



# ACU Sustainable Development Goals Report *2025*

Caring for our  
common home



# Message from the Vice-Chancellor and President

At Australian Catholic University, our commitment to sustainability is inseparable from our mission. As a leading Catholic university, we enable flourishing lives, foster thriving communities and forge an ethical future. Grounded in the dignity of the human person and oriented towards the common good, our approach to sustainability seeks not only to protect the environment on which we all depend, but to nurture human flourishing in its social, cultural and spiritual dimensions.

The ACU Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025 reflects this deeply integrated vision. It demonstrates how our teaching, research, operations and partnerships are shaped by an ethic of responsible stewardship, informed by Catholic social thought, the call of *Laudato si'*, and the shared global framework of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Together, these lenses remind us that care for our common home is both a moral responsibility and an expression of hope; one that connects local action with global purpose.

Across our campuses and communities, ACU continues to reduce its environmental footprint while strengthening its social impact. From progress in energy, water, waste and sustainable buildings, to research and education that address inequality, health and community wellbeing, our sustainability efforts are animated by a belief that institutions best serve society when they place people at the centre of all service.

Looking ahead, Vision 2033 sets a bold and aspirational path for the university. It calls us to deepen our contribution to the common good through holistic education, high-impact research, collaborative engagement and global connection. Sustainability is a vital enabler of this vision. By embedding stewardship and long-term impact thinking into our institutional purpose, we are shaping a future-ready university that responds with integrity to complexity, uncertainty and change.

This report reaffirms ACU's enduring commitment to care for our common home and to foster a future in which individuals, communities and creation itself may truly flourish.

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.

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# Introduction

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

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is proud to present this Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025, which demonstrates the university's alignment with the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

Across the report, ACU's alignment with the SDGs is shown not as a single program of work, but as a university-wide pattern of action expressed through teaching, research, engagement and partnerships, policy and operations. Through teaching, ACU equips students to engage with major social, economic and environmental challenges in ways that are ethically informed, professionally relevant and attentive to human dignity. Through research, ACU contributes knowledge that addresses practical problems in areas such as health, education, equality, climate response, institutional integrity and sustainable development. Through engagement and partnerships, ACU works with schools, communities, health services, industry, government, the Catholic community and international networks to extend the university's contribution beyond the campus and into the wider society.

The report also shows that ACU's contribution to the SDGs is shaped by its Catholic mission. In all ACU's endeavours, there is a consistent concern for the common good, equitable participation, human dignity and stewardship. This is especially evident in the report's emphasis on SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, which helps connect the university's many activities across the other SDGs and highlights ACU's commitment to collaboration, reciprocity and shared capability.

## SDG 1

# No Poverty



SDG 1 – No Poverty focuses on reducing poverty in all its forms by widening access to opportunity, strengthening material security, and addressing structural disadvantage. For ACU, this includes equitable participation, hardship support, community partnerships, and work that improves the conditions in which people can flourish.



### LEARNING

The ACU curriculum contributes to the aims of SDG 1 through building student understanding of poverty, inequality, sustainability, and the structural conditions that shape disadvantage:

- **DVST100 Introduction to International Development Studies** explicitly focuses on improving the lives of the world's poorest and most vulnerable while examining poverty, gender, health and conflict as development issues. It also asks students to analyse how development theories, institutions and ethical responsibilities affect marginalised communities.
- **GEOG214 Sustainability –** The Global Challenge teaches students to understand the links between sustainability, population, food systems, environmental degradation, poverty and social justice, while also highlighting Indigenous knowledge and ethical approaches to sustainability.

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU has developed programs that aim to reduce the barriers that poverty creates for educational participation, persistence and success.

Key examples of these programs are the National Uni Step-Up program and the university's equity and accommodation scholarships that in different but complementary ways help ACU students overcome socio-economic barriers to tertiary education.

The Uni Step-Up program delivers a structured pathway for Year 11 and 12 students, including those from situations of disadvantage to experience tertiary study, gain access to introductory ACU units, receive orientation and ongoing academic support, and, in equity-based programs, have tuition fees and the Student Services Fee covered by scholarship support.

Meanwhile, ACU's multiple scholarships help to ease the pressures that can prevent students from commencing or continuing study. These scholarships include:

1. ACU Equity Scholarships, which help students overcome financial hardships and disadvantage.
2. Relocation Scholarships, which assist students who must move or are experiencing hardship.
3. Accommodation and Indigenous Accommodation scholarships reduce or remove housing costs so that students can focus on academic success rather than the stress of making their monthly rent.

Combined, these initiatives reduce supported students' financial barriers to ongoing study and strengthen the institutional support many need to prevent hardship denying them access to a university education.

## SDG 2 Zero Hunger



SDG 2 – Zero Hunger focuses on food security, nutrition, and sustainable food systems. For ACU, this may include student food support, responsible food procurement, food-waste reduction, and teaching, research, or engagement contributing to healthier and more resilient food systems.



### LEARNING

ACU applies its curriculum to contribute to the aims of SDG 2 through units of study related to nutrition, food safety, and sustainable food systems:

- **CHEM112 Organic and Food Chemistry** builds foundational understanding of food composition and nutrient analysis.
- **NUTR303 Food Science in Practice** develops applied knowledge of food safety, hazard analysis, food-borne disease, food production and processing, and the safe development of food products in industry contexts.
- **NUTR302 Diet, Health and Disease** teaches the role of diet in disease prevention, management, and evidence-based intervention.
- **NUTR311 Food, Society, and the Environment** directly engages with the concept that sustainable and environmentally sound food systems are urgently needed and require students to analyse food systems critically and propose real-world solutions.
- **NUTR505 Research in Food Nutrition and Dietetics 1** develops research capability through food- and nutrition-related problems in practice settings.
- **NUTR304 Food Product Design and Development** adds further applied relevance through food product and packaging design in response to public health, food safety and labelling requirements.

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU advances objectives aligned to SDG 2 by embedding work integrated learning (WIL) in its nutrition and dietetics and Master of Dietetic Practice programs, ensuring students can apply nutrition and dietetics knowledge in real-world settings that influence food, nutrition and wellbeing.

ACU's WIL program enables students to learn in a workplace outside normal university classes, designed to connect theory with practice, and the university works with a range of industry partners to provide placements and collaborative WIL projects with industry, community and government organisations.

For example, in nutrition and dietetics, WIL includes community engagement, food and culture study tours and professional practice across these units of study:

- **NUTR305 Community and Public Nutrition**

- **NUTR308 Food and Culture Study Tour**
- **NUTR309 and 310 – Work Placement 1 and 2**

The WIL occurs in Australia and overseas in locations such as Bali and the Solomon Islands, with mobility support available through the New Colombo Plan.

Similarly, in the Master of Dietetic Practice, WIL spans research, entrepreneurial and community-engagement-oriented professional practice across the degree, with placements on and off campus in metropolitan and rural hospitals, private practice, the food industry, sporting clubs, social enterprises and community organisations.

Meanwhile at the ACU Melbourne Campus throughout 2025, colleagues in nutrition and dietetics, student life, and others cultivated an edible garden that provides dinner kits to students, including fresh vegetables and herbs, homemade basil pesto prepared by garden volunteers and nutrition and dietetics staff, as well as dry pasta. The edible garden improves students' access to nutritious food, supporting food security at a local level, and demonstrating how community-based food initiatives can contribute to student wellbeing.

## SDG 3

# Good Health and Wellbeing



SDG 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing focuses on physical health, mental health, prevention, care, and the conditions that support wellbeing across the life course. For ACU, this includes health education, research, clinics, student and staff support services, safe environments, and community health partnerships.



### LEARNING

ACU contributes to the aims of SDG 3 through units of study that build students' knowledge of preventative health, health promotion, culturally safe care, and the translation of evidence into allied health practice:

- **EDMH200 Supporting Teacher Mental Health:** The First Five Years addresses burnout prevention, stress management, and evidence-based strategies to improve teacher wellbeing.
- **HLSC652 Health Promotion and Social Inclusion** examines the physical and social inequalities experienced by people with mental illness.
- **PUBD102 Foundations of Health Promotion and PUBH312 Applied Health Promotion,** each prepare students to design and evaluate health-promotion responses across community and population settings.
- **HLSC650 Recovery Oriented Mental Health** emphasises socially inclusive and culturally safe practice.
- **NRSG527 Correctional Health: Chronic Illness and NRSG372 Principles of Nursing: Chronic Illness and Disability** focus on

priority populations, dignity, and safe, evidence-based care.

- **HLSC505 Health Data Fundamentals** links data to service provision, funding, reporting, and policy development.
- **PARA127 Paramedicine in Practice: Primary Care** translates theory into clinical placement.
- **EXSC679 Clinical Assessment and Exercise for Chronic and Complex Conditions** develops evidence-based multidisciplinary care for complex conditions.

