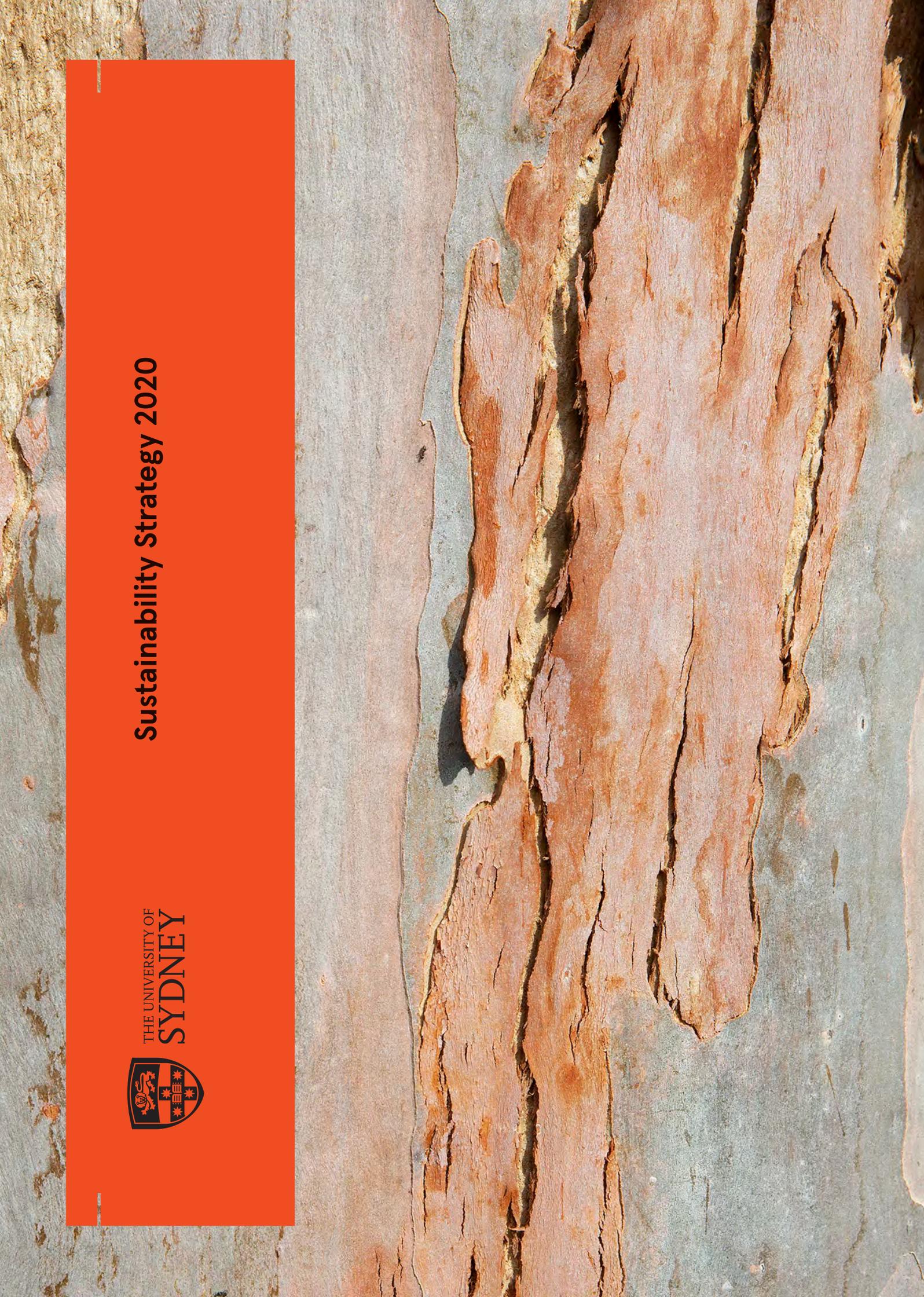


Sustainability Strategy 2020



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

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

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 applying profound understanding of sustainability for many tens of thousands of years.

Cover: Close up of a Sydney Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus saligna*) on Cadigal Green, Darlington Campus located at -33.889862, 151.192348.
Inside front cover: Kangaroo paws (*Anigozanthus flavidus*) in front of artwork on the Carslaw Building on Camperdown Campus by Dale Harding, descendant of the Bidjara, Ghungalu and Garingbal peoples (Spine 3, 2018, concrete, concrete oxide, hematite).

CONTENTS

1	Sustainability Strategy at a glance	4
2	Introduction	6
3	Strategic vision and pillars	10
	Foundation: Caring for Country	12
	Pillar 1: Enriching lives through research and education	14
	Pillar 2: Enabling resilient places and a responsible footprint	20
	Pillar 3: Empowering good governance and coordination	28
4	Appendices	
	Consultation and engagement overview	30
	Acknowledgements	32

Foreword from the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor

We are pleased to present the University's Sustainability Strategy 2020: a commitment to a revitalised institutional focus on sustainability that delivers solutions to the interconnected problems facing our shared future. Recent seismic events such as the Australian bushfires of 2019–20 and the COVID-19 pandemic underpin the need for comprehensive research universities to drive progress towards more sustainable outcomes.

At Sydney, we are building on strong foundations. Our multidisciplinary approach to research and education enables our staff and students to collaborate productively and successfully to develop solutions to complex issues facing Australia and the world. Our efforts have already attracted attention – we have been placed second in the university sector globally in the 2020 Times Higher Education Impact ranking based on our success in delivering the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals – but we recognise our duty to do more.

We are grateful to the hundreds of staff and students who contributed to the development of this strategy, sharing their views on how the University can be a model for sustainability best practice. As we look to the coming decade, our aspiration is to embed sustainability not only on our own campuses, but in how our research, teaching and engagement contributes to the development of a positive, vibrant and sustainable future for urban, rural and regional Australia.

