

ACU Sustainability Report 2024

Caring for our
common home





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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Message from the Vice-Chancellor and President

At Australian Catholic University, our mission – anchored in the dignity and flourishing of every person – guides all we do in teaching, research and engagement. This commitment is reflected in the ACU Sustainability Report 2024, which showcases our holistic approach to sustainability and our care for our common home.

We are a university of and for people. We are a community of staff, students, alumni, and partners united by a shared dedication to ethics, the dignity of the human person and the common good. Our work is animated by compassion and a deep sense of responsibility, expressed through collaborative efforts with research partners, Catholic agencies, and community organisations both in Australia and internationally. Together, we address pressing issues such as social disadvantage, mental health, family wellbeing, and cultural resilience, translating values into action that strengthens communities and builds a more just and sustainable future.

We continue to advance environmental stewardship across our campuses, reducing emissions, conserving water, and designing spaces that nurture wellbeing. These efforts, large and small, reflect our belief that responsible management and ethical leadership are inseparable from our mission of faith and service.

Looking to the future, Vision 2033 charts a bold and hope-filled path for ACU. It calls us to deepen our enduring commitment to the common good, an aspiration that resonates with the challenges outlined in *Laudato si'* and aligns with the global priorities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Through Vision 2033, we are shaping a future in which every person and every community may truly flourish, guided by purpose, inspired by faith, and sustained by hope.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Z. Skrbiš'.

Professor Zlatko Skrbiš
Vice-Chancellor and President
Australian Catholic University



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

Introduction

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is proud to present this Sustainability Report, which demonstrates our alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ACU has integrated the SDGs into the life of the university, ensuring that students, staff and partners are part of a shared commitment to advancing the common good.

Through teaching, ACU prepares graduates to address the world's most pressing challenges, embedding sustainability, equity and justice in their education. Our research produces knowledge that not only expands academic frontiers but also delivers practical solutions for communities in need. And through engagement and partnerships, ACU builds enduring relationships with communities, governments, industry and other universities, ensuring that our contributions extend beyond the campus to local, national and international contexts.

Special emphasis is given to SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, which provides the framework that connects and strengthens all other SDGs. From reciprocal partnerships with schools and community organisations to global collaboration through networks such as SACRU, ACU demonstrates that the pursuit of sustainable development is a collective endeavour. In this way, ACU's Catholic mission and Vision 2033 converge with the SDGs, offering a distinctive and holistic pathway towards human flourishing and environmental stewardship.

SDG 1 No Poverty



ACU contributes to ending poverty through widening participation in higher education, scholarships and programs that directly engage marginalised communities. Initiatives include Uni Step-Up and tailored supports for low-income and refugee students. This reflects Catholic social teaching on the preferential option for the poor.



1.1. TEACHING

ACU's teaching in poverty and development equips students with critical perspectives on justice, equity and sustainability. Courses in international development, sustainability studies and the Core Curriculum embed reflection on the causes and consequences of poverty, preparing graduates to address disadvantage in diverse contexts. By foregrounding ethical responsibility and the dignity of all people, these subjects directly align with SDG 1 (No Poverty).

- **DVST100 – Introduction to International Development Studies:** introduces development challenges and equity issues.
- **GEOG214 – Sustainability: The Global Challenge:** explores sustainability with focus on poverty and equity.
- **PHCC104 – Ethics and the Good Life:** builds justice and dignity reflection for all ACU students.

1.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores the structures that shape economic opportunity and human wellbeing. Studies include rethinking frameworks of distributive justice, analysing the role of education in reducing poverty, and examining the impact of child labour on schooling. Together, these projects advance understanding of how systemic barriers perpetuate poverty and identify pathways toward equity, reinforcing ACU's commitment to SDG 1 and to social justice.

- **Rethinking Global Distributive Justice:** this study reframes international legal and economic norms to address crises in health, hunger and sustainability.
- **The Effect of Education on Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa:** this study shows institutions matter for education's poverty-reduction effects.
- **Interactions Between Child Labour and Schooling:** this research explores how child labour shapes access to education.

1.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU's community engagement and partnerships extend the university's commitment to reducing poverty both locally and globally. Programs such as Uni Step-Up and refugee access pathways provide tangible opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, while international collaborations through SACRU amplify this work on a global scale. These initiatives demonstrate how ACU's partnerships embody Catholic social teaching while advancing SDG 1.

- **Uni Step-Up Program:** this ACU program supports students from disadvantaged schools to access higher education at ACU.
- **HOPE Program:** ACU researchers evaluated the HOPE Program, an initiative designed to support young families with complex needs.
- **SACRU Driving Global Change Report:** this report details SACRU's multi-institute collaboration on global sustainability development, which includes focused work on poverty and equity.

