

DesignInc

Architecture
Urban Design
Interiors
Landscape
designinc.com.au

Sydney Sustainability Action Plan

Version III
January 2026

Indigenous design elements for the project Suntory Oceania - Swanbank Manufacturing Facility were achieved by local Yuggera elders and local indigenous artist Kylie Hill.

We acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



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Together, we will make a positive difference in every environment we shape.

Born from three Australian architecture and design practices coming together in 2000, DesignInc is a powerful union of design talent, professional expertise, and multidisciplinary skills.

Our combined talent of over 200 designers—across studios in Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Melbourne and Sydney—bring a holistic perspective to all briefs and sites.

We are single-minded about creating healthy buildings and people-centric environments from the large scale to the small. Believing that design is a journey to be shared, we involve our clients and consultants in the creative process.

As an integrated design studio, we offer:

- Architecture
- Interior Design
- Landscape Architecture
- Urban Design



01

Sustainability at DesignInc Sydney



Current State

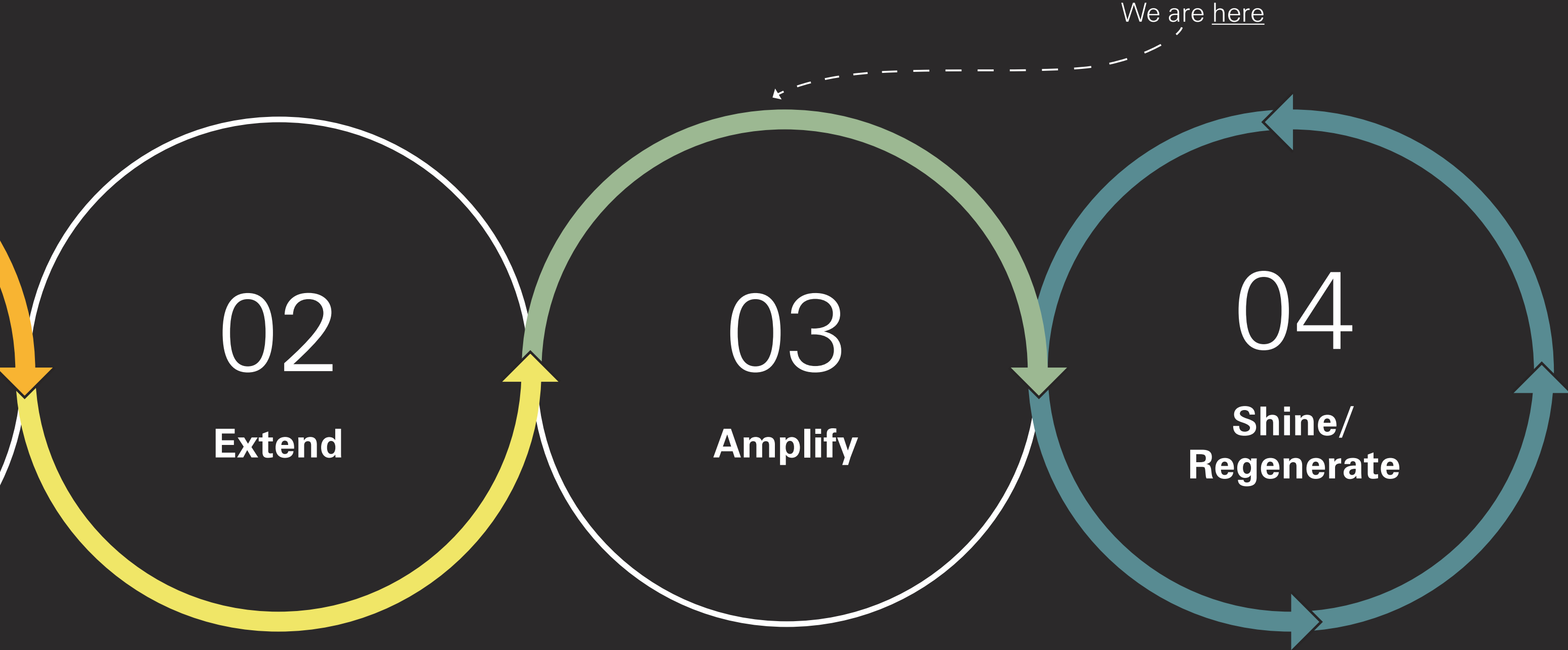
This is DesignInc Sydney's third Sustainability Action Plan (SAP)

This SAP follows the goals and recommendations of the Architects Declare 'Amplify' SAP.