Belinda Hutchinson AC (BEc '76)
Chancellor

Dr Michael Spence AC (BA '85 LLB '87)
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

Establish our campuses as **sustainability living labs**



Foreground **Indigenous knowledges and histories** in all of our sustainability work



Have no more than **10% of staff and 5% of students** travel to campus by private motor vehicle



Source **100%** of electricity from renewable sources



Become **'single-use plastic free'** campuses



Reduce potable water use by **30% per person**



Send **zero waste** to landfill



Expand our **multidisciplinary sustainability education** offerings



Foundation: Caring for Country

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

Pillar 1: Enriching lives through research and education

Strategies

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Put research excellence into practice through living labs on our campuses |
| 2 | Prioritise the development of high-quality sustainability research at the University |
| 3 | Develop global and local partnerships and practice |
| 4 | Increase our capacity for sustainability education across the University |
| 5 | Enhance the student experience of sustainability |
| 6 | Support understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of living in harmony with the environment and each other |

Pillar 2: Enabling resilient places and a responsible footprint

Strategies

- | | |
|----|---|
| 7 | Demonstrate leadership in waste reduction and management |
| 8 | Reduce our energy emissions |
| 9 | Sustainably develop and manage the built and natural environment on our campuses to support people, plants, animals and the planet |
| 10 | Require responsible procurement practices to enable ethically and sustainably sourced products at all stages of our supply chains |
| 11 | Reduce our water use |
| 12 | Provide affordable, healthy and culturally acceptable food and beverages that are accessible to all and aligned with recognised sustainable procurement practices |
| 13 | Reduce impacts associated with unsustainable travel to, from and around our campuses |
| 14 | Improve environmentally, socially and financially responsible investment practices |

Pillar 3: Empowering good governance and coordination

Strategies

- | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 15 | Establish effective governance |
| 16 | Be transparent about our progress |

INTRODUCTION

As Australia's first university, the University of Sydney has a tradition of developing leadership for good – shaping change to improve the lives of our immediate campus community and neighbours, as well as the local, national and international communities we serve. We also celebrate the increasing voice and influence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on our campuses and in our discussions about how the social and physical environment makes our University special.



Aerial view of Eastern Avenue, Camperdown Campus

As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, today's environmental and social crises highlight the need for such leadership. In 2015, world leaders agreed the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which identifies 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that define environmental, social and economic imperatives to ensure peaceful and sustainable futures for all nations. Among our most urgent challenges is climate change. The UN's Paris Agreement urges all nations to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and reach global emissions neutrality by 2050 in order to stay within a 1.5°C rise above pre-industrial levels. Together with the Paris Agreement, the SDGs are increasingly providing a common language to discuss sustainability and to frame action throughout all parts of society, including higher education.¹

As we consider our role in the next decade, comprehensive universities such as ours have a moral obligation to inform and accelerate Australia's fair and equitable contribution towards these goals. The first six months of 2020 – with the COVID-19 pandemic following the bushfires of the Australian summer – make the need for a common understanding, and action, abundantly clear. This is a responsibility we should not wear lightly: as a publicly funded institution our social license to operate is dependent on us meeting the expectations of the communities we serve; as a university that is among the world's best, we should exceed them.

We have world-leading academics who collectively enable a unique trans-disciplinary consideration of multiple aspects of sustainability, covering the human, scientific and technical dimensions of the crises we face, and the mental, physical and ecological health implications. They research and teach in an institution where our largest campus lies within the heart of Australia's biggest city, yet our work touches the ground in many other places – from a marine research station on the Great Barrier Reef to health education and research facilities in remote New South Wales, to student journeys with remote Indigenous communities in the Torres Strait Islands and across the nation.

During the extensive internal consultation that informed the development of this strategy, our staff and students consistently impressed on us that they want to see the sustainability values they have at home reflected in their place of work and study. In particular, our new intakes of undergraduate students represent 'Generation Greta' – a generation that is acutely aware that their future depends on how urgently society addresses the disconnect between the science, their expectations, and what is put into practice all around them every day. We will empower students to be active agents in their own destinies by getting in touch with their sense of belonging through acts of caring for Country, including through learning about Indigenous Australians' history of connection to Country, and understanding the value of ensuring a healthy natural environment and a fair and just society into the future.

¹ For example, Times Higher Education's University Impact Rankings assess universities against the SDGs in relation to research, outreach and stewardship. In the 2020 rankings the University of Sydney ranked second in the world, and first in Australia: <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2020/04/22/the-impact-rankings-2020.html>

This strategy aims to use all of our University's strengths to accelerate our efforts to become more sustainable, mindful both of the footprint our campuses make on the planet, and also of being creative and energising when enabling our 70,000+ students and staff to increase their positive handprint in a disrupted world.

We want this strategy to expand our collective imagination and grow opportunities to contribute to a positive, vibrant and sustainable long-term future for urban, rural and regional Australia.

Through this work we must be mindful that our campuses stand on land shaped for thousands of years by the knowledge and practice of our First Peoples' cultures and environmental practices. At the heart of our sustainability vision is the University's dedication to progress our Indigenous strategies: these offer great opportunities to enable a deeply grounded sustainability identity, operating through powerful mechanisms of recognising cultural knowledge, engaging in enquiry and mutual accountability to community and place, and growing and deepening a sense of belonging and social and emotional wellbeing. Our University's commitment to growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' voices, culture, knowledge and experience into our research, education and operations will be vital to embedding an ethos of caring for Country into everything we do for the benefit of all Australians and generations to come.



The impact of COVID-19

Engagement and consultation to inform the development of this strategy took place before the Australian bushfires of 2019–20 hit their devastating peak, followed by the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020.

The financial impact of COVID-19 on the Australian university sector means it will not be possible for the University of Sydney to invest in the immediate future in infrastructure changes as was originally envisaged when we started to develop a sustainability strategy in 2019. On the other hand, these crises underpin the need for a University-wide approach to sustainability that enables greater alignment across our research, education and operations: when the pandemic ends, we will still be faced with the climate crisis that brought us the summer bushfires, and that crisis will not be so easily overcome.

We are therefore launching this document as a statement of strategic intent. As we prepare to return to campus in the second half of 2020 and adapt to a world changed by COVID-19, the pandemic gives us the opportunity to focus first on a key platform for the success

of our sustainability ambitions: cultural and behavioural change. We can continue the campus-wide conversations on culture shift to enable sustainability, and pursue opportunities to translate our academic research into our operational practices. We can develop new approaches to and opportunities for sustainability-related education. We can work with our students and our staff to think anew about how we act on campus in terms of our approaches to waste, to travel, and to procurement. And once the financial impact of COVID-19 becomes clearer, we will return to consider how we can invest to meet our other aspirations in this strategy.