SDG 2 Zero Hunger



ACU affirms food security and nutrition as fundamental human rights. Through partnerships such as SACRU–FAO, curriculum in nutrition and food science and sustainable procurement, ACU contributes to addressing hunger and sustainable food systems.



2.1. TEACHING

ACU integrates food security and nutrition into its curriculum to prepare students for tackling global hunger and sustainable food systems. Units in nutrition, public health and food studies equip students with the skills to address malnutrition, food insecurity and the environmental impacts of food production. These learning opportunities align directly with SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

- **NUTR311 – Food, Society, and the Environment:** examines food systems, environment and nutrition.
- **PUBH642 – Global Nutrition and Food Security:** addresses global food insecurity and sustainable nutrition.
- **TECH207 – Food and Society:** considers social and environmental aspects of food.
- **NUTR305 – Community and Public Health Nutrition:** explores public health nutrition practices.

2.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores hunger and nutrition from scientific, social and justice perspectives. Projects include clinical trials on dietary interventions, applied studies of food insecurity and analyses of distributive justice. Collectively, these projects generate evidence that reinforces the goals of SDG 2 by identifying sustainable solutions to hunger.

- **OsteoPreP trial:** this study tested synbiotic supplementation for bone and metabolic health in women.
- **Rethinking Global Distributive Justice:** this research provides a global-justice perspective on crises marked by hunger and other health risks.

2.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU's partnerships advance food security through both local community initiatives and international collaborations. Community health and nutrition programs, along with sustainable procurement, demonstrate local action, while global partnerships with agencies such as FAO extend ACU's influence on food systems worldwide. These initiatives embody ACU's practical commitment to SDG 2.

- **SACRU–FAO Collaboration:** joint investigations on food security and sustainable agriculture.
- **Community health and nutrition programs:** these programs are delivered through ACU's unit of study *NUTR603 – Engaging with Communities*.
- ACU is committed to sustainable procurement partnerships with Indigenous suppliers, as part of ACU's commitment to Reconciliation and Indigenous Advancement (see **section 21, ACU Procurement Policy**).

SDG 3

Good Health and Wellbeing



ACU is a leader in training health professionals and advancing public health research. Its impact spans large nursing and paramedicine cohorts, community health clinics and global research on chronic disease, mental health and exercise science.



3.1. TEACHING

ACU educates the next generation of health professionals by embedding health, wellbeing and mental health into its teaching. Large nursing, paramedicine and allied health cohorts are supported by curriculum in psychology, epidemiology and trauma-informed practice. This foundation reflects ACU's mission of service and aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing).

- **ALHT106 – Psychology for Allied Health:** psychology foundations for allied health.
- **PUBH103 – Epidemiology:** Principles of population health: skills in applying epidemiology to matters of public health.
- **EDAP614 – Mental Health and Basic Counselling Skills:** skills for supporting mental health.
- **NUTR305 – Community and Public Health Nutrition:** nutrition practice in public health contexts.
- **FTHY607 – Trauma and Mental Health in Relational Systems:** trauma-informed practice and mental health.

3.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores public health, chronic disease prevention and mental health. Studies span from hospital-based mortality research to investigations of urban design's effect on wellbeing. Collectively, these projects contribute evidence for healthier societies, reinforcing the objectives of SDG 3 by addressing health disparities and improving care outcomes.

- **Glucose Levels at Hospital Admission and 5-Year Mortality:** this multi-hospital study links admission glycaemia with mortality risk.
- **Health Services Research Culture and Capacity:** this research assessed organisational enablers for research-active health services.
- **Active Travel, Built Environment and Youth Health:** this study links features of the built environment to amount and types of physical activity by those living in that environment.
- **Cities and Mental Health (Barcelona Study):** this explores how density, green space and pollution impact mental health
- **Improving Quality of Work for Positive Health:** connects human

resource management practices and workforce wellbeing to health outcomes.

3.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU extends its health expertise into the community through clinics, hospital partnerships and NGO collaborations. These partnerships provide direct services while building health literacy and workforce capacity. By engaging locally and globally, ACU exemplifies the goals of SDG 3 in promoting access to healthcare and wellbeing.

- **ACU health clinics:** these campus clinics provide psychology, speech pathology and exercise physiology services to the university and to the wider community.
- **St Mary's House of Welcome Psychosocial Support:** ACU researchers worked collaboratively with partner agency staff throughout the design and delivery of the support project, with the aim of improving NDIS clients' engagement with the program.
- **Talk Suicide Support:** ACU researchers evaluated a community-based suicide prevention program.

SDG 4

Quality Education



Education is ACU's core mission and greatest contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. ACU ensures access for students from diverse backgrounds, integrates sustainability and equity across the curriculum, and undertakes research on equity, inclusion and the transformative role of education.



