on UC-owned and controlled sites through a combination of onsite solar and grid renewables by 2026.
- Reduce campus energy intensity by 20% by 2032 (on a 2024 baseline) through energy efficiency and electrification.
- Ensure no fossil fuels in new buildings or vehicles from 2025, and no new gas assets installed from 2026.
- Introduce a sustainable travel policy for and mandatory offset scheme for business travel by 2026.
- Identify short-term opportunities to encourage low-emissions transport e.g. cycling options across campus, including improved connectivity of bus routes to main UC campus, working toward Campus Master Plan target of 30% public transport and 20% active transport use by staff and students by 2040.
- Increase the number of product, service and investment providers that have a net zero commitment and are actively transitioning to 50% by 2030.

## CASE STUDY: UC Campus Rooftop Solar Program

### *Moving toward a renewable energy future*

**Situation:** UC recognised the need to expand its on-site renewable energy generation, in compliment to the ACT Government's 100% renewable electricity program. This initiative aimed to enhance UC's sustainability efforts and further contribute to the region's renewable energy landscape.

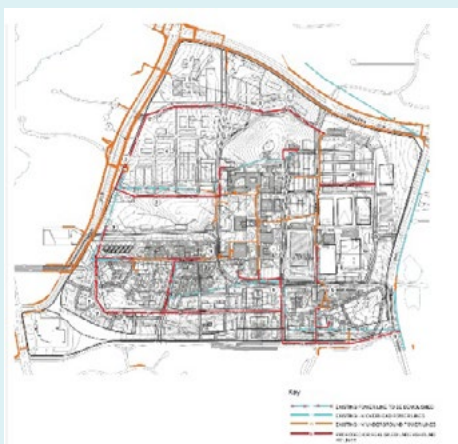


FIGURE 5: ELECTRICITY CIVIL  
INFRASTRUCTURE OUTCOME DESIGN  
(UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA 2020-2040)

Sources: University of Canberra,  
Campus 2020–2040: [canberra.edu.au/about-uc/media/media-releases/2022/november/uc-is-on-a-solar-mission-with-the-biggest-rooftop-solar-project-in-the-territory2#](https://canberra.edu.au/about-uc/media/media-releases/2022/november/uc-is-on-a-solar-mission-with-the-biggest-rooftop-solar-project-in-the-territory2#)

## Approach

- The project was designed in line with UC's commitment to the Talloires Declaration, emphasising social responsibility and environmental stewardship.
- The project involved a thorough assessment and customisation of a 792kW solar system to fit existing campus structures, maximising energy generation and efficiency.
- The design allowed for unrelated energy efficiency enhancements and future expansion for solar integration in new buildings, ensuring sustainable growth and financial viability.

## Key Results

- The UC Campus Rooftop solar program's 792kW system contributes to 7.5% of the campus's annual electricity consumption, leading to substantial energy cost savings. The program also enhances UC's sustainability effort and contribute to the region's renewable energy landscape, benefiting its research programs, partnerships, and rankings.
- The rooftop solar program is expected to yield a positive net result from years 2–20 of the life of the investment. This long-term financial viability ensures the sustainability of the project and to UC.

## Pathway 3: Embrace Indigenous Knowledges

UC aims to activate the campus as a focal point of Indigenous knowledge sharing and community. In line with our [Indigenous Leadership Strategy](#)<sup>1</sup> we seek to foster an environment where Indigenous cultures and knowledges are valued, respected, and celebrated through every aspect of university life, enabling their full potential in advancement of our sustainability practice.

We seek to draw on the rich heritage and wisdom of the Indigenous peoples in adoption of a holistic approach to sustainability that incorporates the head and the heart—the emotional and the spiritual—fostering a deeper connection to “why” that will support enduring behavioural change.

### Advancing SDGs



### Objectives

- 1. Embed across campus experience:** Increase application and visibility of Indigenous knowledge systems on campus through initiatives that showcase Indigenous history, and integrate Indigenous practices across student experience and campus operations.
- 2. Build learning and engagement:** Establish the university campus as a vibrant hub for Indigenous knowledge sharing and community engagement, activating spaces for Indigenous learning experiences, place-making initiatives, and cultural events.