As we integrate the desire articulated across the University for a more sustainable campus with the realities of climate change, and the more recent impact of bushfires and COVID-19, many in our community see doing nothing – or going back to ‘business as usual’ – as simply not possible. Our moral imperative to enable progress towards sustainable outcomes is arguably all the more compelling.



The USYD Solidarity Tree was a way for members of the University community to show their support for those whose studies were affected by the COVID-19 travel ban in Semester One 2020. Image credit: Bachelor of Commerce graduate Martin S Phabmixay.

STRATEGIC VISION AND PILLARS

The University of Sydney will build and inspire communities to create a culture of sustainability both locally and globally.

In our responsibility to care for Country on which our campuses lie, we will enact change.

Putting our research and education into practice, we will enrich and transform lives now and for future generations.

Pillar 1

Enriching lives through research and education

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

Pillar 2

Enabling resilient places and a responsible footprint

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

Pillar 3

Empowering good governance and coordination

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

Foundation: Caring for Country

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



FOUNDATION: CARING FOR COUNTRY

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



Augustine Kang



There is no place in Australia that has not been known, nurtured and loved by Australia's First Peoples. The University of Sydney's campuses and facilities sit on the ancestral lands of the Gadigal, Gamaraygal, Dharug, Wangal, Tharawal, Deerabbin, Darkinyung, Guringgai, Gamilaraay, Barkindji, Bundjalung, Wiradjuri, Wiljali, Ngunawal, Gureng Gureng and Gagudju peoples. As we pursue this strategy, the University will continue to acknowledge these sites rich in Aboriginal histories and respect the continued storylines of a deep continual connection to Country and culture.

Caring for Country underpins this strategy, framing our intent and actions. At the heart of our sustainability vision is a strong commitment to progress the University's visionary *Wingara Mura – Bunga Barrabugu* strategy, the interim Unfinished Business action plan and the incoming *One Sydney, Many People* strategy, which will enable the University to leap forward from 2021 to 2025². Our work to become a more sustainable university must observe multiple knowledge systems – including those of our First Nations communities – to learn and understand practices that will continue to build long-term sustainability. Some examples include, stewardship of land and water, awareness of cultural heritage, policy, advocacy, and other aspects co-designed with Indigenous communities. Through this strategy, we want to enable everyone who steps on Country to appreciate the complexity of the natural environment as it shifts and emerges over time and minimises

negative human impact upon it. Further, as our staff and students come from and will return to places all over Australia and the world, we aim to role model ways of acting and caring for our environment locally as a new way of envisioning and progressing caring for the complex systems that enable life on our whole planet. In doing so, we will:

- recognise cultural identity through building cultures within our workspaces and classrooms where a First Nations voice is embedded in all our work
- pursue a process of comprehensive investigation and exploration of place and people, past, present and future to deliver outcomes that are responsive to the contemporary concerns of our diverse University community, its staff, students and visitors
- partner effectively with peoples and communities in urban, rural and regional Australia and globally in co-created activities to deliver long-term sustainable benefits to us all
- learn from and work with multiple knowledge systems and the latest research to establish a visible culture of sustainability that is accessible to all and recognises the importance of individual, collective and institutional action.



SLIC students at Lake Mungo in far-west NSW, home to the Ngyiampaa, Mutthi Mutthi and Southern Paakantyi peoples.

² <https://www.sydney.edu.au/about-us/vision-and-values/our-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-community.html>
The principles underpinning this Caring for Country foundation were developed by members of our staff and student advisory group in consultation with the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services).

PILLAR I: ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

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

Students at
Camden Campus



The University will be a place that drives social and environmental change and where sustainability is integrated into our campus life. We will achieve this by growing a strong sense of belonging and responsibility to our campuses, and implementing world-leading research and education in our everyday practice.

The University's commitment to research excellence, and embrace of multidisciplinary initiatives, has resulted in path-breaking and innovative research in sustainability. Our researchers are already world-leading – across fields from new forms of energy generation and storage, to supply chain analysis, to biodiversity, to healthy and sustainable food systems, to Indigenous world views, to environmental and climate justice, to analysing the social, emotional and mental health impacts of climate change. Many of our multidisciplinary institutes (MDIs) have a sustainability focus. For example, the Sydney Environment Institute was founded to bring together the environmental humanities and social sciences to understand and respond to environmental crises. The Charles Perkins Centre is another example: it brings together a cross-section of scholars to address the interconnectedness of our environment, food and health. We are proud to be home to a wide array of globally recognised researchers and research centres: supporting and applying superior research in sustainability-related fields is, and will remain, in the University's DNA.

The curricula of our faculties and schools already cover the broad scope of sustainability. From interrogating complex environmental challenges to identifying myriad social sustainability solutions, students can engage in all aspects of sustainability at the University of Sydney. Our ambition is to be able to claim leadership in visibly centring sustainability into all of our workings. We strive to motivate and equip every University of Sydney graduate to embrace social responsibility – thinking critically, collaborating productively, and positively influencing the world – and recognising themselves as custodians of the future. This is even more important as we tackle issues of sustainability, which require multiple modes of thinking and cooperation across a range of complex systems.

Under this strategy, we will work to bring our researchers, students and professional staff into an interface of research–education–operations that will be a unique driver and demonstration of our sustainability work and, ultimately, contribute to a positive long-term sustainable future for our nation. By putting world-leading research into practice, trialling new research within living labs, and providing new opportunities for our students inside and outside the classroom, we will place sustainability at the heart of our core activities of research and education.



To mark National Reconciliation Week 2020, our scientists, architects, alumni, and an Indigenous architectural graduate collaborated to present a vision for how we can respect land and community at our Narrabri Campus, showcasing the importance of Australian native grasses in food production.

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

To demonstrate our dedication to making tangible and visible changes on our campuses, we will systematically put into everyday practice some of our best sustainability research, allowing both for the practical application of world-leading research and strengthening education–research synergies by enabling student learning and participation.

Recognising the University’s responsibility to model good practice in our own operations, we will engage our staff and students in using our campuses throughout NSW and beyond as ‘living labs’ to create, test, evaluate, and implement new examples of sustainability research. This approach will also enhance our capacity to act as a broader agent of change through the thousands of young people who study here and who can get involved in living lab sustainability experimentation (see also strategy 5: student experience).