01

Review

A firm who have signed on to the Architects Declare pledge but whose work or practices are not consistently meeting the goals of the movement. Your SAP should clearly articulate how you will begin to change your office culture to better align all work and business operations with the Architects Declare Principles.



A firm whose business operations and projects consistently align with the majority of the Architects Declare Principles but who do not have a formalised process of engagement or consistent approach that captures all aspects of the business. Your SAP should celebrate your success but define a clear path to holistic action across the business including your vision of sustainability and how it aligns with the Architects Declare Principles.

A firm well-versed in sustainability and a leader in the field in terms of projects and advocacy. Your SAP should be about innovation and how your actions can be amplified further to influence others and grow the community.

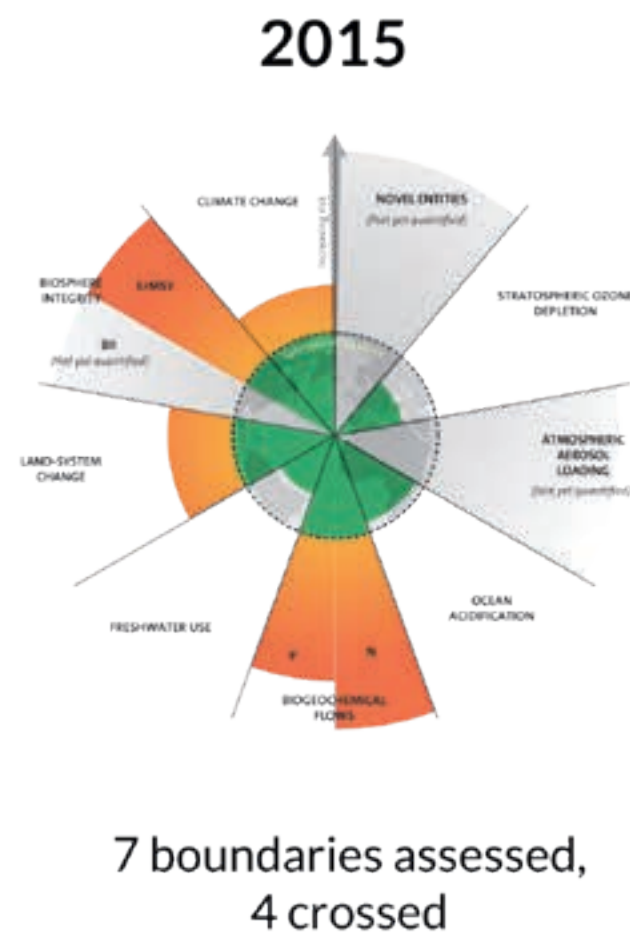
A firm that has been a recognised leader in advocacy and action on Architects Declare Principles and sustainability more broadly. Your SAP will take your thought leadership beyond the profession and your clients—your work impacting beyond just the built environment. Your SAP creates connections beyond client and other practitioners into collaborators and government, aiming to be a truly regenerative practice. You will be looking to develop your SAP into a RegAP (Regeneration Action Plan) and take the next steps forward!

Why a Sustainability Action Plan?

Scientists have warned that Earth's life support systems have been so damaged that the planet is well outside the safe operating space for humanity.

Seven out of nine "planetary boundaries" for processes that maintain a stable and resilient Earth system have been breached because of human-caused pollution and the destruction of the natural world. The last three years have been the hottest ever recorded and the planet is currently headed for at least 2.5C of heating with disastrous results for humanity.

