



ACU Sustainability Report 2023

Caring for our
common home



Message from the Vice-Chancellor and President

Australian Catholic University is an institution dedicated to values of truth, excellence, and service, and is a responsible manager of the natural resources on which it depends to operate and to advance its mission across and beyond its eight campuses.

ACU is a university of service composed of a community of students, staff and partners united by a belief in the dignity of the person and a commitment to the common good. We express this in our ethically informed research, in our curriculum that aims to develop the whole person, and in a program of community engagement that fosters capacity and positive change for our partners.

Meanwhile, ACU's *Vision 2033* sets our strategic direction over the next decade. It is built on a foundation of holistic education, collaborative engagement, high impact research and global connection. These strong foundations will sustain ACU while it works to advance the common good.

ACU continues to reduce its contribution to climate change, limit its water and energy consumption, responsibly manage its waste, construct sustainable buildings, and conduct research and deliver education that together contribute to human flourishing. The ACU Sustainability Report 2023 records these actions, which apply the teachings of Pope Francis in *Laudato si'* and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zlatko Skrbis'.

Professor Zlatko Skrbis
Vice-Chancellor and President
Australian Catholic University

Acknowledgement of Country

In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's spiritual connection to Country, and in continuing ACU's commitment to Reconciliation, it is customary to acknowledge Country as we pass through it. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways where Australian Catholic University campuses and leadership centres are located, and we thank them for their continued custodianship.

Artwork designed for ACU by Gilimbaa

Contents

Message from the Vice-Chancellor and President	01	Human dignity and the common good	17
Acknowledgement of Country	02	Inclusive economic and labour markets	19
<i>Laudato si'</i> and the SDGs	04	Sustainable urban environments	21
Shared humanity and our common home	05	Local, national and international dialogue	23
Tackling pollution and climate change	07	Institutions, legal and regulatory frameworks	25
Clean, safe water for all	09	Governance	27
ACU's Sustainability Bond	11	Our principles	27
Biodiversity and protection of natural ecosystems	13	Prayer for our earth	28
Health, education and social cohesion	15		



Caring for our common home

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.

Laudato si' and the Sustainable Development Goals

LAUDATO SI' THEMES	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS			
Shared humanity and our common home				
Tackling pollution and climate change				
Clean, safe water for all				
Biodiversity and protection of natural ecosystems				
Health, education and social cohesion				
Human dignity and the common good				
Inclusive economic and labour markets				
Sustainable urban environments				
Local, national and international dialogue				
Institutions, legal and regulatory frameworks				

Shared humanity and our common home



VISION 2033

ACU's strategic direction from now until 2033 is to enable flourishing lives, to foster thriving communities, and to forge an ethical future. This commitment is set out in ACU's Vision 2033, which identifies holistic education, collaborative engagement, high-impact research and global connection as the activities that will help realise the university's commitment to the common good.

Vision 2033 draws on Catholic traditions and belief in the dignity of the human person to provide a learning environment that emphasises growth of the whole person, prepares students for the workforce challenges and opportunities of the future, serves communities, and address nationally significant challenges through research, partnerships and policy development.

THE CORE CURRICULUM

ACU's Core Curriculum is part of all our students' education, providing each student with the opportunity to reflect on our shared humanity and the common challenges we face across the globe. Students engage with principles that include:

- **the dignity of the human person:** every person has value, is worthy of great respect and must be free from slavery, manipulation and exploitation
- **solidarity:** we are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences
- **the common good:** everyone should have access to what they need to live a fulfilling life
- **rights and responsibilities:** every person has a fundamental right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are responsibilities, to one another, to our families, and to the larger society
- **stewardship of the earth:** it is our collective responsibility to care for the world we inhabit.

As part of the Core Curriculum, every student competes a community engagement unit, working with organisations that serve disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE EXCELLENCE

ACU's governance guides the university's operation and performance and provides the institutional foundation for its robust social and environmental commitments. ACU is a public institution recognised and funded by the Commonwealth Government as well as a public company. This means that ACU's governance is delivered by a leadership team and by several decision-making bodies, including the Senate and the Academic Board.

Meanwhile, ACU's community engagement program is the university's flagship contribution to social sustainability. ACU is one of just two institutions outside of the United States to receive the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, which recognises ACU's thorough institutional commitment to community-engaged practices and reciprocal partnerships.

And in its commitment to stewardship, ACU has achieved some of the highest levels of energy, water and material efficiency in the university sector to limit its demand for natural resources, and its capital building program aims to create campuses that express the best of environmentally sustainable design.



LAUDATO SI'

"The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development [...] Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world's poorest."

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 12, My appeal [13]

BY THE NUMBERS

ACU's Community Engagement resulted in **101,725** hours of community engagement in 2023



ACU students contributed **434** hours of work to the ACU and Order of Malta Community Hub, supporting people experiencing disadvantage



ACU consumes just **one quarter** the amount of mains water and just **one third** the amount of energy compared to the Australian university sector average*



Our mission

In truth and love.

Within the Catholic intellectual tradition and acting in truth and love, Australian Catholic University is committed to the pursuit of knowledge, the dignity of the human person and the common good.