### Targets

- Engage our Indigenous staff, students and communities in all key decisions made in relation to campus operations, including facilities and estate management, procurement, and land management practices.
- Establish dedicated Indigenous learning spaces equipped with resources and cultural artifacts, developing place-making initiatives that reflect Indigenous narratives across campus and in the virtual curriculum.

<sup>1</sup> [canberra.edu.au/about-uc/indigenous-leadership/indigenous-strategy](http://canberra.edu.au/about-uc/indigenous-leadership/indigenous-strategy)

## CASE STUDY: Country as teacher

### *Cultivating alternative education practices in connected to country*

**Situation:** UC has recognised the need to develop alternative educational practices that honour the Indigenous ways of being knowing and doing. This shift to embrace a more Indigenous teaching and learning approach allows a more sustainable human-nature relationship with better connection to nature and the land.



**FIGURE 6: 'TEACHING FOR COUNTRY' PROJECT PHOTO (UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, COUNTRY AS TEACHER PROGRAM)**

Sources: University of Canberra, Country as Teacher website: [canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/csc/transformational-pedagogies/country-as-teacher](https://canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/csc/transformational-pedagogies/country-as-teacher)

## Approach

- Focus on integrating local environment and Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, enabling staff and students to engage deeply with the land and its history, through direct experiences and learning projects like 'Teaching for Country'.
- Embed traditional Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing into educational practices, balancing multiple perspectives, and ensuring cultural integrity.
- Launch a targeted program for educators, centralising on Indigenous pedagogy and curriculum, demonstrated by the success of the 'Country as Teacher' graduate certificate and other key projects.

## Key Results

- A large number of Education students have completed UC's 'Country as Teacher' program, significantly advancing the university's goal to indigenise the curriculum and establish a place-based educational model. This initiative has deepened participants' connection to land and history, fostering sustainable human-nature relationships with Indigenous knowledge.
- The program's success is evident in the growing interest, with over 120 teachers volunteering for the 2023–2024 period. This substantial participation highlights the program's effectiveness in embedding cultural integrity and resonates with a growing interest in culturally integrated education throughout Australia.

## Pathway 4: Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion

The University of Canberra has a proud record of exemplary achievement in public health and wellbeing research, positioning us as one of Australia's leading universities in this area. Additionally, our commitment to combating inequality is evident, with approximately two in five of our students being first in their family to attend university.

We aim to deepen our impact in this domain and continue to enhance the health, wellbeing, and resilience of our communities. Through the advancement of research and programs, we seek to promote health, physical and mental wellbeing, and inclusion for our staff, students, and broader communities, setting examples that extend from the Canberra region to the world.

### Advancing SDGs:



### Objectives

- 1. Promote health and wellbeing outcomes in the community:** support health and wellbeing outcomes for staff, students and broader regional communities.
- 2. Enhance health and wellbeing inclusion:** increase accessibility of food welfare and education programs across campus that enhance food security and wellbeing for staff and students.

- 3. Document and showcase public health and wellbeing research:** Showcase UC's world-leading public health and wellbeing research and its impact across the region through the advancement of key institutes such as the Health Research Institute and the Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Research Network to serve as hubs of leading thinking and practice.
- 4. Strengthen mental health and wellbeing support systems:** Amplify and enhance mental health support programs, including free counselling services, to promote mental wellbeing and resilience across the university community.
- 5. Harness the potential of campus gardens for health and wellbeing:** Develop and maintain campus gardens as integral spaces for promoting physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing among staff and students.

### Targets

- Embed wellbeing and resilience through connection to nature into the Campus Master Plan by 2025, enhancing connection to natural landscapes and biodiversity across campus.
- Maintain affordability and year-round availability of food welfare programs for UC staff and students, enhancing promotion and access to programs such as the UCX food pantry and community garden.
- Develop and incorporate strategies to enhance campus accessibility for people with physical disabilities into the Campus Master Plan by 2025, prioritising investment to address issues such as parking, lift access, and wayfinding, with a focus on ensuring equitable access to campus landscapes and wellbeing gardens.