Jointly, these units show that ACU embeds major SDG 3 concerns such as health promotion, equity, safety, and applied clinical capability within its programs of learning.

### RESEARCH

ACU research contributes to SDG 3 through areas of health impact such as health workforce capability, equitable and culturally safe care, prevention and health promotion, and more effective clinical and rehabilitation systems.

#### **The quality and preparedness of the health workforce**

Research on maternal wellbeing and support for new graduate midwives

shows that positive outcomes for women and infants depend not only on clinical care, but also on supportive workforce conditions, reflective practice and workplace cultures that help retain skilled practitioners.

Similarly, research on paramedicine education shows that safer and more responsive health services depend on workforce preparation that extends to safety systems that support, rather than displace, clinician judgement and person-centred care. And research on mental health placement participants shows that immersive, recovery-oriented learning environments can reduce stigma, improve mental health literacy and strengthen both professional capability and help-seeking cultures among future health practitioners.

#### **Equitable, culturally safe and person-centred healthcare**

ACU's research with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities shows the importance of measures that are culturally responsive, data sharing that is strictly consent based, and Indigenous-led governance in improving care quality and safeguarding sovereignty and safety. Research on family violence similarly frames health and wellbeing in

broader, system-aware terms, showing how violence affects women's physical, mental and perinatal wellbeing, and how better screening, referral, support pathways and understanding of coercive control are needed to prevent further harm.

### **Social, behavioural and environmental conditions that shape wellbeing**

Research on walkable neighbourhoods links the built environment to more purposeful and health-supporting physical activity; research on alcohol and sleep highlights the health risks associated with using alcohol as a sleep aid; research on healthy eating in a disadvantaged multiethnic community shows that food practices are shaped by cost of living, culture, knowledge and experience of services; and research on vaccination behaviour shows that vaccine uptake is influenced not only by information, but also by hope, value and practical supports that help translate intention into action.

### **Advancing service improvement and rehabilitation practice**

Research in cerebral palsy shows how better implementation supports, clearer practice elements and stronger clinical resources can improve the uptake of communication technology and goal-directed training, thereby supporting participation and quality of life. This work complements ACU's research contribution to service quality: it shows that good health outcomes depend not only on the existence of interventions, but on practical systems, guidance and systemic support for health interventions.

### **ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS**

ACU's community engagement and partnership activities demonstrate its commitment to improving health

outcomes, advancing health equity, and translating expertise into real-world benefit. Its leading SDG 3-aligned programs include:

- **The Future in Youth:** this program sees ACU work with communities in low socio-economic settings to build physical activity, health knowledge, resilience and general wellbeing among young people, while also strengthening local capability through partnerships with schools and community organisations.
- **ACU Exercise Lifestyle Clinics:** this program offers supervised exercise assessment and intervention for community members, with referral pathways linking ACU to local medical centres, schools and hospitals, in a process that translates health expertise into prevention and rehabilitation services.
- **ACU's placements and partnerships:** this program operates in Australia and overseas in the professions of nursing, midwifery, paramedicine, physiotherapy, nutrition and dietetics. Under the program, students and staff work alongside communities and health professionals to provide health promotion, clinical care, maternal and child health support, falls prevention, food and nutrition initiatives, and culturally informed, community-centred practice.

### **POLICIES**

ACU's policy framework supports healthier and safer working and learning environments through prevention and risk control:

- **The Smoke-Free and Vape-Free Environment Policy** commits ACU to a safe and healthy environment, prohibits smoking and vaping across university premises, vehicles and relevant fieldwork settings,

and directs staff and students to cessation supports including the Employee Assistance Program, Student Counselling Service and Quitline.

- **The WHS Driver Safety Procedure** requires journey planning, fatigue management, rest breaks, hydration, safe rostering and vehicle safety controls for staff who drive as part of their work.
- **The WHSMS Corrective Actions Procedure, WHSMS Health and Air Monitoring Procedure and WHSMS Safety in Design Procedure** each establish practical systems for identifying hazards, recording incidents and illnesses, monitoring exposures, offering counselling and support after adverse results, and designing or refurbishing spaces in ways that minimise risks to health and safety.

### **OPERATIONS**

ACU delivers on-campus allied health services that combine healthcare with education and workforce development, delivered in clinical facilities and supported by a commitment to research-informed practice, teamwork and client-centred care.

ACU's Melbourne Psychology Clinic and the Mary Aikenhead Clinic at the Strathfield Campus expand access to low-cost counselling and psychological assessment for the wider community, while also providing supervised, real-world clinical training for provisional psychologists from ACU's Master of Psychology.

Similarly, ACU campuses have a broader suite of health clinics open to students, staff and the public that offer allied-health services including physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, social work and exercise physiology delivered by student practitioners under qualified supervision.

## SDG 4

# Quality Education



SDG 4 focuses on inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education, together with lifelong learning opportunities. For ACU, this includes access, student success, teaching quality, curriculum design, graduate capability and outreach that broadens educational opportunity.



### LEARNING

ACU contributes to the aims of SDG 4 through inclusive teaching, evidence-based pedagogy, and the preparation of teachers to support diverse learners effectively:

- **EDEC366 Positive Environments for Learning and Development and EDET200 Effective Teaching 3** teach student teachers how to create engaging, inclusive and safe learning environments that promote participation, wellbeing, positive behaviour and learning achievement.
- **EDES100 Understanding Learning and Teaching and EDES500 Foundations of Development and Learning in Australian Childhood Contexts** build knowledge of human development, motivation, learner diversity, and the psychological, social, and cultural factors that shape educational need.
- **EDFD260 Teaching and Managing Learning Environments** develop pedagogy, assessment, classroom management and ethical IT use through research and professional experience.
- **EDFD227 Partnerships: Inclusive and Diverse Learning** teaches collaborative practice, advocacy, and support for children, families

and diverse communities.

- **EDFD459 Learning Spaces** helps future teachers think critically about the design of learning spaces within and beyond the classroom, including electronic learning environments.

### RESEARCH

ACU-linked research contributes to SDG 4 through three connected areas: improving teaching quality and pedagogy; strengthening student engagement, persistence and preparedness; and supporting reflective, adaptive and future-oriented learning environments.

Improving teaching quality and pedagogy

ACU's research examines teaching approaches that strengthen the learning process.

For example, research on remotely delivered literacy instruction found that a language-rich programme produced stronger gains in reading accuracy and phonemic awareness than business-as-usual instruction, while research on the integrated teaching of reading and writing likewise found improvements in writing quality, planning, vocabulary, sentence proficiency and spelling, supporting the value of treating

reading and writing as mutually reinforcing.

In early childhood education, research on schema learning found that teachers became more confident in recognising and extending children's thinking, refined their pedagogy, and strengthened relationships with children, with implications for teacher education and policy.

Strengthening student engagement, persistence and preparedness

ACU research also contributes evidence on approaches that help students engage more fully in learning and prepare for study and professional participation. For example, research using gamified mobile technology found improved engagement and retention among first-year accounting students, including stronger interaction with learning materials, teachers and peers, and greater persistence through later assessment tasks.

Meanwhile, research on cognitive rehearsal training for pre-registration nursing students found increased perceived self-efficacy in responding to workplace incivility, suggesting that structured interventions can better prepare students for challenging professional environments. Likewise, research on integrating computer-assisted and AI-assisted language

learning found positive effects on motivation, personalised learning, language proficiency and learner satisfaction, with the integrated model outperforming comparison groups.

Supporting reflective, adaptive and future-oriented learning environments

A further ACU contribution to SDG 4 lies in research that supports education systems to become more adaptive and better informed.

Research using artificial intelligence and machine learning found that postgraduate student engagement could be predicted with accuracy of up to 85 per cent, indicating a potential role for learning analytics in earlier intervention and course improvement.

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU advances SDG 4 through a large-scale work integrated learning (WIL) model delivered across all three faculties: the Faculty of Education and Arts, the Faculty of Health Sciences, and the Faculty of Law and Business.

ACU's WIL program embeds practice-based learning so students can apply classroom learning in real workplaces and community settings. WIL at ACU integrates the theory of learning with the practice of work, a category that includes placements, professional experience, clinical education and internships. Altogether, ACU supports its students with more than 30,000 tailored WIL opportunities each year, supported by preparation such as simulation environments and authentic assessments that build confidence and work-readiness.

In the Faculty of Health Sciences, this includes supervised practice in real-world clinical contexts (including ACU clinics) under qualified educators; and across disciplines, WIL includes partner-based projects, including online options, with industry, community and government.