Our values

Truth

ACU is a place where faith and reason are explored in search of truth.

Excellence

The pursuit of excellence underpins our efforts in teaching, research and engagement.

Service

ACU is a university of service. We seek to improve the lives of others through compassion, empathy and respect.

*Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association Annual Survey, 2022.

Tackling pollution and climate change



COMMITMENT TO CLIMATE ACTION

ACU recognises an organisational emissions boundary that includes all of its direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions, and ACU is committed to reducing those emissions to net zero.

The university's commitment to climate action aligns with the Papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*, and to the United Nations Paris Agreement of 2015.

In line with that commitment, the university's greenhouse gas emissions peaked in 2019 at more than 30,000 tonnes and in 2023 fell to approximately 23,500 tonnes. ACU achieved this reduction by switching its Australian campuses to 100% renewable power, replacing large amounts of air travel with video conferencing, reducing its waste generation, and maintaining its sector-leading levels of energy efficiency.

ACU will pursue future emissions reductions in part through the electrification of its vehicle fleets and its campuses, but mainly through the purchase of low carbon goods and services. This is because ACU's supply chain is the source of more than 95% of its greenhouse emissions.

In 2024 ACU will embark on a long-term program of work to transform its carbon-heavy supply chain to a low-carbon and then zero-carbon supply chain.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

ACU has the highest energy efficiency in the Australian university sector, using just one third of a gigajoule of energy per square meter of floorspace.* This level of energy efficiency is twice as high as the Tertiary sector's energy efficiency as a whole, and it has enabled ACU to constrain its energy costs and the emissions, particularly from its use of gas for space heating and the supply of hot water.

2023 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

In 2023, ACU emitted approximately 23,500 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) from its scope 1, 2, and 3 carbon emitting activities. ACU's direct, or scope 1, emissions amounted to approximately 1200 tonnes; its scope 2 emissions were zero, and its scope 3 emissions amounted to approximately 22,300 tonnes.

RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY

Since 2021, ACU's Australian campuses have been powered with 100% renewable electricity. This has helped ACU to avoid the emission of at least 15,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas each year had ACU instead used conventional electricity. And in 2023, ACU locked-in contracts to supply 100% renewable electricity to its Australian campuses until mid-2026.

Meanwhile, in 2023 ACU tripled its installed solar power capacity to 110 kWp (kilowatts peak, the rate at which solar panels generate energy at peak performance), thank so a 75 kWp array installed on the Melbourne campus's Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building. The building's solar panels will generate more than 90,000 kWh of power each year, adding to the 30 kWp solar power array at the Ballarat campus, which annually generates approximately 35,000 kWh.

CLIMATE CHANGE EDUCATION

With climate change one of the greatest challenges we face in the twenty-first century, ACU's teaching unit *GEOG206: Climate Change: Past, Present and Future* introduces students to our planet's climate system and examines what is driving current and future climate changes. The unit forms part of ACU's response to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals on Climate Action (SDG13.3). Related subjects examine the causes and consequences of natural disasters (GEOG218 – Natural Disasters: Risk, Response and Resilience) and global scale natural hazards and their impact on humans (GEOG306 – Extreme Earth: Natural Hazards, Risk and Vulnerability).

Meanwhile, ACU's students learn how to design learning that incorporates scientific understanding of sustainability (EDSI660 – Science, Inquiry and Sustainability Education), to manage the sustainability of events (EMGT202 – Event Management: Design and Sustainability) and to use interdisciplinary approaches to understand the connections between the environment, poverty and social justice in GEOG214 – Sustainability: The Global Challenge.

* Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association Annual Survey 2022



The Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building has a solar array that will generate more than 90,000 kilowatt hours of carbon free electricity each year for more than 20 years.

BY THE NUMBERS

100% renewable electricity from July 2021, and locked in until July 2026



75% of all the forms of energy that ACU uses is from renewable sources



Greenhouse gas emissions per full-time student have fallen **<25%** since 2019



<2000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emitted in 2023 from activities under ACU's direct control

LAUDATO SI'

“When we speak of the ‘environment’, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 104, Environmental, economic and social ecology [139]

Clean, safe water for all



ACU's seven Australian campuses are in a range of places and climates, from close urban sites in Melbourne and Sydney, to broad, open spaces in Brisbane. This demands from ACU a highly flexible approach to campus water management.

This approach has ensured that over the past decade ACU has limited its annual water use to three kilolitres per student, which is just one third the amount of water used per student across the Australian university sector.

This consistent level of water efficiency rests on three key sets of actions:

1. Water-efficient landscaping

ACU's grounds staff practice careful water management of its wide variety of open, green spaces, which include sports grounds, lawns, Aboriginal gardens, paved surfaces, expanses of garden beds and a sensory garden.

Key to this practice is xeriscaping, or landscaping design that eliminates the need for irrigation, and the extensive use of drought-tolerant species incorporated into diverse campus gardens.