4.1. TEACHING

Teaching programs embed equity, inclusion and sustainability across the curriculum. Courses in inclusive education, Indigenous perspectives, sustainability and global development prepare students to contribute to equitable education systems. This teaching aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education).

- **DVST307 – International Development Global Experience:** immersive placement unit exposing students to education and development challenges.
- **EDET300 – Effective Teaching 4:** inclusive education prepares teachers for inclusive classrooms.
- **EDSI168 – Science, Inquiry and Sustainability:** incorporates sustainability and inquiry-based learning.
- **BUFP103 – First Nations of Australia Culture, History and Politics:** ensures recognition of Indigenous perspectives.
- **GEOG214 – Sustainability: The Global Challenge:** includes education's role in promoting equity.

4.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores barriers and opportunities in education worldwide. Projects include studies on international students' experiences, the impact of child labour on schooling and education's role in economic growth. These insights advance SDG 4 by deepening understanding of how education fosters inclusion, equity and development.

- **Adrift Down Under: International Students' Experiences:** this study reviews barriers and enablers to inclusion in higher education.
- **Interactions Between Child Labour and Schooling:** this research generated global insights into poverty and access to education.
- **The Effect of Education on Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa:** this study links institutional quality with equitable development outcomes.

4.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU's partnerships with schools and communities expand access to higher education for disadvantaged students. Programs such as Uni Step-Up and global collaborations through SACRU embody reciprocity and shared learning. Through these initiatives, ACU contributes to SDG 4 by ensuring education remains a transformative pathway for all.

- **Uni Step-Up Program:** mentoring and transition programs for low-SES secondary students to pursue higher education.
- **SACRU Driving Global Change Report:** the report details joint initiatives with Catholic universities globally on SDG education and literacy.
- **Community school engagement:** ACU develops formal partnerships with disadvantaged schools to widen participation in post-secondary study.

SDG 5

Gender Equality



ACU advances gender equality through institutional policies, inclusive teaching, and research on gender, health and justice. Its commitment is recognised through Athena Swan accreditation and embedded across student and staff development.



5.1. TEACHING

ACU integrates gender equality into teaching by embedding perspectives on women, equity and rights across disciplines. Courses on Indigenous culture, human rights and sustainability challenge inequities and promote inclusion. This commitment aligns with SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

- **EDSI168 – Science, Inquiry and Sustainability:** considers gender and social equity within sustainability education.
- **BUFP103 – First Nations of Australia Culture, History and Politics:** explores Indigenous perspectives, including women's roles.
- **LHRD111 – Human Rights and Indigenous People:** introduces students to gender, human rights and Indigenous equity.

5.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores gender equity in health, safety and social participation. Studies on intimate partner violence, women's health and migrant wellbeing highlight the barriers women face and propose pathways to justice. This scholarship supports SDG 5 by producing evidence that informs gender-responsive policies and practices.

- **Intimate Partner Violence Risk Factors:** this study identifies gender-based risk factors and service design needs.
- **OsteoPreP trial:** this study focuses on women's bone and metabolic health.
- **Mental Health and Help-Seeking Among African Migrants:** this study examines gendered patterns of health-seeking.

5.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU fosters gender equality through leadership programs, Athena Swan accreditation and community collaborations. These initiatives promote equity for staff and students while contributing to systemic change across the sector. In this way, ACU's partnerships advance SDG 5 by breaking down barriers to women's participation and leadership.

- **Women's Leadership For Mission program** is an ACU program designed by, with and for women who are inspired by a gospel vision of justice, freedom and the dignity of the human person, and supports participants to obtain the knowledge, skills and networks that foster local and global communities.
- **Athena Swan/SAGE Network:** in 2024, ACU was awarded an Athena Swan Bronze Award in recognition of the university's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- **Keeping People Safe Report:** ACU researchers mapped the work undertaken by Catholic agencies in responding to and preventing family violence.



SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation

ACU integrates water efficiency, stormwater management and sustainable design across its campuses. Research and teaching extend to water-sensitive urban design, climate resilience and public health dimensions of water security.



6.1. TEACHING

ACU's teaching on water stewardship highlights the social, ecological and health dimensions of clean water.

Units in geography, sustainability and science education prepare students to address global water challenges. This aligns with SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).

- **GEOG311 – Catchments to Coasts:** focuses on integrated water and coastal management.
- **EDSI168 – Science, Inquiry and Sustainability:** includes water stewardship and sustainability.
- **GEOG214 – Sustainability: The Global Challenge:** considers global equity in access to water resources.

