

Our commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

2023

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2023 Sustainability Snapshot

1 NO POVERTY



Clemente Australia

program to break the cycle of poverty

2 ZERO HUNGER



FAO Partnership

strategic agreement to address global food security

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



2nd

globally in *Times Higher-Ed Impact Rankings*

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



95%

ACU graduates employed within 6 months

5 GENDER EQUALITY



88%

employees feel work is allocated fairly regardless of gender

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Top 5

among Australian universities for the most efficient water usage per full-time student

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



>25%

of university's floor area complies with sustainable design standards

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



SAGE Athena Swan program

bronze award in 2023 for commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



BEST hub

The Blacktown Exercise Sports and Technology hub opened in 2023

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025

extensive consultation across all levels of the organisation

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



St. Teresa of Kolkata Building (STKB)

STKB Melbourne inaugurated, showcasing sustainable design excellence

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



<38%

ACU's food waste proportional to the sector average, demonstrating a lower environmental footprint

13 CLIMATE ACTION



100%

renewable electricity across all campuses

14 LIFE BELOW WATER



2023-2025 Plan

to limit the amount of plastic waste entering waterways

15 LIFE ON LAND



Bushland Management Plan

in ACU Brisbane Campus to protect and promote health native flora

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfast

fostering interfaith dialogue

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Carnegie Classification

ACU is one of two non-U.S. institutions with Carnegie Community Engagement recognition

Addressed to ‘every person living on this planet’, Pope Francis’ *Laudato si’*: On the care for our common home captures the interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental justice in building and protecting our common home. It acknowledges that our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together. The encyclical on integral human development adds to the Catholic Church’s body of teaching. Highlighting global inequality, it calls for a transformation of our societies and individual lifestyles. It is a profound call for change. The United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Both the *Laudato si’* as well as the SDGs call for a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable world. ACU has a strong commitment to sustainability. Our approach to sustainability is grounded in our Catholic mission and the University’s values, acknowledging the indivisible link between social, economic and environmental sustainability and our university’s future. We recognise our responsibility and have embraced the 17 SDGs to deliver a better and more sustainable future for our common home, aligned to the *Laudato si’* encyclical. ACU shares in the United Nation’s vision for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. As part of our commitment to sustainability, we take actions to strive towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – showcasing our commitment to environmental sustainability, social inclusion, growth and partnerships

SDG 1: No Poverty

ACU sponsors and hosts Clemente Australia, working in partnership with community, education, business and government organisations and individual volunteers.

Clemente aims to break the cycle of poverty, inequality and social injustice for people experiencing complex life challenges through access to university education. the achievement of studying humanities subjects at a university level for a person who has been living on the edge of society can be truly transformative.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

The Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU), of which ACU is a founding member, [signed an agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) to address global food and health inequalities. FAO Deputy Director-General Maria Helena Semedo and SACRU Vice President Professor Franco Anelli, Rector of the Università Cattolica, which hosts the SACRU Secretariat, signed the agreement in late 2022. It advocates for a holistic, sustainable health approach, focusing on reducing malnutrition by addressing the entire food system and achieving One Health outcomes that safeguard human, animal, plant, and ecosystem health. The agreement supports the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3, and 10 (Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-Being, and Reduced Inequalities), aligning with recent global initiatives.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being

Ranked best in Australia for research and promotion of health and wellbeing

ACU is a leading trainer of teachers, and it continues to educate among the largest number of nursing and midwifery students in Australia, making ACU a key provider of Australia’s health workforce. In 2023, this, combined with ACU’s extensive health research, elevated ACU into second place globally for its impact on good health and wellbeing in the *Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (2023)*.

Global initiatives for healthcare

ACU is advancing global healthcare through strategic collaborations. In October 2023, Itololo Hospital and Community Health Service (IHCHS), a rural Tanzanian facility located 300 km from Kilimanjaro International Airport, received its first modern anaesthetic and haematology analyser. This milestone was achieved thanks to a partnership between ACU experts and the charity A Passionist Heart Foundation (APHF), bringing essential healthcare advancements to remote communities.

Retinoblastoma, the most common childhood eye cancer, can be life-threatening if untreated. Nepal sees around 50 new cases annually, but high treatment costs often lead to advanced disease progression. Currently, only one hospital in Nepal has a specialist for this condition. In early 2023, ACU committed to a four-year sponsorship of Open Eyes Nepal, a charity offering free treatment and ocular rehabilitation. This support includes chemotherapy, eye surgeries, and custom prostheses, which typically cost \$100 USD, all provided at no charge to families in need.