We aim to:

- develop new opportunities for coordination between students, academics, and operations staff to facilitate the use of our campuses as living labs, including establishing clear protocols for living lab projects and how they scale across our footprint.



The Boundary Layer Wind Tunnel at the Faculty of Engineering's Centre for Wind, Waves and Water. Available for research, teaching and consulting, the tunnel is designed to conduct experiments on dispersion in urban flows, wind loads on buildings, wind energy, fluid-structure interaction and atmospheric turbulence.

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

The University will continue to encourage research to address the complex problems of sustainability on global and local scales. These problems are notoriously interconnected, so to solve some of the most pressing sustainability challenges – raising environmental, social and health issues – researchers will need to continue to cross disciplinary and institutional boundaries on issues ranging from public health, to the preservation of Indigenous cultures, to adaptation and resilience planning, to circular economy design and technologies.

We aim to:

- directly support sustainability as one of the core foci in the research strategy of faculties and MDIs and as one of the core foci in all Research Portfolio-led funding schemes
- incorporate a sustainability focus into internal funding schemes, and supplemental support for external grant schemes
- as part of the development of the next institutional strategy, explore using the UN Sustainable Development Goals as a common language and framework to bring together research from across the University that supports sustainability, and informs the development of new external partnerships
- retain our best scholars in sustainability and recruit emerging leaders in a range of fields to build our capacity and support new and novel ways of exploring and addressing the challenges faced by humanity.

Strategy 3: Develop global and local partnerships and practice

Just as our efforts to raise the quality of sustainability-related research will require continued support for multidisciplinary initiatives within the University, so we will need to enable our researchers' participation in global sustainability research, through enabling linkages with existing University partners and new ones, facilitating access to funding and subject matter expertise at other external partners, and developing partnerships to allow scalability and application of research outcomes for the good of society.

We aim to:

- support researchers to build strong links with communities, industry, NGOs, other universities and governments to develop leading sustainability research into real-world application
- provide research support to University contributions to global efforts (e.g. UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and programs monitoring progress on the Sustainable Development Goals).

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

We know that our students want more sustainability-related content in their education, and that they want to see their own sustainability values taking life on our campuses. We should capitalise on our breadth as a comprehensive university to build on existing sustainability-related courses by developing new opportunities across our faculties and schools to provide a distinctive and holistic education for future sustainability leaders.

Through leveraging the transformation of undergraduate education under the University's 2016–20 Strategic Plan and our current focus on the postgraduate curriculum, we will encourage the development of sustainability teaching and pedagogy leadership, including the use of experiential learning activities. In doing so, we will create opportunities and support for students and staff to actively contribute to making a positive difference through our education programs. Complementing our multidisciplinary research efforts, and reflecting the complex and interconnected nature of sustainability-related problems, our students should also have increased access to study beyond their home discipline through the development of new multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary opportunities for sustainability education.

We aim to:

- embed sustainability themes and practices into curricula and learning activities across all disciplines, based on a range of cultural and social perspectives and in accordance with broader efforts to ensure a consistent and distinctive Sydney education
- integrate cross-disciplinary and multicultural 'sustainability knowledge' into our graduate attributes

- broaden the range of Industry and Community Project Units (ICPU) linked to sustainability-related problems and industries and Open Learning Environment (OLE) units of study that enable students to engage and explore sustainability themes and ideas
- in partnership with the Sydney Environment Institute and Associate Deans (Education) establish new opportunities for undergraduate students to embark on a rich sustainability education through a multidisciplinary major and minor in sustainability
- determine the viability of micro-credentialing and other specialised postgraduate and executive training in sustainability (e.g. leadership, reporting, communications)
- support innovation and excellence in sustainability education and increase opportunities to share these ideas and experiences among university staff
- draw on global best practice to develop how we reward and recognise sustainability-related teaching (exploring areas such as education fellowships and grants, awards and staff exchanges)
- enable students' ability to learn across different dimensions of sustainability through greater transparency of sustainability-related units, majors, degrees, and other opportunities
- make teaching opportunities available to Higher Degree by Research students and early-career researchers in sustainability research roles.

Strategy 5: Enhance the student experience of sustainability

Our students should be stimulated to think, reflect and learn about sustainability not only in the classroom, but every time they set foot on our campuses. A key element in successfully developing future sustainability leaders will be to effectively link formal education with broader opportunities to practise sustainability on campus. We will help to create a sense of belonging to the University by involving students directly in shaping and measuring sustainability on our campuses, including through implementation of student research via living labs (see strategy 1). Student experience can also be enhanced by the ability to participate in extra- and co-curricular activities, such as those offered by the University of Sydney Union (USU), that support their own sustainability values.

We aim to:

- develop mechanisms to support sustainability leadership for students, such as sustainability internships and placements, development of student sustainability leadership programs, and publicising student sustainability research
- work with the USU and other partners to enable a holistic campus experience of sustainability.

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

Our campuses reside on land shaped by the environmental and cultural practices of our nation's First Peoples. There is much to be learned from the deeply grounded sustainability knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We will support students and staff understanding of this knowledge through coordination with the University's existing and forthcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategies.

We aim to:

- coordinate sustainability research and education activities with the *Unfinished Business Action Plan* and the incoming *One Sydney, Many People* strategy.



PhD candidates Alon Loeffler and Savannah McGuirk work on 'Smart Soil' using biochar as part of their Climate Resilience Project for interdisciplinary unit INFC7000 Inventing the Future.

PILLAR 2: **ENABLING RESILIENT PLACES AND A RESPONSIBLE FOOTPRINT**

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



Our community of more than 70,000 staff and students is the size of the population of a small city, and our campuses spread from the metropolitan to the remote. We acknowledge our significant impact on the Country where our campuses reside, and accept the moral and social obligation to leave a responsible footprint where we tread. We will engender a culture of a positive handprint – actions that not only reduce negative impact, but are positive for the health of our environment.

As we developed this strategy, our staff and students told us they expect to see the sustainability practices they aspire to at home reflected in their place of study or work – how we manage our waste, how we reduce emissions associated with our energy use, and what goods and services we buy (and from whom). Areas such as these are often the ‘visible’ aspects of sustainability on campus, and as such are the areas where our people are most interested in understanding our progress.

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

sustainability. This includes making the campuses resilient to the impacts of climate change, and ensuring they are places for humans and ecosystems to flourish.

