

## Narelle Pearse, Chief Operating Officer



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At CQUniversity, sustainability is not just a guiding principle—it is embedded in how we operate, engage with our communities, and plan for the future.

Throughout 2024, we continued to turn commitment into action, integrating sustainability across our campuses, research priorities, and strategic planning processes. This report highlights the progress we've made and the practical steps we're taking to ensure a resilient, inclusive, and environmentally responsible future.

Our 2024–2028 Sustainability Framework provides a clear structure for embedding sustainability in our day-to-day operations, long-term planning, and community engagement. Over the past year, we've expanded our decarbonisation initiatives, strengthened environmental management systems, and supported new opportunities for students and staff to contribute meaningfully—whether through on-ground restoration work, campus initiatives, or applied research.

Notable achievements include the release of our inaugural Decarbonisation Plan, enhanced environmental monitoring at our Rockhampton North campus, and student-led sustainability projects that reflect our commitment to real-world impact. Our research continues to address urgent global challenges—from biodiversity loss and renewable energy transitions to food systems and regional resilience.

As a dual-sector institution with deep regional roots, CQUniversity is uniquely positioned to deliver sustainability outcomes that are locally grounded and globally relevant. We're proud to support regional communities, strengthen partnerships, and lead by example across education, infrastructure, and service delivery.

I'd like to thank our staff, students, and partners for their continued commitment and collaboration. Sustainability is not achieved in isolation—it's built through shared effort, strategic investment, and the alignment of values and action.

As we look ahead, CQUniversity will continue to embed sustainability in everything we do—ensuring we remain responsive, future-focused, and accountable to the communities we serve.



#### **Acknowledgement to Australia's First Nations Peoples.**

CQUniversity recognises and acknowledges the important role First Nations peoples make to our communities, and values Australian Indigenous knowledge systems as an integral part of our teachings.

	Contents	Page
<b>✓</b>	Message from Chief Operating officer	2
<b>✓</b>	About this report	4
<b>✓</b>	2024 Highlights & Challenges	5
<b>✓</b>	Community engagement	6
<b>✓</b>	Sustainability at CQU – History	7-8
<b>✓</b>	2024 Statistics	9
<b>✓</b>	Sustainability Framework introduction	10
<b>✓</b>	Sustainability framework targets	
	✓ 1. Learnings	11-12
	✓ 2. Research	14
	☑ 3. Social, Community & Partnership	17
	✓ 4. CQU – a sustainable business	18
	✓ 5. Waste, 6. Water & 7. Energy	20
	☑ 8. Biodiversity & 9.Estate & Built environment	21
<b>✓</b>	Caring for Land and Sea Country: a Konomie Island adventure	22
<b>✓</b>	Decarbonisation plan – Ratified 2024	23
<b>✓</b>	Looking Ahead: Our Sustainability Roadmap 2025	24
<b>✓</b>	Contact Us	25



# About this report

### Why produce this report?

### Aligning with Strategic Goals:

Show how sustainability supports CQU's pillars of People, Planet, and Partnerships.

#### ✓ Commitment to SDGs:

Demonstrate contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals through education, research, and community initiatives.

### ✓ Sustainability Performance:

Provide updates on targets outlined in the Sustainability Framework.

### Accountability & Improvement:

Offer transparency on progress and identify areas for further enhancement.

### ✓ Stakeholder Engagement:

Involve students, staff, and the community in sustainability efforts and future goals.

#### ESG Adherence:

Showcase CQU's commitment to environmental, social, and governance standards.

#### Research & Education Excellence:

Highlight how sustainability is integrated into research and academic programs.

### ✓ Partnerships & Collaboration:

Reflect the role of partnerships in advancing sustainability outcomes.