It is our responsibility—as design practitioners in the built environment sector—to be a part of the solution.



The evolution of the planetary boundaries framework. Licenced under CC BY-NC-ND 3.0

(Credit: Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University. Based on Sakschewski and Caesar et al. 2025, Richardson et al. 2023, Steffen et al. 2015, and Rockström et al. 2009).

Aspirations

Create buildings and places that form and support the vital nodes of community.

We want to contribute to a better future within the built environment and focus on the physical, mental and social well-being of our staff and broader communities.

Improve relationships between people and nature to create more resilient societies.

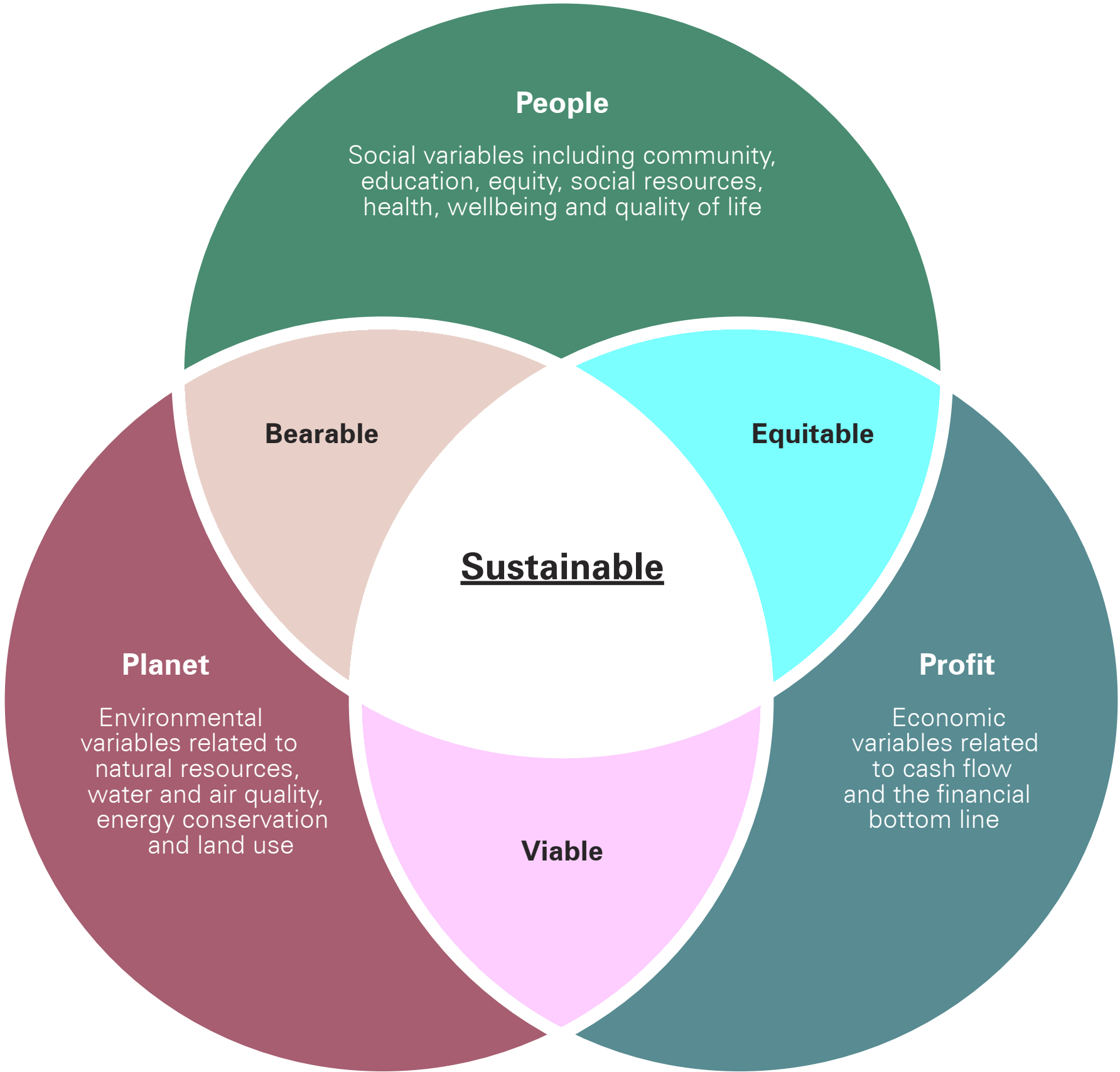
The establishment and successful implementation of our Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) has allowed us to assess and understand the impacts of our work and business operations, and define steps to continually improve them.