## CASE STUDY: Health Research Institute

### *Building community wellbeing and resilience*

**Situation:** The Health Research Institute (HRI) at the University of Canberra, is a leading force in public health research. With over 70% of its publications in the top 10% for Public Health and Health Services. Understanding the pressing challenges posed by natural disasters such as droughts, bushfires, and the COVID-19 pandemic, HRI recognised the critical need to deepen the understanding of regional and community wellbeing and resilience across Australia.



FIGURE 7: HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE 2023 HIGHLIGHTS (UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE 2023 HIGHLIGHTS)

Sources: University of Canberra, Health Research Institute website: [canberra.edu.au/research/centres/hri](https://canberra.edu.au/research/centres/hri)

University of Canberra, Health Research Institute research highlights 2023: [www.canberra.edu.au/content/dam/uc/documents/research/hri/HRI-highlights-2023.pdf](https://www.canberra.edu.au/content/dam/uc/documents/research/hri/HRI-highlights-2023.pdf)

## Approach

- The HRI conducted research to track and analyse the wellbeing, resilience, and liveability of different communities and demographic groups over time across Australia.
- In-depth research focused on activities that enhance community wellbeing and resilience, such as natural resource management, regenerative farming, and health and safety practices.
- The HRI developed three specific survey categories—regional wellbeing, living well in the ACT region, and carer wellbeing—to comprehensively address various aspects of community resilience.

## Key Results

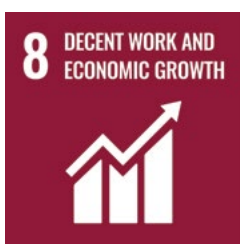
- HRI's "Living Well With Climate Change" survey, funded by the ACT Government, significantly influenced policy and community resilience. It identified vulnerable groups, informed ACT's Wellbeing Framework, and led to enhanced climate preparedness, particularly among young people, renters, and women, effectively addressing diverse climate risks.
- HRI's partnerships extend to over 100 communities, including collaborations with Aboriginal health organisations like the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation in the Northern Territory, and urban service providers such as Capital Regions Community Services in the ACT. These alliances have significantly shaped local and national health policies, enhancing wellbeing and resilience across diverse Australian communities.

## Pathway 5: Nurture Sustainability Leaders

Empowering our staff and students with the skills and knowledge to transition our economies, institutions, and built environments toward sustainable futures is essential for driving meaningful change.

UC is committed to fostering the development of future sustainability leaders by creating pathways to amplify passion and enable action. Aligned with this ambition, UC aims to increase the number of staff and student-led initiatives supporting its sustainability ambitions and enhance the transition of graduates into applied fields of sustainability.

### Advancing SDGs:



## Objectives

- 1. Continue to support and grow grassroots participation of UC students and staff in sustainability actions and initiatives:** provide a high-quality program of opportunities for UC staff and students to contribute toward our sustainability objectives.
- 2. Enhance graduates' transition into applied sustainability fields:** develop programs and pathways that enable students to gain applied sustainability experience through curriculum and use insights on graduate outcomes in applied fields of sustainability to enhance skill building and graduate pathways.
- 3. Identify and Support Emerging Sustainability Leaders:** Identify and support emerging sustainability leaders across academia, research, and operations through mentoring and professional development initiatives.

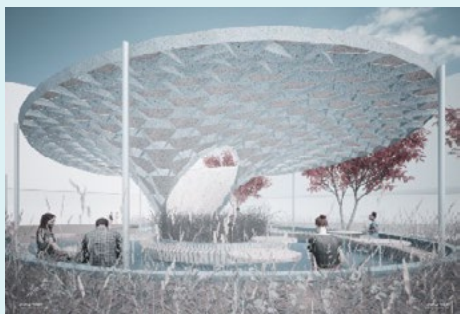
## Targets

- Maintain and grow, year-on-year, the number of staff and students who participate in sustainability activities throughout the year.
- By 2026, capture a baseline metric and develop an ongoing tracking system for how many UC graduates work in applied sustainability fields, and aim to drive year-on-year improvement in these metrics.
- By 2025, refresh UC's graduate attributes to include a more explicit focus on sustainability, incorporating sustainability principles into core units across all faculties by 2026.
- By 2025, establish a formal mentorship program for emerging sustainability leaders.
- Introduce at least one applied-sustainability WIL or capstone unit in each faculty by 2026, providing hands-on experience for students in real-world sustainability challenges.

