

# PART FIVE:

# SUSTAINABILITY

## ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

Sustainability is one of the University of Newcastle's core values, guiding our campus operations, teaching and research, and our partnerships with industry, government and the region.

In 2025, the University continued to support research that accelerates clean-energy innovation and climate resilience, progress decarbonisation across our operations, and contribute to the Hunter region's transition to a low-carbon economy.

## MAKING SUSTAINABLE CHOICES EASIER ON CAMPUS

The University continued to expand its sustainable initiatives in 2025 with a range of initiatives:

- Recycling programs continued to expand, with Simply Cups, Soft Plastics Recovery, Resource Recovery Kiosks and Return and Earn providing accessible waste-avoidance and recycling options. The new Return and Earn machine at Callaghan diverted 143,652 containers from landfill in 2025, contributing to a cleaner campus and lowering waste-management costs.
- A new waste services contract commenced in November 2025, including a dedicated Resource Recovery Officer to strengthen recycling performance. Food-organics collection expanded, with Edwards Hall diverting 12.84 tonnes of organic waste from landfill. Further expansion is planned for Student Living in 2026 in line with legislative requirements.
- The University's ridesharing partnership with Liftango continued to reduce transport emissions and parking demand. In 2025, 461 registered users completed 3,474 shared trips, removing 7,748 vehicles from campus roads and avoiding more than 25 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- From June to December 2025, the University prioritised reuse and circular practices, extending the life of 279 furniture items and diverting over 6.6 tonnes of material from landfill. Avoided purchasing and landfill emissions resulted in an estimated 171.73 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>-e avoided, demonstrating the environmental benefit of reuse-first principles.

## 100% RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY AND PROGRESS ON DECARBONISATION

The University maintained its 100% renewable electricity supply through a new five-year Power Purchase Agreement with Snowy Energy. Campus solar systems generated 1.47M kWh during 2025, offsetting around 4% of total electricity use.

## SCOPE 1 AND 2 EMISSION OFFSETS FOR 2025

In 2025, the University purchased and retired Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) equivalent to 800 tonnes of anticipated residual Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions, based on best available data at the time of reporting. Final Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions for 2025 will be confirmed through the University's annual carbon footprint assessment, undertaken by an independent third party. Any variance between estimated and confirmed emissions will be reconciled through the University's annual review process to ensure the 2025 offset boundary is met in full.\*

*\*Scope 3 emissions were not included in the University's 2025 offset boundary, which applied to Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions only.*

## BRINGING BUSH BACK

Bringing Bush Back restores native bushland in NSW and Queensland through improved land management, allowing vegetation to naturally regenerate on land previously cleared or over-grazed. These projects generate ACCUs under the Human-Induced Regeneration methodology, which is scientifically measured and independently verified by the Clean Energy Regulator to ensure the carbon stored in regenerating bushland is verifiable, additional and long-term. In addition to reducing emissions, Bringing Bush Back delivers biodiversity and ecosystem co-benefits, including improved habitat for native wildlife, healthier soils, reduced erosion, and support for sustainable farming practices.

## CALLAGHAN BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025

The University of Newcastle's Callaghan Bushfire Management Plan, completed in 2025, outlines a comprehensive strategy to manage and reduce bushfire risk across the campus by identifying at-risk assets and detailing coordinated measures for prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. The plan emphasises ignition prevention, vegetation and fuel management, the establishment and maintenance of Asset Protection Zones, and retrofitting older buildings to boost bushfire resilience, while also outlining procedures to safeguard vulnerable people through enhanced situational awareness and clear evacuation or shelter-in-place protocols. Importantly, the plan embeds ongoing collaboration with emergency services, including the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire & Rescue NSW, through regular information-sharing, consultation on site during high-risk periods, and integration of external command structures. It also calls for regular audits, and continuous review to support the University in continual improvement.

## DATA-DRIVEN CAMPUS MANAGEMENT

In 2025 the University expanded campus-wide Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping to include environmental and cultural datasets, such as known Aboriginal archaeological sites, heritage buildings, endangered flora, nesting boxes, biodiversity offsets, bushfire-risk analysis and contaminated-soil locations. These tools support more effective project planning, strengthen risk management practices, and enable proactive decision-making that helps reduce negative impacts and increase development co-benefits.

## UNITED NATIONS' SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The University of Newcastle is a signatory to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The University's Looking Ahead Strategic Plan and Environmental Sustainability Plan are guided by these goals and we are taking action to implement SDG-linked and relevant competencies in our curriculum and on campus. In 2025 the University ranked 39th in the world in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. We also ranked 2nd in the world for 'Climate Action' and 9th in the world for 'Good Health and Wellbeing'.