SDG 4: Quality Education

Education and Employment

ACU ensures education is accessible and transformative, with 95 per cent of graduates employed within six months. ACU received five-star ratings for student engagement, skills development, and graduate salary, with more than 75 per cent of graduates satisfied with teaching quality and support.

Widening participation

ACU runs programs to increase higher education access for underrepresented students, including on-campus experiences, workshops, and its Uni Step-Up program, allowing senior students to study university units early.

Graduate attributes

ACU graduates are developed as professionals, citizens, and scholars with empathy, imagination for problem-solving, and a commitment to creating a just and sustainable world.

First Peoples

ACU supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with tailored academic, cultural, and personal resources, aiming to increase their participation and representation among students and staff.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

ACU received the Athena Swan Bronze Award in 2023, recognising its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This international accreditation helps institutions achieve systemic and cultural changes and measure progress against global standards. ACU earned the Bronze Award after identifying internal barriers to equity and creating an action plan to address them.

ACU is working to embed inclusiveness in the university's culture, improving its support for parents and carers, boosting support for career progression, extending flexible work to all staff while managing its potential impact on career opportunities, and better assisting staff who experience harassment, bullying and discrimination.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

ACU supports local and regional water authorities in their aim to improve water security. ACU does this in four ways:

1. Installing water efficient appliances such as toilets, taps and showers at all its campuses.
2. Integrating water sensitive urban design features into its campuses, to reduce the volume of damaging stormwater run-off into local drains and to remove pollutants from stormwater.
3. Installing water tanks to capture and re-use rainwater that falls on the campuses. ACU has more than 660,000 litres of water-storage capacity installed on its campuses.
4. Applying xeriscaping principles to the design of campus gardens, to minimise the amount of water required to maintain the health of the gardens.

In 2023, ACU consumed only 4.14 kilolitres of water per equivalent full-time student and staff member, ranking fifth lowest in water usage across the Australian university sector. More information is available in the ACU Water Management Plan 2023 – 2025.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

ACU recognises that its buildings are the source of most of its scope 1 and scope 2 emissions and it therefore aims to construct energy-efficient new buildings and upgrade its existing buildings to higher levels of energy efficiency.

This policy has ensured that every major building project at the university since 2011 has applied environmentally sustainable design principles, including many of the principles included in the Green Building Council of Australia's Green Star rating system.

As of 2024, a quarter of the university's floor space has been constructed or renovated in accordance with sustainable design principles.

Energy efficiency is the cornerstone of ACU's energy management. ACU has the lowest energy density of any Australian university, and the university achieves this because it closely monitors its energy consumption to identify energy wastage and opportunities to reduce energy consumption while maintaining amenity for students and staff.

The university's commitment to carbon reduction, and the energy efficient construction, renovation and operation of its buildings, is detailed in the ACU Carbon and Energy Management Plan 2023 – 2025.

The plan sets out the carbon reduction priorities, objectives and targets and the pathway to achieving those targets. The plan is reviewed annually, and a new plan is prepared every three years.

Energy use density

ACU has the highest energy efficiency of any university in Australia, according to the annual survey of the Tertiary Education Facility Management Association.

In 2024, ACU will use approximately 79,500 GJ of energy. The university's floor space is 231,093 square metres. This means that ACU's energy density is 0.34 GJ per square meter of floor space. This is energy density is approximately half the energy density of the Australian university sector.

Low carbon energy use

ACU uses 100 per cent renewable electricity at its Australian campuses. Meanwhile, in 2024 the university will use approximately 79,500 gigajoules of total energy (gas and electricity). Approximately 67,500 gigajoules of that energy will come from low-carbon sources such as solar and wind farms.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Refugee and migrant engagement

ACU's Stakeholder Engaged Scholarship Unit (SESU) collaborates with refugee and migrant communities, supporting research-driven initiatives. In October 2023, SESU partnered with community groups for an employment accelerator event, connecting 250 refugees and migrants with employers in key industries.

Modern anti-slavery training

ACU, in collaboration with the Anti-Slavery Taskforce of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, integrates modern slavery education into its Core Curriculum for undergraduates. Nearly 800 students participated in a pilot study, helping shape future course content. ACU also provides anti-slavery training for staff in procurement roles, with training extended to vendors through the Australian Catholic Anti-Slavery Network (ACAN).

Collaborate Plus business incubator

ACU Collaborate Plus fosters entrepreneurship by supporting start-ups and SMEs through collaborative spaces in Strathfield and North Sydney. The hub offers resources, business advice, and access to research and expertise to help businesses grow and innovate.