This work must dovetail with existing and future University programs that aim to improve the resilience and wellbeing of our people and places as we work together to create a community where all people feel a sense of belonging, are valued and safe. Caring for the environment in both positive action and in reducing negative impacts provides a powerful opportunity to bring diverse groups together. This can build social and emotional wellbeing and a sense of cohesion among students and staff through common appreciation and understanding of natural values. This includes, but is not limited to, collaboration with the University’s Indigenous Strategy and Services Portfolio, work to enhance the student experience, work under the Culture Strategy, and our implementation of the principles and requirements of the *Modern Slavery Act* through our supply chains and research endeavours.



Image credit: University of Sydney Union

Strategy 7: Demonstrate leadership in waste reduction and management

Our staff and students identified waste and our contribution to landfill as the top area where they want to see the University take action.

We will change our operations and practices to reduce, reuse and recycle organic and inorganic waste on our campuses (dovetailing with efforts under strategy 12 (food)). Recognising we share individual responsibility in enabling change, this will include developing guidelines and education appropriate to each campus, which should include open and transparent monitoring and reporting of progress towards these goals (see strategy 15 (governance)). Student projects can be built around the planning and evaluation of these activities to enhance the educational impact of these activities, as in strategy 1 (living lab).

We aim to:

- send zero waste to landfill by 2030
- achieve a 20% reduction in waste generated per person by 2030 (from 40kg/ EFSTL/FTE in 2017–18)
- recover 80% of organics waste on campus by 2025
- achieve 60% recycling by 2025
- enable 'single use plastics free' campuses by 2025
- compost 80% of food waste by 2025
- ensure 100% of food/beverage packaging offered on campus is compostable or recyclable by 2025.

Strategy 8: Reduce our energy emissions

We recognise our responsibility to reduce our emissions in accordance with global consensus among scientists aiming to limit global warming to 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius. At present, around four-fifths of our annual carbon emissions come from our everyday operations such as electricity, fleet cars and natural gas use.

We aspire to lower the University's reliance on non-renewable energy sources by reducing our imported energy provision from non-renewable sources and, drawing on our academics' expertise, expanding onsite generation and supporting the development of new technologies and ways of thinking about energy on our campuses and in our research. In addition, we aspire to decrease our electricity and gas usage by increasing the efficiency of or replacing existing building operations systems. Any such infrastructure work will need to be supported by encouraging our staff and students to use less energy through awareness-raising campaigns.

We aim to:

- achieve net zero emissions³ from Scope 1 and 2 sources by 2030
- source 100% of electricity from renewable sources by 2025
- generate 3 megawatts on-site renewable electricity by 2025.



The University of Sydney currently has rooftop solar systems installed on 20 buildings, which generates more than 1 MWh (1000 kilowatt hours) of solar energy per annum.

³ Net-zero emissions, sometimes called carbon neutrality, refers to not emitting more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than the earth's systems can naturally absorb. At the University of Sydney, our net-zero goal refers to emissions attributed to Source 1 and 2 energy use across all of our campuses by 2030 (as defined by the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007 (NGERS)). Emission totals are as per our Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association (TEFMA) and NGERS submission.

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

Our physical campuses play a critical role in our University community – combining specialist research and teaching facilities in both the built and natural environment with unique heritage architecture and beautiful grounds. However this is not the case for all parts of our campuses: there is a significant diversity in the places and spaces that the University owns and manages, with older buildings posing a particular challenge in terms of retrofitting. Our sustainability work will need to grapple with this complexity and diversity, and also draw on Indigenous knowledges in how we promote a whole-of-landscape approach to managing people, land, water and biodiversity, including native flora and fauna and their role in sustainability.

As we continue to adapt our campuses for the future, we must be mindful of a number of factors:

- the importance of building supportive, collaborative and inclusive spaces, where community and environment wellbeing is prioritised
- the importance of collaborative design and build processes, including close consultation with on-campus and external expertise and the wider community
- the need to employ innovative technologies for both built and landscape infrastructure that minimise negative impacts and increase positive environmental impacts to prepare us for the consequences of climate change
- the role of biodiversity on our campuses, not just in increasing our resilience to climate change but in advancing our commitment to learn from Indigenous knowledges in new physical infrastructure developments on our campuses.

We aim to:

- ensure a minimum 5 Star Green Star rating for all new buildings and 4 Star Green Star for major refurbishment projects in current buildings by 2025
- assess 100% of eligible buildings and core infrastructure for climate resilience by 2025, including climate resilience and sustainability standards in the University's asset management planning across all campuses
- establish a Biodiversity Management Plan and baselines to set biodiversity targets and approved indicators for all campuses and farms by 2025
- enable 30% canopy cover by 2030.



The planting of native Gadi trees on our Camperdown Campus honours the place where the University resides and the traditional landowners, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. It has also resulted in the return of native bees to the campus.

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

Our community told us they cared about having ethical and sustainable goods and services on our campuses: they want to be able to buy items on campus that align with their personal values. Due to the size and scale of our operations, the University has an opportunity to leverage our buying power to bring more ethically and sustainably sourced products at all stages of our supply chains and with on-campus vendors. Through increasing our commitment to responsible procurement through recognised sustainable procurement practices, we will also enable progress under strategies 7 (waste) and 12 (food), and support the University's responsibilities under the *Modern Slavery Act*.

We aim to:

- ensure 100% of UniBuy catalogue content sourced or negotiated after 1 January 2021 adheres to ethical buying guidelines by 2025, informed by academic expertise within the University
- by 2025 include appropriate consideration of sustainability during the sourcing process or in contract delivery for 100% of contracts with a total contract value over \$250,000 (excluding GST), where sourcing was commenced after 1 January 2021.

Strategy 11: Reduce our water use

In recent years, NSW has again been dealing with the consequences of drought, with our University feeling the impact most at our rural and remote facilities. While we have made some progress over the past decade, such as rolling out a smart irrigation system across our Camperdown/Darlington Campus, we must do more.

Under this strategy, we will raise the awareness and literacy of our community around responsible water use on all our campuses in the context of a changing climate and increased drought. Drawing on our academic expertise, we will investigate ways of using infrastructure, technology and research to make our campuses and operations more drought-resilient and less reliant on potable water use.

We aim to:

- reduce our reliance on potable water (per person) by 30% by 2030 (aligned to FTE/EFTSL).