## 2024

### Highlights

- ✓ CQU sustainability framework 2024-2028 endorsed & implemented
- ✓ Decarbonisation plan endorsed June 2024
- ✓ Tree audit and health inspection report undertaken
- ✓ Further development of GHG emitting sources to improve decarbonisation reporting
- Development of Environmental management plans (Rockhampton North & Bundaberg)
- ✓ 75+ electricity and 5 water smart meters to provide detailed consumption data across the North Rockhampton campus
- ✓ 100 bird and insect attracting native plants established across North Rockhampton campus
- School of Business and Law committed to the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME).
- Construction starts on new state-of-the-art hydrogen information centre at CQU Gladstone
- Roofing upgrades at the Mackay residential college improved indoor building temperatures, reducing power consumption, emissions and enhanced water capture

### Challenges

- ✓ Sustainability staff turnover
- Limited resources (staff, budget etc.)
- ✓ Timing of weather events
- Low participation numbers in events (clean up Australia day, tree planting)



## Community Engagement:

Over the past three years, CQUniversity (CQU) has collaborated with the Rockhampton Regional Council on a conservation project to rehabilitate the Frenchmans Creek area. This initiative involved CQU Horticulture students actively participating in the removal of invasive species and the reintroduction of native vegetation, leading to the successful regeneration of the native bushland.



The partnership underscores CQU's commitment to environmental sustainability and provides practical conservation experience for its students.

initiative as it's one that just has so many benefits, providing an ideal setting for students to study ecosystem function, combining bushland and waterway habitats,"

Environmental Sustainability Cr Elliot Hilse

# Sustainability at CQU - History

2011

✓ Joined ACTS

Environmental sustainability committee (CoP) established

2016

Sustainability under DFM business area

☑ DFM developed the 1<sup>st</sup> sustainability policy and framework

2017

✓ Green buildings council member

✓ Pilot recycling program

Mackay, Bundaberg & Emerald LED lighting conversion upgrade

2018

☑ Clean up Australia - Platinum business supporter

Sustainability officer role created

☑ Ditch the disposable campaign launched

✓ Melbourne LED lighting conversion

2019

Ditch the disposable campaign launched

☑ CQU joins a QLD Uni consortium for long term renewable energy purchase

✓ Rockhampton North Outdoor LED lighting conversion upgrade

✓ CMERC (Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre) founded

2020

✓ Water metering on North Rockhampton campus

✓ Installation of waste bin stations

✓ 200,000L capacity of rainwater tanks installed

☑ Green Gown Awards nominee – Ditch the disposables







# Sustainability at CQU - History

2021

- ✓ CQU's Festival of change event
- ✓ 1<sup>st</sup> 5 Green star designed buildings School of Mining (Rockhampton) & School of manufacturing (Gladstone)

2022

- ☑ Review of CQU's carbon emission undertaken, plan for Net zero by 2050
- ✓ Recycling rollout completed; waste audits undertaken
- Reduced printed paper campaign launched
- Food waste from Residential kitchen taken to local Croc farm.

2023

- ✓ 200kW solar array at Emerald campus constructed
- ✓ 1<sup>st</sup> EV charging station installed Rockhampton North

2024

- ✓ Release of the Sustainability framework 2024-2028
- Release of the decarbonisation strategy, to guide CQU net zero targets
- ✓ Development of campus based Environmental management plans for Rockhampton & Bundaberg
- ✓ Tree audit undertaken which included species, health, maintenance recommendation

2011 2016 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024



### 2024 Statistics



17% reduction in water consumption\*



<sup>-</sup> 2% total electricity reduction\*









Ranked 52nd globally (Times Higher Education Impact Rankings.)
Ranked 320 globally (QS Sustainability Rankings).

13% increase in waste tonnage and a 16% drop in diversion rate\*

>300kg of chicken carcasses diverted to local croc farm



\*\*Based on 17 kWh per 100 km average (EV Council Australia)

# Sustainability Framework 2024 - 2028

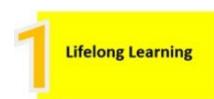
- CQUniversity Sustainability framework (2024-2028) was endorsed early 2024
- Provides a strategic roadmap for embedding sustainability across CQU
- Aligns with the university's Strategic plan 2024-2028, global best practices and overall university values.
- ✓ Focuses on linkage to our new Strategic Plan 2024 -2028, the UN SDGs and the increased focus of Environmental, Societal, and Governance (ESG).