6.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores water forecasting, urban sustainability and blue-green infrastructure. These projects examine how technology and planning can safeguard water access and health. Together, they support SDG 6 by advancing solutions for water security and sanitation.

- **Water Resource Forecasting with Machine Learning and Deep Learning:** this research used predictive modelling for hydrology and demand management.
- **Global Healthy and Sustainable City Indicators:** this study developed water and sanitation indicators for urban sustainability.
- **Exploring Greenery, Air Pollution and Walkability with Cardiometabolic:** this research examines the links between greenery and air quality and human health.

6.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU works with councils, communities and global networks to promote water conservation and stormwater management. Student campaigns and SACRU collaborations highlight the importance of equitable access to safe water. These partnerships demonstrate ACU's contribution to SDG 6 through stewardship and advocacy.

- **Stormwater and water-sensitive design:** this is a key feature of ACU's campus development. ACU applies sustainable design principles at its campuses in recognition of its campuses' role and responsibility to improve neighbourhood water management.
- **Water conservation on campus** is a guiding principle for ACU's campus operations, and aims to limit ACU's institutional water-footprint.
- **SACRU Driving Global Change Report:** this report is a multi-institute collaboration on global sustainability development that addresses water security and sanitation as global equity issues.

SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy

ACU is committed to transitioning to clean, renewable energy and has set a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2040. The university integrates renewable energy procurement, **on-site solar generation**, and energy efficiency across its campuses, while embedding sustainability into teaching and advancing research on energy justice and climate disclosure.



7.1. TEACHING

ACU integrates energy transitions into its curriculum, ensuring students engage with the challenges of clean energy and sustainability. Courses in management, education and sustainability equip graduates to lead organisational and societal energy change. This aligns with SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy).

- **GEOG214 – Sustainability:** The Global Challenge: explores global challenges including energy transitions.
- **MGMT605 – Strategic Management for Sustainability:** examines sustainability strategy and energy management in organisations.
- **EDSI168 – Science, Inquiry and Sustainability:** prepares educators to teach about sustainability and clean energy transitions.

7.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores energy justice, corporate climate disclosure and resilience. These projects highlight both technical and ethical dimensions of energy transition. This scholarship advances SDG 7 by providing evidence to support equitable and transparent clean energy systems.

- **Beyond Carbon Emissions:** Addressing Broader Climate Risks in Corporate Financial Disclosures: calls for broader reporting frameworks on climate and energy.
- **Water Resource Forecasting with Machine Learning and Deep Learning:** predictive modelling approaches with applications in energy resilience.
- **Rethinking Global Distributive Justice:** includes perspectives on energy justice.

7.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

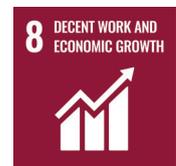
ACU demonstrates leadership in practice through 100 per cent renewable electricity procurement, solar generation, and efficiency upgrades. These operational commitments, supported by external partnerships, showcase ACU's contribution to SDG 7 by reducing emissions and modelling responsible energy use.

- **ACU has purchased 100 per cent renewable electricity since 2021** for its Australian campuses.
- **On-site solar generation:** the installed solar capacity on ACU's campuses now exceeds one megawatt.
- **Energy efficient campus operation:** a foundational principle of ACU's environmental management is to minimise its demand for natural resources and now ACU is sector-leader in energy efficiency.

SDG 8

Decent Work and Economic Growth

ACU promotes decent work and inclusive economic growth through fair employment practices, modern slavery reporting, student placements and entrepreneurship support. Research explores labour justice, workplace wellbeing, and sustainable governance.



8.1. TEACHING

ACU teaching supports decent work and ethical economic growth through courses on social enterprise, sustainable trade and modern slavery. Students are equipped to recognise and address inequities in labour and commerce. This teaching advances SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

- **MGMT310 – Organisational Change for Sustainability:** prepares students to lead organisational change for sustainable futures.
- **HUMA331 – Big Ideas: Social Enterprise and Innovation:** encourages entrepreneurship addressing social and economic inequalities.
- **BUSN302 – International Trade:** examines fair and equitable global trade systems.
- **LAWS609 – Modern Slavery and the Law:** focuses on the legal frameworks to prevent labour exploitation.

8.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores how organisations can promote fairness, wellbeing and sustainability in the workplace. Studies cover labour justice, workplace health and governance practices. These projects contribute to SDG 8 by identifying pathways to inclusive and sustainable economic participation.

- **Comparative Analysis of Rewards and Knowledge Sharing** identifies drivers of productivity and innovation.
- **Improving Quality of Work for Positive Health** connects human resource practices to wellbeing outcomes.
- **Interactions Between Child Labour and Schooling** highlights economic barriers to decent work.
- **Board Flexibility in Diversity, Experienced CEOs and Corporate Sustainability Disclosure:** this research identifies the corporate governance practices that support responsible enterprises.