2. Rainwater harvesting and management

ACU has installed over 700,000 litres of water-tank capacity across its campuses. The tanks capture rainwater harvested from the roofs of ACU's campus buildings. The rainwater is used to flush toilets and irrigate campus gardens, which helps to reduce ACU's consumption of mains water.

- Ballarat Campus: 275,000 litres of water storage
- Brisbane Campus: 300,000 litres of water storage
- Canberra Campus: 80,000 litres of water storage
- Melbourne Campus: 50,000 litres of water storage

3. Water efficient appliances

All campuses have installed a range of water-efficient appliances, such as low-flow showerheads, waterless or low-flow urinals, dual flush toilets, and drip irrigation systems. The university has also installed systems to capture and re-use water used to routinely test fire-systems.

LAUDATO SI'

"Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity."

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 23,
The issue of water [30]



The Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building is designed to demonstrate Australian excellence in sustainable design and construction.

BY THE NUMBERS

ACU consumes
<3 kilolitres of water per
full time student, just one-
third the average level of
consumption of Australian
Universities



700,000+ litres of water
storage capacity on ACU's
Australian campuses.



SAINT TERESA OF KOLKATA BUILDING

The water efficient design of the St Teresa of Kolkata building at ACU's Melbourne Campus will ensure the campus limits its water use to just 1000 litres of water per full-time student, barely one fifth the university sector's average water consumption per student.

The St Teresa of Kolkata Building has water-efficient taps that use just 4.5 litres per minute, showers that use just 6.5 litres per minute, 4-Star WELS rated toilets, a 30-kilolitre tank for rainwater storage, and a system to capture and re-use water deployed in the building's regular tests of its fire system.

ACU's sustainability bond



A WORLD FIRST

In 2017, ACU secured \$200 million through the sale of sustainability bonds to some of Australasia's largest institutional investors. In doing so, ACU became the first organisation in Australia and the first University in the world to issue a sustainability bond, which offered investors the opportunity to participate in the financing of ACU projects that deliver positive social and / or environmental results.

ACU has used the funds raised by the Sustainability Bond to construct sustainable buildings on our campuses and to support research by the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education and the Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE CAMPUSES

The proceeds of ACU's Sustainability Bond have been used to finance or refinance a number of ACU's sustainable building projects, including:

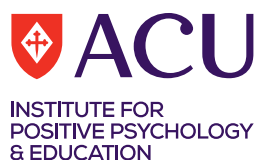
- The Daniel Mannix Building, at ACU's Melbourne Campus
- The St Brigid's School of Health Sciences, at ACU's Ballarat Campus
- The Veritas Building, Canberra
- The Mercy Building, Brisbane
- The Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building

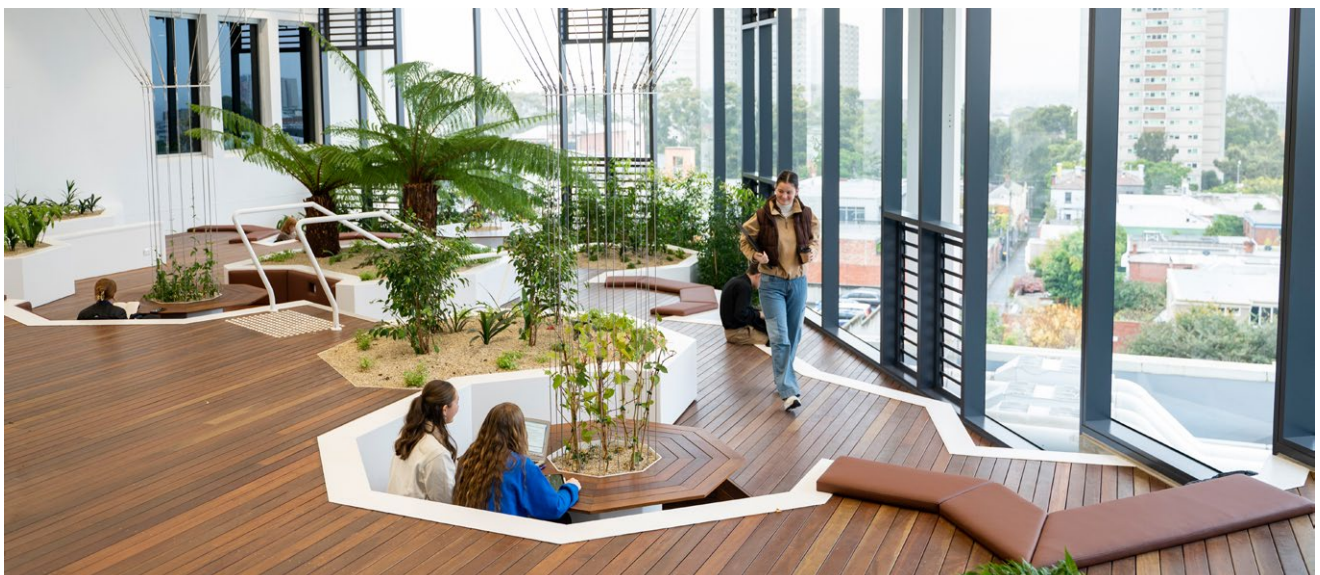
SUPPORTING RESEARCH WITH SOCIAL IMPACT

The ACU Sustainability Bond also funds key social research programs that focus on improving the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in society. ACU has spent Sustainability Bond funds to support the work of two of ACU's leading research bodies: the Institute for Positive Psychology & Education (IPPE) and the Mary MacKillop Institute for Health Research (MMIHR).