Gender Equality Diversity and Inclusion staff experience survey 2023

Around 89% of employees surveyed feel they are treated with dignity and respect by their managers, and around 88% of them feel the work is allocated fairly regardless of gender.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

World-class sports hub

In 2023, ACU opened its newest state-of-the-art health and physical activity facility, the Blacktown Exercise Sports and Technology Hub (BEST). This \$100m facility showcases the university's innovation in sports science and provides access to cutting edge research and sporting facilities for students, industry and the community of Western Sydney.

Incubator program participation

In 2023, ACU's Industry and Innovation team members progressed through the highly competitive CSIRO incubator program On Prime, developing their skills in commercialisation and revenue diversification for business and social enterprise activities for the university.

Sustainable modern infrastructure

In Melbourne ACU opened the Saint Teresa of Kolkata building, which demonstrates ACU's commitment to sustainable and innovative buildings. With 100 per cent renewable electricity sourced from the grid, solar panels capable of generating 74,000 kWh of electricity per year, a 30-kilolitre rainwater tank, over 2000 live plants, a rooftop sports court and green spaces over 13 levels, for staff and students, the welcoming building provides a nexus for community and university in a vibrant city setting.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff

ACU is working to advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' employment at ACU. To guide this work, the university in 2023 released its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Employment Plan 2023 – 2026. The plan specifies the programs and initiatives that ACU will deploy to attract and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, build its capability to support staff to succeed, and ensure ACU is a culturally safe workplace.

Supporting parents at ACU

ACU supports its staff with some of the most generous and flexible parental leave provisions of any organisation in any industry. The university offers leave provisions that support mothers and their partners, with support also for adoptive and foster parents. To complement these policy provisions, ACU has developed an information kit to help staff members, and their supervisors manage parental leave, the transition to new parental responsibilities, and the eventual return to work. Staff at ACU can also access a child-care referral service to help staff identify suitable childcare options and access a staff-led internal communications group that shares information helpful for working parents.

The Gender Equity Action Plan 2022-2025

ACU's long-standing commitment to gender equality, diversity and inclusion continues to advance through our Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Framework (GEDIF) 2021–2025. This framework informed the development of the

[Gender Equality Action Plan \(GEAP\) 2022–2025](#) and enables future initiatives such as the SAGE Athena Swan program.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

ACU contributes to the development of sustainable cities and communities in the areas of housing, transport, and sustainable buildings.

The university promotes sustainable commuting to its staff, students and visitors in several ways. This includes:

- online information about public transport and cycling routes to its campuses
- publication of campus amenity maps that shows the location of showers, lockers and bike storage
- secure bike storage on every campus
- showers, lockers and change rooms on every campus
- electric vehicle charging points at its Melbourne and North Sydney campuses
- participation in Australia's annual Ride to Work/Uni Day, every October
- bike repair kits available on every campus.

ACU's campuses also prioritise pedestrians on campus. For example, ACU's campuses cover 46 hectares, but car parking occupies just 15 per cent of that space.

Building green

ACU's buildings are vital to the university's core business of research and learning, and they are also the source of the majority of ACU's environmental impacts, from energy and water consumption to greenhouse emissions, to the consumption of materials and generation of waste in their construction and maintenance.

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For this reason, ACU is committed to the construction and renovation of its buildings to high levels of sustainability. Sustainable design features are now a normal part of new and renovated buildings at ACU.

These features include:

- high-efficiency lighting and air-conditioning
- water-conserving taps, toilets and showers
- light sensors
- furniture and flooring made from recyclable materials
- paint, finishes, furniture and flooring that emit very low or no volatile organic compounds
- wood sourced from sustainably managed plantations.

ACU also has several buildings certified under the [Green Star rating system of the Green Building Council of Australia](#). These include the St Brigid's School of Health Sciences (5-Star Green Star), the Veritas Building (5-Star Green Star), The Daniel Mannix Building (6-Star Green Star). The Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building is also designed to achieve a 5-Star Green Star rating, and is undergoing its rating assessment.

ACU Brisbane's John Paul II Building and Mercy Building, as well as ACU Melbourne's Raheen Library and ACU North Sydney's Victor Couch Library, also incorporate sustainable-design principles in their design

Affordable housing

The university's student accommodation program does many things to support vulnerable students, including:

- provision of a Rental Advisory Service that assists students to source safe and legitimate accommodation, as well as assist when students experience problems with their rented accommodation
- the provision of student accommodation at below-market rates to a large number of qualifying students
- accommodation scholarships for domestic students, international students, elite athletes and performers, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- an additional scholarship is available to help pay the rent of commencing undergraduate students who are suffering hardship or who are required to relocate to study at one of ACU's Sydney, Ballarat or Canberra campuses.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Ethical use and procurement of goods

ACU is committed to ethical consumption of goods and services. The university puts this into practice through several policies and standards, including the following:

- A commitment to [eradicating modern slavery](#) from its supply chain.
- A requirement in its procurement standard ACU-022 that potential suppliers of goods to the university must provide information on the sustainability of production processes and materials and whether the goods can be recycled or reused at the end of their product lifecycle.
- A requirement in its procurement standard ACU-022 that potential suppliers of services to the university demonstrate their commitment to ethical sourcing, including, anti-slavery, fair and safe working conditions, anti-corruption, human rights and environmental sustainability. ACU requires potential suppliers to explain how they verify compliance with those standards, from source to delivery to customer.