- Encourages collaboration across staff, students, and external partners.
- ☑ Strengthens CQU's role as a leader in sustainability and innovation
- Tracks progress with measurable targets and reporting.
  - ✓ 2024 Targets are listed in this report







11.

Target		Due	Complete	Comments
1.1	Development of plan to be approved for implementation across the University.	Dec 2024	100 %	The Draft Disability Informed Action Plan (DIAP) was finalised and is progressing through approvals. Key consultations continue, and SSAF funding was secured to support implementation in 2025.
	Develop and rollout an education and communication strategy on the University's position on Artificial Intelligence around assessment.	Jun 2024		The GenAI Roadmap and StaffNet page with tools and resources are now available. LDID delivered 32 GenAI professional development sessions, including sessions with the Australian University of Kuwait, reaching 914 staff.
1.2	Develop and seek approval for fast-track processes to enable rapid review and approval of courses to meet the changing needs of industry.	Dec 2024	100 %	Fast-track process identified and applied to fast turn-around short courses in collaboration with CTS.
	Refresh Scholarly Activity @CQUniversity Framework and ensure alignment to Learning and Teaching Framework.	Dec 2024		The CQUniversity Scholarship of Tertiary Teaching Online Conference drew 367 attendees, with recordings available from 1 November. LDI Learning Design staff ran weekly drop- in sessions, and the Educator Excellence and Enrichment Program trial results will be presented in Q1 2025.
	Develop and seek approval for a University-wide Student Engagement and Success Framework.	Dec 2024	N/A	This initiative is being progressed as a key deliverable within the Retention Equity Program.
1.3	Revise (and for School of Trades - Develop) School Student Engagement and Retention/Completion Plans to align with new Framework and relevant government policy.	Dec 2024	90%	School reviews led to minimal changes, pending the Learning & Teaching Strategy and Framework. The SoT Student Engagement and Retention Plan has been drafted. Forward Plan: Finalise the plan while focusing on early student support, staff mentoring capacity, student recognition activities, feedback review, and ongoing collaboration with CQU divisions and employers.
1.4	Development of Social Innovation Education Strategy to be approved for implementation across the University.	Dec 2024	50%	EQS Formal Change Proposal and development of new Learning and Teaching Strategy and realignment of key staff.  Forward Plan: Transition task to newly employed Director, LTF, due to start in April 2025.



Target		Due	Complete	Comments
1.5	Implementation Plan developed for rollout of the Product Strategy (2025 rollout).	Jun 2024	80%	Development of CTS Student Conversion Strategy underway. Consultation to occur with business units involved in student conversion activities to coordinate our approach. Forward Plan: Transition task to newly employed Director, CTS, due to start in March 2025.
1.6	Consideration by each school of sustainability themes in various presentations and activities undertaken by the university. Provide an annual list of relevant items to capture and report.	Dec 2024	ongoing	CQUniversity embeds Sustainability and Social Innovation across all courses, aligning with the UN SDGs. As a PRME signatory, we support impactful research on topics such as employee retention, food waste, water, clean energy, and environmental impact—many led by the School of Business and Law. These efforts contribute to meaningful social and economic outcomes. Our academic and research focus ensures graduates are equipped to lead in responsible and sustainable business practices.
1.7	Digital mapping of VET workflows completed, including plan for implementation approved by the University.	Dec 2024	ongoing	In 2024, key projects supported ongoing improvement work, including student journey mapping (VET and HE), CRM-based project tracking, and a policy review to streamline systems like AIMS VET workflows. These initiatives aim to enhance efficiency and the overall student experience.