8.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU engages with industry, NGOs and government to promote fair work practices and entrepreneurship. Collaborate Plus hubs, anti-slavery partnerships and student placement programs extend the university's impact. These initiatives embody SDG 8 by linking academic expertise with real-world change.

- **Collaborate Plus Innovation Hubs** at ACU provide support for small to medium enterprises, social enterprises and start-ups.
- **Anti-slavery collaborations:** ACU has partnerships with government and NGOs to build awareness and compliance with Anti-Slavery legislation.
- **Work integrated learning:** studying at ACU is enhanced by extensive work-integrated learning with future employers.



SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

ACU invests in sustainable infrastructure and fosters innovation through entrepreneurship hubs, research-industry collaborations and flagship campus developments. Research contributes to responsible governance, technological change and human-centred design.



9.1. TEACHING

ACU teaching fosters innovation by equipping students with skills in product design, sustainability and leadership for change. This emphasis on creativity and responsibility aligns with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure).

- **HUMA331 – Big Ideas: Social Enterprise and Innovation:** equips students to develop innovative responses to social and economic challenges.
- **TECH306 – Product Design Innovation:** provides skills in sustainable and user-centred product development.
- **MGMT605 – Strategic Management for Sustainability:** explores innovation and change management in organisational contexts.
- **EDLE658 – Leading Innovation:** builds leadership capacity for managing innovation in education and organisations.

9.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores human-centred innovation, governance and resilient infrastructure. Projects on robotics, knowledge sharing and city indicators contribute to more equitable and sustainable industries. This scholarship supports SDG 9 by advancing innovation that serves the common good.

- **Comparative Analysis of Rewards and Knowledge Sharing** identifies enablers of innovation cultures.
- **Global Healthy and Sustainable City Indicators:** this research develops a toolkit for monitoring infrastructure sustainability.
- **Water Resource Forecasting with Machine Learning and Deep Learning:** predictive modelling approaches to water forecasting, with applications in energy resilience.

9.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU invests in sustainable infrastructure and builds partnerships through hubs and flagship developments. Facilities like the Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building and the BEST Hub demonstrate how innovation can strengthen communities. These initiatives align with SDG 9 by integrating industry, research and society.

- **Sustainable campus development:** ACU has worked with partners such as the Green Building Council of Australia to design and accredit the sustainability of many of its flagship buildings.
- **Blacktown Exercise, Sports and Technology (BEST) Hub:** ACU is a partner in the BEST Hub, which integrates sport, health and technology for community and industry.
- **Collaborate Plus Innovation Hubs** at ACU provide support for small to medium enterprises, social enterprises and start-ups.

SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities



ACU prioritises equity and inclusion in access to education and employment. Through targeted scholarships, disability action plans, First Nations strategy and research on equity and justice, ACU addresses barriers to participation and outcomes.



10.1. TEACHING

ACU integrates equity into its teaching through courses on development, Indigenous perspectives and inclusive education. These programs challenge barriers to participation and encourage social innovation. This focus supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

- **DVST100 – Introduction to International Development Studies:** introduces concepts of poverty, inequality and institutional reform.
- **EDET300 – Effective Teaching 4: Inclusive Education:** prepares teachers for supporting students with disability and diverse needs.
- **BUFP103 – First Nations of Australia:** Culture, History and Politics: integrates Indigenous perspectives and equity.
- **HUMA331 – Big Ideas: Social Enterprise and Innovation:** encourages entrepreneurship addressing inequality.

10.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores inequities in education, health and migration. Projects on international students, migrant health and economic growth demonstrate how structural barriers create exclusion. These insights reinforce SDG 10 by informing efforts to reduce inequality.

- **Adrift Down Under: International Students' Experiences:** an integrative review of international students' experiences and barriers.
- **Mental Health and Help-Seeking Among African Migrants:** this research explores inequities in migrant health outcomes.
- **Interactions Between Child Labour and Schooling** this study examines education inequalities caused by child labour.
- **The Effect of Education on Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa** this study shows education's role in reducing inequality.

10.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU's programs and partnerships support refugees, students with disability and disadvantaged communities. Collaborations with schools and NGOs extend pathways for inclusion. These initiatives contribute to SDG 10 by addressing systemic inequities through practical action.

- **Refugee and asylum seeker scholarships:** ACU resources a range of access programs supporting refugee cohorts.
- **Settle Well:** ACU researchers evaluated a schools-based support program for refugees.
- **Healing In Culture Program:** ACU researchers evaluate a program that aims to improve the health and educational outcomes of First Nations children.