In the Faculty of Law and Business,

WIL is embedded across law and business programs through a mix of workplace placements in legal/professional/community organisations, simulated workplace learning such as interviewing, negotiating or mooted, consulting and research projects with industry partners. It is also included in structured experiences such as pro bono legal practice and business professional experience with corporate, government and not-for-profit organisations so that students gain job-ready capability and can receive 10 – 20 credit points toward their degree.

### POLICIES

ACU's policy framework supports the continuous development of both academic and professional staff as part of delivering high-quality education:

- The Professional Learning for Academic Staff Policy provides for structured professional learning aligned with the ACU Teaching Criteria and Standards Framework, Research Quality Standards and the Higher Education Standards Framework, and assigns the Centre for Education and Innovation responsibility for developing, implementing and evaluating professional learning programs for academic staff. It also supports a wide range of capability-building activities, including induction, teaching development programs, research studies, conference participation, postgraduate study support, teaching grants and awards, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training.
- The Professional Development for Professional Staff Policy provides for coordinated professional development, induction, online learning, leadership development, on-the-job learning and equity-based access to development

opportunities for professional staff whose work supports the university's educational mission.

### OPERATIONS

ACU applies a set of mandated Physical Teaching Space Standards (the standards) to ensure that it delivers to students a learning environment that by design improves learning outcomes, inclusion and student experience. The standards recognise that effective teaching and learning spaces support learning and that students require high-quality, appropriately equipped environments across all campuses.

The standards provide for the following:

- flexible spaces that support different teaching approaches, with technology, Wi-Fi, writable surfaces, movable furniture, breakout areas and room configurations that enable collaboration, communication and group work
- accessibility features including wheelchair access, adjustable-height tables and compliance with disability requirements
- comfortable and welcoming formal and informal learning spaces that support wellbeing and a sense of community and belonging.

An important complementary policy to the Physical Teaching Space Standards is the WHSMS Health and Air Monitoring Procedure, which supports safe working and learning spaces by requiring prevention-focused monitoring and response where staff or students may be exposed to hazards such as noise, hazardous substances or communicable disease.

## SDG 5

# Gender Equality



SDG 5 – Gender Equality focuses on eliminating discrimination and advancing the full participation, safety, and leadership of women and girls. For ACU, this may include gender equity in access and progression, prevention of gender-based harm, fair employment practices, and gender-responsive policy and service design.



### LEARNING

ACU contributes to the aims of SDG 5 with units of study that examine gender inequality, women's leadership, women's representation, and the social structures that shape inequity:

- **PSYC223 Psychology of Sexuality and Gender** explores gender stereotypes, gender identity, sexuality, and the ways societal dynamics contribute to the development and maintenance of gender and sexual inequalities.
- **HIST218 Oral History: Australian Women's Voices** recovers women's experiences and perspectives across Australian history, including those of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in varied cultural and ethnic contexts.
- **THMM511 Theology and the Challenges and Opportunities for Women's Leadership** directs students' focus to women's marginalisation in leadership in Church and society.
- **HRMG214 Recruitment, Selection and Remuneration** contributes an employment-systems perspective through its attention to diversity, equity, and legal requirements in staffing and remuneration practices.

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU advances SDG 5 through structured programs and institution-wide equity planning that address women's leadership formation and workplace barriers to gender equity. The Women's Leadership for Mission program, which is designed by, with and for women, supports participants to build knowledge, skills, dispositions and networks that foster women's participation and leadership in the Church, society, and economic and political life.

In parallel, ACU's Athena Swan Bronze Award Action Plan (2024 – 2030) identifies key barriers to equity, diversity and inclusion at ACU and sets actions and targets to reduce gender pay gaps, improve women's representation and progression in the university's senior roles, and improve support for parents and carers. The plan also addresses workplace safety and equality by targeting bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment) and discrimination through improved reporting, prevention and support mechanisms while strengthening equity data to improve ACU's monitoring of progress.

### POLICIES

ACU's policy framework supports both gender equality directly and the safe, supportive institutional conditions in which it can occur.

- The ACU Equal Opportunity Policy establishes the university's support for equal opportunity, diversity and gender equality in employment and education and requires management practices to be free from bias and unlawful discrimination. The policy further commits ACU to gender pay equity across all roles through transparent action plans informed by annual gender pay gap analysis.
- The ACU Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence Policy commits the university to a safe and respectful working, learning and living environment, prevention initiatives, support services, and trauma-informed, people-centred processes for disclosures and formal reports of gender-based violence.
- The ACU Provision of Support for Victims of Family or Domestic Violence Policy provides all staff, including casuals, with paid leave for medical, legal, counselling, relocation and safety needs, while requiring managerial support, referral to the Employee Assistance Program and confidentiality.



## SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation

SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation focuses on safe water, sanitation, hygiene, water efficiency, and protection of water systems. For ACU, this often involves campus water management, pollution prevention, sustainable design, and research or partnerships that improve water outcomes beyond the campus.



### LEARNING

ACU's learning program contributes to the aims of SDG 6 through units of study that examine issues of safe water quality, pollution prevention, and community water capability:

- **GEOG311 Catchments to Coasts** teaches students how rivers, catchments and coasts function, examines the impacts of human activity on these systems, and develops skills in impact assessment applied to real-world issues such as safe water resource supply and management, water storage, risks to water resources, and catchment rehabilitation.
- **EDSI168 Science, Inquiry and Sustainability** prepares future teachers to build scientific understanding of sustainability, including resource conservation and participatory approaches to environmental problem-solving in early education settings.
- **GEOG214 Sustainability: The Global Challenge** broadens the alignment by connecting sustainability to natural resource management, environmental degradation, and ethical responsibility, including Indigenous knowledges that can advance sustainable environmental management.

### OPERATIONS

ACU develops and manages its campuses to minimise potable water use through smart design, efficient fixtures, and sustainable landscapes.

ACU's campuses collectively record one of the lowest rates of water consumption per student in the Australian university sector, demonstrating sector-leading water efficiency. The most recent data from the annual survey of the Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association shows that ACU used 2.88 kilolitres of water per equivalent full-time student (EFTSL), just 30 per cent of the Australian university average of 9.5 kilolitres of water per EFTSL.

ACU campuses have a combined 600,000 litres of water storage capacity, which the university uses to capture and reuse stormwater for toilet flushing and irrigation, reducing reliance on mains supply.

Sustainable landscape design is another key feature of ACU's water strategy. At the Ballarat Campus, a xeriscaped garden showcases drought-tolerant plantings that thrive with minimal watering. Similarly, the Melbourne Campus features an 1,800-square-metre urban park that replaced a former multilevel concrete car park. The park integrates Water Sensitive Urban

Design (WSUD) elements such as rain gardens, permeable surfaces, and native vegetation, to naturally filter stormwater and support local biodiversity.

Through these initiatives, ACU demonstrates how thoughtful planning, recycled water use, and resilient landscape design can work together to conserve water, enhance urban ecosystems, and build climate-adapted campuses that reflect environmental stewardship and the values of sustainable design.

## SDG 7

# Affordable and Clean Energy

SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy focuses on reliable, sustainable, and increasingly low-carbon energy systems. For ACU, this usually includes renewable energy, energy efficiency, electrification, operational performance, and teaching, research or partnerships that support a just energy transition.



### LEARNING

ACU contributes to the aims of SDG 7 through teaching that builds understanding of decarbonisation, sustainability, policy, and the justice dimensions of energy transition:

- **GEOG310 Sustainable Cities and Communities** addresses climate-friendly cities, urban decarbonisation, infrastructure, governance, and decision-making for sustainable urban development.
- **THEL215 All Roads Lead to: Mapping Laudato Si' and UN Sustainable Development Goals** directly engages SDGs 7–12 through themes of economic justice, unjust economic structures, community resilience and empowerment, and action at local, national, and global levels, including dialogue with policy makers and practitioners.
- **PUBH640 Global Health and Sustainable Development** adds a broader systems perspective by linking sustainable development, environmental health, global inequalities, and the roles of major actors and trans-national corporations.

### RESEARCH

ACU research contributes evidence on both the resilience and the governance dimensions of climate response.

For example, ACU research on climate risk and corporate investment behavior in emerging economies found that firms in higher climate-risk regions experience lower investment efficiency and adopt more cautious investment strategies in response to operational and financial uncertainty. The researchers concluded that climate resilience requires more than awareness of physical risk alone; it also depends on integrating climate risk into financial, investment and regulatory settings.

### POLICIES

ACU's Sustainability Policy provides a clear institutional basis for improving energy performance by linking sustainability to reduced energy consumption, lower operating costs, and more efficient campus infrastructure. The policy commits the university to set objectives and targets, provide supporting information and infrastructure, and apply resource efficiency, behaviour change, sustainable building design and new technologies to reduce environmental impacts. The policy is broader

than energy alone but nonetheless demonstrates that ACU has embedded clean-energy principles within its operational planning and campus development framework.

