

# Looking Ahead 2030

Strategic Plan



**Acknowledgement of Country**

*The University of Newcastle acknowledges the traditional custodians of the Australian lands on which our campuses are located. We pay our respects to the wisdom of Elders past and present and extend this respect to the homelands of our students and staff.*

**Cover Artwork: Many Voices, One Community** is a collaborative collage shaped by the individual artistic contributions of community, alumni, students and staff gathered to mark the University's 60th anniversary in 2025. Guided by First Nations traditions of shared making and knowledge exchange, the work brings diverse perspectives together, celebrating connection, collective achievement, and the University's enduring commitment to equity, engagement, excellence and sustainability.

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**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

The University of Newcastle supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Throughout this document we demonstrate alignment with the use of each goal's square icon.

# A Message from the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor

For more than sixty years, the University of Newcastle has upheld a distinctive and enduring commitment to serving our regions while expanding our reach as a globally-connected institution.

From our origins as a regional university, we have evolved into an internationally-engaged community, deeply embedded in Newcastle, the Hunter, and the Central Coast, while actively contributing to global networks and partnerships.

Our purpose continues to be driven by the needs and aspirations of the people we serve locally and internationally. Through our sustained focus on equity and excellence, we have transformed the futures of more than 200,000 individuals worldwide through education.

*Looking Ahead 2030* builds on the strong foundations laid by our *Looking Ahead 2020-2025 Strategic Plan*. Our vision, purpose, values, and Indigenous commitment remain central, guiding us as we embrace new opportunities and respond to emerging challenges. This plan represents a shared commitment to shaping a future that reflects the ambitions of our students and staff, and the priorities of our communities.

Developed through extensive consultation, *Looking Ahead 2030* captures the voices and vision of our students, staff, alumni, partners, and broader community.

Our focus on education, research, and engagement will be supported by our People, Sustainability, Global, Digital and Estate plans, all designed to place people at the heart of everything we do and create impact that matters. These themes are reflected in all elements of this plan, with every measure of success driving people-first and impact-focused outcomes.

We remain committed to developing life-ready graduates through academic excellence and inclusive education. We will continue to champion Indigenous leadership and knowledge, and drive research that addresses the most pressing issues of our time.

Our values will come to life through transformational initiatives that give back to our communities. We will set the standard for what it means to be a university of and for our regions, delivering world-class education and research.

Thank you for being part of this journey. We look forward to what we will achieve with our people and our communities, honouring our past and inspiring generations to come.



The Hon Patricia Forsythe AM  
Chancellor



Professor Alex Zelinsky AO  
Vice-Chancellor and President



# Our Vision

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To be a world-leading university for our regions.

# Our Purpose

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To deliver an outstanding student experience, preparing graduates for life in an increasingly interconnected society.

To serve our regions by taking research that matters to the world and bringing our global expertise home.



## What does this look like?

### By 2030...

...the University of Newcastle is a vital force in its thriving regions. Anchored in the Hunter and Central Coast, we connect and collaborate with communities, industries, and ecosystems globally by leveraging our relationships, partnerships, and our Singapore campus. We are deeply connected to the lives and futures of the people we serve, helping drive a just transition to clean energy, equitable housing, and healthier lives. Our research and partnerships deliver real change, including addressing inequality and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and our neighbours in Asia and the Pacific region.

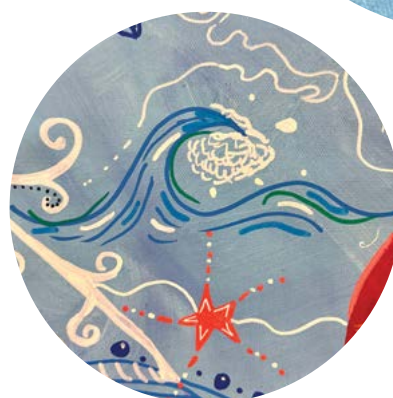
We are nationally and internationally recognised for leadership in inclusive, high-quality education, sustainability, and regionally-focused innovation. Our reputation rests on meaningful partnerships, impactful research, excellence in teaching, and a commitment to solving real-world challenges.

Graduates leave with knowledge, confidence, and the ability to adapt, lead, and contribute meaningfully with employers and communities. Our staff and students thrive in an environment that prioritises wellbeing, belonging, and purpose.

Digital technology, including artificial intelligence, has expanded access to education and transformed how we work, teach, and discover, while preserving the human connection at our core. We harness new technologies to drive productivity and efficiency in university operations.

Our regions pulse with creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial energy, with the University central to their cultural and economic identity. We are where ideas become ventures, and where art meets science to enrich lives. Our advancements across disciplines, including health, engineering, education, and creative industries, have improved outcomes throughout our regions and beyond. Amid global uncertainty, we remain resilient, environmentally and financially sustainable, future focused, and committed to our mission.

We are not just in our regions, we are of them and for them.



# Our Values

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At the University of Newcastle, our values are more than words. They are the compass that guides our decisions, shapes our culture, and inspires our impact. They reflect who we are, what we stand for, and how we work together to serve our communities and the world.

## Excellence

We pursue the exceptional and strive for innovation in our teaching, research, and operations for our students and regions.

Excellence drives us to innovate, set high standards, and continuously improve, celebrating achievement while always challenging ourselves to do better.

## Engagement

Our staff, students, alumni and communities are deeply connected to the challenges and opportunities in each of our regions and beyond.

Engagement to us means listening deeply, collaborating openly, and working with our partners to ensure our efforts are relevant, responsive, and create real-world impact.

## Equity

Our commitment to equity and inclusiveness is fundamental to everything we do.

Equity drives us to create inclusive environments, support diverse communities, build partnerships that remove barriers to participation, and ensure our decisions promote fairness, access, and opportunity for all.

## Sustainability

We are ethically minded and prioritise responsible management of our environment and the financial sustainability of our institution.

Sustainability means leading with care, thinking long-term, and making choices that protect our environment, and support the wellbeing of our people.

## What sets us apart

### Equity is our foundation

As equity innovators for more than 60 years, we champion access to education for all, ensuring that everyone's talent and potential is nurtured regardless of their background. With Australia's longest running enabling pathway, Open Foundation, our commitment to equity is nationally recognised.

### A place where learning meets life

Our curriculum offerings build real-world experience, preparing our students for life, not just for jobs. They embed resilience and community mindedness, ensuring our graduates are equipped to thrive through our strong connections with local communities, industry partnerships, and co-located facilities.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership

Through strong community ties and the Wollotuka Institute, we are a national leader in Indigenous education, engagement, and employment. Our long and proud history as an innovator in this space underpins our commitment to Indigenous student success, employment opportunities, and proactively embedding a culturally safe and responsive environment.

### Here for the Hunter and Central Coast

We stand out for our deep commitment to the Hunter and Central Coast, ensuring students and researchers drive regional growth through partnerships, innovation, and tailored education.

### Partnering with Asia and the Pacific

Our purposeful engagement across Asia and the Pacific brings international collaboration home. We help to create opportunities, enrich learning, and support development, reflecting our commitment to shared progress across borders.

### Sustainability at the core

We embed sustainability in all that we do, integrating it as a core value driving innovation, community action, and climate resilience in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

# Our Indigenous Commitment

The University of Newcastle stands on the unbroken foundation of more than 60,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Our University is stronger, richer, and more responsive because we embrace and learn from the histories, knowledge systems, and enduring cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This commitment guides our work through reciprocity, respect, and genuine partnerships with Indigenous communities, both locally and beyond.