### **Tertiary Education Division**

In 2024, CQUniversity deepened the integration of sustainability into learning across all levels. Sustainability themes were embedded in course content, supported by micro credentials and student-led projects focused on real-world challenges like land rehabilitation and environmental monitoring. These efforts ensure our graduates leave with the skills, mindset, and awareness to lead positive change in their communities and industries.'



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Target	Due	Complete	Comments
2.1 Develop and implement Health Research Strategy.	Dec 2024	100 %	Strategy was implemented in 2024 in collaboration with Schools of HMAS and Nursing and Appleton Institute.
2.2 Implement an external audit of the University's Animal Ethics Committee to ensure compliance with Commonwealth and various State regulations.	Oct 2024	100 %	The external AEC review was conducted in October 2024. The final report to be received early 2025.
2.3 Develop a Research Infrastructure Plan.	Dec 2024	100 %	Initially budget-dependent, the measure shifted to supporting research teams with capital budget applications. In early 2024, it secured \$990K (Research Precincts Partnership Program) and \$17M (ABIC Proposal), with four additional bids funded.
2.4 Establish baseline to capture local and global research partnerships.	Dec 2024	100 %	Data has been captured in relation to international research collaborations, research conducted at overseas locations, and international co-authorship.  In 2024, CQU's publications were 44.8% local (485) and 55.2% global (598).

#### Research division

CQUniversity's research in 2024 continued to address critical sustainability issues—from reducing methane in agriculture and tackling plastic waste, to protecting marine ecosystems and advancing public health. With a growing alignment with the UN SDGs and steady increase in research income, our research efforts are driving meaningful impact in Australia and globally.'

#### B: Tuning Greenhouses to increase yield

Greenhouse cropping is Australia's fastest-growing food-producing industry, offering significantly higher yields and better-quality produce compared to conventional farming. This project will use computer modelling and field experiments—supported by data from Bundaberg Brewed Drinks—to optimise greenhouse design for ginger production, laying the groundwork for broader industry collaboration in protected cropping.



C: Cheaper greener Queensland: Optimising renewable fuel production from mixed-waste A CQUniversity-led project is paving the way for Queensland's first commercial-scale renewable fuels refinery, converting mixed solid waste—including plastics, tyres, and refinery residues—into Australian-standard diesel and petrol. Led by Dr Md Jahirul Islam in partnership with Northern Oil Refinery and SynBio, the research focuses on refining crude oil extracted from waste through thermochemical processes and testing its performance in modern engines. This innovation addresses a key gap in waste-to-fuel technology, aiming to reduce landfill, boost the circular economy, and deliver environmental benefits through cleaner, locally produced fuels.

#### E: Shaping Queensland's Grid for a Renewable Future

Queensland aims for 70% renewable energy by 2032, but many rural communities rely on aging power lines that are prone to outages from storms, bushfires, and other natural events. This project explores innovative solutions using distributed renewable energy, advanced voltage regulation, and battery storage to improve reliability and reduce costs. By integrating dSTATCOM technology and energy storage into the grid, we're enhancing stability and supporting Queensland's renewable energy transition. A field trial of these technologies is planned for next year.



- A. Strengthening collaboration between the agricultural and health sectors in Fiji to improve nutritional outcomes in farming families (Project didn't go ahead)
- B. New methane mitigation technology to increase Qld's beef industry sustainability (No report, researcher on leave)
- C. Great Northern Spices (No report, researcher on leave)



## F: Restoring resilience in seagrass habitats of the Whitsunday Islands (Reef Islands Initiative Whitsundays)

Seagrass meadows are vital for marine life, but the Whitsunday Islands have been at high risk of seagrass loss for over a decade. This project is paving the way for large-scale restoration by improving seed collection, germination, and planting techniques. A major milestone is the establishment of a dedicated seagrass nursery at Coral Sea Marina Resort, supporting the restoration of Zostera muelleri. By securing a reliable seed supply and refining restoration methods, this work strengthens biodiversity, supports marine species like turtles and dugongs, and contributes to future blue carbon and ecosystem service goals.