### OPERATIONS

ACU's Australian campuses have been powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity since 1 July 2021. This electricity is supplied by wind and solar farms throughout Australia and has eliminated about 85 per cent (or more than 15,000 tonnes) of ACU's annual carbon footprint.

ACU also operates two solar systems with a combined size of 120 kilowatts. These are installed at its Ballarat and Melbourne campuses.

The university also strives to constantly increase its energy efficiency, which it measures by how much energy is used per square meter of the floor space of campus buildings. Using this measure, ACU is Australia's most energy efficient university: in 2024, it used around 0.33 gigajoules of energy per unit of floor area, which is almost twice as energy efficient as the Australian university sector as a whole, according to the Annual Survey of the Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association.

## SDG 8

# Decent Work and Economic Growth

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth focuses on fair work, safe conditions, productive employment, and inclusive economic opportunity. For ACU, this can include employment practices, student employability, ethical supply chains, enterprise support, placements, and research or engagement that strengthens decent work.



### LEARNING

ACU's program of learning contributes to the aims of SDG 8, especially through teaching on labour rights, workplace wellbeing, employability and modern slavery risk:

- **OHSE312 Worker Health and Wellbeing and LAWS212 Employment Law** address workplace hazards, psychological safety, harassment and bullying, return to work, employment entitlements, underpayment of wages, occupational health and safety, dispute resolution, and industrial action.
- **LAWS609 Modern Slavery and the Law** examines forced labour, debt bondage, child exploitation, legal and policy responses, victim protection, and supply-chain responsibilities under the Australian Modern Slavery Act.
- **LHRG106 Human Rights and Business Regulation** develops understanding of due diligence, grievance mechanisms, and human-rights compliance in business operations and supply chains.
- **LAWS458 Children's Rights** focuses on issues of labour exploitation and child protection.
- **LAWS505 Australian Visa System: Economic Migration**

develops advanced professional skills in employer-sponsored and skilled migration matters.

- **ECON107 Macroeconomics 1: The Workings of a National Economy** builds practical analytical capability in economic policy and development.

### RESEARCH

ACU research contributes to SDG 8 through three connected areas that show the university's consistent concern with the quality of economic activity, the conditions under which people work, and the institutional settings that support fairer and more sustainable outcomes:

Responsible governance and sustainability-oriented economic practice

Research on corporate governance and organisational outcomes found that board demographic, structural and capital diversity were positively associated with stronger carbon performance, and that board independence was positively associated with ESG performance. The same research also showed that sustainability-linked compensation incentives and a sustainability committee could strengthen

governance outcomes, including in situations where leadership arrangements might otherwise weaken ESG performance.

Decent work, workforce wellbeing and organisational support

Research on work-passion profiles among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian employees found that role ambiguity and job overload were associated with less desirable patterns of functioning, while more harmonious forms of work passion were linked to stronger psychological wellbeing and resilience at work. Meanwhile, research on sessional teaching staff in pre-registration nursing programs found that teaching was experienced as meaningful and identity-affirming, but that sustained engagement depended on role clarity, collegial inclusion, regular communication and ongoing pedagogical support.

Inclusive labour-market participation and innovation in economic activity  
Research on public procurement and active labour-market policy found that governments are increasingly using procurement to help disadvantaged groups gain access to better-quality jobs, and showed that procurement can support fairer employment outcomes

by embedding labour standards such as job security, training, employee voice and fair work conditions into contracting and supply chains. At the same time, the study found that this connection remains uneven and is not yet coherently integrated across policy systems. Other ACU research, which investigated livestream commerce in tourism, showed how innovative engagement models can stimulate purchasing behaviour in tourism-related economic activity.

## ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU's Co-Lab program demonstrates institutional commitment aligned to SDG 8 by building practical pathways from learning to enterprise and employment through a community-focused innovation system. Co-Lab's inclusive co-working hubs and entrepreneurship programs support students, alumni and the wider community to develop and scale ventures through mentoring, workshops, pitch programs and accelerator pathways, with reported outcomes including \$7.9 million raised by hub startups and 743 jobs created.

Co-Lab also strengthens employability through Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and structured connections between startups/innovative businesses and students seeking real-world experience and career-ready capability development. In addition, Co-Lab supports ethical innovation and industry collaboration through research commercialisation activity such as the NSW TechVouchers approach, which connects SMEs with university researchers and over time has generated at least \$300,000 in research revenue and industry-linked projects.

## POLICIES

ACU's policy framework supports decent work through defined employment conditions, staff wellbeing, flexible work, equitable remuneration, capability development and responsible procurement:

- The Employment of Fixed Term Staff Policy, Employment of Fractional Staff Policy, Employment of Part Time Staff Policy and Employment of Sessional Academic Staff Policy set formal conditions for different categories of staff, including arrangements for hours and work patterns, notice, severance, paid induction, remuneration and, in some cases, conversion to continuing employment.
- The Employee Assistance Program Policy provides confidential counselling and wellbeing support for staff and their immediate families.
- The Flexible Working Arrangements Policy gives staff access to flexible work options and requires requests to be considered on equitable and transparent grounds.
- The Remuneration Policy commits the university to transparent and equitable pay, including annual gender pay gap analysis.
- The Professional Development for Professional Staff Policy supports ongoing staff capability.
- The Childcare Support for Academic Staff Policy provides targeted assistance for eligible academic staff returning from parental leave to participate in research dissemination beyond employment settings.
- The Procurement Policy requires probity, modern slavery risk reduction and consideration of positive social impact in sourcing decisions.

## OPERATIONS

ACU's anti-slavery work is an integral part of our institutional commitment to decent work, ethical business practice and the protection of human dignity. ACU applies governance oversight of this commitment through its Senate directly and the Senate's Finance and Resources Committee, as well as the Eradicating Modern Slavery Working Group. ACU's Vision 2033 strategy names modern slavery as a strategic issue for the university.

ACU operationalises this commitment in several ways:

- ACU maps risk across its supply chain of more than 3,000 suppliers, targets higher-risk categories (including cleaning, security, construction and clothing), and strengthens due diligence using supplier questionnaires and other functions in its Sedex supplier portal.
- ACU also embeds decent work expectations in its contracts. For example, by requiring cleaning and security contractors to take reasonable steps to eliminate modern slavery in their supply chains, undertake due diligence, provide annual modern slavery statements, and accept potential integrity payroll audits, alongside confirmations about direct employment and award-based pay and entitlements.
- ACU links these actions to decent work inside the university, such as fair and equitable remuneration arrangements under the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, steps to reduce insecure academic work, complaint pathways for bullying/harassment/discrimination, and remediation of entitlement errors, and acknowledges that the relevance of modern slavery extends beyond its procurement activities to its international students, a cohort recognised as vulnerable to labour abuses.



## SDG 9

# Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure focuses on resilient infrastructure, innovation, and the responsible use of knowledge and technology to solve real-world problems. In a university setting, this commonly includes research translation, innovation ecosystems, digital capability, sustainable campus infrastructure, and external collaboration.



### LEARNING

ACU's program of learning contributes to the aims of SDG 9 through teaching on innovation, entrepreneurship, technology, applied design and translation into real-world contexts:

- **EDLE658 Leading Innovation and ENTD301 Managing Entrepreneurship and Innovation** develop students' capability in leading change, managing innovation, commercialising new ventures, and creating sustainable social and economic value.
- **ENTD203 Innovating Through Technology** focuses on digital innovation, responsible use of advanced technologies, and business-model innovation.
- **BMSC303 Drug Development** gives students a clear view of how innovation moves from discovery to market through clinical trials, regulation, licensing, patents, and scaling of businesses.
- **TECH212 Textile Innovations** uses industry and community excursions and asks students to respond to identified user needs.
- **TECH306 Product Design Innovation** combines user-centred redesign, safety, accessibility,

sustainability, lifecycle thinking, and preparation for professional internship.

### RESEARCH

In 2025, ACU researchers investigated how advanced digital tools can improve the performance, transparency and practical usability of smart-building systems. For example, in research into the applications of Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) and interpretable Artificial Intelligence (AI) in smart buildings and energy savings in buildings, researchers examined the use of transparent AI methods across predictive modelling, energy monitoring, fault detection and optimisation in buildings. They found that these approaches can improve energy forecasting accuracy, strengthen decision-making, and make model outputs more interpretable for end users. The study also concluded that AI-driven energy-management systems can contribute to sustainability by reducing energy waste and improving operational efficiency, while helping building managers, industry and policymakers better understand the factors driving energy performance.

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU's Co-Lab program operates a university-based innovation ecosystem that connects students, researchers, industry and community into practical pathways for venture development and research translation. The program delivers accessible co-working hubs at North Sydney, Strathfield and Melbourne campuses and hybrid programs that provide modern facilities, networking opportunities and structured entrepreneurship education to help participants develop ideas, test opportunities and build viable ventures.