SDG 11

Sustainable Cities and Communities

ACU contributes to sustainable and resilient cities by embedding sustainability in campus infrastructure, partnering with communities through the Carnegie classification, and producing research on liveability, urban health and community resilience.



11.1. TEACHING

ACU's teaching on climate change, sustainability and community engagement equips students to strengthen urban resilience. These programs highlight the role of equity and inclusion in building sustainable communities. This aligns with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

- **GEOG216 – Climate Change: Past, Present and Future:** explores science of climate change and implications for urban resilience.
- **GEOG214 – Sustainability: The Global Challenge:** addresses urban sustainability and social equity.
- **WCIV300 – Making a Difference:** builds student capacity for local and global community engagement.

11.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores the links between urban design, health and wellbeing. Projects on active transport, mental health and sustainability indicators provide evidence for more liveable cities. Together, they support SDG 11 by advancing knowledge for resilient communities.

- **Active Travel, Public Transport and Built Environment in Youth** explores links between urban design and health.
- **Cities and Mental Health: Built Environment, Environmental Exposures and Lifestyle Factors** assesses mental health impacts of urban planning.
- **Global Healthy and Sustainable City Indicators** provides a toolkit for sustainable city planning and monitoring.
- **Exploring Greenery, Air Pollution and Walkability with Cardiometabolic Health** connects environmental attributes with health in urban areas.

11.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU strengthens community resilience through partnerships with councils, Carnegie-classified collaborations and local engagement. These initiatives promote equity, inclusion and sustainable design. In doing so, ACU contributes directly to SDG 11 by building stronger cities and communities.

- **Carnegie Community Engagement Classification:** ACU became one of the first Australian higher education institutions to obtain this classification. It recognises ACU as a higher education leader in institutionalised community engagement, committed to working with the community to transform society.
- **Ageing Well:** ACU researchers evaluated a community program that supports older Australians' wellbeing as they age.



SDG 12

Responsible Consumption and Production

ACU advances responsible consumption and production through campus waste management, sustainable procurement, education in food and product design, and research on sustainability reporting and responsible business practices.



12.1. TEACHING

ACU teaching explores responsible consumption through courses in food systems, product design and sustainable business. These units challenge students to consider the impacts of production and waste. This aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

- **NUTR311 – Food, Society, and the Environment:** explores sustainability of food systems and consumption.
- **TECH207 – Food and Society:** considers social and environmental impacts of food production and consumption.
- **TECH306 – Product Design Innovation:** equips students to design sustainable and low-impact products.
- **MGMT605 – Strategic Management for Sustainability:** examines sustainable business models and supply chains.

12.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores sustainability reporting, corporate governance and responsible investment. These studies provide evidence for systemic change in production and consumption. Together, they reinforce SDG 12 by promoting transparency and accountability.

- **Determinants of Corporate Climate Change Disclosure in Emerging Markets** investigates governance drivers of sustainability reporting.
- **Beyond Carbon Emissions: Addressing Broader Climate Risks in Corporate Financial Disclosures** calls for comprehensive reporting frameworks.
- **Hedging Precious Metals with Impact Investing** explores financial innovations for sustainable investment.
- **Board Flexibility, Experienced CEOs and Corporate Sustainability Disclosure** identifies governance practices for responsible production.

12.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU implements waste reduction, sustainable procurement and recycling initiatives across campuses. Collaborations with councils and community groups extend this impact. These actions demonstrate ACU's practical commitment to SDG 12 through daily stewardship.

- **Supplier sustainability criteria:** section 19 of ACU's procurement policy mandates sustainability criteria for all goods and services.
- **Campus waste minimisation:** ACU generates among the lowest amounts of waste per student of any Australian university, as part of its commitment to operating with the lowest possible environmental impact.
- **Partnering with local government:** in 2023 and 2024, ACU partnered with the Business Renewables Buying Group, a local government-led buying group that helped local councils and a range of small to large businesses purchase 100 per cent renewable power.

SDG 13 Climate Action

ACU recognises climate change as a defining moral and ecological challenge. The university has committed to net zero emissions by 2040, integrates climate science into teaching, and conducts research addressing climate adaptation, governance and resilience.



13.1. TEACHING

ACU integrates climate science and sustainability literacy into its teaching. Courses on climate change, sustainability, and education prepare students to understand and act on global warming. This teaching advances SDG 13 (Climate Action).

- **GEOG216 – Climate Change: Past, Present and Future:** provides students with scientific and policy perspectives on climate change.
- **GEOG214 – Sustainability: The Global Challenge:** addresses climate as a global sustainability issue.
- **EDSI168 – Science, Inquiry and Sustainability:** prepares educators to teach climate and sustainability literacy.

13.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores climate governance, adaptation and justice. Projects on corporate disclosure, distributive justice and sustainability indicators provide evidence for more effective climate responses. These contributions support SDG 13 by identifying equitable pathways for climate action.