#### H: Monitoring the effectiveness of fauna sensitive infrastructure along the Peak Downs Highway

Koalas are endangered in Queensland, and vehicle collisions pose a serious threat to their survival. In 2023 alone, at least 145 koalas were killed on a 50 km stretch of the Peak Downs Highway. To better understand their movement and use of fauna underpasses, researchers monitored three underpasses using wildlife cameras and conducted habitat surveys in 2022 and 2024. While thousands of animals were recorded on camera, only one koala was observed using an underpass, suggesting many still cross the highway directly. The study recommends extending exclusion fencing and further research into koala movement and health to improve road safety for this vulnerable species.

## I: Capacity Building and strengthening resilience in the correctional setting to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disaster

The Correct Connect project, funded by the Australian and Queensland governments, aimed to enhance disaster preparedness in correctional centres through co-designed training and support. Delivered between March 2023 and June 2024, the project included workshops, masterclasses, and a tailored micro-credential course. Participants developed strategies to strengthen organisational responses before, during, and after disasters, leading to the creation of a Community of Practice for Correct Connect Mentors. These resources provide a scalable framework for improving disaster resilience in correctional and other high-risk settings.





Target		Due	Complete	Comments	
3.1	Deliver a new Philanthropic Strategy for the University and renew our partnership agreement with Salaam Baalak Trust for a five-year period.	Dec 2024	100 %	Renew partnership agreement with Salaam Baalak Trust for five (5) years – <b>renewed</b> .	
3.2	Grow Office of Social Innovation by delivering at least three (3) major initiatives that contribute to positive social outcomes in regional Queensland.	Dec 2024	100 %	<ul> <li>Three programs were delivered in regional Queensland during 2024:</li> <li>Growing Workforce Participation (funded by QLD Social Enterprise Council</li> <li>Q-SEED in Townsville (funded by Adv QLD and John Villiers Trust).</li> <li>Gladstone Community Connection and Inclusion (funded by Department of Communities)</li> </ul>	
3.3	Identify opportunities that explores industry co-location on our campuses that contributes to improving campus utilisation and life.	Dec 2024	100%	Significant work has been underway with campuses and DFM to identify agile and reasonable processes to promote co-location of industry parties, which will increase utilisation. This work is ongoing in collaboration with other Divisions.	
3.4	Develop a university-wide framework that provides consistency across all outbound engagement including community, political advocacy, philanthropy, alumni relations, media relations and social innovation.	Dec 2024	95%	The Engagement Framework development has been completed. Released expected March 2025	

Strategic Engagement & Social Innovation
Through strong local and global partnerships, CQUniversity
fostered inclusive, community-led sustainability in 2024.
Projects like the Konomie Island and Frenchmans Creek
restorations brought together students, staff, and
Traditional Owners, while our philanthropic and social
innovation work continued to support equity, access, and
social resilience across regional Australia.'



Target		Due	Complete	Comments	
4.1a	Develop a revenue attribution methodology to support financial accountability.	Dec 2024	100 %	Minimum viable product (MVP) dashboard created and being	
4.1b	Develop a scope of works to implement the revenue attribution methodology.	Jun 2025	-	tested.	
4.2	All divisions support the university to meet financial targets: • current ratio >1, • achieve operating surplus by 2028, • net cash flow from operations ≥ 115%.	Dec 2028	99%	<ul> <li>2024 Sustainability targets:</li> <li>Develop a revenue attribution methodology and SOW to implement – 100% complete</li> <li>Current ration &gt;1.0 – 1.43</li> <li>Exceed budget – \$29.085m favourable</li> <li>Net cash flow from operations ≥115% – 109.14%</li> <li>Commercialisation Services review – 100%</li> </ul>	
4.3	Review the future of commercialisation Services and deliver a report on findings and return on investment options.	Dec 2024	100%	Report delivered to the Commercialisation Committee. Additional feedback received and to be incorporated into revised report with recommendations and associated costings and return on investment options	

### Finance and Corporate Services Division

In 2024, CQUniversity reinforced its commitment to long-term economic sustainability. Work progressed on assessing course viability including development of models and self-service data to improve financial transparency and support informed decision-making. Optimising the business model has remained a key focus for commercial areas, alongside initiatives to diversify revenue streams across the University. These efforts reflect a mature approach to financial stewardship—ensuring the University remains agile, accountable, and resilient in a changing higher education landscape and funding policy environment.