## RESPONSIBLE INVESTING

Since 2018, the University has been proactively strengthening its approach to responsible investment, by considering Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues within its portfolios. Supported by the University's investment portfolio manager, Mercer, we monitor performance against the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mercer is a founding signatory to the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) and recognised as a global and local leader in responsible investing. In 2023, the University established new three-year ESG goals.

At the end of 2025, the University had performed as follows against key targets:

1. Maintained a total portfolio ESG score that is better than the universe by at least 0.5 by 2026. In 2025, the University achieved an ESG score of 2.0, outperforming the industry benchmark average of 2.2.
2. Decarbonised total portfolio by 25% on a weighted average carbon intensity (WACI) basis, from a 2020 baseline. The University has achieved a total portfolio emission reduction of 17.1% compared to the 2020 baseline.
3. Increased investments aligned with the UN SDGs. The University's portfolio remains well aligned with the goals with a net impact rating of 1.3 for 2024 compared to the benchmark rating of 0.7.
4. Shift of asset allocation towards climate transition aligned assets and away from high climate transition risk assets, from a 2020 baseline. The University has grown climate aligned assets to 2.1% in 2025, against 0.0% in 2020. Transition risk assets have increased against the baseline to 2.5% in 2025.

The University continues to work with Mercer to identify areas of further development in improving its ESG investment approach. All statistics are either as at 30 June 2025 or over the Financial Year (FY) 2024–2025.

## STATEMENT OF STEPS TAKEN TO ADDRESS MODERN SLAVERY RISKS IN 2025

The University is committed to combatting modern slavery and has implemented proactive measures to address modern slavery risks. Oversight of this critical area is provided by the University's Anti-Slavery Working Group, which includes representatives from diverse areas of the organisation. This group leads the implementation of the University's Modern Slavery Action Plan and aims for alignment with the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner's Guidance on Reasonable Steps (GRS).

The NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner did not notify the University of any significant issue requiring a response in its Annual Report during 2025.

Specific actions taken by the University to ensure goods and services procured are not a product of modern slavery include:

- Modern slavery awareness training rolled out to key staff across the University throughout the year.
- Modern slavery clauses embedded across all standard forms of contracts with suppliers and service providers.
- A Supplier Code of Conduct is in place and it explicitly addresses modern slavery expectations.
- Modern slavery risk assessments were conducted for all procurement activities valued over \$250,000 using the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner's GRS Inherent Risk Identification Tool. Procurements flagged with a 'heightened' modern slavery risk had additional evaluation, including assessment against weighted criteria for supplier responses to Modern Slavery schedules.
- Modern slavery considerations are integrated within the University's Investment Policy and ESG reviews are conducted to assess and mitigate risks across the investment portfolio.
- Sourcing and partnerships in place with local small and medium enterprises that meet ethical labour standards.
- Engaging a cleaning services contractor certified under the Cleaning Accountability Framework (CAF) 3-Star Prequalification.
- Continued collaboration with the Australian Universities Procurement Network (AUPN) Anti-Slavery Program and Working Group/s has ensured:
  - Knowledge sharing and strategies for addressing modern slavery;
  - Refinement of supplier self-assessment questionnaires to deliver consistency across the sector;
  - Aggregation of sector wide procurement data for trend analysis and shared risk management (including application of due diligence prioritisation criteria to understand where, as a sector we have the biggest influence to leverage meaningful impact); and
  - Monitoring and addressing sector-wide inherent risks such as those within the medical equipment, laboratory supplies and electronics supply chains.

## WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

The University of Newcastle continued to progress initiatives in the final year of the Wellbeing, Health and Safety Strategy 2020–2025. We remain committed to a healthy and safe workplace, with key programs delivered in 2025. This included resources and training developed to increase understanding and strengthen the implementation of psychosocial risk management approaches, as well as the completion of psychosocial risk registers and support services for change management programs. Further initiatives included enhancements to early intervention and case management, upgrades to our reporting technologies, and a review of laboratory safety inspection programs.

At year end, a total of 94% of staff completed the University's Work Health and Safety induction (including casual staff). Our safety culture is reflected in the support of 17 Health and Safety Committees, 82% completion of 14-day hazard and incident actions, and over 830 safety reviews. There were 11 reports of serious or near-miss incidents made to SafeWork NSW. A total of 30 claims were accepted for Workers' Compensation due to workplace injury. No prosecutions were made under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011.