Sustainable management of waste

ACU is committed to sustainable management of the waste that it generates.

The ACU Waste Management Plan 2023 – 2025 directs the university's program of waste minimisation, recycling, and waste avoidance. The plan was created in 2023 and was reviewed in 2024.

The waste management plan includes measures to manage and minimise hazardous waste, minimise plastic waste, minimise the consumption of disposable items, and sets standards for wastewater disposal.

The waste management plan also directs how the university measures the amount of waste sent to landfill and recycled. ACU collects data on the weight and volume of all its categories of waste.

In 2024, the university will generate about 425 tonnes of total waste. 250 tonnes of waste is expected to be sent to landfill and approximately 175 tonnes will be recycled.

In 2023, ACU generated just 18 kilograms of waste per equivalent full-time student. The Australian university sector overall generated 47 kilograms of waste per equivalent full-time student.

As part of its commitment to sustainability, ACU publishes an annual sustainability report. The reports are [viewable online](#).

SDG 13: Climate Action

ACU uses 100 per cent renewable electricity at all its Australian campuses.

ACU measures the amount of energy it uses across the university. In 2024, the university will use approximately 65,766 gigajoules of energy. The total amount of energy from low carbon (renewable) sources will be approximately 52,836 gigajoules in 2023.

The main source of fossil-fuel energy used on the university's campuses is gas, which is mainly used for heating. This means that ACU's key energy challenge over the next decade is to eliminate its dependence on gas for heating at its campuses in Melbourne, Ballarat, Canberra and Sydney. As technologies improve, this task will become both feasible and economical.

The university expects to use around 79,500 GJ in 2024, with approximately 67,500 gigajoules of energy from low-carbon sources such as solar and wind farms.

ACU aims to become carbon neutral by 2040.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

The ACU Waste Management Plan (2023 – 2025) details how ACU limits the impact of its wastewater on local ecosystems and the flora, fauna and communities that rely on those ecosystems. The plan also includes details of how ACU aims to reduce its plastic waste, as a key measure to reduce the amount of plastic that enters waterways.

SDG 15: Life on Land

Most ACU campuses are in urban locations with minimal areas available to support a highly biodiverse campus. An exception is ACU's Brisbane Campus, where ACU works to maintain and extend the biodiversity of the ecosystem in which the campus is located.

The Brisbane Campus applies a bushland management plan that aims to protect and promote the health of the campus's wide diversity of native flora, which provide food and shelter for many insect, bird and mammal species.

More details are in the Bushland Management Plan – ACU Brisbane.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Human rights and just societies

Research at ACU's Thomas More Law School emphasises human rights, access to justice, and commercial law. Its curriculum highlights the ethical and social responsibilities of modern lawyers, encouraging internships, community engagement, and pro bono work.

Child protection systems

ACU's Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) focuses on improving child safety through research and partnerships. Recognised for expertise in child protection, ICPS contributed to policy discussions, media, and publications in 2023.

Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfasts

ACU hosts Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfasts, fostering dialogue between faith leaders and parliamentarians. The events celebrate Australia's diversity and communal values, promoting mutual understanding and respect.

SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals

Local, national, and international presence

ACU is Australia's only national university with seven campuses across four states and one in Rome, Italy. ACU offers international placements for students across all faculties. ACU's research institutes host world-class researchers, focusing on education, health, and theology. The Rome Campus regularly holds international seminars to foster global collaboration.

Reconciliation Action Plan

ACU's Reconciliation Action Plan supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in education and integrates their perspectives into the curriculum, promoting reconciliation within the university and community.

Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement

ACU is one of only two institutions outside the United States recognised with the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification for its commitment to deep community partnerships.

Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU)

ACU is a founding member of SACRU, fostering global research collaboration. In 2023, SACRU explored topics like AI, sustainability, and women's leadership. ACU's Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Zlatko Skrbis, serves as SACRU's President.

ACU and DePaul University Conference on Community Engagement

The biennial conference celebrated university/community partnerships, with ACU staff and students presenting at the 2023 event in Chicago.