- **Beyond Carbon Emissions: Addressing Broader Climate Risks in Corporate Disclosures:** this study broadens the scope of corporate climate reporting.
- **Determinants of Corporate Climate Change Disclosure in Emerging Markets** identifies institutional drivers of reporting.
- **Global Healthy and Sustainable City Indicators:** this research integrates climate indicators into urban sustainability monitoring.
- **Rethinking Global Distributive Justice:** this research examines fairness and distributive justice in climate adaptation.

13.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU demonstrates institutional leadership through its net zero commitment, renewable energy procurement and advocacy. Partnerships with SACRU and public policy engagement extend this influence globally. Together, these initiatives align ACU's mission with SDG 13 in confronting climate change

- **Net Zero by 2050 commitment:** ACU has a Paris Agreement-aligned carbon reduction target.
- **Sustainable energy management:** ACU purchases 100 per cent renewable power for all of its Australian campuses and is a sector leader in energy efficiency.
- **SACRU Driving Global Change Report** highlights SACRU members' joint global research projects on climate and ecological justice.



SDG 14 Life Below Water

Although ACU's campuses are urban, the university contributes to protecting oceans and waterways through stormwater management, waste reduction, teaching on ecosystems, and research with implications for marine and aquatic environments.



14.1. TEACHING

ACU integrates ecological and marine stewardship into its teaching through courses on catchments, sustainability and theology. These programs highlight the interdependence of human and aquatic systems. This focus supports SDG 14 (Life Below Water).

- **GEOG311 – Catchments to Coasts:** examines water and coastal systems and their management.
- **EDSI168 – Science, Inquiry and Sustainability:** includes water and ecological literacy in school and community contexts.
- **THCP223 – Theology and Ecology:** explores ethical and theological dimensions of ecology, including oceans.

14.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores water resilience, urban planning and ecosystem health. Projects on water forecasting and sustainability indicators demonstrate the value of blue-green infrastructure. This scholarship advances SDG 14 by supporting sustainable management of marine environments.

- **Water Resource Forecasting with Machine Learning and Deep Learning:** this research uses predictive tools relevant for water and coastal resilience.
- **Global Healthy and Sustainable City Indicators:** this study incorporates measures for water-sensitive urban design impacting coastal ecosystems.

SDG 15 Life on Land



ACU supports biodiversity and ecological stewardship across its campuses. This includes campus biodiversity programs, integration of ecology in teaching, and research connecting health, planning and ecosystems.



15.1. TEACHING

ACU teaching embeds ecological literacy and stewardship across courses in theology, sustainability and science. These units highlight the importance of biodiversity and conservation. This aligns with SDG 15 (Life on Land).

- **THCP223 – Theology and Ecology:** examines theological understandings of biodiversity and ecology.
- **GEOG214 – Sustainability: The Global Challenge:** considers biodiversity and conservation in global sustainability.
- **EDSI168 – Science, Inquiry and Sustainability:** engages students with ecological balance and stewardship.

15.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores the links between ecology, health and wellbeing. Studies on green space, biodiversity and sustainability indicators demonstrate the benefits of thriving ecosystems. This evidence supports SDG 15 by identifying strategies to protect land and biodiversity.

- **Exploring Associations of Greenery, Air Pollution and Walkability with Cardiometabolic Health:** this research examines the impact on human health of neighbourhood greenery and air quality.
- **Cities and Mental Health: Built Environment, Environmental Exposures and Lifestyle Factors:** this research examines the benefits to wellbeing of green space.
- **Global Healthy and Sustainable City Indicators:** this research provides methods for monitoring biodiversity and green infrastructure.

SDG 16

Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions



ACU strengthens institutions through transparent governance, human rights education, and research on justice and equity. The university contributes to peace and justice through its policies, teaching in law and human rights, and partnerships with NGOs and government.



16.1. TEACHING

ACU integrates justice, law and human rights across its teaching. Courses in human rights, history and Indigenous justice prepare graduates to strengthen institutions and advocate for equity. This aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

- **LAWS308 – Human Rights in Contemporary Australia:** examines Australian legal frameworks for rights and justice.
- **LAWS407 – International Human Rights Law:** provides understanding of treaties and international human rights frameworks.
- **LAWS609 – Modern Slavery and the Law:** addresses contemporary exploitation through legal systems.
- **LHRD111 – Human Rights and Indigenous People:** focuses on Indigenous justice and equality.
- **HIST251 – Human Rights in History:** traces development of rights and justice through historical contexts.

16.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores governance, justice and human rights. Projects span modern slavery, distributive justice and corporate accountability. Together, they contribute to SDG 16 by generating knowledge to build fairer institutions.