## CASE STUDY: Upcycle Pavilion Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Project

*Empowering future impact through work integrated learning.*

**Situation:** UC recognised the disconnect between students' theoretical understanding of sustainability and its practical application. To address this, UC aimed to cultivate future sustainability leaders by offering a hands-on learning experience that bridge this gap.



**FIGURE 8: UPCYCLE PAVILION PROJECT STUDENT DESIGN (UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA, WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING, UPCYCLE PAVILION PROJECT INTERNAL FILE)**

Sources: University of Canberra, Work Integrated Learning Unit, Upcycle Pavilion Project internal file

University of Canberra, Work Integrated Learning Supervisor Guidelines: [canberra.edu.au/about-uc/for-business/employers/WIL-Supervisor-Guidelines](https://canberra.edu.au/about-uc/for-business/employers/WIL-Supervisor-Guidelines)

## Approach

- UC Established an upcycle pavilion work integrated learning (WIL) unit to offer students the opportunity to work on real-life projects and apply their sustainability knowledge.
- The program tasked students with creating a feasible pavilion design, using sustainable practices and materials, including recycled HDPE waste plastic.
- The program let students engaged in workshops and presentations to refine and gain approval for their designs from Campus Estate, integrating practical experience with academic learning.

## Key Results

- The Work Integrated Learning (WIL) unit on the Upcycle pavilion project has provided students with industry experience, allowing them to apply theories and concepts to the workplace. This has resulted in students developing essential employability skills, networks, and a deeper understanding of their professions.
- The upcycle pavilion project provided an example to other institutions of how sustainability can be successfully incorporated in work integrated learning as an approach to cultivate the future sustainability leaders by preparing students for continuous sustainability impact after they graduate.

# Translating to Action

UC's Strategic Framework for Sustainability serves as a comprehensive guide to action, setting out a clear institutional sustainability ambition with pathways to impact and initiatives to achieve our objectives. To successfully implement this plan, and make tangible progress toward our goals, UC is establishing three key enabling structures:

- Implementation action plan
- Sustainability performance reporting
- Governance and oversight

These are outlined in greater detail below.

## Implementation Action Plan

UC is developing a detailed Implementation Action Plan that sets out the key steps we need to take to achieve the objectives and targets set out in this strategy. This will enable the University to track implementation of the Strategic Framework and ensure accountability for delivery.

## Sustainability Performance Reporting

It is critical to establish transparent reporting of UC's progress towards achieving its sustainability objectives. This is proposed to occur in several ways:

- **An annual Sustainability Impact Statement** that provides transparent reporting on progress towards UC's sustainability objectives, as well as showcasing key grassroots initiatives across UC.
- **An appropriate cross-sector benchmarking mechanism** that enables UC to rigorously compare its progress to other institutions as well as help give Council and other stakeholders confidence that key sustainability compliance obligations are being met. There are several options to do this which need to align with UC's existing reporting and data collection mechanisms.

- **Strengthened reporting to Sustainability rankings bodies** – particularly reporting to Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, and QS Sustainability Rankings. UC can and should target improvement in these rankings systems.

## Governance and Oversight

Delivery of the Strategic Framework for Sustainability will be overseen by a number of key UC committees. These are:

- **UC Sustainability Steering Committee** – A management committee of senior academic and professional staff subject matter experts and student representation, which will contribute to the delivery initiatives and track implementation on a week-to-week, month-to-month basis.
- **UC Executive Team** – the University's executive team will receive a regular quarterly report on progress against delivery of the Strategic Framework.
- **UC Planning and Development Committee** – as the Council sub-Committee responsible for the University's sustainability performance, the Planning and Development Committee will also receive regular quarterly reporting on progress.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Staged Approach to Strengthening UC Sustainability Reporting

The below provides a staged approach to maturation of UC’s sustainability reporting that can be implemented over the short-medium term.