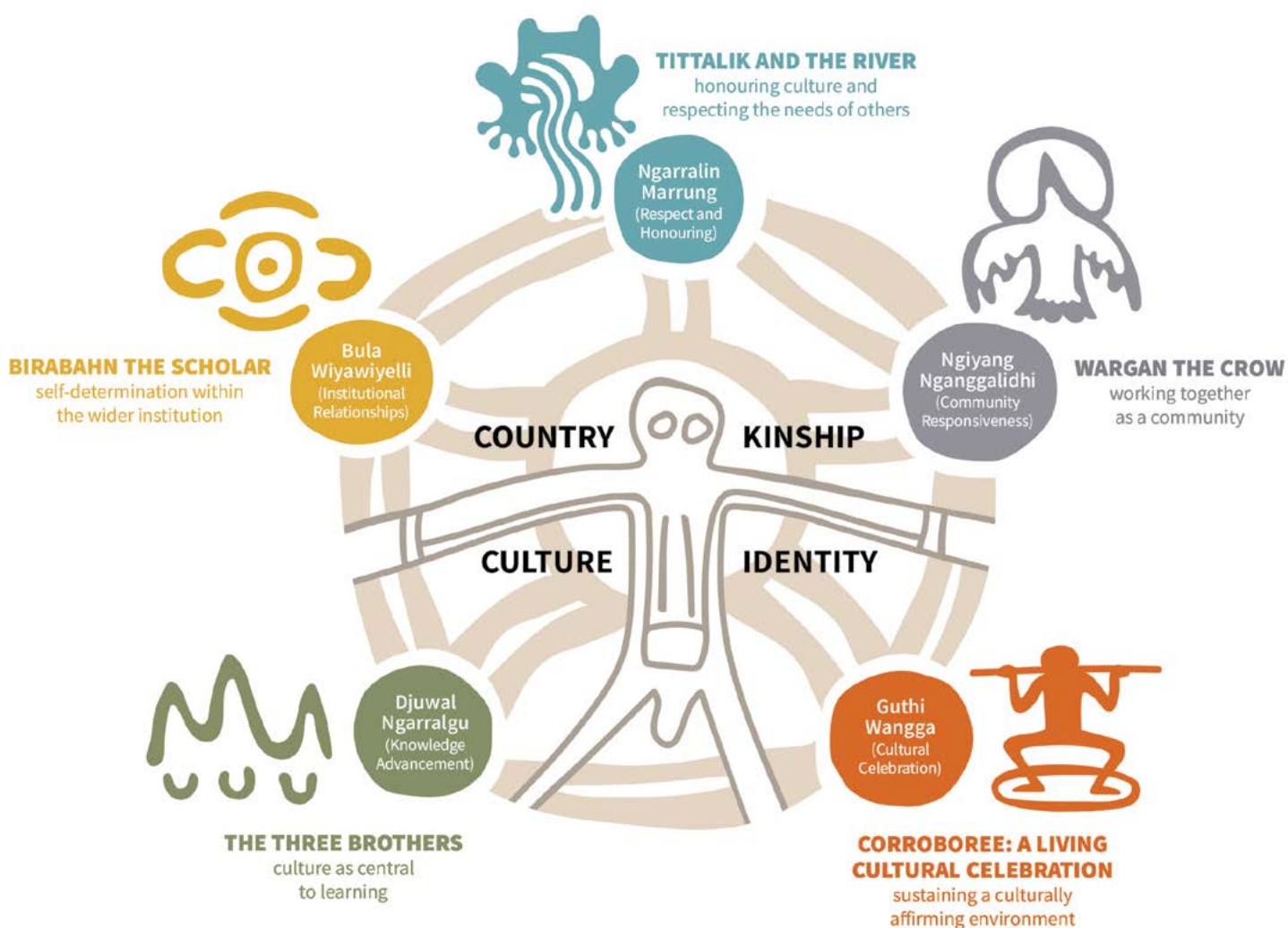
The University of Newcastle will measure success not only in numbers, but in relationships: stronger ties with communities, culturally safe campuses, empowered Indigenous leadership, and lasting impact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

Through the Wollotuka Institute, we have built a proud record as the sector leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments and staff employment. These achievements reflect decades of collaboration and innovation grounded in strong community relationships.

**Our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families, and communities is central to the University's strategic direction. We are responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within our regions and achieving priorities set by them. We will:**

- Pursue the highest rates of success among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across all disciplines.
- Ensure that all staff increase their cultural knowledge and understanding through ongoing cultural capability training.
- Ensure that all students genuinely engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, peoples, and cultures across our curriculum offerings through the culturally responsive graduate attribute.
- Grow the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and ensure that research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is community-led, ethical, culturally respectful, and beneficial to communities.
- Ensure that there is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement across all levels of leadership and governance, and that we work closely with local communities to meet their needs.





We will be guided by the Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards, expressed through our inter-institutional relationships. The Cultural Standards shape how culture guides our practice, decision-making, and ethical engagement within higher education, ensuring that Aboriginal ways of being, knowing, and doing remain central. They are an articulation of cultural continuity, shaped by the wisdom of ancestors, and the values of our communities. We will be further guided by the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

# Our Journey



As we reflect on 60 years of impact, we look ahead, guided by our purpose and a commitment to helping our regions embrace new opportunities and meet emerging challenges.

Our *Looking Ahead 2020-2025* Strategic Plan laid the foundations for the next five years to build upon. *Looking Ahead 2030* represents an evolution, not a departure, expanding on this groundwork and our 60-year history, while ensuring we are prepared for our future.

Through the life of *Looking Ahead 2020-2025* we:

- Embedded Career-ready Placement opportunities in all our undergraduate curriculum offerings.
- Strengthened our research impact through our Living Lab.
- Implemented environmental initiatives that work towards carbon neutrality.
- Delivered new locations such as the Q Building in Newcastle's CBD, the Gosford Central building, and the Central Coast Clinical School.
- Strengthened connections with Asia and the Pacific region, alumni, and international partners, and grew our presence in Singapore.
- Proudly became one of the first two universities in Australia to achieve SAGE Athena Swan Silver Accreditation for gender equity, diversity, and inclusion (GEDI).

## Our Strategic Issues

Our plan seeks to respond to the local, national and global strategic issues and opportunities identified by our stakeholders.



Leading on issues that matter to our regions, including the economic, health, environmental, and social impacts of energy transition, housing, and inequality.



Preparing our graduates for their future by collaborating with employers and creating closer links between skills and knowledge.



Prioritising the success and wellbeing of our students, staff, and regions, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and those in Asia and the Pacific region.



Leveraging emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, to both disrupt and expand the reach of education and research, and to innovate the ways we work.



Championing the development of the Hunter and Central Coast as vibrant regions for innovation, entrepreneurship, arts, and culture, with the University playing a pivotal role in their identity and growth.



Navigating dynamic domestic and global change to ensure long-term financial sustainability of the institution.



## What We Heard

From the outset, our journey to develop our strategic plan was grounded in a desire to understand what our staff, students, and communities want and need us to be.



Our **students** told us they want focus on career readiness, practical skills, and flexible learning, with strong industry links to support real-world success.



Our **staff** told us they want focus on preparing students and staff for the future of work, equitable access to education, and building community trust.