- **Determinants of Corporate Climate Change Disclosure in Emerging Markets:** this research explores board independence and governance transparency.
- **Beyond Carbon Emissions: Addressing Broader Climate Risks in Corporate Disclosures:** this research examines accountability in corporate reporting of climate risk.
- **Intimate Partner Violence Risk Factors:** this research identifies risks of violence against intimate partners and informs justice and safety services.
- **Rethinking Global Distributive Justice:** this study proposes legal frameworks for justice during crises of health, hunger and sustainability.

16.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

ACU collaborates with government, NGOs and communities to advance justice and reconciliation. These partnerships support advocacy, law reform and community safety. Such engagement demonstrates ACU's commitment to SDG 16 by strengthening institutions locally and globally.

- **Keeping People Safe Program:** ACU researchers mapped the unique work of Catholic agencies in responding to and preventing family violence.
- **Human rights research collaborations:** ACU's researchers focus on collaborative programs that address human rights and access to justice.

SDG 17

Partnerships for the Goals

Partnerships are central to ACU's mission and its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. Through international research alliances, community engagement and cross-sector collaboration, ACU builds capacity for collective impact.



17.1. TEACHING

ACU emphasises partnerships in its teaching through courses on development, sustainability, climate and human rights. These programs highlight the importance of collaboration for addressing global challenges. This directly supports SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

- **DVST307 – International Development Global Experience:** immersive placements engaging with development partners.
- **DVST100 – Introduction to International Development Studies:** builds foundational understanding of global equity and partnership.
- **GEOG214 – Sustainability: The Global Challenge:** addresses partnerships for sustainable futures.
- **GEOG216 – Climate Change: Past, Present and Future:** explores global scientific and policy cooperation.
- **WCIV300 – Making a Difference:** focuses on student engagement with community partners.
- **BUFP103 – First Nations of Australia:** integrates Indigenous perspectives into national reconciliation partnerships.
- **LHRG306 – Human Rights Advocacy:** examines collaborative advocacy for human rights.

- **LAWS407 – International Human Rights Law:** analyses multilateral partnerships in law and governance.

17.2. RESEARCH

Research at ACU explores sustainability, justice and finance through joint projects. Initiatives such as the Global Healthy and Sustainable City Indicators showcase how partnerships build shared knowledge. This work contributes to SDG 17 by advancing collective solutions.

- **Comparative Analysis of Rewards and Knowledge Sharing:** this research explores cultures of collaboration and partnership.
- **Hedging Precious Metals with Impact Investing:** this research analyses finance as a lever for sustainable development.
- **Rethinking Global Distributive Justice:** this work examines international legal and economic frameworks for crisis equity.

17.3. ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are central to ACU's mission, extending from SACRU collaborations to Carnegie-classified community engagement.

These initiatives demonstrate the power of solidarity across institutions and sectors. By fostering cooperation at all levels, ACU exemplifies SDG 17 in action.

- **Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU):** ACU is a founding member of the alliance.
- **ACU hosted the 2024 ASEACCU Conference:** this conference of the Association of Southeast and East Asian Catholic Colleges and Universities aims to foster regional partnerships for the greater good.
- **Carnegie Community Engagement Classification:** ACU became one of the first Australian higher education institutions to obtain this classification. It recognises ACU as a higher education leader in institutionalised community engagement, committed to working with the community to transform society.
- **Collaborate Plus Innovation Hubs** at ACU provide support for small to medium enterprises, social enterprises, and start-ups.
- **Healing In Culture Program:** ACU researchers evaluate a program that aims to improve the health and educational outcomes of First Nations children.

Sustainable Development Goals

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

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

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

Conclusion

This Sustainability Report demonstrates that ACU's alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals is not incidental, but foundational to who we are as a Catholic university. Through teaching, we prepare graduates who are knowledgeable, ethical and ready to contribute to a more sustainable world. Through research, we generate knowledge that responds to global and local challenges with integrity and impact. Through engagement and partnerships, we extend our mission into the communities we serve, fostering solutions that are collaborative and enduring.

The emphasis on SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals reflects ACU's conviction that the achievement of all other SDGs depends on strong, inclusive and global collaboration. Our partnerships – whether with schools, hospitals, governments, or international networks – are grounded in reciprocity and a shared commitment to human dignity and the common good.

In conclusion, ACU reaffirms its leadership and responsibility in contributing to the SDGs. This report is not only a record of achievements but also a declaration of intent: that ACU will continue to act with courage, faith and responsibility in addressing the great challenges of our age. With Vision 2033 as our guide, and with the SDGs as our shared horizon, we look to the future with confidence, committed to advancing sustainability, equity and justice for generations to come.