	Horizon 1: 3–6 months	Horizon 2: 6–12 months	Horizon 3: 12 months plus
<b>GOALS AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Strengthen capacity, capability and processes for sustainability reporting, and agree cross-pathway benchmarking reporting approach</b>	<b>Publish first UC Sustainability Impact Statement, implement additional rigour around rankings submissions, and roll-out new cross-sector benchmarking reporting</b>	<b>Maintain comprehensive reporting approach and continue to streamline and improve</b>
<b>KEY ACTIVITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define roles and responsibilities for sustainability reporting across UC and develop policies and procedures for data collection, analysis, and reporting.</li> <li>• Assess the need for additional reporting frameworks to enhance benchmarking and measurement of outcomes against each pathway to impact.</li> <li>• Capture all sustainability initiatives and outcomes in existing reporting practices and frameworks: TEFMA, Time Higher Education and QS Benchmarking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch an annual UC Sustainability Impact Statement, bringing enhanced transparency to UC stakeholders on progress against objectives.</li> <li>• Review and invest in technology and systems for data collection and management. Build capability in data collection methods and tools to ensure accurate and consistent reporting.</li> <li>• Identify additional data collection requirements and integrate new frameworks into reporting practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a robust and comprehensive sustainability reporting approach and cadence, with established reporting frameworks to support the measurement of outcomes across all pathways to impact.</li> <li>• Measure and publicly report on carbon emissions to track progress towards carbon targets.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2 – Implementation Action Plan Version 1.0

### Pathway 1: Water and Ecosystem Stewardship

OBJECTIVE	DETAILED INITIATIVES	DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF IMPACT (H/M/L)	LEVEL OF EFFORT/COST (H/M/L)
<b>Document and showcase ecological research</b>	Document and showcase UC's world leading ecological research and its impact across the region.	Research	L	M
<b>Enhance habitat connectivity</b>	Working with academics and Indigenous knowledge identify significant ecosystems across the campus and surrounds, with a focus on creating continuous habitat connection from Black Mountain, Gossan Hills through to Lake Ginninderra. Embed this work into the master plan and progressively plan to nurture and develop them i.e. annual planting etc.	Research, Operations, Community	M	M
<b>Water management and development controls</b>	Develop a campus water management plan and development controls under the Campus Master Plan that incorporates water-sensitive urban design principles, increasing at grade ecological water flows on and through the campus, supported by capturing water for reuse e.g. through new builds and developments.	Operations	H	H
<b>Cultivate campus-based regenerative ecosystems for applied learning</b>	Harness UC's unique campus biodiversity along with Indigenous knowledge and land management practices to create a living laboratory of a regenerative ecosystem for staff and students to engage with through coursework and research.	Education, Research, Operations, Community	M	H

**Circular resource management**

Expand and showcase the current UCX “It’s not just rubbish” waste separation pilot into an ACT centre for material reclaim with a central facility and experience for students and community to pro-actively reclaim valuable materials. Develop as an education, research resource and partnership program engaging with the community and the ACT Government as a showcase of their Circular Economy Strategy.

Education,  
Research  
Operations,  
Community

**M**

**M**

Work with waste contractors to complement the central recovery centre with standardised campus-wide valuable material resource collection that is a living model of ACT best practice i.e. cardboard, clean paper, containers deposit scheme, metal and glass connection and organic composting points at relevant buildings. Focussing on valuable material rather than landfill vs commingle segregation (which should improve as a result).

Education,  
Research  
Operations,  
Community

**M**

**M**

Working with on-campus retailers, suppliers, waste management contractors, ACT Government and Academics to develop and showcase UC’s commitment to ACT Government plastic reduction declaration and plastic-free at key retail locations e.g. provide reuse options and only use easy to segregate and recycle plastics with dedicated collection e.g. act as a feed for Faculty of Art and design Upcycle program.

Education,  
Research,  
Operations,  
Community

**M**

**M**

As part of the Digital Master Plan, introduce initiatives to reduce consumables consumption e.g. paper and print cartridges through follow-me printing, and the capture and reuse of e-materials e.g. appliance reuse program.

Operations

**L**

**M**

Introduce a building waste recycling policy specifying requirements for recycling of building materials, capturing in new construction contracts for refurb and building works.