IPPE conducts research into physical and psychological well-being, resilience and self-concept, and rigorous measures of important psychosocial outcomes. The Institute's researchers have been awarded over 70 Australian Research Council grants. Among its many current research projects are those that focus on youth at-risk of dropping out of school, on the impact of Indigenous education programs, and on the psychological wellbeing of school principals, and of police.

MMIHR conducts research that discovers and promotes effective strategies to create a healthier Australia. The Institute brings national and international health experts together with leading organisations to conduct research that transcends discipline-based boundaries. MMIHR's research ranges throughout the fields of exercise and nutrition, bone health and fractures, and the interaction between behaviour, urban environments and cognitive health.





Biodiversity and protection of natural ecosystems



ACU's contribution to biodiversity and ecosystem protection is indirect. This is because most of ACU's campuses and leadership centres are in suburban and inner urban locations alienated from their original ecology. For this reason, ACU's most effective means of ecosystem protection is its overall program of energy, water and materials efficiency, carbon reduction, and circular waste management that turns waste into a resource.

LAND FOR WILDLIFE AND BRISBANE CAMPUS

Since 2015, Brisbane City Council's Wildlife Conservation Partnership program has provided advice to ACU's Brisbane Campus on the biodiversity value of its campus grounds and ways to improve and protect that value. The Brisbane Campus has stands of natural vegetation within its expanses of lawn and a bushland area with added conservation value because it adjoins the Nudgee Waterhole Reserve, forming part of an ecological corridor running through the Kedron Brook Catchment. The campus is rich with Queensland Blue Gum, Ironbark, Brush Box and Paperbark trees and includes a freshwater vegetated wetland on with sedges and rushes.

COMPOST FROM FOOD WASTE

In 2023 ACU's food waste collection service quadrupled its impact compared to 2022, and roll-out of the food waste service is yet reached the entire university. This program has now delivered over 6,000 kilograms of clean food waste to facilities that turn that material into compost used to promote the soil health of parkland and farms. This also keeps that food waste out of landfills, where it would generate methane, a much more powerful greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

YEAR	KILOGRAMS OF FOOD WASTE
2020	730
2021	820
2022	1080
2023	4020

ORGANIC GARDEN WASTE

In 2023, ACU managed to divert its second-highest amount of campus garden waste from landfill and into mulch for use on its own and other organisations' parks and gardens. Mulch on gardens improves the ability of soil to hold water and promotes the health and abundance of soil microbes, enriching the fertility of the soil and adding to the resilience of the plants that depend on it.

Over the past five years, ACU has collected and sent for mulching almost 200 tonnes of green waste, with ACU's Brisbane Campus supplying almost half of that amount.

YEAR	TONNES OF GARDEN WASTE
2019	44
2020	27
2021	39
2022	37
2023	43



ACU's Brisbane Campus is home to a rich biodiversity of animals, birdlife, insects and plants.

BY THE NUMBERS

6000+ kilograms of food waste collected for composting since 2020, avoiding the emission of greenhouse gases with the global warming impact of ten thousand kilograms of carbon dioxide



190 tonnes of garden green waste diverted from landfill to instead become mulch, for reuse on parks and gardens, including ACU's own campuses



LAUDATO SI'

"The earth's resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce, and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses.

...It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential "resources" to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves. Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity... We have no such right."

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 24, Loss of biodiversity [32, 33]

Health, education and social cohesion



ACU is dedicated to making education available to everyone, and to making education a transformative experience. This development of the whole person and ACU's programs of work-integrated learning help 95% of ACU graduates find employment within six months of graduation.* And ACU has obtained five-star ratings for students' engagement in learning, skills development and their graduate salary, with more than three quarters of graduate students satisfied with ACU's teaching quality, learning resources and overall student support**.

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 to help ACU into second place globally for its impact on good health and wellbeing in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (2023).

*Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal 2022
** Good Universities Guide 2023

WIDENING PARTICIPATION

ACU is committed to increasing the participation of students from groups under-represented in higher education. As part of this mission, ACU delivers several widening participation programs to schools in low-socioeconomic areas. These include on-campus and in-school programs that help students envision and understand higher-ed learning, workshops with Year 12 students to increase their exam confidence, and access to ACU undergraduate student ambassadors to show that university is attainable for everyone. A leading ACU Widening Participation program is ACU's Uni Step-Up. The Uni Step-Up program allows senior secondary students to study two first-year university units via face-to-face and online modes.

GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

ACU provides a learning environment that emphasises growth of the whole person and aims to instil four attributes in every graduating student:

Insight into their own characteristics as a professional, citizen and a scholar, and a readiness to change and grow

Empathy, especially with Australia's First Peoples, and with people and cultures globally

Imagination that supports creative and critical problem solving, and innovation for a better future

Impact, or a commitment to action beyond words for more sustainable and just world.