Our **industry partners** told us they want focus on closing skills gaps, ensuring graduates are job-ready, and deepening collaboration to support innovation.



Our **local, state, and federal representatives** told us they want focus on economic transition, equitable access to education, and alignment with government priorities.



Our **communities** told us they want focus on cost of living, mental health and equitable access, and expect the University to lead on regional challenges.





Our **alumni** told us they want focus on lifelong learning, supporting career transitions and upskilling, and staying engaged with the alumni community in Australia and beyond.

# From our Regions to the World

The University of Newcastle is deeply embedded within Newcastle, the Hunter, and the Central Coast, as well as the communities it serves. Our commitment to place is central to our identity as the university of and for our regions.

We have a strong and growing presence across regional and rural locations, including Tamworth, Taree, Moree, Upper Hunter, Armidale, Port Macquarie, Inverell, and Coffs Harbour. We are extending access to education and health training where it's needed most.

Our Asia and Pacific engagement focuses on strategic collaborations to address shared challenges, with initiatives spanning environmental sustainability, public health, inclusive education, and economic development, creating meaningful opportunities to codevelop solutions that foster resilience and prosperity.



Our communities are not only defined by where we have a physical presence. They are where our students come from and are where many return home. They are where the industries we collaborate with are based and where the benefits of our innovation are felt by communities. They are where our staff live, build their careers, and help shape our shared future.



## The Hunter

The Newcastle and Hunter region has reinvented itself many times, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of its people.

Anchored by a proud and vibrant Aboriginal community, the region carries deep cultural and spiritual significance. Its legacy as a powerhouse of industry and resources, particularly coal mining and steel production, has shaped its economic and social foundations.

Today, the Hunter is undergoing a dynamic transformation, embracing innovation in clean energy, health, education, and digital technologies. It is also cultivating a thriving arts and creative sector, enriching the cultural fabric of the region. As one of the most diverse and representative areas in Australia, the Hunter stands as a true microcosm of the nation, making it central to the University of Newcastle's mission and identity.



## The Central Coast

The Central Coast region is a place of natural beauty, cultural depth, and growing innovation. It is home to the largest Aboriginal community in New South Wales and a diverse population that reflects the evolving face of modern Australia. Traditionally known for tourism and agriculture, the Central Coast is now emerging as a hub for health, education, and advanced manufacturing.

Its proximity to both Sydney and Newcastle positions it as a strategic connector and a region of increasing influence. The Central Coast is not just a place we serve, it is a vital part of who we are.



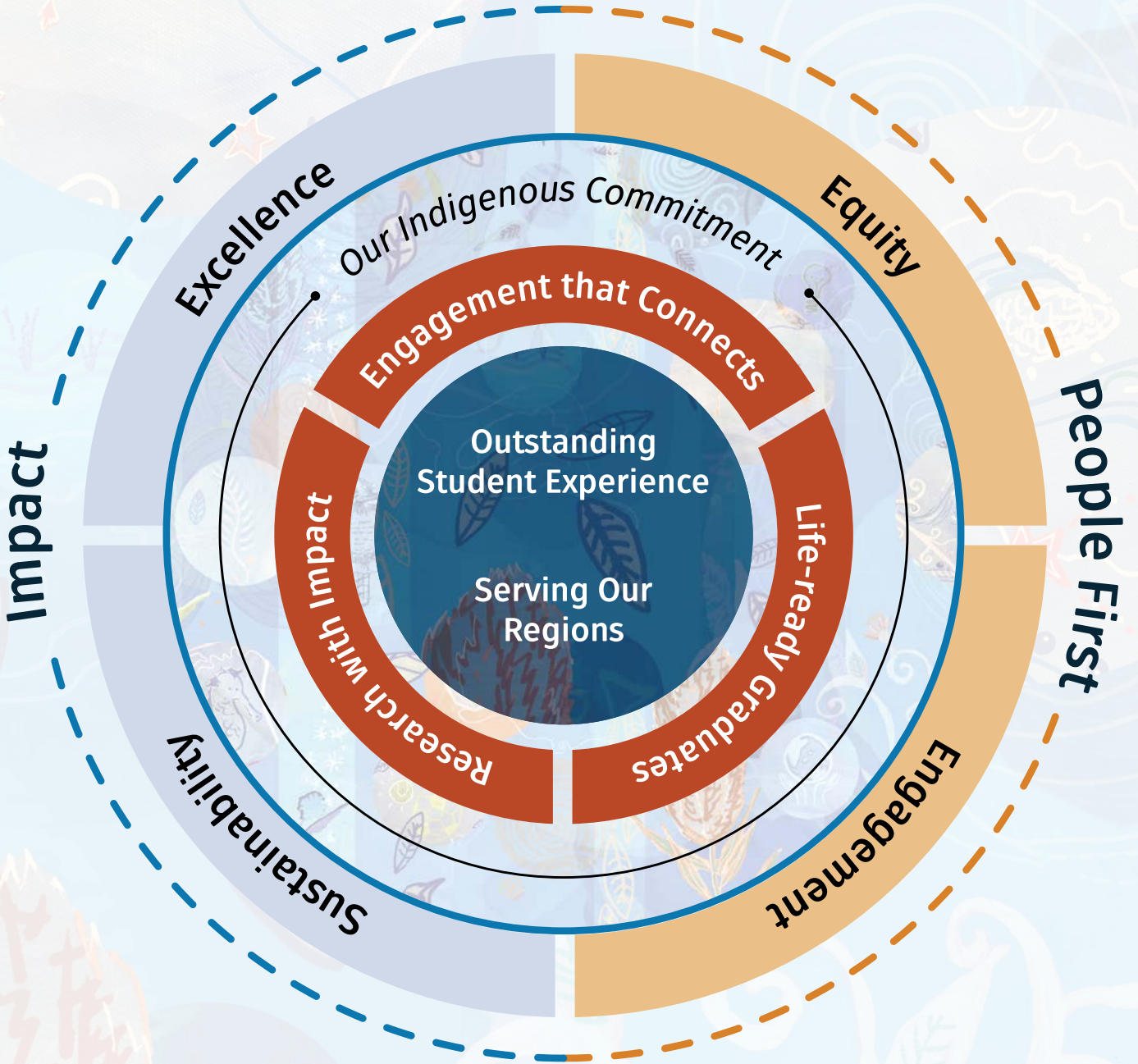
## Global Engagement

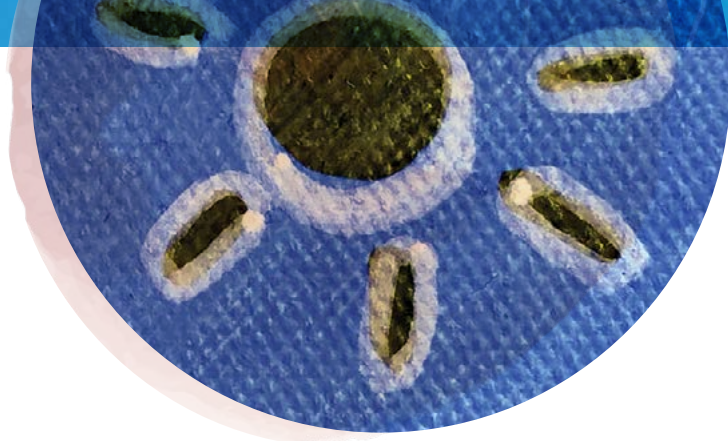
Internationally, the University maintains a strong presence in Singapore and valued connections throughout Asia, the Pacific, and across the world. We leverage our strong local foundations to create global connections and impact. We will continue to strengthen our ongoing commitment to building reciprocal relationships in the Pacific region, leveraging initiatives and partnerships both existing and emerging.