Co-Lab also strengthens industry-linked innovation through partnerships and government-supported commercialisation initiatives, including the NSW TechVouchers program that enables SMEs to collaborate with ACU researchers to commercialise new products, technologies and services, with reported outcomes that include, over multiple years of operation, at least \$300,000 in research revenue generated and three projects funded. Across its operations, Co-Lab reports measurable innovation-ecosystem outputs including more than 110

industry and university connections facilitated, more than 400 startup events, and \$3.1 million in grant income generated.

## **POLICIES**

ACU's policy framework provides a documented basis for infrastructure planning, facilities management, ICT governance, research administration and open access to research outputs:

- The Capital Planning Policy supports long-term investment planning across physical infrastructure, virtual infrastructure and business improvement initiatives through a 10-year rolling Infrastructure Plan.
- The Facilities Planning, Design and Management Policy requires campus spaces to be planned, designed and managed to support

teaching, research and engagement.

- The ICT Governance Policy sets priorities for ICT strategy, governance, investment, standards and project review across teaching, learning, research and administration.
- The Higher Degree Research Policy establishes structured arrangements for research degree administration.
- The Open Access for ACU Research Policy requires broad dissemination, repository deposit and reuse of research outputs.

## **OPERATIONS**

Since 2011, ACU's commitment to environmentally sustainable design has meant that major new buildings are infrastructure enabled by innovation, commonly incorporating

digital management systems, high-quality materials and higher-performance design to reduce resource use while improving health and functionality, in line with the aims of SDG 9.

These innovative characteristics are apparent in campus buildings such as the Daniel Mannix Building (6-Star Green Star), St Brigid's Building in Ballarat (5-Star Green Star), Brisbane's Mercy Building, Canberra's Veritas Building (5-Star Green Star), the John Paul II Building, the Raheen Library refurbishment, and Melbourne's Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building (5-Star Green Star). In each of those buildings ACU has embedded innovations such as advanced HVAC and energy management, smart lighting and controls, high-performance glazing, rainwater reuse, solar generation, and low-emission fit-outs.

# SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities



SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities focuses on reducing systemic disadvantage and improving equity in access, participation, and outcomes. For ACU, this may include widening participation, inclusive teaching and services, cultural safety, disability access, equitable employment practices, and advocacy or partnership work that addresses inequality.



## LEARNING

ACU's program of learning contributes to the aims of SDG 10 through teaching that develops inclusive practice, cultural responsiveness, anti-racist capability, and research and advocacy skills for social change:

- **EDET300 Effective Teaching 4: Students with Disability and Inclusive Education and EDFD478 Catering for Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom** prepare pre-service teachers to support students with disability and other diverse learners through differentiated teaching, Universal Design for Learning, effective adjustments, and inclusive school communities.
- **EDFD653 Social and Cultural Contexts of Education** examines how social class, ethnicity and gender shape educational outcomes.
- **OTHY211 Social Determinants of First People's Health and Wellbeing** develops culturally responsive practice from First Peoples' perspectives through community engagement and work with cultural mentors.
- **OTHY204 Occupational Participation and Disability** links

participation, disability, culture, and connection to Country.

- **SWTP213 Race and Identity: Anti-Racist Social Work Practice** engages students on matters including anti-racist strategies, intersectionality, and advocacy within their professional practice.
- **HLSC652 Health Promotion and Social Inclusion, EDRS652 Practitioner-led Research for Social Change, EDRE627 Educating for Social Justice** extend this contribution through research, advocacy, and program development focused on equity, access, dignity, and social inclusion.

## RESEARCH

ACU research contributes to SDG 10 through three connected areas: reducing barriers to participation and access; building culturally safe and inclusive systems; and generating evidence for more equitable policy and service design.

### Reducing barriers to participation and access

ACU research contributes evidence on both the lived experience of exclusion and the practical design of more inclusive responses. Examples include:

- research on young people's views of disability in Australia found that negative attitudes and stereotypes continue to shape unequal experiences in education, employment and community life, with participants describing exclusion, underestimation and barriers to participation
- research on an inclusive dance guide for children with cerebral palsy developed a co-designed, evidence-based resource to support fuller participation in community dance settings
- research on rural and urban youths' higher-education aspirations found that young people in rural Australia were significantly less likely to aspire to higher education, and that this disparity reflects not only differences in social capital but also wider structures of rural life, resource distribution and educational access.

### Building culturally safe and inclusive systems

A second contribution lies in research that shows inequality as a question of power, safety and institutional design. Examples include:

- research using Indigenous

methodologies on health-data sharing found that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander service users and health workers preferred consent-based, selective data sharing, and that custodial stewardship and Indigenous-led governance are important for protecting sovereignty, cultural safety and equitable service outcomes

- research on work-passion profiles among Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian employees found that role ambiguity and job overload were associated with less desirable patterns of functioning, while more harmonious forms of work passion were linked to stronger psychological wellbeing and resilience at work across both groups.

### **Generating evidence for more equitable policy and service design**

ACU research also contributes to SDG 10 through evidence that more equitable outcomes depend on better-designed services and stronger long-term policy settings. Examples include:

- research evaluating a 24/7 telephone health advice and triage service found that it positively influenced care-seeking behaviour, increased self-management, and reduced unnecessary emergency department and emergency-service use, indicating that accessible service models can reduce pressure on overstretched systems while improving pathways to care
- research on changing life expectancy in European countries found that countries which sustained stronger reductions in mortality from cardiovascular disease and cancer were better able to withstand the COVID-19 period, highlighting how long-term policy choices affecting prevention, diet, physical activity, obesity risk and access to health care materially shape inequality in health outcomes and resilience.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS**

ACU's scholarship offerings contribute to SDG 10 by reducing financial and practical barriers that can exclude students from accessing, participating in and succeeding at university.

ACU's Equity scholarships provide direct support for students seeking to overcome financial hardship or other disadvantages, while the Relocation Scholarship supports commencing undergraduates experiencing hardship or needing to relocate to study at ACU's Sydney, Ballarat or Canberra campuses.

ACU also targets accommodation cost pressures through the ACU Accommodation Scholarship (a 20 per cent remission in student accommodation rental fees) and the International Student Accommodation Scholarship (a 20 per cent remission for 12 months), helping students focus on their studies rather than housing costs.

Furthermore, ACU's Indigenous Accommodation Award supports Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students studying away from home and community by covering the full cost of accommodation, while the EAPP Accommodation Scholarship assists eligible elite athletes and performers who require accommodation during their studies.

## **POLICIES**

ACU's policy framework includes specific measures to reduce barriers and support more equitable participation across both staff and students. These policies include:

- The Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Cultural and Ceremonial Leave Guideline, recognises the importance of cultural obligations and provides paid leave for eligible staff to attend them.
- The Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Language Allowance Guideline provides an allowance where Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language capability is required in employment.

- The Discrimination and Harassment Policy commits the university to a safe and inclusive environment free from discrimination and harassment across a wide range of protected attributes, with complaint pathways that are intended to be sensitive, fair, timely and confidential.
- The Remuneration Policy commits ACU to transparent and equitable pay, including annual gender pay gap analysis.
- The Student Veteran Support Policy provides flexible study options and tailored support for student veterans.
- The Students with Disability Policy provides reasonable adjustments, education inclusion plans and access and disability service support to enable equitable participation in learning and university life.

## **OPERATIONS**

ACU advances SDG 10 by reducing barriers to participation and success for students with disability and related support needs through its Access and Disability Service.

As part of this service, ACU has a dedicated team focused on establishing support for students with a temporary or ongoing medical or mental health condition, disability, or significant carer responsibilities. Moreover, the service works with students to implement reasonable adjustments (including extensions and exam adjustments), connect them with learning support services, and assist with physical access arrangements.

ACU also strengthens inclusion for students with hidden disabilities through participation in the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program, with trained 'sunflower champions' on each campus who can provide additional support and assistance to students who choose to wear a sunflower lanyard.

ACU also adopts other accessibility measures such as campus accessibility information and processes for disability parking for valid permit holders.

## SDG 11

# Sustainable Cities and Communities

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities focuses on inclusive, resilient, safe, and sustainable places. For ACU, this may include campus planning, transport, accessibility, resilience, local liveability, cultural contribution, and partnerships with communities and governments on urban sustainability.