Operations

**M**

**M**

## Pathway 2: Transition to a Net Zero Future

OBJECTIVE	DETAILED INITIATIVES	DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF IMPACT (H/M/L)	LEVEL OF EFFORT/COST (H/M/L)
<b>Increase clean, affordable energy supply</b>	Define and showcase UC's 100% renewable electricity program i.e. through UCs Solar rollout and the ACT renewable energy program all of UC's electricity comes from onsite solar and remote wind farms.	Operations, Community	L	M
	Showcase UC's clean energy and affordable transition research and education across campus, and the region.	Education, Research	L	M
	Complete and expand campus solar rollout within HV export restrictions, contribution to renewable energy and cost savings [Existing].	Operations	M	L
	Lobby TEFMA to acknowledge ACT 100% renewable energy supply in benchmarking.	Community	M	L
<b>Reduce and eliminate emissions (Existing buildings and assets)</b>	Develop a thermal efficiency and boiler electrification implementation plan and embed it into the capital plan over an agreed period informed by asset renewal and ACT Government program e.g. 2035/45	Operations	H	H
	Partner with the ACT Government to showcase the electrification transition and identify grant funding opportunities.	Operations, Community	H	H
	Initiate a domestic hot water electrification program with smart timers to support solar utilisation and campus demand management.	Operations	H	H
	Define measurement framework to benchmark and measure improvements in campus energy intensity, identifying key focus areas to achieve 2032 reduction target.	Operations	M	M

	As part of the Digital Master Plan, develop and implement a campus space utilisation and ways of working plan, to maximise efficacy and reduce emissions e.g. schedule and utilisation databased timetable optimisation, AV power save modes etc.	Operations	M	M
	As part of the Digital Master Plan, work with HVAC service providers to implement tools such as fault detection diagnostics to improve efficiency and progressively align load management in response to on-campus generation/ market signals.	Operations	M	M
<b>Reduce and eliminate emissions (New builds and assets)</b>	Establish and communicate a commitment to no-new fossil fuel assets i.e. end of life replacements, new purchases etc.	Operations	H	H
	Develop net zero ready building/asset standards for UC and on-campus developments, including no new fossil fuel assets and energy performance and control requirements e.g. All new builds should be 5–6 Green Star Rating (All electric and renewable powered).	Operations	M	H
	Implement renewal/electrification plan for all fleet vehicles at end of lease.	Operations	L	M
<b>Encourage uptake of low and emission-free transport options</b>	For business travel start offsetting emissions on a user pays basis e.g. include standard offsets as part of flight bookings.	Operations	M	M
	Increase on-campus end of trip facilities and electric vehicle charging facilities (Identify grant funding to support).	Operations	M	M
	Establish an account with an electric vehicle service provider e.g. share car/ scooter program, to allow zero emissions business trips and make vehicles available for student and community use.	Operations	L	M

	Establish a standard offset strategy for emissions that cannot be immediately eliminated e.g. air travel, including options to capture carbon through on-campus revegetation projects e.g. GreenFleet and through reducing emissions through Indigenous land management practices.	Operations	L	M
<b>Support the community and influence suppliers to transition to net zero Emissions</b>	Develop a sustainability investment policy and a transition and divestment plan.	Operations	M	M
	Undertake a review of purchased goods and services volumes and develop partnerships and procurement guidelines to reduce supply chain emissions.	Operations, Community	M	M
	Establish and communicate a baseline of supply chain (Scope 3) emissions including purchased goods and services, investments, capital goods, business travel, commuting and working/studying from home etc.	Operations	L	M

## Pathway 3: Embracing Indigenous Knowledge

OBJECTIVE	DETAILED INITIATIVES	DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF IMPACT (H/M/L)	LEVEL OF EFFORT/COST (H/M/L)
<b>Embed across Campus Experience</b>	Expand growth of Indigenous species in the UC community garden, supported by UCX-run cooking classes to educate on use.	Education, Community	L	L
	Capture and showcase the Indigenous history of the site and region virtually and through the campus i.e. walking trails, art, language.	Education, Operations, Community	L	H
	Embedded Indigenous practices and rituals into campus operations e.g. welcome to campus, edible gardens and medicines.	Education, Research, Operations, Community	L	M
<b>Build Learning and Engagement</b>	Create dedicated spaces for learning experiences and place-making based on Indigenous narratives of country [Existing].	Education, Research, Operations, Community	L	M
	Identify and showcase connection to country and place marking research and education programs e.g. urban design, Indigenous place naming, native plants and ecosystems etc.	Education, Research	L	M
	Develop curriculum-based study tours to enhance connection to Indigenous cultures and knowledges.	Education, Community	M	M
	Showcase the story of 'country as teacher' and expand/adapt to other course offerings.	Research, Community	M	M