Our Sydney presence enables us to build international collaborations with industry, government, and other institutions, expanding opportunities for students and researchers.

Our Singapore presence allows us to cultivate partnerships with industry, government, and educational institutions across Asia and the Pacific. It is a strategic gateway that provides opportunities to connect our students and researchers with business in the region and beyond.

# Our Plan at a Glance





## Life-ready Graduates

### Measures of Success

**Student Satisfaction:** We will be in the top 10 of universities in Australia for student satisfaction, as measured through the national Student Experience Survey.<sup>^</sup>

**Student Outcomes:** We will be in the top 10 of universities in Australia for 6-year Undergraduate completion rates.<sup>^</sup>

**Curriculum Sustainability:** We will ensure that curriculum offerings are financially sustainable, market-aligned, adaptive to emerging technologies, and responsive to student and industry demand.\*

### Focus Areas

- An Outstanding Student Experience
- Life-ready
- Sustainable Learning and Teaching

## Engagement that Connects

### Measures of Success

**Locally Connected:** We will improve our standing with our regional community as evidenced by continuous improvement in our Community, Industry, and Alumni sentiment.<sup>^</sup>

**Globally Recognised:** We will build trust and support in our communities locally and globally, evidenced by being in the top 200 universities in the *QS World University Rankings*.\*

### Focus Areas

- Building Trust by Engaging
- Impact for a Sustainable Future
- Empowering Communities

<sup>^</sup> **People First Measures:** Measures of Success that recognise that we are an institution that exists to improve lives, and whose greatest asset is its people.

\* **Impact Measures:** Measures of Success that seek to ensure that the University can serve future generations.

## Research with Impact

### Measures of Success

**Growing Capacity:** We will be in the top 10 of universities in Australia for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) student enrolments.<sup>^</sup>

**Driving Quality:** Our researchers will be supported to conduct work of the highest quality.<sup>^</sup>

**Partner Aligned:** We will grow our research, as evidenced by being in the top 10 of Australian universities for research income.\*

### Focus Areas

- Solving What Matters to our Regions
- Delivering Research Impact
- Expanding our Collaborations
- Communicating our Achievements

## A Future-ready University

### Measures of Success

**Staff Engagement:** Our staff will feel empowered, supported, and digitally enabled, evidenced through continual improvement in staff engagement surveys.<sup>^</sup>

**Financial Sustainability:** We will generate a core operating margin of 5% to enable future investments in people and infrastructure.\*

**Environmental Sustainability:** We will aim to be carbon neutral by 2029.\*

### Focus Areas

- People First
- Embedding Sustainability
- Global Reach
- Digital Enablement and Artificial Intelligence

# Our Flagships

Our Flagships are initiatives that reflect the needs, strengths, and aspirations of our communities. They integrate education, research, and engagement to create meaningful and measurable impact to deliver on our civic mission.

A structured process will guide the selection of initiatives, ensuring alignment with community priorities, institutional strengths, and strategic relevance. Initiatives delivered must demonstrate:

## Core Objectives



Responsive to community needs



Aligned with our purpose and values



Integrated across education, research, and engagement

## Key Features



Strategic distinctiveness



Builds on our proven strengths



Aligned with priorities of, and co-designed with, community, industry and government.



Scalability

## Funding and Investment



Leveraging internal resources, capacity and capability



Designed for sustainability and longevity



Positioned for external funding or revenue generation

## Implementation Approach

We will implement these initiatives through a staged approach that balances ambition with institutional capacity, with a commitment to delivering at least three flagships over five years.

### Phase 01

Establish governance, set selection protocols, establish seed funding model, and develop stage-gated approval process with business cases for priority projects.

### Phase 02

Launch flagship initiatives selected through the first round of seed funding. Strengthen partnerships, embed Sustainable Development Goals alignment, and refine evaluation frameworks.

### Phase 03

Scale successful projects and expand engagement. Integrate learnings into long-term planning. Continue cycle of prioritisation and investment established in Phases 1 and 2.

## Flagships in Action

Our University's focus on our regions reflects our belief that transformation begins with listening, partnering and acting locally for impact both here and across the world.

Through our Flagships, we will continue to empower regional futures, reinforce community resilience, and ensure that the University of Newcastle remains a trusted partner in shaping a more equitable and prosperous Australia.

Our established **Trailblazer for Recycling and Clean Energy (TRaCE)** serves as an example of what a flagship could look like in practice. TRaCE accelerates the commercialisation of clean energy and recycling technologies in a collaborative model that partners with the Commonwealth Government, industry, UNSW Sydney, and positions the Hunter as a global leader.

*The examples provided below are illustrative only and represent a sample of potential initiatives for consideration. They are subject to further exploration of business cases during implementation of the strategy.*

### What if we offered immersive, real-world professional experiences for students that deliver real services and benefits for our communities?

Building upon our identity as a civic-minded university that values equity and engagement, we could expand and scale our existing student clinic model, from health clinics to legal advice centres, to meet community need and enrich work integrated learning opportunities.

### What if we leveraged our unique position in the Hunter and Central Coast to address the housing crisis as one of Australia's most pressing challenges?

Drawing on strengths in planning, law, health, engineering, design, and supported by advanced prototyping capabilities, we could co-create sustainable and inclusive housing solutions. These could accelerate affordability, enhance environmental outcomes, and prepare future industry leaders.

### What if we championed physical activity as a powerful force for inclusion, health, and wellbeing in our regions?

Leveraging our strengths in sport and movement education, research and partnerships, we could work with community to create a unified sports hub. This could support regional health, student pathways, wellbeing for under-represented and disengaged groups, elite and emerging professional athletes, and retired athletes transitioning in their careers.

### What if we made supporting a just energy and social equity transition central to our role in shaping Australia's future?

In regions like the Upper Hunter, collaborative efforts are driving economic diversification, workforce development, and environmental stewardship. These initiatives demonstrate how innovation, place-based learning, and strategic partnerships can energise industries and uplift communities, building the capabilities Australia's future demands.

# Life-ready Graduates

Our Education Plan will deliver an outstanding student experience, preparing our graduates for life in an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

At our University, students are not just learning – they are growing, thriving, and preparing to shape the world we all want to live in. They are supported every step of the way. Their wellbeing, both physical and mental, are at the heart of the student experience.