FIRST PEOPLES

ACU is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students academically, culturally and personally. The university draws on its dedication to social justice and community engagement to empower students to think critically and ethically and to bring about change in their communities and professions. First Peoples students are eligible for access to tailored courses, scholarships, student services and facilities from ACU. The university is committed to increasing its proportion of domestic bachelor students - and the number of staff - who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

LAUDATO SI'

"If we want to bring about deep change, we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behaviour. Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature."

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 157,
Educating for the covenant between
humanity and the environment [215]



ACU's First People's Directorate has a broad program of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.

BY THE NUMBERS

Education at ACU is ranked **2nd** in Australia and **top 50** globally*



Nursing at ACU is ranked **4th** in Australia and **14th** globally*



Sport Science at ACU is ranked **12th** in Australia and **52nd** globally.^



ACU is one of the world's **Top 50** Young Universities (a university less than 50 years old)**



THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LITERACY

ACU's Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy seeks to understand how people learn to read and write and to translating that knowledge into effective teaching practices. Staff at the Centre believe that every student can learn to read and write if the instruction they receive is based on the best scientific evidence available. The Centre aims to create distinctive, inclusive and research-informed literacy education in ACU, so that ACU produces knowledgeable, skilled and ethical literacy teachers and professionals, and conducts world-leading literacy research with impact.

A key program of the Centre is its North Sydney Literacy Clinic, which provides evidence-based assessment and interventions for children with reading and spelling difficulties and delivers professional development opportunities for teachers and clinicians supporting people with literacy problems.

THE INSTITUTE FOR POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION

ACU's Institute for Positive Psychology and Education tackles the significant issues of our time through positive psychology. It conducts multi-disciplinary research to address critical educational and psychosocial issues and translate theory to inform effective policy and practice. The work of the IPPE demonstrates how individuals, communities and organisations can not only succeed, but flourish and thrive.

The IPPE often collaborates with organisations from industry, government, not-for-profit, and the community, and its projects have supported health care workers, indigenous students, young teenagers at risk of dropping out of school, and teachers of early secondary school students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

*2023 Shanghai Ranking Global Ranking of Academic Subjects

** 2023 Times Higher Education Rankings

^2023 Shanghai Ranking, Global Ranking of Sport Science Schools and Departments

Human dignity and the common good



Human dignity and the common good are key principles that guide ACU in its address of matters concerning social justice and human development. ACU recognises the inherent dignity of every person, without qualification, and it turns all of its resources to the common good, which aims to meet the needs of all people in all the dimensions of their humanity.

GENDER EQUALITY

ACU has been awarded an Athena Swan Bronze Award in recognition of the university's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. The Athena Swan accreditation program is the world's only internationally recognised accreditation program that enables participating institutions achieve systemic, structural and cultural changes, and then measure those changes against international benchmarks. The Athena Swan Bronze Award is the foundational level of accreditation. ACU obtained the award following its close examination of the barriers within ACU that impede equity, diversity and inclusion, and its creation of an action plan to tackle and dismantle those barriers.

ACU will now work to embed inclusiveness in the university's culture, improve its support for parents and carers, boost support for career progression, extend flexible work to all staff and manage its potential impact on career opportunities, and better assist staff who experience harassment, bullying and discrimination.

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 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.

CLEMENTE AUSTRALIA PROGRAM

Through the Clemente Australia program, ACU provides an academically approved university course for Australians who would otherwise be excluded from tertiary education. The program empowers Australians experiencing challenging life circumstances and to break cycles of poverty, inequality and injustice. On completion of four Clemente subjects, students graduate with an ACU Certificate in Liberal Studies. These units can be credited towards an ACU undergraduate degree when students continue their studies.

ETHICS

Ethics is central to what ACU does and what it teaches, and ACU has integrated ethics into its learning, research, community engagement and operations. A leading example is the Plunkett Centre for Ethics, which for more than thirty years has advanced knowledge of the ethical standards relevant to human health and wellbeing in areas such as clinical practice, medical research, allocation of healthcare resources, and business. ACU's students, meanwhile, engage with critical questions about our common social life and ways we can change the world. And in 2023, ACU collaborated with leading Australian and international corporations to deliver a series of business ethics initiatives.

ACU ETHICS FINDER

ACU has developed and hosts an expertly curated ethics search engine database called EthicsFinder. A global network of more than 80 philosophers and specialists from more than 50 universities and institutions support EthicsFinder, ensuring the accuracy, currency and quality of its thousands of links to articles, books and videos across the web. A key feature of EthicsFinder is that it collates and continually updates Catholic teaching across every topic, offering users a unique and accessible way to navigate Church teaching.



ACU students undertake work placements to prepare them for their future workplace, most often in careers dedicated to the service of those in need.