CQU researchers are helping Bundaberg Rum's fermentation more efficient improving product quality while reducing waste

CQU research drives rescue plan for fruit and veg waste

CQU students create Flood-resistant shelters in India. Humanitarian Engineering Program, Amrita Live-in-Labs



cuts emissions by over 15%

10%. Baseline year to be fixed based on data.

6.3

Waste

Target Comments Tenders released early Waste management plan to be developed and adopted. Dec 2025 2025 Implement formal program to divert waste from landfill. Dec 2026 Develop a formal monitoring program of waste data across all campuses. Dec 2026 5.4 Develop a draft Circular Economy Plan for consideration by the University. Aug 2027 CMERC research Continue to develop our Research activities through CMERC. Jun 2028 continuing Develop the plan for water metering at Rockhampton. Ensure meters are reliable Water meter system Jun 2025 and capture data to develop trend information for review. purchased late 2024 Reduce the overall use of water by the University (metric to be determined) by

Due

Dec 2028

Complete

		\		
7.1	Implementation of the Decarbonising plan to reduce electrical load and increase renewable energy sources to meet our target reduction of 40% by 2030. In line with the plan provide annual reporting.	Dec 2030	-	
7.2	Increased awareness across the university of the importance of reducing our carbon emissions footprint and consideration of this in future decisions.	Dec 2028	-	
7.3	As outlined in the DCP The University will adopt a strategy of sell excess LGC (2023-2026) to help fund an 80% increase (based on current solar installations including the new Emerald array) in the amount of renewable and sustainable energy solutions "behind the meter".	Dec 2026	-	
7.4	Consider renewable "green" energy increasingly as sources of energy in any new energy contract.	Dec 2028	-	
7.5	Introduce alternate "green" energy fuel sources for vehicles inline with the overall targets of our Decarbonising plan. 10% of fleet to have reduced carbon emissions.	Dec 2028	-	



Tar	get	Du	e	Complete	Comments
	EMP for Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton completed.	Mar	2027	-	Bundaberg & Rockhampton completed 2024. Emerald, Mackay & Gladstone underway
8.2	Expand annual tree planting activities to include Bundaberg, Emerald, Mackay, Rockhampton.	Aug	2028	-	
8.3	Undertake initial Flore and Fauna current for Dundahara Emerald Cladetone	Dec	2026	-	
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9.1	Develop draft systems and processes for the implementation of a space charging model across the university.	Dec 2026	-	
9.2	Ensure minimal impact of environmental aspects and impacts for all future development and consider refurbishing/re-purposing existing facilities as a priority before building new.	Ongoing	-	
9.3	Any new construction or refurbishment is to critically assess and reduce the need for any excess materials including future proof/redundancy items. This can be building materials, furniture, wiring/cabling etc.	Ongoing	-	
9.4 a)	Install Indigenous welcome signage in all campuses.	Dec 2025	-	
9.4 b)	Continue to create Yarning circles and cultural safe spaces across our regional campuses.	Dec 2026	-	
9.5	Continue to design new facilities to a 5 start Green Star rating. During 2026 introduce a suitable Nabers rating to the university design manual.	Feb 2026	-	
9.6	Investigate methods and actions to actively reduce the amount of backlog across the university by 15% based on the estimates developed in 2023.	Dec 2028	_	

#### Directorate of Facilities Management:

CQUniversity made tangible progress across energy, water, waste, biodiversity, and campus infrastructure in 2024. Our Decarbonisation Plan is driving cleaner energy decisions, while improved metering and environmental planning are helping us manage our campuses more sustainably. These efforts are reducing our footprint and embedding sustainability into everyday operations.'