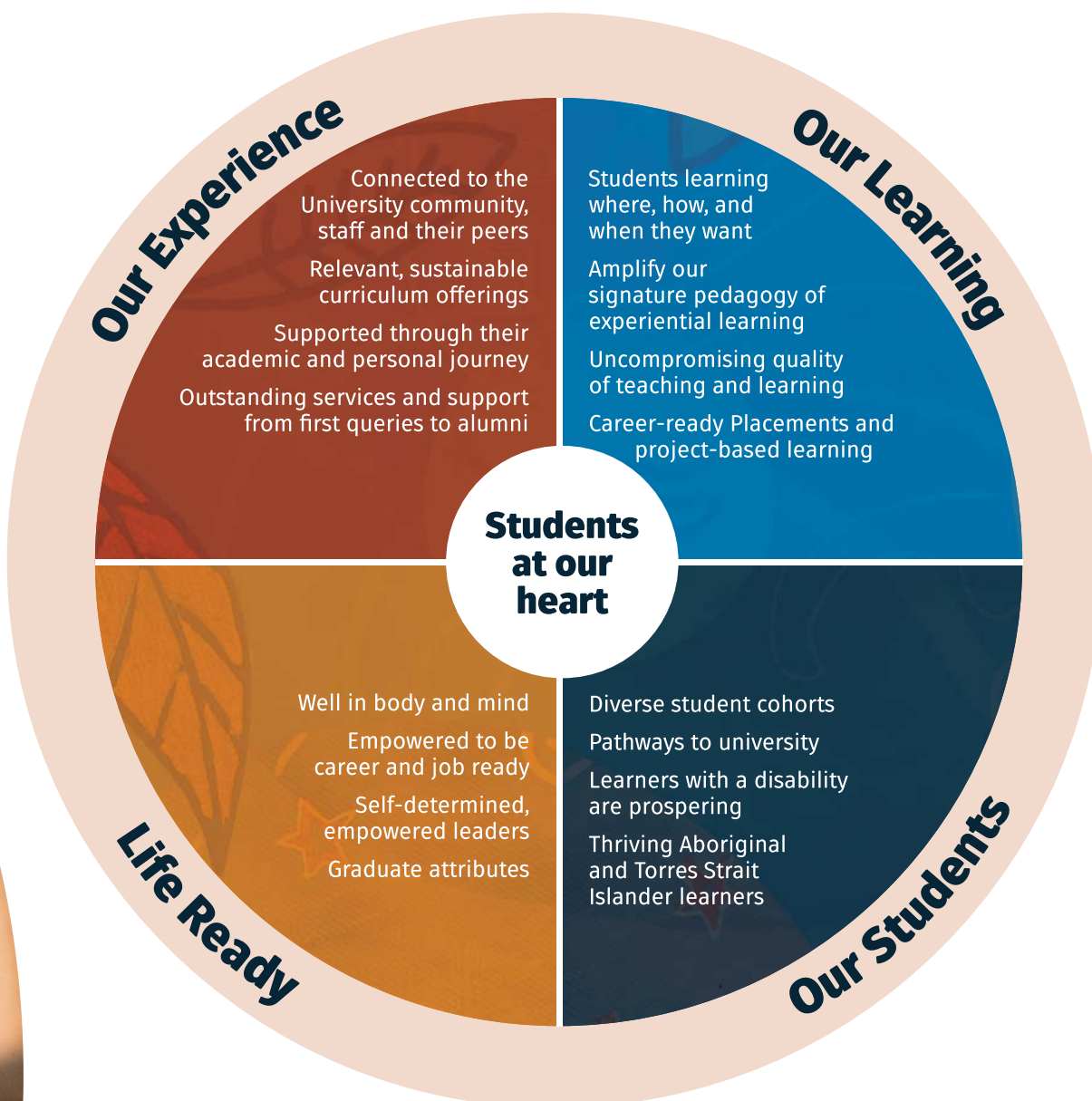
Our graduates will be well versed in contemporary digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, and prepared to thrive in a world where data-driven decision-making and intelligent systems shape every industry. They will build real skills for life and their careers, and be empowered to be confident, competitive, and inspired to make a difference to the communities they live in.





## Our Goals

- Our curriculum offerings are relevant, sustainable, and flexible; delivered when and how our students want them.
- The learning experience is connected to real-world application, informs our students' futures, and ensures that they are valued by employers.
- Our comprehensive student wellbeing approach supports students' resilience and determination to thrive in a complex world.



## Our Path Forward

Our measures of success and focus areas for *Life-ready Graduates* are outlined here, while the detail on the initiatives and actions that will bring the strategy to life is contained in our supporting **Education Plan**. This plan will support staff and students to navigate learning, teaching, and the student journey through clear protocols, governance frameworks, and practical implementation steps.



### People First

**Student Satisfaction:** We will be in the top 10 of universities in Australia for student satisfaction, as measured through the national Student Experience Survey.

**Student Outcomes:** We will be in the top 10 of universities in Australia for 6-year completion rates.



### Impact

**Curriculum Sustainability:** We will ensure that curriculum offerings are financially sustainable, market-aligned, adaptive to emerging technologies, and responsive to student and industry demand.





## An Outstanding Student Experience

We will make real-world experiences and engagement central to the learning journey. From immersive work-integrated learning opportunities, such as Career-ready Placements, to flexible, student-driven pathways, our students will experience deep, transformative learning that is personal and purposeful.

Our students will be empowered to learn flexibly – where, how, and when they want.

We will proactively collaborate in the post-secondary education sector to make education more accessible and affordable for learners, and more rapidly responsive to emerging industry skills needs.

From the first query to life as an alumnus, we will provide outstanding service and support. We will ensure that every student, from every background, feels valued, empowered, and prepared for lifelong success.



## Life-ready

We will prepare our students for life, not just work. Through a focus on self-determined, empowered learning, students will develop the skills and knowledge to take ownership of their journey. They will be equipped with the confidence and resilience required to navigate an ever-changing world.

Our curriculum offerings will be grounded in a strong set of graduate attributes and capabilities that support lifelong success, adaptability, and meaningful contribution to society. Students will be prepared for citizenship, engaged in their communities, and connected to the world.

Throughout their academic journey, students will be supported holistically, with a strong focus on wellbeing and personal growth.



## Sustainable Learning and Teaching

Our curriculum offerings will be both relevant and sustainable. We will build upon our existing strengths to deliver teaching and learning of uncompromising quality, to equip students with the skills and knowledge to thrive.

We will continuously review our portfolio of curriculum offerings to ensure the long-term sustainability and quality of what we offer our students.

We will support our people with the skills and resources to deliver high quality learning grounded in real-world experience, in collaboration with partners in our regions and beyond.



# Research with Impact

Our Research Plan sets out a bold vision to reshape our research environment into one that is mission-driven, collaborative, and impactful.

Research builds upon discovery at our University. It is a shared endeavour powered by curiosity, collaboration, and a commitment to improving lives. Our researchers work closely with communities, industry, and partners to tackle the issues that matter most to our regions and the world.

Through this plan we will prioritise translating knowledge and expertise into real-world impact that's scalable and sustainable, while enhancing our regional relevance, elevating our national contributions, and strengthening our global standing.



## Our Goals

- Help our regions thrive through research excellence, collaboration, and impact.
- Be the research and innovation engine room for our regions, driving solutions that resonate globally.
- Be the brokers of connection to address industry and community-led needs.



## Our Path Forward

Our measures of success and focus areas for *Research with Impact* are outlined here, while the detail on the initiatives and actions that will bring the strategy to life is contained in our supporting **Research Plan**. This plan will support staff and students to navigate research through clear protocols, governance frameworks, and practical implementation steps.



### People First

**Growing Capacity:** We will be in the top 10 of universities in Australia for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) student enrolments.

**Driving Quality:** Our researchers will be supported to conduct work of the highest quality.



### Impact

**Partner Aligned:** We will grow our research, as evidenced by being in the top 10 of Australian universities for research income.



## Solving What Matters to our Regions

Harnessing the strengths of our three Institutes, we will direct our research and innovation efforts towards the challenges that matter most to the communities in our regions, with high potential for application nationally and globally.



Strategic investment will accelerate priority initiatives, while new models of engagement and evaluation will deepen our partnerships and amplify regional impact, to position our University as a leader and collaborator in transformative change.