BY THE NUMBERS

11 community organisations partnered in the delivery of the programs



113 students participated in one or more course units



13 Clemente students graduated with a Certificate of Liberal Arts in 2023



71% pass rate of attempted assessments



LAUDATO SI'

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 104, Environmental, economic and social ecology [139]

Inclusive economic and labour markets



RESPECT AND RECOGNITION

Inspired by our mission and values as a Catholic university, ACU has a critical role to play in achieving a just Australia in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' rights as First Peoples are recognised, respected, celebrated and enjoyed. Our key principle of ACU's **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Employment Strategy** is to retain and continue to expand our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and reach the national parity rate of **3%** employment.

REFUGEE AND MIGRANT ENGAGEMENT

ACU engages closely with refugee and migrant communities, with its Stakeholder Engaged Scholarship Unit (SESU) establishing an especially strong track record of success.

SESU provides scholarly expertise and research assistance to organisations working in areas that are central to ACU's mission and ethos as a Catholic university. It facilitates partner-initiated research projects to help inform, shape, evaluate and develop community programs and services.

In October 2023 SESU teamed with Western Sydney community groups to support a successful employment accelerator event where nearly 250 migrants and refugees met with prospective employers from the health and care, construction, transport, logistics and retail sectors. The event connected job seekers directly to employers and fostered employment networks, empowering participants to enter the workforce. These events and the establishment of a Migrant Employment Working Group were recommendations of SESU's community-based research report, *Migrating from Settlement to Prosperity*, conducted in partnership with SydWest Multicultural Services.

COLLABORATE PLUS BUSINESS INCUBATOR

ACU Collaborate Plus is ACU's entrepreneurship and innovation hub. It aims to support and develop fledgling businesses and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) through the sharing of resources, knowledge, research and expertise. ACU Collaborate Plus has established multidisciplinary collaborative spaces in Strathfield and North Sydney to facilitate sustainable partnerships with organisations to support and strengthen local networks of entrepreneurs and enhance innovation in product and process development. The University is providing project support incentives for collaborative start-ups including advice on business plans, compliance and regulations, financial management, marketing programs, insurance and legal structures and risk assessments through innovation mentors, academic and business partners. SMEs can also partner with the University to access research and expertise.



ACU's Co-Lab business incubator provides an innovative environment that connects ACU's mission with a wide range of industry opportunities.

BY THE NUMBERS

\$2.4m funding raised
by Co-Lab start-ups



\$58,500 prize money
awarded by Co-Lab for
new projects



380+ jobs created



677 ACU students, staff
and alumni supported



LAUDATO SI'

"The social dimensions of global change include the effects of technological innovations on employment, social exclusion, an inequitable distribution and consumption of energy and other services, social breakdown, increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, and the loss of identity. These are signs that the growth of the past two centuries has not always led to an integral development and an improvement in the quality of life. Some of these signs are also symptomatic of real social decline, the silent rupture of the bonds of integration and social cohesion."

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 32, Decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society [46]

Sustainable urban environments



SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

ACU incorporates environmentally sustainable design principles into its building projects and the development of its campus grounds. In 2023, ACU opened its latest highly sustainable building, the Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building, which is designed to achieve a 5-Star Green Star rating. The building integrates solar energy, high-performance windows and facade materials, water conservation, abundant indoor plants, stormwater collection and end-of-trip facilities, which will not only advance the university's resource efficiency goals but deliver a highly amenable and healthy building environment for students and staff.

The Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building joins ACU's three buildings certified under the Green Star rating system of the Green Building Council of Australia - Melbourne's Daniel Mannix Building, Canberra's Veritas Building, and Ballarat's St Brigid's School of Health Science - as well as the Mercy Building and the John Paul II Building (Brisbane) and the Melbourne and North Sydney campus libraries as exemplars of sustainable design.

ACU continues to improve the sustainable operation and design of its 46 hectares of campus grounds, with its green buildings complemented by xeriscaping, drip-irrigation, stormwater management, a sensory garden, an Aboriginal garden, and biodiversity mapping at the Banyo campus.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

ACU has historically sought to manage its material waste through conventional methods that aim to increase recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste that it sends to landfill. This has delivered strong results for ACU: in 2023, it generated just 17 kilograms of waste per full time student, the among the lowest amounts of waste per student of any Australian university.

In 2023, ACU developed and began to implement a new approach to waste management that seeks to reduce total waste generation through a reduction in consumption of materials. This approach aims to reduce the purchase of goods while maintaining campus and workplace amenity and productivity. Initial material efficiency projects will roll out in 2024, targeting unused information technology, refrigeration, and bins, delivering cost savings, reduced use of plastic, and emission of greenhouse gases.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT AT ACU

A major source of ACU's environmental impact is amount of commuting to and from campus by staff and students. In response, ACU has developed its campuses and provides other services to enable students and staff to choose more sustainable modes of transport. The key green travel initiatives include:

- The installation of end-of-trip facilities such as bike lock up points, lockers and showers at every campus
- Publication of Campus Amenity Maps, which assist staff and students find where on campus they can lock up their bikes, take a shower or access a locker
- Supportive Work from Home policies that reduce the frequency and volume of staff commuting
- Shuttle buses to Brisbane and Strathfield campuses from important transport hubs
- Participation in annual events that promote cycling, such as Ride to Work Day
- Provision of videoconferencing capabilities to every ACU desktop and mobile device so that ACU staff have a practical alternative to travelling between campuses, particularly by air travel; and
- A commuter club at ACU's Melbourne Campus, to incentivise staff to use the campus's exceptional public transport links.