### LEARNING

ACU contributes to the aims of SDG 11 through teaching on sustainable urban development, resilience, liveability, public space, and evidence-based responses to urban and environmental challenges:

- **GEOG310 Sustainable Cities and Communities** addresses transport, housing, infrastructure, public and private space, urban inequality, homelessness, environmental justice, sustainable urbanisation, climate-friendly cities, and urban decarbonisation, while also developing practical capability in urban mapping, use of community data, and scenario planning for urban environmental management.
- **GEOG218 Natural Disasters: Risk, Response and Resilience** focuses on natural hazards, disaster risk reduction, preparedness, recovery, and resilience-building for communities and settlements, including the social dimensions of vulnerability.
- **GEOG216 Climate Change: Past, Present and Future** attends to issues of vulnerability, mitigation, adaptation, and policy responses.
- **NUTR311 Food, Society, and the Environment** asks students

to propose real-world solutions to food-system issues.

- **TECH213 Food Industries** includes an industry excursion linked to practical food-industry contexts.

### RESEARCH

ACU research contributes evidence on safer streets, healthier neighbourhood design, and more inclusive community environments. Examples include:

- research that examined hazard perception and gap acceptance in a virtual reality pedestrian street-crossing task developed and validated a virtual-reality tool for assessing pedestrian hazard perception and gap acceptance, providing an evidence base for future pedestrian road-safety research, education and intervention
- ACU researchers investigated neighbourhood walkability and found that residents of higher-walkability neighbourhoods accumulated more purposeful and higher-intensity walking patterns, supporting the view that neighbourhood design can improve urban liveability and health even where total activity volume does not

change

- research that aimed to understand determinants of healthy eating in an Australian priority community identified how food access, transport, affordability, accessibility and cultural fit shape healthy living in a disadvantaged local community, and concluded that community-based, community-accessible and community-owned responses are needed.

### POLICIES

ACU's policy framework provides for long-term planning and governance of physical, virtual and social infrastructure, alongside practical support for community engagement and campus management:

- The Capital Planning Policy establishes a 10-year rolling Infrastructure Plan and governance arrangements for capital planning, prioritisation and delivery across physical infrastructure, virtual infrastructure, business improvement initiatives, sport, health and wellbeing projects and social infrastructure projects.
- The Community Engagement Time Release Policy supports staff participation in approved

community-based activities that contribute to the common good, address social justice issues and assist communities experiencing disadvantage or marginalisation.

- The Community Service and Emergency Services Leave Policy provides paid leave for community duties and emergency assistance.
- The Facilities Planning, Design and Management Policy requires campus spaces to be planned, designed and managed to support teaching, research and engagement, provide appropriate amenities and maintain health and safety standards.

## OPERATIONS

ACU's commitment to environmentally sustainable design (ESD) has ensured that every major new building project since 2011 has integrated the principles of efficiency, health and stewardship of resources in alignment with ACU's mission to care for creation:

- The Daniel Mannix Building (2011) at Melbourne Campus has a 6-Star Green Star rating reflecting world-leading sustainable design, achieved through Active-Mass Cooling,

underfloor air distribution and 90 per cent recycling of construction waste.

- The John Paul II Building (2016) at Brisbane Campus features automated ventilation, zoned lighting and high daylight access.
- The St Brigid's Building (2017) at Ballarat Campus is the city of Ballarat's first 5-Star Green Star building and employs solar generation, xeriscape landscaping and a physical structure with high-recycled-content.
- The Mercy Building (2018) in Brisbane set an ACU benchmark for integrated energy management, enabling campus-wide reductions of 265 megawatt hours (MWh) and 210 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through its advanced HVAC system. Water-efficient fixtures and recycled materials complement this performance.
- The Veritas Building (2019) at Canberra Campus has high-performance windows, very high indoor air quality, and a 140 kilolitres rainwater-reuse system that underpin the building's 5-Star Green Star rating, delivering an 84 per cent reduction in greenhouse

gas emissions compared with conventional buildings.

- The 5-Star Green Star Mother Teresa Building (2023) at ACU's Melbourne Campus sets a new benchmark for energy-efficient and sustainable design. It uses advanced air-conditioning and lighting systems, efficient glazing, and smart controls to cut energy use and greenhouse gas emissions by more than 40 per cent compared with a standard building. Solar panels on the roof supply clean electricity, while energy-saving lifts and escalators further reduce power demand. The design also ensures excellent indoor comfort, with healthy air quality and consistent temperatures all year round.

Common to all projects are efficient water systems, sustainable materials, indoor environmental quality, and active transport facilities such as bike storage and showers. Together these projects demonstrate that ACU's building portfolio meets the highest standards of environmental performance, resource conservation and occupant wellbeing, embodying the university's commitment to the care of our common home.



## SDG 12

# Responsible Consumption and Production

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production focuses on resource efficiency, waste reduction, circular systems, and responsible purchasing. For ACU, this often includes procurement standards, waste and recycling systems, hazardous materials management, sustainable operations, and behaviour change supported by good design and governance.



### LEARNING

ACU's program of learning contributes to the aims of SDG 12 through teaching on sustainable food systems, safe production processes, product and packaging design, and the social and environmental drivers of consumption. Examples include:

- **NUTR311 Food, Society, and the Environment** examines the ways in which sustainable and environmentally sound food systems are urgently needed and requires students to analyse food systems critically and propose real-world solutions.
- **NUTR304 Food Product Design and Development** develops practical capability in designing new food products and packaging in response to public-health issues, food-safety requirements, labelling obligations, and consumer acceptance, with continual attention to quality control across production.
- **TECH213 Food Industries** has a focus on food production and processing, packaging, quality management, sustainability, and health and safety.

- **TECH207 Food and Society** includes content on the treatment of food contaminants, cross-contamination, safe work practices, risk assessment, and social influences on food selection.

### RESEARCH

Under SDG 12, ACU research contributes evidence on the governance conditions that support more sustainable resource use, stronger environmental accountability, and more responsible production systems. Examples include:

- In a research project that examined links between Boards of Directors' demographic, structural and capital diversity and corporate carbon performance, ACU researchers found that diversity in those fields was positively associated with corporate carbon performance
- a research investigation of Boards of Directors' capital diversity, values diversity, audit committee diversity, and corporate carbon performance showed that diversity in those fields was positively associated with corporate carbon performance, with sustainability committees, when present, playing a partial mediating role.

### OPERATIONS

ACU aims to minimise the amount of waste that it sends to landfill. This requires ACU to reduce and to recycle as much of its waste as possible.

- **Waste reduction:** Since 2012, ACU has reduced the amount of waste it generates by 50 per cent. In 2012, ACU generated 1,170 tonnes of rubbish; in 2025, it generated approximately 600 tonnes, or about 22 kilograms per equivalent full-time student.
- **Recycling:** ACU's recycling rate in 2025 is 50 per cent of its total waste generation. ACU recycles paper, cardboard, plastic, electronic waste, garden waste and food waste.
- **Organic waste:** In 2022 ACU introduced food waste collection into its campuses to complement its garden waste recycling. ACU's food waste is composted and returned to gardens and farms to support healthier soils and ACU's garden waste is mulched and then re-used on gardens. In 2025, ACU diverted nearly 50 tonnes of garden and food waste from landfill.

# SDG 13 Climate Action

SDG 13 – Climate action focuses on reducing emissions, strengthening resilience, and aligning decisions with a credible transition to a low-carbon future. For ACU, this can include decarbonisation of operations, climate risk management, research and teaching on climate, and transparent performance reporting.



## LEARNING

ACU's program of learning contributes to the aims of SDG 13 through teaching on climate change, disaster risk, resilience, adaptation, sustainability, and governance:

- **GEOG218 Natural Disasters: Risk, Response and Resilience** develops students' understanding of natural hazards, disaster risk reduction, preparedness, recovery, vulnerability, public-health impacts, and the building of disaster resilience in communities and settlements.
- **GEOG216 Climate Change: Past, Present and Future** addresses the science, causes, impacts, and evidence-based solutions to climate change, including renewable-energy technology, government intervention, mitigation, adaptation, and policy responses.
- **GEOG306 Extreme Earth: Natural Hazards, Risk and Vulnerability** focuses students' learning on climate change mitigation, adaptation, reconstruction, recovery, and risk management.
- **EMGT301 Event Management: Economic Social and Environmental Impacts** applies

triple-bottom-line thinking and sustainable planning to event management.

- **MGMT309 Governance, Risk and Operations Management** presents governance, risk, and reporting capability as organisational responses to complex environmental challenges, including climate change.

## RESEARCH

ACU research aligns with SDG 13 through work that supports decarbonisation, climate-risk analysis, adaptive capacity and climate-related transparency. Highlights include:

- a systematic review of the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) to help save energy in buildings concludes that AI can improve building energy management, reduce energy waste and strengthen operational efficiency
- research into climate risk and corporate investment behaviour in emerging economies shows that climate risk can reduce firms' investment efficiency in higher-risk settings, providing evidence that climate change is materially affecting economic decision-making and that climate risk needs to be

integrated into investment and policy frameworks

- research into corporate power relationships finds that CEO power is associated with weaker climate disclosure, unless countered by stronger governance and monitoring, indicating the type of institutional conditions needed for more credible climate transparency
- research into river and lake interactions in Jiangxi Province, China strengthens understanding of hydrological climate impacts and supports more informed adaptation planning
- research into the concept of planetary health among health professionals extends climate action into professional formation by linking healthcare practice, environmental responsibility and planetary health.