## Delivering Research Impact

We will implement a new Fellowship Program to attract, support, and empower world-class researchers.



Through these Fellowships, we will invest in exceptional talent whose work is shaping the future. This will help advance knowledge, address complex global challenges, and drive positive change in our communities and beyond.





## Expanding our Collaborations

Our research ecosystem will transcend boundaries by scaling strategic partnerships, strengthening global alliances, and diversifying our funding partners.

Through multidimensional collaborations and co-creation with stakeholders, we will unlock new opportunities for impactful innovation, knowledge exchange, and shared success.

Our approach will embrace diversity and belonging to ensure culturally respectful and inclusive outcomes that shape a better future.



## Communicating our Achievements

We will enhance how we capture, track, and communicate research impact, aligning research expectations and promotion criteria to support meaningful and measurable outcomes.

By supporting teams across the impact pathway, we will elevate our research reputation and strengthen our standing in global rankings.



# Engagement that Connects

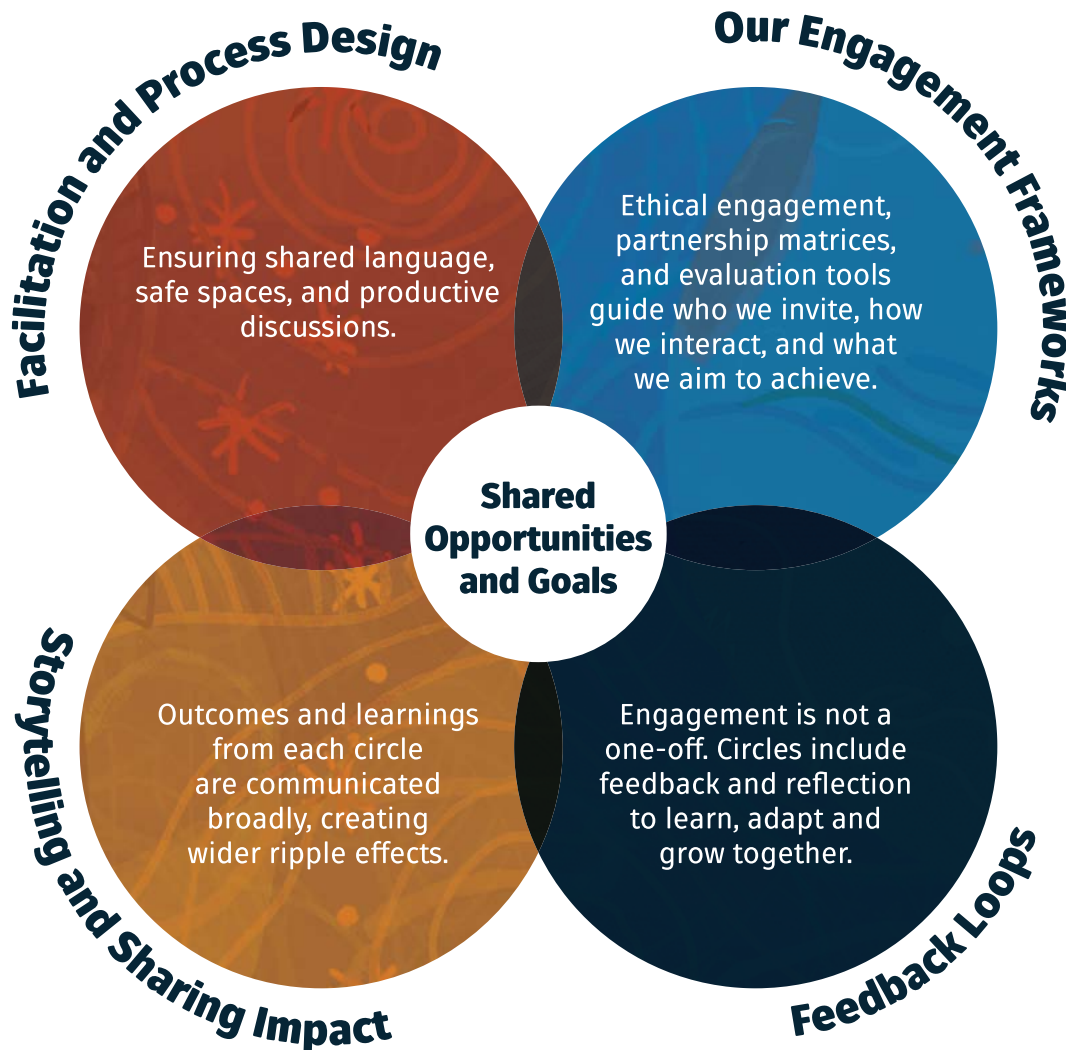
Our focus is on long-term, reciprocal partnerships that deliver impact and shared benefits, and respond to community priorities. For us, engagement is a sustained relationship built on trust, respect, and collaboration.

We recognise that no single voice holds all the answers. Our Circles of Collaboration reflect our commitment to inclusive, respectful, and solution-focused engagement. These circles bring together staff, students, researchers, industry, government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and citizens in structured, shared spaces to co-create knowledge and act on opportunities.



## Our Goals

- We will build powerful partnerships locally and nationally to translate research into real-world impact, enrich student learning, and advance equity and inclusion beyond access to education.
- Staff and students will act as connectors and catalysts for our internal collaboration to lay the foundation for external success.
- We will be guided by ethical frameworks and a commitment to collaboration across disciplines, cultures, and sectors, to make partner interactions simple and consistent.



## Our Path Forward

Our measures of success and focus areas for *Engagement that Connects* are outlined here, while the detail on the initiatives and actions that will bring the strategy to life is contained in our supporting **Engagement Plan**. This plan will support staff and students to navigate engagement and partnerships through clear protocols, governance frameworks, and practical implementation steps.



### People First

**Locally Connected:** We will improve our standing with our regional community as evidenced by continuous improvement in our Community, Industry, and Alumni sentiment.



### Impact

**Globally Recognised:** We will build trust and support in our communities locally and globally, evidenced by being in the top 200 globally in the *QS World University Rankings*.





## Building Trust by Engaging

At our University, engagement is grounded in respect and cultural standards. Our Ethical Engagement Framework will ensure we listen, learn, and co-create with our partners.



We will actively remove barriers to participation and seek to engage historically underrepresented groups. This includes prioritising place-based engagement with regional, rural, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



## Impact for a Sustainable Future

Our engagement will be purposeful and aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring our work addresses pressing challenges and delivers measurable change.



We will be clear about the purpose and expected outcomes of engagement, supported by governance frameworks such as the Philanthropic Governance and Community Partnership Matrix.

Engagement protocols will include defined objectives, transparent reporting, and shared evaluation metrics.

We will build enduring partnerships and consider the long-term social, environmental, and economic outcomes of our engagement activities.



## Empowering Communities

Through education and research, engagement will empower communities and partners to lead their own development, resilience, and innovation journeys.



Internally, engagement will be a defining feature of our identity and a strategic enabler, informing decision-making, strengthening collaboration across the University, and embedding a culture of shared purpose.

This dual focus will ensure engagement drives internal capability and alignment, as well as external impact.



# A Future-ready University

## People First



We will build on the passion, commitment, and expertise of our people to drive collaboration, innovation, and agility. Cultural standards will be embedded into leadership and engagement, fostering trust and belonging through storytelling, transparency, and active listening.