ACU students and staff have access to end of trip facilities that support sustainable, active modes of travel to and from campus.

BY THE NUMBERS

ACU reduced its per-student annual waste generation from **27** kilograms in 2019 to **17** kilograms in 2023



In 2023 ACU’s embrace of video conferencing helped cut carbon emissions from staff air travel by **55%** compared to 2019



ACU has secure bike parking for more than **450** bicycles and showers, lockers and change rooms for bike and pedestrian commuters to campus



ACU’s sustainably designed buildings contribute **20%** of the university’s entire Australian floor space



LAUDATO SI'

“Many cities have become unhealthy to live in, not only because of pollution caused by toxic emissions but also as a result of urban chaos, poor transportation, and visual pollution and noise. [...] We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 31, Decline in the quality of human life and the breakdown of society [44]

Local, national and international dialogue



LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE

ACU is Australia's only national university, with eight campuses across five States in Brisbane, North Sydney, Strathfield, Blacktown, Canberra, Melbourne, and Ballarat. Alongside our local and national presence, we also have a campus in Rome, Italy, bringing together researchers and students from all over the world. International placements are available for students in all faculties, making the ACU student experience truly global.

ACU's research institutes bring together world-class researchers to foster a rich and thriving research environment that produces internationally recognised standards of research. With a research strategy focused on areas of specialisation related to our mission and identity, ACU has achieved research excellence in our priority areas of education, health, and theology and philosophy and other liberal arts. Over recent years, more than a hundred outstanding early career researchers, professors, associate professors, and professorial fellows joined ACU from around the world and are largely based within the research institutes. Convened by ACU's leading research institutes, international seminars are regularly hosted at ACU's Rome campus, providing a forum for international collaboration.

OUR RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

ACU continues to provide meaningful opportunities and to encourage greater participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in tertiary education, empowering them to reach their full academic and economic potential. ACU's Reconciliation Action Plan aims to drive our contribution to reconciliation within ACU and the wider community. The plan assists ACU to solidify its commitment to involving First Peoples in the life of the University and to making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives integral to the University's curriculum. The plan includes practical actions that drive our contribution to reconciliation, drive a broader change agenda and provide a framework to enable us to play a role in improving the lives and respecting the dignity of Australia's Indigenous people.

CARNEGIE CLASSIFICATION FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ACU became one of the first of only two institutions outside the United States to be recognised with the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. The Classification recognises institutional commitment to deep community engaged practices and reciprocal partnerships and affirms ACU as a leader in the Australian sector.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE OF CATHOLIC RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

ACU is one of eight founding members of the Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU), along with Boston College in the United States and six other Catholic universities from Europe, South America, and Japan. The partner universities are committed to developing a research-intensive environment championing academic freedom and ethical responsibility and seeking to promote joint research projects and publications.

In 2023, SACRU examined topics including artificial intelligence, Laudato Si, environmental sustainability and education, women's leadership, ethics, service learning and more, in publications, webinars, seminars and meetings.

ACU's Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Zlatko Skrbis, is the current President of SACRU.

BIENNIAL ACU AND DEPAUL UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The biennial ACU and DePaul Conference on Community Engagement examines, explores and celebrates the partnerships between university and community, to foster greater knowledge and skill in service-learning and university-community engagement. In 2023, 13 ACU staff and five ACU students presented at the event held in Chicago and online.



ACU's Rome Campus hosts international conferences and ACU students undertaking a range of courses

BY THE NUMBERS

7 campuses in Australia
and **1** campus in Rome



75 external
community partners



80+ student exchange
partnerships with
universities around the world



100% of ACU's research
disciplines are ranked as
world class or above



LAUDATO SI'

"I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all."

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 12, My appeal [14]

Institutions, legal and regulatory frameworks



MODERN ANTI-SLAVERY TRAINING

As part of its deep commitment to eradicate modern slavery and human trafficking, ACU partnered with the Anti-Slavery Taskforce of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney to introduce the topic of modern slavery to ACU students before they embark on their professional journeys.

The project developed content for ACU's Core Curriculum, which all undergraduate students undertake as part of their ACU degrees. Nearly 800 students engaged with the learning materials in the pilot study and their responses informed ACU's further development and delivery of the material within the Core Curriculum, and ACU's partners will share the material beyond the university.

ACU also educates its staff with anti-slavery training modules developed with the Australian Catholic Anti-Slavery Network. This training is supplied to all staff involved in purchasing and procurement decisions, and ACAN and ACU make the training available to all vendors and suppliers who deal with ACU.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND JUST SOCIETIES

Research by ACU's Thomas More Law School focuses on substantive themes aligned to the mission of ACU: human rights; access to justice; and commercial law and just societies. The School's researchers work on issues including the interaction between domestic and international human rights law, indigenous issues in Australia and overseas, therapeutic justice, restorative justice, and the fields of commercial law with a special emphasis on the promotion of just outcomes for society.