## POLICIES

ACU's policy framework supports climate action through documented sustainability objectives, transparent reporting, and climate-relevant campus planning and management requirements. For example:

- The Sustainability Policy requires the university to establish

objectives and targets to reduce environmental impacts, publish sustainability objectives, targets and performance data, and apply resource efficiency, behaviour change, building design and new technologies to reduce environmental impacts. It also commits ACU to designing, constructing and refurbishing buildings and grounds to minimise lifecycle environmental impacts while improving wellbeing and productivity, and assigns senior leaders responsibility for integrating sustainability into teaching, research, corporate services, campus operations and procurement.

- The Facilities Planning, Design and Management Policy complements this by requiring university space

to be planned and managed in alignment with strategic objectives, with efficient use of space, support for teaching, research and engagement, and professionally managed campus facilities and amenities.

## **OPERATIONS**

Carbon management is a core concern in ACU's operations, with the following initiatives, targets and programs underway as part of ACU's business-as-usual operational management:

- Carbon emissions target: ACU is committed to carbon neutrality by 2040. It will reduce scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions by 60 per cent by 2030 compared to a 2020 baseline and reduce scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions by 95 per cent by 2040, and offset the remaining emissions from 2040.

- Renewable electricity: ACU's Australian campuses have been powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity since 1 July 2021. This electricity is supplied by wind and solar farms throughout Australia and has eliminated about 85 per cent (or more than 15,000 tonnes) of ACU's annual carbon footprint. ACU also operates two solar systems with a combined size of 120 kilowatts. These are installed at its Ballarat and Melbourne campuses.
- Business travel: ACU's 2025 business travel emissions remained well below pre-pandemic levels, with air travel generating 2,372 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, less than half the university's 2018–2019 average of around 6,000 tonnes.

# SDG 14 Life Below Water

SDG 14 – Life Below Water focuses on protecting aquatic ecosystems, improving water quality, and reducing harmful impacts on rivers, wetlands, coasts and oceans. For ACU, this may include pollution prevention, research, education, restoration activity, and community partnerships that strengthen stewardship of water environments.



## LEARNING

ACU's program of learning contributes to the aims of SDG 14 through teaching that builds ocean and coastal literacy:

- **GEOG218 Natural Disasters: Risk, Response and Resilience** requires students to examine coastal and maritime hazards, tsunamis, disaster risk reduction, and resilience-building for settlements and communities, helping students understand how aquatic and coastal environments shape human vulnerability and response.
- **GEOG216 Climate Change: Past, Present and Future** teaches atmospheric and oceanic processes and interactions, and examines sea-level rise and coastal and island impacts of climate change.

## OPERATIONS

ACU designs and manages its facilities to minimise potable water use through smart systems, efficient fixtures, and sustainable landscapes.

The campuses have a combined 600,000 litres of water storage capacity, which the university uses to capture and reuse stormwater for toilet flushing and irrigation, reducing reliance on mains supply.

Sustainable landscape design is another key feature of ACU's water strategy. For example, at the Ballarat Campus, a xeriscaped garden showcases drought-tolerant plantings that thrive with minimal watering. The Melbourne Campus, meanwhile, features an 1,800-square-metre urban park that replaced a former multilevel concrete car park. The park integrates Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) elements such as rain gardens, permeable surfaces, and native vegetation, to naturally filter stormwater and support local biodiversity.

# SDG 15 Life on Land



SDG 15 – Life on Land focuses on biodiversity, habitat protection, restoration and the sustainable management of land-based ecosystems. For ACU, this may include campus biodiversity planning, landscape management, procurement choices and research or partnerships that support conservation outcomes.



## LEARNING

ACU's program of learning contributes to the aims of SDG 15 through teaching on ecology, conservation, biodiversity, land, and ecological responsibility:

- **EXSC315 Alpine Ecology and the Outdoor Experience** introduces students to alpine ecology, examines alpine conservation issues and management, and asks them to consider the outcomes and impacts of programs operating in alpine environments.
- **THEL216 Integral Ecology, Justice and Global Development: Shaping Shared Futures** includes considerations of ecological sustainability, biodiversity case studies, and action at local, national, regional and global levels.
- **THCP223 Theology and Ecology** explores ecological crisis, the significance of land in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander spirituality, ecological justice, and ecological practice aimed at improving human relationships with the earth and with communities that depend on healthy ecological systems.

Taken together, these units of study show that ACU embeds ecological literacy, conservation awareness, and land-related ethical responsibility within its teaching, as a practical demonstration of the university's commitment to the purposes of SDG 15.

# SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions



SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions focuses on accountability, fairness, safety, participation, rights and strong institutions that serve the common good. For ACU, this commonly includes governance, integrity, complaints and reporting systems, academic freedom, community safety and partnerships that strengthen just institutions.



## LEARNING

ACU contributes to the aims of SDG 16 through teaching on peacebuilding, justice systems, human rights, safeguarding, ethical institutions and fair decision-making:

- **DVST205 Peace and Conflict** examines peacebuilding strategies, conflict prevention and resolution, local community responses, civil society, Indigenous approaches, and the long-term building of peaceful and stable societies that support the rule of law.
- **LCRM306 Criminal Justice Ethics**, which focuses on fair and objective justice systems and the ethical health of institutions.
- **LCRM313 Restorative Justice and LCRD104 – Juvenile Justice**, which address inclusive responses to wrongdoing, human dignity, diversity, prevention, and restorative practice. The units also show strong alignment with rights protection and institutional accountability.
- **LHRG103 Legal Institutions and Human Rights, LHRG207 Human Rights and Criminal Justice**, and **LAWS603 Migrants and Refugees: Contemporary**

## Issues in the Criminal Justice System

examine human-rights systems, detention, discrimination, racism, access to justice, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

- **EDSC603 Safeguarding Childhood: Perspectives from Law and Welfare**, and **UNMC511 and UNMC 512 Safeguarding Children** develop safeguarding capability through law, policy, institutional accountability, child-safe practice and prevention-focused reform.
- And several units of study engage closely with justice, rights, peace, social equality, human dignity, poverty, global institutions and the ethical foundations of a just society. These include **POLS309 World Politics and Justice**, **EDRE627 Educating for Social Justice**, **SOCS201 Social Justice and the New Economy**, **THCT613 Foundations of Social Justice**, **THEL216 Integral Ecology, Justice and Global Development: Shaping Shared Futures**, and **PHIL320 Ethics, Justice and the Good Society**.

## RESEARCH

ACU research contributes to SDG 16 through three connected areas: strengthening safeguarding and child protection; examining accountability, legality and transparency in governance; and supporting more effective and humane youth justice responses.

### Strengthening safeguarding and child protection

ACU research contributes evidence that can strengthen child safety, institutional accountability and safeguarding practice in the communities the university serves. Examples include:

- research on the prevalence of child sexual abuse perpetrated by leaders or other adults in religious organisations in Australia produced nationally representative evidence on this form of abuse and reinforced the ongoing responsibility of faith-based settings to protect children and young people
- research on the prevalence and age of first experience of peer sexual harassment during childhood in Australia found that peer sexual harassment is a significant issue for Australian children, that girls

and LGBTQIA+ young people are disproportionately affected, and that first experiences occur early enough to support earlier, developmentally appropriate prevention and education

- research on safeguarding practices in Australian Christian religious settings found that, although policies and leadership commitment have improved, meaningful change is still constrained by cultural resistance, hierarchical power structures and compliance-driven practice.

### **Examining accountability, legality and transparency in governance**

A second contribution lies in research that examines how institutions succeed or fail under conditions that test responsible governance and public accountability. Examples include:

- research on law and politics in Nauru argued that failures of fidelity to rule-of-law principles across parliament, the executive and the judiciary help explain the weakening of constitutional government and the erosion of accountable public authority
- research on board diversity, climate change performance and ESG outcomes indicated that stronger governance capability is associated with better oversight and more legitimate, socially responsive decision-making
- related research on CEO power and climate disclosure found that weak internal governance can amplify opacity, while stronger board independence supports greater transparency in environmental reporting.