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

There are two important elements to food sustainability on campus: ensuring what we consume is ethically and sustainably sourced and disposed of (both in terms of waste and food security), and working with partners such as the University of Sydney Union, who are responsible for the majority of on-campus outlets.

The balance between the sustainability and healthiness of food and its affordability can be challenging. Linking this strategy to our work under strategies 7 (waste) and 10 (procurement), we will bring our academic expertise together with campus partners and vendors to explore innovative ways that enable the provision of affordable, healthy and culturally acceptable food and beverages.

We aim to:

- have 100% of food and beverage items sold in University owned or leased outlets to be ethically and sustainably sourced by 2025, including promoting purchasing relationships with, and support for, local food producers, and expanding the availability of vegan and vegetarian options
- reassign 100% of safe, unsold food from non-composting and landfill sources by 2025.



The University of Sydney's Student Union, USU, already offers discounts for bringing your own mug to its campus cafes, and also offers ceramic mugs customers can borrow if they've forgotten their own cup at their Courtyard Cafe (bottom). The Courtyard Cafe also features an edible micro-greens wall by Farmwall (top). Image credits: University of Sydney Union

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

International collaboration is an essential part of academic work, with global networks critical to advancing the work and developing the career of our own academics. They also help us to attract and retain leading researchers from around the world and to enable international experiences for our students. The nature of this collaboration has for some time sat uneasily with our knowledge of the impact of international air travel on climate change.

Yet the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that significant cultural change is possible. As a consequence of this strategy, we will consult across the University community to develop recommendations around staff air travel that balance a commitment to sustainability with the nature of academic work and the conduct of University business. We will support the development of innovative ways of collaboration and knowledge-sharing that reduce the need to travel, and investigate how the University might create a 'green fund' to fund grass-roots sustainability initiatives.

More broadly, and again taking from what we have learned in response to COVID-19, we will explore normalising new approaches to how we enable students and staff to learn and work from home to suit their needs and limit emissions, without compromising the significant benefits of a campus-based university. We will also facilitate awareness of the environmental, health and wellbeing gains and access of students and staff to active commuting. Recognising the value of people-centric campuses that are easier to access, we will also investigate, resource and develop initiatives for the next iteration of our current Sustainable Transport Action and Mobility Plan 2020–25.

We aim to:

- have no more than 10% of staff and 5% of students travel to work by private motor vehicle transport by 2025
- reduce the number of kilometres flown on University business by 20% by 2025.





Property in drought-stricken Gunnedah, NSW, that was the site for a University research project into the drinking habits of koalas.

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

Through the financial investments that the University controls or significantly influences we can either help or hinder a future that is more environmentally, socially and financially sustainable.

We have already made progress: the carbon footprint of the University's share portfolio is the lowest it has been since the University launched its carbon reduction strategy nearly five years ago. But we recognise our obligation, as a research community and leading Australian institution, to do more in how we use our financial investments to create a sustainable future, balanced with our responsibilities as a capital manager.

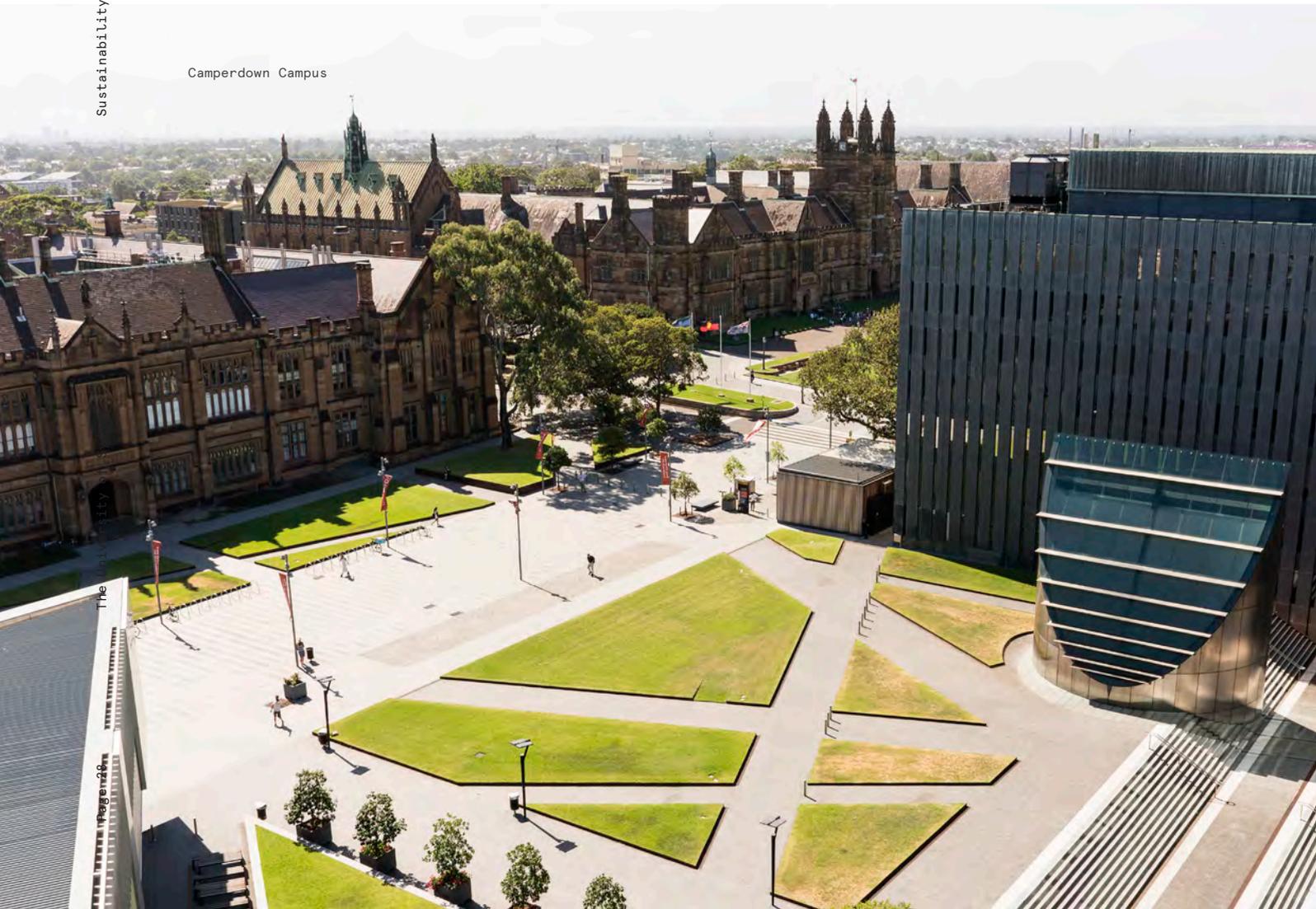
We aim to:

- review the University's existing investment portfolio principles and strategy, drawing on expertise from our academic community as well as external investment best practice, and present a recommendation to the University's Senate by 2021 on whether to supplement the existing approach with fossil fuel exclusions and/or increased impact investment.