Meanwhile, students in the Thomas More Law School engage with a curriculum that emphasises the ethical, social and environmental duties of the modern lawyer. A strong practical component of community engagement, internships and pro bono work, representing the interests of those who might not otherwise have access to justice.

CHILD PROTECTION, STATUTORY SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

ACU's **Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS)** aims to improve the lives of children, young people and families through quality research, program evaluation, training, consultation and translating knowledge for policy makers and practitioners.

ACU is nationally recognised for our expertise in child protection and preventing and responding to the abuse and neglect of children. Through partnerships with government, non-government and community organisations, we aim to influence policy and practice to achieve positive social change, strengthen service systems and support child-safe communities.

In 2023, the ICPS prepared submissions to the South Australia Economic and Finance Committee and to the Attorney-General's Department, contributed to more than twenty additional publications, and provided comment in more than fifty articles in mainstream media, specialist media, social media posts, podcasts and radio interviews.

PARLIAMENTARY INTERFAITH BREAKFASTS

ACU hosts Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfasts, bringing together parliamentarians and the leaders of many faith communities in a spirit of mutual respect and dialogue. The events present faith leaders with the opportunity to offer a prayer or reading in support of wise deliberations and good government. The breakfasts also provide an opportunity for parliamentarians of all parties to meet the leaders of many different faiths, joining with them to celebrate Australia's diversity and communal harmony, while highlighting the shared interests and values that are common to us all. For ACU, the events provide a chance to demonstrate our commitment to serving the common good. It is an opportunity to not only embrace and better understand our diverse faiths, but also to reflect on the important role that faith plays in our everyday lives and in our calling to serve the community.



2023 Federal parliamentary interfaith breakfast

BY THE NUMBERS

7 Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfasts hosted by ACU since 2014



20,000 hours of pro bono service delivered by Thomas More Law School students



PRO BONO LAW PROGRAM

ACU law students from the Thomas More Law School participate in a pro bono law program that aims to provide justice to the most marginalised in our community. Since the program's inception in 2013, Law students have provided over 20,000 hours – the equivalent of ten working years - of voluntary work to almost thirty organisations, including the Salvos, the Magistrates Court of Victoria, Oxfam, WorkSafe, the Australian Parliament, the Tenants Union of NSW and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

LAUDATO SI'

“There is a growing jurisprudence dealing with the reduction of pollution by business activities. But political and institutional frameworks do not exist simply to avoid bad practice, but also to promote best practice, to stimulate creativity in seeking new solutions and to encourage individual or group initiatives.”

Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, page 130, Dialogue for new national and local policies [177]

Our governance

ACU is committed to environmental and social sustainability at the highest levels of the organisation. Our *Vision 2033* identifies environmental, social and governance matters as part of ACU's institutional foundations. Our approach is guided by Pope Francis's *Laudato si'* encyclical as well as the targets set in the UN SDGs. We have given life to those commitments by establishing a whole-of-university sustainability framework, which brings together and grows our impact across education, research, engagement and university operations.

Our core values

At all times, ACU staff and affiliates will behave in a way that upholds our mission both as individuals and as representatives of the university. We are committed to the following principles.

Our values

Truth

We're committed to the lifelong pursuit of knowledge, freely seeking truth through research, critical enquiry and active discovery. We share our truth with our students and the broader community through teaching, scholarship and community engagement, and by contributing to the growth and betterment of society.

Service

ACU is a university of service. We seek to serve the wider community through education, community engagement and research, especially by providing opportunities to those in need and by educating our students to be socially and morally responsible individuals. We're committed to serving the common good and upholding the sacredness of life. We respect and welcome all faith traditions and uphold the dignity of all human beings.

To ensure staff and students of all backgrounds and beliefs enjoy a safe and welcoming learning environment, we support the Australian Human Rights Commission's campaign 'Racism. It stops with me.'

Academic excellence

Our pursuit of excellence in teaching and research underpins our approach to learning, scholarship and teaching. We're dedicated to providing world-leading intellectual and educational experiences, enhanced by innovation and creativity.



Prayer for our earth

All-powerful God,
you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth,
so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty,
not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts
of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognise that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace. Amen

Pope Francis, Laudato sí'

Sustainable Development Goals

	SDG 1 – No poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
	SDG 2 – Zero hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
	SDG 3 – Good health and wellbeing	Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.
	SDG 4 – Quality education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all.
	SDG 5 – Gender equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
	SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
	SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
	SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
	SDG 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.
	SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities	Reduce inequalities within and among countries.
	SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
	SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
	SDG 13 – Climate action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
	SDG 14 – Life below water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
	SDG 15 – Life on land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
	SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
	SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

A full list of targets for and details of the social, environmental and economic challenges covered by each goal can be found at www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

The *Laudato si'* encyclical can be found at www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html, with a summary provided in www.catholic.org.au/commission-documents/bishops-commission-for-justice-ecology-and-development/laudato-si/1711-encyclical-summary/file