## Pathway 4: Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion

OBJECTIVE	DETAILED INITIATIVES	DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF IMPACT (H/M/L)	LEVEL OF EFFORT/COST (H/M/L)
<b>Document and showcase public health and wellbeing research</b>	Showcase the leading health, wellbeing and resilience research and practice being developed at UC and applied across the region.	Research	L	H
	Showcase UC's health and wellbeing expertise and experience as part of UC student and staff recruitment and community engagement including a connection to Indigenous knowledge and traditional foods and native herbs.			
<b>Strengthen mental health and wellbeing support systems</b>	Strengthen awareness and access to mental health support services, including free counselling services, for staff and students.	Education, Operations, Community	M	M
<b>Harness the potential of campus gardens for wellbeing</b>	Uplift the UC Community Garden and make it a thriving space with rich biodiversity that brings in an increasing number of students, staff and outside community members to grow and harvest their food and participate in applied learning and research.	Education, Research, Operations, Community	M	M
	Create educational programs to highlight the broad benefits of food growing e.g. low-cost nutritious food, reduced emissions, mental health wellbeing, community cohesion and sharing, an ability to grow and share culturally relevant foods, increased self-sufficiency skills, and increased biodiversity.	Operations, Community	M	L

<b>Enhance health and wellbeing inclusion</b>	Develop and enhance food welfare programs including the UCX food pantry ensuring affordability and year-round access through integration with operational practices and supplementation with food growing initiatives.	Operations, Community	H	H
	As part of the Campus Master Plan, improve on-campus accessibility for people with physical disabilities e.g. parking, lift access, and wayfinding, with a focus on ensuring equitable access to the campus landscapes and gardens.	Operations	H	H
<b>Promote health and wellbeing outcomes in the community</b>	Promote commitment to a tobacco-free campus and extend to include the sale and use of vaping products.	Research, Operations, Community	M	L
	Work with on-site vendors to supply and promote healthy eating options.	Community, Operations	H	L
	Embed wellbeing and resilience through connection to nature into the teaching pedagogy, to create engaging spaces and resources throughout the campus and surrounding landscapes.	Education, Operations, Community	H	M
	Integrate principles of biophilic design into the Campus Master Plan to create environments that support relaxation, stress reduction, and restoration.	Operations	H	M

## Pathway 5: Nurturing Sustainability Leaders

OBJECTIVE	DETAILED INITIATIVES	DOMAIN OF ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF IMPACT (H/M/L)	LEVEL OF EFFORT/COST (H/M/L)
<b>Continue to support and grow grassroots participation</b>	Identify and showcase existing cross-campus sustainability initiatives to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing – including UC researchers advancing Sustainability Development Goals through their research.	Education, Research, Operations	L	M
	Develop and launch an internal seed funding program to support grass-roots initiatives that align with Sustainability@UC impact pathways.	Operations	M	H
<b>Identify and Support Emerging Sustainability Leaders</b>	Embed sustainability into UC’s graduate attributes and identity, expanding to align with core principles of ESG and the SDGs.	Education	M	M
	Identify and support emerging sustainability leaders across academia, research and operations through mentoring and professional development.	Education, Research, Operations	M	M
	Creation of opportunities for higher degree by research (HDR) community to participate in sustainability professional development opportunities.	Research	M	M
	Create a sustainability digital badge for students (My eQuals)	Education	L	L

**Enhance graduates’ transition into applied sustainability fields**

Develop applied sustainability Work Integrated Learning (WIL) units / Capstone programs across all faculties, leveraging existing approaches and case studies.

Education,  
Community

**H**

**M**

Develop an approach to measure and track UC alumni working in applied sustainability fields and use these insights to enhance skill-building and graduate pathways.

Education,  
Community

**M**

**L**

Create opportunities for foundational sustainability education for all undergraduate degree students.

Education

**H**

**M**

Develop a transdisciplinary sustainability course for postgraduates

Education

**M**

**M**



UNIVERSITY OF  
**CANBERRA**