### **Supporting more effective and humane youth justice responses**

ACU research also contributes to SDG 16 through evidence that better justice outcomes depend on rehabilitation, capability-building and culturally safer engagement with vulnerable young people. Examples include:

- research evaluating an initiative to reduce car theft and joyriding by First Nations young people found

that the program fostered social connection in a culturally safe environment, strengthened social cohesion, promoted empathy for victims, and pointed participants toward lawful training and employment pathways

- research on a group treatment program for young offenders in custody found that cognitive and social cognition remediation can improve information processing, emotional control, and planning and organising skills among young people with cognitive and mental health challenges, with potential benefits for reintegration and reduced reoffending.

### **ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS**

ACU's participation in the Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU) supports outcomes aligned to SDG 16 by strengthening university norms and capability around ethical conduct, rights protection and accountable knowledge institutions.

For example, in the publication *Driving Global Change: SACRU Contribution to a Sustainable Future*, SACRU frames Catholic universities as communities where "the pursuit of truth is inseparable from the pursuit of justice," and positions research and education as serving the common good, an institutional stance consistent with SDG 16's emphasis on justice and strong institutions. The publication's SDG 16 reflection explicitly links peace and inclusiveness to justice and "sound institutions" free from opaque and corrupt practices, emphasising values such as non-discrimination, opposition to abuse of power and honesty in institutional life.

In parallel, ACU's hosting of the SACRU Autumn 2025 School at its Rome Campus focused on the universal right to freedom of scientific research, including the right to investigate and publish without censorship or interference, grounded in international human-rights instruments, demonstrating

ACU's practical commitment to protecting academic freedom as a core institutional freedom relevant to SDG 16.

### **POLICIES**

ACU's policy framework sets formal controls for integrity, risk management and accountable decision-making. Key policies that deepen ACU's institutional foundations include:

- The Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy, which prohibits bribery, facilitation payments, improper gifts and entertainment, secret commissions, money laundering, and false or incomplete record-keeping, and extends these expectations to relevant third parties acting for or with the university.
- The Declaration of Interest Policy, which requires staff and affiliates to make annual and ongoing disclosures of actual, potential and perceived conflicts, submit management plans, update declarations when circumstances change, and report relevant foreign interference risks.
- The Fraud and Corruption Control Framework, which assigns oversight responsibilities to Senate, the Senate Standing Committee, the Audit and Risk Committee and senior officers, requires fraud registers to be maintained and reviewed, supports reporting through protected disclosure channels, and provides for internal and external audit, investigation, disciplinary action and continuous improvement.
- The Data and Information Governance Policy establishes clear accountability for institutional data and requires authorised access, secure handling, documented data trails, and appropriate retention and disposal.
- The Ethical Partnerships Policy requires case-by-case due diligence on ethical, legal, foreign interference and reputational risks before partnerships proceed.

## SDG 17

# Partnerships for the Goals

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals focuses on collaboration, shared capability, and coordinated action that helps turn ambition into measurable progress. For ACU, this often includes reciprocal partnerships, knowledge-sharing, joint projects, policy coherence and evidence practices that help other SDG efforts succeed.



### LEARNING

ACU contributes to the aims of SDG 17 through teaching that develops partnership capability, reciprocity, community engagement, evidence-informed action and strategic alignment:

- **BIPX202 Community Engagement: Building Strengths and Capabilities** links business learning to volunteer placements with social enterprises, not-for-profits, and community groups, with explicit attention to ethical and social responsibility and sustainable outcomes for partner organisations.
- **EDFX267 Community Engagement** frames placements in diverse non-mainstream educational settings as reciprocal partnerships.
- **PUBH222 Public Health Community Engagement** emphasises partnership, equality, mutual respect, and commitment in work with public-sector and non-profit agencies supporting disadvantaged communities.
- **HRMG311 Sustainable Human Resource Management and Global Stakeholders** includes measurement, implementation and

reporting on sustainable HRM practices.

- **EDWB653 Whole School Approaches to Family and Community Engagement for Wellbeing and Learning** requires students to adopt evidence-informed approaches and action planning grounded in literature, local policy and practice.
- **NUTR305 Community and Public Health Nutrition** develops program planning, implementation, evaluation, and community engagement capability in culturally appropriate public-health nutrition settings.
- **THEL216 Integral Ecology, Justice and Global Development: Shaping Shared Futures** adds a broader systems perspective by asking students to consider how institutions align values and actions across sustainability frameworks and stakeholder contexts.

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU's SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) alignment is observable through three distinct partnership types in 2025:

**Partnerships that provide access-and-inclusion pathways and support**

ACU uses partnerships to widen access and reduce exclusion by combining structured pathway programs with material supports that remove common participation barriers.

- For SDG 1, the National Uni Step-Up pathway works with Year 11 and 12 students including those from situations of disadvantage to provide tertiary exposure, access to introductory units and academic support, while scholarships and accommodation supports address hardship and housing pressures that can prevent continuation.
- For SDG 10, targeted scholarships that reduce cost and access friction are key. These scholarships variously support students who need to relocate to access university and reduce the cost of accommodation away from home, with a dedicated program of accommodation support for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students studying away from home and community.

### Partnerships with external organisations

ACU builds relationships with external partners to deliver community benefit and build local capability. These are tightly focused on SDG 3 partnerships, such as the following:

- Future in Youth, a partnership program with schools and community organisations in low-SES settings that aims to build young people's physical activity, health knowledge, resilience and wellbeing.
- ACU's Exercise Lifestyle Clinics connect participants to ACU students and, as required, to local medical centres, schools and hospitals for prevention and rehabilitation pathways.
- Work Integrated Learning (WIL) has a similar partnership model that places ACU students in placements in their chosen professional discipline – from nursing, midwifery, paramedicine, physiotherapy, to nutrition and dietetics. These placements see students and staff working alongside health professionals and communities in Australia and overseas to deliver health promotion, clinical care and community-centred practice.

**Partnerships that translate knowledge into practice and build stronger institutions**

ACU uses partnerships not only to deliver services, but to build platforms that translate research and enterprise into applied outcomes and reinforce the institutional conditions that make that work credible.

- For SDG 8 and SDG 9, ACU's

Co-Lab functions as a community-facing innovation ecosystem that links students, researchers, industry, community and government-supported initiatives through the medium of co-working hubs and structured programs that involve mentoring, workshops, pitch programs, and accelerators. Co-Lab reports outputs such as 124 WIL placements, more than 110 industry/university connections, 408 startup events, and outcomes including \$7.9m raised, 743 jobs created, and \$3.1m grant income generated, plus SME-researcher commercialisation via NSW TechVouchers to a value of \$300,000 in research revenue.

- For SDG 16, ACU's hosting of the SACRU Autumn School 2025 highlighted its commitment to strengthening and defending institutional freedoms. The event focused on the universal right to freedom of scientific research, including the right to investigate and publish without censorship or interference, while always working within accepted norms of human rights.

**POLICIES**

ACU's policies framework align to SDG 17 by setting clear, practical standards for building partnerships that are mission-aligned, ethical, accountable

and outcomes-oriented:

- The Educational Partnerships Policy provides a structured governance framework for education-related partnerships with organisations including academic institutions, Church, community, government and industry, requiring formal agreements, delegated approvals and registration, and embedding due diligence, risk management and lifecycle quality assurance and monitoring to safeguard teaching standards and student outcomes.
- The Ethical Partnerships Policy establishes a principles-based approach to partnership suitability that supports innovation and impact while protecting institutional integrity, including explicit exclusion criteria for partnerships that conflict with obligations relating to modern slavery, sanctions and foreign interference risk.
- The Non-Education External Collaboration Policy requires that all research and enterprise collaborations demonstrate transparency, mutuality and robust relationship management, supported by due diligence, compliance controls and training requirements to ensure partnerships remain secure, responsible and well-governed.

# 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/](http://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](http://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](http://www.catholic.org.au/commission-documents/bishops-commission-for-justice-ecology-and-development/laudato-si/1711-encyclical-summary/file)

# Conclusion

This SDG Report 2025 demonstrates that ACU's alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals is integral to its mission as a Catholic institution committed to truth, service, human dignity and the common good.

Across the report, that alignment is expressed through the university's core activities through learning that prepares ethically informed and professionally capable graduates; through research that addresses significant local, national and global challenges; through engagement and partnerships that extend ACU's contribution beyond the campus; and through policies and operations that embed sustainability, equity, safety and accountability within the institution.

The report also makes clear that ACU's contribution to the SDGs depends substantially upon partnership. Whether with students and staff, schools and community organisations, health and social-service providers, government, industry, or national and international university networks, ACU's strongest contributions are often realised through reciprocal and mission-aligned collaboration.

In conclusion, this report records not only a substantial body of activity undertaken in 2025, but also a clear institutional direction. It shows ACU's commitment to development that is at once educational, social, environmental and ethical. Guided by its mission, ACU can regard this report as a statement of its continuing purpose: to contribute with responsibility, integrity and hope to the advancement of sustainability, equity and justice for the communities it serves.