Our staff will be empowered and developed as outstanding thought leaders in a high-performing institution, guiding students on their journey to becoming life-ready graduates, local ambassadors, and global citizens.

We value the critical role our people play in achieving our teaching, research, and community engagement objectives. In a rapidly changing

and increasingly competitive environment, we will invest in capability and adaptability to ensure our people thrive in a changing world.

To be a sector leader in staff engagement, delivering an exceptional employee experience is essential. We will support distributed leadership, enabling all staff to contribute at their highest levels and to realise their unique potential.



### People First

**Staff Engagement:** Our staff will feel empowered, supported, and digitally enabled, evidenced through continual improvement in staff engagement surveys.



## Transforming the Way We Work

Attracting, nurturing, and retaining high-performing staff who are dedicated to upholding our values will be a key factor to our future success in serving our students and communities.

To achieve this, we will strengthen our employer offer, develop our people, and promote collective learning by sharing successes and challenges.

We will develop tailored career development programs for academic and professional staff to grow and nurture career mobility, pathways, and pipelines.

We will prioritise modernising our research support structures and streamline internal processes to create an agile and responsive research environment.

We will create the right conditions for all our people to achieve excellence and to adapt to changing circumstances throughout their careers. Cultivating collaboration and celebrating achievements remain central to shaping and sustaining our values-based culture.

## Keeping People Healthy and Safe

We remain committed to a culture of continuous improvement in health, safety, and wellbeing with strong leadership commitment and high levels of engagement integrated into everything we do.

We will model ownership, responsibility and accountability in everyday practice, and create safe spaces for education and research where staff feel trusted and respected. This will be consistent with the principles of the *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence*.

We will foster belonging, ensuring our people feel valued and connected.

We strive for high performance at every level. Leaders will embed a culture of high performance founded on consistent processes aligned to our organisational strategy. They will support staff to achieve their best in a healthy and safe environment.

## Culture Grounded in our Values

We will build a culture grounded in our values of excellence, equity, engagement, and sustainability.

Informed by our landmark *Cultural Capability Framework*, we will champion cultural responsiveness, encourage self-reflection, and establish a shared understanding of ethical practice with courage to ask questions and seek clarity.

Our focus on excellence and sustainability requires effective cooperation and collaboration, an enterprising approach and a strong focus on delivering strategic goals.

We will bring a range of perspectives, disciplines, and expertise to our community, aligned to our focus on engagement. Valuing diversity and inclusion, fostering collaboration, and celebrating achievements will be essential to nurturing our commitment to equity.



## Embedding Sustainability



Sustainability is a defining principle that must shape every aspect of how we operate, educate, and contribute to society. For the University of Newcastle, this means embracing a holistic understanding of sustainability, one that includes environmental stewardship, financial resilience, and ethical responsibility.

As we look to the next five years, we recognise our role as a public university is leading by example: modelling sustainable futures through our teaching, research, and campus operations.

Aiming to achieve carbon neutrality by 2029 is a cornerstone of this vision, reflecting our determination to act decisively on climate change while ensuring long-term institutional viability and social impact.



### Impact

**Financial Sustainability:** We will generate a core operating margin of 5% to enable future investments in people and infrastructure.

**Environmental Sustainability:** We will aim to be carbon neutral by 2029.



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Pla  
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## Teaching for a Sustainable Future

We will embed sustainability across our curriculum ensuring that all students, regardless of discipline, graduate with the knowledge, values, and capabilities to contribute to a more sustainable world.

This includes integrating climate literacy, systems thinking, and ethical reasoning into learning experiences, while supporting educators to innovate in how sustainability is taught.

We will champion Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems, community-based learning, and transdisciplinary approaches that reflect the complexity of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, preparing graduates to lead in a rapidly changing world.

## Research with Impact and Responsibility

Our research agenda will prioritise sustainability-driven innovation, from health technology, clean energy, and circular economies to social equity and biodiversity conservation. We will foster cross-sector partnerships that translate research into real-world impact, and support researchers to engage with the ethical dimensions of their work, particularly in areas such as emerging technologies, resource use, and climate resilience.

Sustainability will guide how we conduct research; encompassing environmental responsibility, financial viability, and ethical integrity, promoting open science, responsible data practices, and low-impact methodologies. Our leadership in areas such as green hydrogen and environmental restoration demonstrates our capacity to contribute meaningfully to global solutions.

## Sustainable Campuses and Operations

With campuses that span urban centres and significant bushland environments, we have both a responsibility and an opportunity to lead by example. With over 250 hectares of bushland, wetlands, and conservation zones, our campuses are home to diverse ecosystems and endangered species. We will continue to actively manage these landscapes through biodiversity and bushfire management plans, while integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and ecological restoration.

Our commitment to carbon neutrality by 2029, with a clear emphasis on true decarbonisation, will put us on track to achieve ambitious Net Zero emissions by 2050 in line with state and national government targets. Financial, environmental, and social sustainability will underpin our strategic decisions, ensuring we remain agile and resilient.



## Global Reach



We will cultivate high-value international student pathways, global partnerships and strategic relationships that enhance our reputation, support the University's near-term priorities, and create meaningful opportunities for staff, students, graduates, and communities.

Success will be supported by an interconnected and University-wide international approach that harnesses the strengths of our ecosystem:

- Amplifying our research centres and industry connectivity.
- Delivering diverse and sustainable enrolment outcomes for Colleges and Schools.
- Providing transformative overseas experiences and placements for our students.
- Advocating and advancing the University's interests through government and partner channels.
- Cultivating a dynamic and engaged alumni cohort, at home and abroad.



## Global Engagement and Growth

We will strengthen our global engagement through a strong international student cohort and creating transformative experiences available to a wide range of students.

To achieve this, we will establish scalable, financially, and operationally sustainable transnational education partnerships across all Colleges.

We will integrate planning, support and engagement with Newcastle Australia Institute of Higher Education (NAIHE) Singapore, leveraging the campus as a hub for regional engagement across Asia.

This will also be supported by the establishment of a robust midyear session for diverse student cohorts with innovative programs and experiences.

## Shaping our Global Reputation

We will amplify the University's profile as a global leader in research, education, and regional development. Our research strengths and industry connectivity will be showcased through targeted profile-raising activities.

Our University will be positioned as the leading partner of choice for government, NGOs and universities across the Pacific region. Our United Nations CIFAL centre will leverage our strengths in sustainability, energy research, education, and regional development.

We will promote the University of Newcastle as the leading regional university for transformational overseas student experiences and Career-ready Placement opportunities.

## Empowering Alumni across the Globe

We will cultivate lifelong connections with our graduates, embedding alumni engagement into the student lifecycle and beyond. This will include proactive support for graduates of the last decade through innovative alumni programs that excite and increase engagement.

We will establish lifelong learning, graduate education pathways, and career upskilling modules that provide value to our graduates.

Across the University, a culture of alumni mentorship and volunteering will be embedded, supported through scalable platforms.

Alumni will be integrated into the student engagement lifecycle to create a more seamless approach to supporting positive student and graduate experiences.



## Digital Enablement and Artificial Intelligence



Digital technologies are fundamentally transforming how universities operate, engage, and deliver value. For the University of Newcastle, this digital revolution presents both challenges and opportunities to reimagine our core functions while strengthening our position as a future-ready institution.

Our digital enablement strategy encompasses a broad technology ecosystem, inclusive of artificial intelligence, that will enhance our teaching, research, community engagement, and operations.