## WORKFORCE DIVERSITY

**Table A: Trends in the Representation of EEO Target Groups<sup>1</sup>**

EEO GROUP	% of Total Staff <sup>2</sup>			
	Benchmark or Target	2023	2024	2025
Women	50	64.6	65.5	65.3
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders	3.9	2.9	3.2	3.5
People whose first language was not English	19	5.2	7.3	6.9
People with a disability	n.a.	1.9	2.0	2.1
People with a disability requiring work-related adjustment	1.5	0.3	0.3	0.3

Source: Ascender HRS database

**Table B: Representation of EEO Target Groups: Academic v General Staff<sup>2</sup>**

EEO Group	% of Total Staff <sup>2</sup>		Award	
	Benchmark or Target	Total		
Women	50	65.3	Academic	55.7%
			Professional	72.2%
			Teacher	75.0%
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders	3.9	3.5	Academic	3.2%
			Professional	3.7%
			Teacher	-
People whose first language was not English	19.0	6.9	Academic	11.2%
			Professional	3.8%
			Teacher	-
People with a disability	N/A	2.1	Academic	2.3%
			Professional	2.0%
			Teacher	-
People with a disability requiring work-related adjustment	1.5	0.3	Academic	0.1%
			Professional	0.4%
			Teacher	-

**Table C: Trends in the Distribution of EEO Target Groups<sup>3</sup>**

EEO Group	Distribution Index			
	Benchmark or Target	2023	2024	2025
Women	100	85.4	87.7	88.1
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders	100	93.2	95.3	95.1
People whose first language was not English	100	114.8	113.5	114.7
People with a disability	100	99.7	95.9	97.3
People with a disability requiring work-related adjustment	100	119.6	106.1	93.2

**Table D: Distribution of EEO Target Groups: Academic v General Staff<sup>5</sup>**

EEO Group	Distribution Index Award			
	Benchmark or Target	Total		
Women	100	88.1	Academic	94.3
			Non-academic	92.6
Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders	100	95.1	Academic	96.3
			Non-academic	95.1
People whose first language was not English	100	114.7	Academic	105.1
			Non-academic	100.3
People with a disability	100	97.3	Academic	97.3
			Non-academic	90.0
People with a disability requiring work-related adjustment	100	93.2	Academic	122.4
			Non-academic	89.0

<sup>1</sup> Staff numbers are as at 30 June 2025

<sup>2</sup> Excludes casual staff

<sup>3</sup> A distribution index of 100 indicates that the distribution of the EEO group across salary levels is equivalent to that of other staff. Values less than 100 mean that the EEO group tends to be more concentrated at lower salary levels.

# EQUITY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY/ ACTION PLANS

The Equity Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023-2025 aims to enhance the University's approach to EDI by embedding equity, diversity and inclusion principles into all policies, practices, and activities and is based on EDI Framework principles. The EDI Strategy identifies a range of equity cohorts and the potential for intersectionality to exacerbate inequities further. The strategy includes five action plans that address EDI activities not covered by other initiatives, ensuring strategic alignment with complementary plans. The five EDI Strategy Action Plans are:

1. Policy and Procedure Approach
2. Safety for Everyone
3. Inclusive Leadership for Executive and Senior Staff
4. Inclusive Behaviours for Academic and Professional Staff
5. Accessibility

In 2025, the University continued to progress and report on actions from the above five action plans. In early 2026, the University will begin developing a new EDI Strategy and suite of Action Plans to harness progress made in 2025 as well as identify new areas of focus through consultation with staff and students and other key stakeholders. The EDI Strategy will be aligned with the University's new Strategic Plan 2030 and its supporting plans.

## GENDER EQUITY

The University had two workforce gender-based Institutional KPIs in 2025 – to achieve 37.5% representation of Senior Academic Women by 2025 and for 50% representation for Senior Professional Women. As of December 2025, 39.2% of Senior Academics and 52% of professional staff were women. Programs/initiatives to support the progression and retention of women in 2025 included:

- Development programs such as the Women in Leadership Program, Mentoring Program and Live.Learn.Lead.- 2LP Becoming a Successful Leader.
- Promotion support including mock interviews, promotion equity sessions and relative to opportunity statement support.
- Fellowships such as the Research Advantage Equity Fellowships.

In 2025, the University continued to meet compliance reporting obligations with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) of NSW through submission of its annual compliance report in June 2025. In 2026, the University will be setting new WGEA targets as part of new legislation/compliance requirements and in alignment with the new EDI Strategy and Gender Strategy.