PILLAR 3: EMPOWERING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

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

Camperdown Campus



Lessons from our peers show that institutional support for sustainability is crucial. Such support is inherent in the creation and launch of this strategy; an enduring commitment to incorporating sustainability through our research, education and operations to enact change will be critical to its success.

Strategy 15: Establish effective governance

We will establish an Office of Sustainability charged with ensuring the coordination of sustainability actions under this strategy, including integration with the University’s broader governance structures. Reporting to a member of the senior executive, it will be the central coordinating body for the broad range of sustainability research, education, engagement, and impact at the University as we pursue the aspirations we have set out in this statement of strategic intent.

An immediate focus will be to set plans for specific actions and changes that enable us to meet those aspirations. As we develop those plans, we will work closely with units across the University to clarify and strengthen all of the above strategies and aims, responding appropriately to the impact of COVID-19 on the University’s ability to invest in the short term.

We aim to:

- implement a governance and operating framework by the end of 2020 to support our strategic ambition for the University community to be more sustainable on campus through research, education and collective and individual action
- within that framework, develop methods to engage the University’s academic expertise through a

community of practice that advises on how best to pursue the targets and commitments in this strategy, and to provide opportunities for the broader University community to participate in grassroots action that contribute towards the goals of this strategy

- rescind the existing Environmental Sustainability Policy 2015 and develop a new policy to include social sustainability and reflect the vision, guiding principles and commitments of this strategy.

Strategy 16: Be transparent about our progress

Through transparent and open communication, the University will be honest about our progress and demonstrate an enduring commitment to sustainability from its leadership through staff, students, alumni, visitors and the broader community in which we operate.

We aim to:

- report annually to the University community and broader public during the life of this strategy, transparently reflecting on progress towards our sustainability targets and commitments, showcasing achievements and presenting an action plan for the following year
- sign up to the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS), used by more than 1000 tertiary institutions globally, and achieve a ‘gold’ rating by 2025.

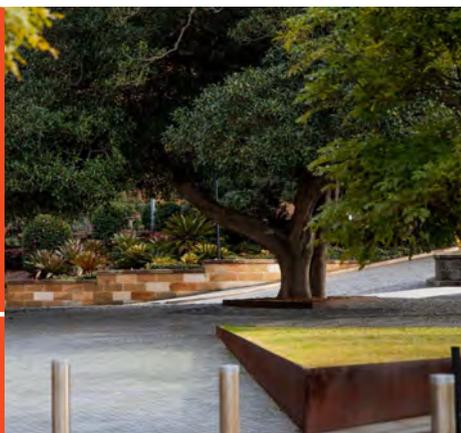
Our rankings in the THE Impact rankings 2020

1st

in Australia

2nd

globally



Consultation and engagement overview

Extensive engagement underpinned the development of this strategy, involving academics and professional staff from across the University as well as our students and alumni. This complemented other critical inputs, which included a thorough current state assessment of the University and benchmarking against domestic and international peers.

At the heart of our engagement efforts was an advisory group of approximately 30 academics, professional staff and students, chaired by Professor David Schlosberg, Director of the Sydney Environment Institute. This group, supplemented by others in domain-specific subgroups focusing on areas such as energy, waste, and food, met throughout 2019 and was tasked with the co-creation of a vision and guiding principles to underpin the development of the strategy, which were supported by UE in late 2019.

The work of the advisory group flowed into broader engagement with students and staff over two phases:

- In August, the University's leadership team, students, and academic and professional staff were asked to rank sustainability priority areas for the University, and for them as individuals. More than 1100 people responded, with the results revealing a consistent sense of sustainability priorities across leadership, students and staff, with the following focus areas being ranked as the top five: waste and recycling; energy and emissions; built environment; ethical procurement; water.
- A second phase of broad engagement took place in October and November 2019, shifting the focus from where students and staff thought the University should focus its efforts in the first instance, to surfacing ideas about how we should do this. This involved engagement through a series of virtual ideas walls, as well as 'table talk' sessions designed in conjunction with the Sydney Policy Lab and Sydney Environment Institute and attended by more than 160 staff and students, as well as alumni and local community members across multiple campuses.

More than 100 internal and external stakeholder meetings were held throughout 2019 and into early 2020, including regular progress updates to the University Executive and a briefing to Senate. They also included briefings to the heads of school, Academic Board, Research Committee, the Joint Consultative Committee, and the Colleges Consultative Committee, as well as discussions with our peer Group of Eight universities, universities in North America and Europe and the City of Sydney.

Many of these consultation activities were in-depth and occurred over a long period of time, and others were briefer. Together, the result is a strategy that is heavily shaped, and made stronger, by the involvement of our University community.



Engagement survey

More than 1100 members of the University community told us their top five priorities were:

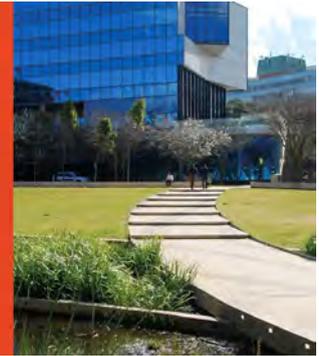
1. Waste and our contribution to landfill
2. Energy and emissions footprint
3. Physical infrastructure has minimal environmental impact
4. Responsible procurement / sustainably sourced products
5. Responsible water use

Have your say on Sustainability

Help us prioritise where we can make the biggest impact across our campuses.

Is it waste and recycling? Water reuse? Sustainably sourced products?

Tell us what you think
- <http://tiny.cc/9bqfbz>



Idea walls

241 users for virtual wall
83 unique ideas
1665 votes

What does sustainability mean to you?