This strategic approach prioritises the intersection of people and technology, focusing on personalised experiences, data-driven insights, and secure, efficient systems.

Our framework is built on ethical principles, equity commitments, and human-centred innovation, ensuring technology serves our academic mission while preparing our community for an increasingly digital future.





## Teaching and Learning Innovation

Digital technologies will transform the educational experience through personalised learning pathways, inclusive environments, and innovative teaching and learning approaches.

We will develop adaptive learning platforms that are responsive to individual student needs and integrate AI-powered and digital tools to enhance feedback and assessment. Immersive learning experiences will be developed that foster creativity and critical thinking. This will also be enhanced by building digital literacy across disciplines to prepare graduates for the future workforce.

Educators will be supported to develop digital fluency and pedagogical strategies that leverage emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, responsibly. Our curriculum will evolve to reflect the changing digital landscape while maintaining academic integrity and excellence.

## Research Advancement and Collaboration

Digital transformation will accelerate research capabilities across the University.

Our priorities include investing in advanced digital infrastructure and data platforms to foster interdisciplinary research through connected systems. We will strengthen data analytics capabilities for research impact and build strategic partnerships to address complex digital challenges.

We will enhance research integrity through robust digital tools for data management, analysis, and collaboration.

Our research community will be empowered to make the most of emerging technologies ethically and transparently.

## Operational Excellence and Strategic Decision-Making

Digital enablement and artificial intelligence will drive operational efficiency and informed decision-making through streamlining administrative processes and automation. This will help enhance our student and staff experience through personalised digital services, integrated cybersecurity and data governance frameworks. We will also use predictive analytics for data-informed decision making and resource optimisation.

We will prioritise initiatives that deliver measurable value while maintaining transparency, security, and human oversight.

Our governance framework will ensure responsible technology adoption aligned with our institutional values and strategic objectives.



# Our Campuses

As a multi-campus university with deep regional and global connections, we embrace the distinct character and strengths of each of our locations. The priorities for each of our campuses will help ensure we are providing a future-ready university experience for our students, staff, and wider communities.

Our campuses are more than physical spaces. They are living expressions of our commitment to giving back, driving innovation, and fostering inclusive communities. They are places where people come together — students, educators, researchers, industry partners, and community members.

Each campus plays a vital role in shaping our identity and amplifying our impact, reflecting the diversity of our communities and the breadth of our ambition. They act as an enabler to deliver on our vision and purpose.



## Callaghan

Awabakal Country

**Our bushland campus where industry and community converge**

**Our priorities:** Renew the campus heart and student precincts, enhance sport, and attract large-scale industry collaboration, positioning Callaghan as a hub for innovation and community impact. We will create spaces that support student life, staff collaboration, and community engagement.



## Newcastle City

Awabakal and Worimi Country

**Civic heart, cultural catalyst, entrepreneurial hub**

**Our priorities:** Activate our City campus locations, driven by the people who study, work, and collaborate there. We will combine this with the longer-term Honeysuckle expansion into a vibrant hub of learning, innovation, student accommodation, and partnerships.



## Central Coast

Darkinjung Country

### Building a university town for the Central Coast's future

**Our priorities:** Strengthen our Central Coast campus as an education hub through the Gosford Central and Gosford Hospital locations. We will build new student accommodation to grow a vibrant university town where students, educators, health professionals, and local partners come together.

Maintain a tenant-based presence at our Ourimbah location in partnership with TAFE NSW, continuing to support collaborative education, training, and community connection for our Central Coast campus, pairing knowledge with skills.



## Sydney

Eora Country

### A hub for business innovation and international education

**Our priorities:** Grow postgraduate and professional curriculum offerings, expand international student pathways, and strengthen industry partnerships. We will position Sydney as a university hub and gateway to our regions, where students connect across cultures, disciplines, and industries.

## Singapore

### A gateway to Asia for collaborative education and cutting-edge research

**Our priorities:** Expand high-demand curriculum offerings in business, health, and engineering, and grow international research collaborations. We will seek to leverage Singapore's position as a regional education hub to strengthen transnational partnerships, student mobility, and connect people.

# Implementing Our Strategy

Through this plan, the University remains accountable to its students, staff, and regions; ensuring inclusive, responsive, and impactful outcomes across education, research, and engagement.

## To ensure the effective implementation of our strategy we will:

### **Establish an Integrated Planning Framework:**

We will implement a cohesive planning framework supported by robust systems and processes that enhance visibility and alignment of plans across the organisation, guiding the development of functional and local-level plans.

**Embed governance practices that drive strategic outcomes:** We will ensure that transparent and ethical decision-making structures are aligned to support accountability, responsiveness, and collaboration, with leaders equipped to champion strategic priorities and foster alignment across Colleges and Divisions.

**Ensure ongoing financial sustainability:** We will align resource allocation with strategic priorities and diversify revenue streams to ensure the long-term viability of our mission and impact.

**Foster a culture and mindset of continuous improvement:** We will encourage innovation, learning, and reflection at all levels, empowering our people to adapt and evolve in pursuit of excellence.

**Promote codesign with stakeholders:** Human Centred Design (HCD), Design Thinking and codesign will be foundational principles in developing programs and projects that deliver on our strategic priorities. Through close collaboration, we will co-create solutions that meet stakeholder needs.

**Undertake ongoing monitoring and evaluation:** We will regularly assess our progress and outcomes through structured monitoring and evaluation processes to track performance, identify areas for improvement, and make evidence-informed decisions.

**Enhance strategic communication and engagement:** We will develop and implement a strategic communications plan to share progress, celebrate achievements, and reinforce the purpose and impact of our strategy.

**Integrate risk into strategic planning and decision-making:** Guided by evidence and ethics, leaders will identify and manage strategic risks and build a proactive risk culture.



## Our Strategy Architecture

Our detailed supporting plans will be the vehicles of success for *Looking Ahead 2030* and will be supported by key enabling plans. Operational plans at the institute, college, school, division, and unit level will translate strategic priorities into local action.

### Looking Ahead 2030 Strategic Plan

#### Supporting Plans

Education Plan

Research Plan

Engagement Plan

#### Future-ready University Enabling Plans

People & Workforce

Digital

Estate

Global

Sustainability

## Our Strategy Timeline

The phasing of our strategy shows our estimated effort to deliver on the objectives of *Looking Ahead 2030* over time. It will be reviewed annually to reflect new developments and the latest prioritisation of our efforts.

Supporting Plan	Focus Area	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Life-ready Graduates	An Outstanding Student Experience	Scale up/transition	Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Maximum effort
	Life-ready	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Scale up/transition	Scale up/transition
	Sustainable Learning and Teaching	Lower intensity of effort	Scale up/transition	Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort
Research with Impact	Solving What Matters to our Regions	Scale up/transition	Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Maximum effort
	Expanding our Collaborations	Scale up/transition	Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Maximum effort
	Delivering Research Impact	Lower intensity of effort	Scale up/transition	Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort
Engagement that Connects	Communicating our Achievements	Scale up/transition	Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Scale up/transition
	Building Trust by Engaging	Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Lower intensity of effort
	Impact for a Sustainable Future		Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Scale up/transition
Our Flagships	Empowering Communities			Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort
	Flagship 1	Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Scale up/transition	Lower intensity of effort
	Flagship 2		Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort	Scale up/transition
	Flagship 3			Scale up/transition	Maximum effort	Maximum effort

Lower intensity of effort   Scale up/transition   Maximum effort



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