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

The 'Maligagu' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy (2020 - 2025) and Action Plan identifies four priorities that drives the University's approach to increasing employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff:

- Priority 1 – Attraction and Recruitment
- Priority 2 – Environment and Retention
- Priority 3 – Development and Advancement
- Priority 4 – Governance and Leadership

In 2025, development of the University's Indigenous staff included:

- Ongoing investment in professional development, mentoring and leadership pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- Strong engagement in career progression, higher duties and internal mobility opportunities.
- Continued focus on wellbeing, cultural safety and flexible work arrangements.
- Development activity sustained despite workforce fluctuations.

The University's KPI for Indigenous Employment was 3.9% participation of staff who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by 2025. As of December 2025, the University had 106 staff members identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, equating to 3.29% representation. Activities designed to increase Indigenous employment rates in 2026 include:

- Establishment of an Indigenous Services Team within the library
- Graduate and early-career pathways through collaborative partnerships with organisations such as Career Trackers, TAFE, as well as a growing number of students being offered employment during and after work integrated learning or internships.
- Conversion of fixed-term roles where appropriate.
- Improved succession planning and central oversight for staff and graduates through development opportunities, secondments and growing our own talent pool.
- Exploring the option to offer ongoing development workshops to be offered to Indigenous Staff Network after successful delivery to Wollotuka Staff in 2025.
- Alignment between College workforce plans and Maligagu targets strengthened.

Throughout 2025, the Indigenous Employment Committee met quarterly to monitor the progress of the 'Maligagu' Strategy and Action Plan and will continue to do so in 2026 as it develops the next iteration of the University's Indigenous Employment Strategy.

The University has a long and proud history in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, research and engagement, led by the Wollotuka Institute. Currently the University has the largest full-time equivalent (FTE) Aboriginal student enrolment in the country and has a strong record of success. To continue this success, the University has a strategic focus on improving institutional retention of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Our Indigenous Commitment) with reference to our overall undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts. Revised Indigenous student support and retention strategies will assist with progressing towards the 0% variance target for 2026.

## DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLANS

The University's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2024-2025 was added to the suite of action plans to strengthen the University's commitment to eliminating barriers within the University and creating opportunities through equity measures to bridge these gaps gradually. The DIAP progressively enhances accessibility and inclusion across campus infrastructure, the digital environment, teaching and learning, student services, and for professional and academic staff. The DIAP has four focus areas:

1. Inclusive Culture
2. Equitable Learning
3. Inclusive Digital Environment
4. Accessible Campuses and Facilities

NB. The University of Newcastle is not required to create a Disability Inclusion Action Plan under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW); it, therefore, does not strictly align to priorities created under such legislated plans, however it does allow the University to be responsive to the needs of students and staff with diagnosed disabilities.

In 2025, the DIAP and associated work continued to deliver on actions striving to improve the experience for students and staff, with examples provided below:

- 240 academic and professional staff completed the Disability Confidence Training program, bringing the total membership of the Accessibility Champions network to 583 members.
- Consultation for new University buildings with a focus on accessibility.
- Development of a Disability Inclusion Library Guide.
- Development of a new module 'Accessible Technology Training'.
- Neurodivergent inclusion through reverse mentoring, sensory spaces and establishment of Neuroadvisory Committee.
- High calibre nominations for Staff Awards (Accessibility Category) recognising individuals or teams making improvements for students and staff.

In 2026, the University will consider potential integration of the DIAP with the new action plans. Delivery of Disability Confidence Training will continue to be a key focus in addition to the formal evaluation of same with a view to publishing impact/outcomes.

## SPIRITUAL SUPPORT AND INCLUSION

In 2024, a Spiritual Support and Inclusion Action Plan was developed and added to the suite of EDI Action Plans mentioned above to foster a more inclusive and supportive University environment. This plan aims to respect and accommodate diverse spiritual beliefs, provide necessary resources, and promote overall well-being for students and staff through open dialogue and multi-faith understandings. By nurturing such an environment, the University aspires to enhance its community's spiritual, and emotional well-being. In 2025 progress highlights included:

- Additional spaces for prayer and reflection.
- Increased awareness of and strengthened relationships between Chaplaincy and the wider university community through activities with UNSA's student religious and cultural clubs, attendance at Wollotuka student BBQs 'Meet the Chaplains' events, articles, posts and interviews shared via student and staff communications channels.
- Funding provided for religious events such as collective student clubs Ramadan Iftar.
- Chaplaincy webpage update.

Ongoing commitment that is inclusive of spirituality and faith, anti-racism and multiculturalism will remain a focus in the University's new EDI strategy (being developed in 2026) and through associated work such as policy development and review.