Responses from engagement survey

“Being a custodian of the things that are entrusted to our care – the people around us and the environment around us.”

“Sustainability is a concept that feels a bit outdated. I’d like to see the idea of mutual flourishing which goes beyond the ‘sustaining’ of a status quo.”

“Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

Table talks

Table talk sessions with **160** students and staff were held at the following locations:

- Camperdown/ Darlington Campus
- Camden Campus
- Westmead Campus
- Camperdown residential colleges



Acknowledgements

This strategy would not be as rigorous or comprehensive as it is without the commitment, expertise and insights from a large number of academics, staff and students who were involved in our Steering Committee, Advisory Group and subgroups. Thank you.

Steering committee

Stephen Phillips, Vice-Principal (Operations) (Chair)

Wayne Andrews, Chief Financial Officer

Professor Robyn Dowling, Head of School and Dean, Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning

Professor Stephen Garton, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Dr Jeremy Hammond, Director, Strategic Ventures and Strategic Planning

Rebecca Murray, Vice-Principal (Strategy)

Greg Robinson, Chief University Infrastructure Officer

Professor David Schlosberg, Director, Sydney Environment Institute

Susan Turner, Executive Director (Acting), Central Operations Services

Advisory group members

Prof. David Schlosberg (Chair)

Olivia Arkell

Eolande Bao

A/Prof. Ruth Barcan

Elise Boccanfuso

Dr Sinead Boylan

Dr Arianna Brambilla

Ashley Brinson

Juliette Churchill

David Clarke

Alison Eslake

Dr Alastair Fraser

Dr Jacob Fry

Michael Gibson

Josie Goldman

Jacky He

Dr Lisa Heinze

Tracey Ho

Prof. Dieter Hotchuli

Elly Howse

A/Prof. Kurt Iveson

Nicole Marchhart

Mark Moeller

Advisory group members (cont.)

Katie Moore

Zoe Morrison

Dr Joy Murray

Isabelle Napier

Belinda Norman

Ben Pinney

Veena Rajan

Prof. David Raubenheimer

Vivienne Reiner

Michelle St Anne

Lucy Taylor

Alex Vaughan

A/Prof. Willem Vervoort

Ben Wilson

Subgroup members

Built Environment

Dr Arianna Brambilla

Eduardo de Oliveira Barata

A/Prof. Wendy Davis

Dr Eugenia Gasparri

Niranjika Wijesooriya Gunarathne

Sophie Lanigan

Culture and Social

Olivia Arkell

Debra Berkhout

Alistair Cowie

Tanya Doulaveras

Lisa Fennis

Rebecca Halliday

Dr Lisa Heinze

Lizette Lee

Natali Marinovski

Katie Moore

Dr Astrida Neimanis

Adrian Powell

Dr Ehssan Sakhaee

Jacqueline Vaughan

A/Prof. Ranjit Voola

Education

A/Prof. Ruth Barcan

A/Prof. Melody Ding

Prof. Manfred Lenzen

Dr Joy Murray

Dr Ehssan Sakhaee

A/Prof. Ranjit Voola

Energy and Emissions

Ashley Brinson
Dr Kapil Chauhan
David Clarke
A/Prof. Gregory Fox
Dr Alastair Fraser
Dr Jacob Fry
Dr Lisa Heinze
Nicole Marchhart
Dr Gobinath Rajarathnam
Dr Guy Roth
Lukas Roth
Alexander Vaughan

Food

Prof. Margaret Allman-Farinelli
Elise Boccanfuso
Dr Sinead Boylan
Dr Ali Bozorgi
Prof. Danielle Celermajer
Ennis Chen
Dr Joy Dai-Keller
Omar Elkhrouth
Rachel Gale
Parth Girdhar
Amanda Grech
Prof. Paul McGreevy
Isabelle Napier
Symmon Natour
Ben Pinney
Prof. David Raubenheimer
Prof. David Schlosberg
Helen Shi
Dr Helen Trevena

Goods & Services

Juliet Bennett
Dr Ali Bozorgi
Patrick Gardner
Dr Lisa Heinze
A/Prof. Kurt Iveson
Ben Pinney
Vivienne Reiner
Prof. David Schlosberg

Governance

A/Prof. Ruth Barcan
Dr Stewart Jackson
Steve Lynch
Vivienne Reiner
Prof. David Schlosberg

Investments

Prof. Abbas Al Zein
Sarah Chow
Alison Eslake
Dr Tanya Fiedler
Dr Alastair Fraser
Patrick Gardner
Josephine Goldman
Lukas Roth
Alev Saracoglu
Alexander Vaughan
Dr Nicole Wedgwood

Landscapes and Biodiversity

A/Prof. Stephen Cattle
Kathleen Coelli
A/Prof. Dieter Hochuli
James Hunt
Dr Tanya Latty
Nicole Marchhart
Mark Moeller
Dr Guy Roth
Mikaela Tielse
A/Prof. Thom van Dooren

Travel and Transport

Tony Arnold
Dr Ali Bozorgi
Prof. Stephen Greaves
Dr Patrick Harris
Nina Haysler
Tracey Ho
Prof. David Levinson
Dr Emily Moylan

Vision

Elise Boccanfuso
Dr Lisa Heinze
Katie Leach
Katie Moore
Veena Rajan
Vivienne Reiner
Alexander Vaughan

Waste & Resource Recovery

Olivia Arkell
A/Prof. Ruth Barcan
Zac Cohn
Jason Denne
Leyne Elbourne
Michael Gotsbacher
Tracey Ho
Katie Leach
Nicole Marchhart
Dr Rohan Miller
Angus Mitchell
Mark Moeller
Dr Alejandro Montoya
Cheryl Swales
Yulia Ulyannikova
Dr Nicole Wedgwood

Water

Elizabeth Duncan
A/Prof. Will Figueira
Nina Haysler
Chris Hipsley
Dr James Hitchcock
Katie Leach
Mark Moeller
Dr Astrida Neimanis
Dr Floris Van Ogtrop
Dr Richard Scalzo
A/Prof. Willem Vervoort

Special thanks to Indigenous Strategy and Services Portfolio

Prof. Lisa Jackson Pulver AM
Prof. Melissa Haswell

Contact us

Strategy Portfolio, Strategic Ventures
university.sustainability@sydney.edu.au