### Community Engagement:

Caring for Land and Sea Country: a Konomie Island adventure

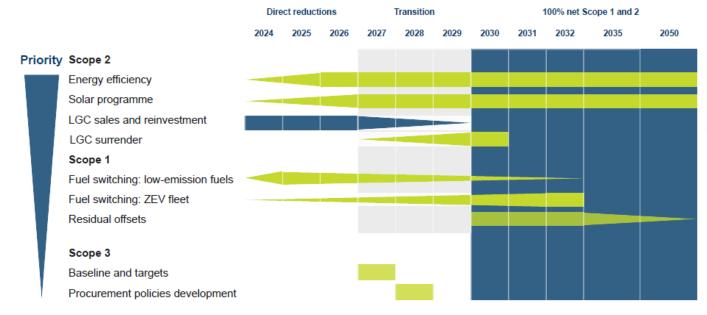
CQUniversity horticulture and conservation students recently participated in a revegetation project on Konomie Island, also known as North Keppel Island. Collaborating with the Capricorn Conservation Council, Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council Rangers, and the Konomie Island Environmental Education Centre P&C, the students engaged in activities such as removing exotic weeds and planting native species. This hands-on experience enhanced their understanding of biodiversity conservation and emphasized the importance of caring for Country.

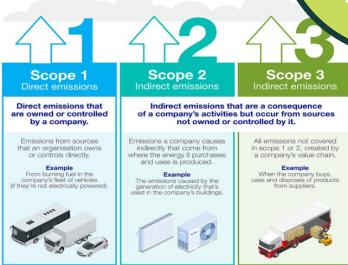


### Decarbonisation Plan – ratified 2024

✓ The CQUniversity Decarbonisation Plan provides a baseline and direction to meet the targets established by the Australian Government.

- ✓ The plan uses the baseline data (2021) to provide details
- ☑ Interim reduction target for 2030 of 40%. (*17.8kt (2021) to 10.68kt (2030*)
- ✓ 2024 2030 is the focus of this plan, plan is to be regularly reviewed and updated as we progress.
- ✓ 2025 will see the first annual report produced
- ✓ Scope 3 items will start to be addressed after 2028.





#### 2021 baseline data

Total	100.00%	17,781,032
Research Processes - Livestock	0.03%	5,091
Transport Fuels	1.2%	210,923
Stationary energy generation	0.4%	70,792
Refrigerant emissions	5.4%	953,732
Electricity purchased from grid	93%	16,540,412

# Looking Ahead: Our Sustainability Roadmap 2025 - 2028

As we move into 2025 and beyond, CQUniversity will continue to build momentum across all nine elements of our Sustainability Framework. Guided by both the Framework and our Decarbonisation Plan, we are taking a coordinated and strategic approach to embedding sustainability across learning, research, operations, and governance. Our focus will remain on measurable outcomes—reducing emissions, improving resource efficiency, and supporting our communities through education and innovation. By deepening partnerships, scaling up impact-led research, and investing in sustainable infrastructure, we are positioning the University to meet its 2030 targets and deliver on our long-term vision of a just, inclusive, and climate-resilient future.

#### 2025 Focus areas:

- ✓ Develop and implement Waste management plan
- ☑ Expansion of Native tree planting Initiatives
- ☑ Environmental management plans for Mackay, Emerald & Gladstone
- Increased Monitoring capabilities (energy production & consumption, water usage)
- ✓ Exploring behind the meter renewable energy projects
- ✓ Continued LED light replacement, HVAC upgrades







For more information contact

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#### **STAFFNET**



"Together, we create a sustainable future for CQUniversity and beyond!"

#### cqu.edu.au

25.