We commit to improving the way we work by establishing clear goals as part of a pathway to achieving Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment.

Design Practice—We provide guidance on environmentally sustainable design principles, evaluate our projects and minimise adverse environmental impacts.

Business Operations—We have a range of initiatives in place to realise our goals for the social and environmental impacts of our business operations.

Education, Outreach + Advocacy—We have a program of activities and events that advocate for change among our team and the design and construction industry.



A framework defining sustainability, key pillars which combine People, Planet and Profit.

Successes in 2025

01

Maintained carbon neutral certification

We have calculated our annual emissions, obtained independent validation and purchased offsets to maintain the carbon neutral certification of our business operations and architectural services for the fourth consecutive year.

02

Implemented policies

We have implemented our emissions reduction and procurement policies to continually reduce and minimise our carbon footprint, whilst advocating for change within our supply chains and broader industry.

03

Hit carbon reduction target

We reduced our full scope carbon emissions by 9.5% from FY2024, achieving our goal for 2025 of a 40% overall reduction from our FY2022 baseline.

04

Improved design processes

We have used the principles in our new ESD Framework to support our design processes and inform our strategic thinking, establishing and tracking project specific objectives through design reviews.

05

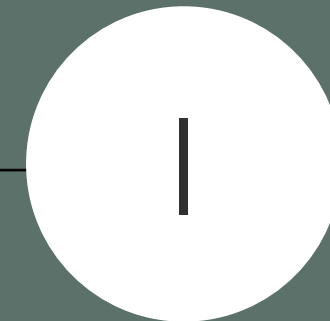
Life Cycle Assessments

We have undertaken Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs) to measure embodied carbon in our new projects' buildings which have confirmed the kg CO₂e/m² NLA is generally well below typical embodied carbon values for relevant Australian building types.



Commitments + Next Steps

We will



Audit our carbon footprint every year and maintain our carbon neutral certifications.

We are taking the next steps to help decarbonise the built environment and meet the future needs of healthy and diverse communities.

II

Aim to reduce our carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 from a FY2022 baseline.

III

Measure the embodied carbon in buildings within all new projects and establish relevant benchmarks.

IV

Set targets for the reduction of embodied and operational carbon against benchmarks for our projects.

VII

Review and update our Sustainability Action Plan annually.

VI

Seek to incorporate Indigenous voices and narratives into the design of all our projects.

V

Implement carbon reduction strategies and undertake carbon reduction checkpoints for our projects.

02

Design Practice



Successes in 2025

01

Leveraging 6D BIM technology and processes has enabled optimisation through rapid, data driven carbon assessments.

Our LCA software allows our staff to undertake lifecycle analyses and measure embodied carbon. The tool is integrated within our Building Information Modelling (BIM) workflows, allowing us to quickly test materials and compare alternative design options so we can make informed design decisions and minimise adverse environmental impacts.

We have measured the embodied carbon in our new projects' buildings, allowing us to start developing our own benchmarks given the lack of reliable industry figures for Australian buildings. Once these benchmarks are established, we will be able to set specific targets for the reduction of embodied and operational carbon.

Project Selection

Process varies depending on stage of project



Base Case Documentation

Material specification and embodied carbon estimation



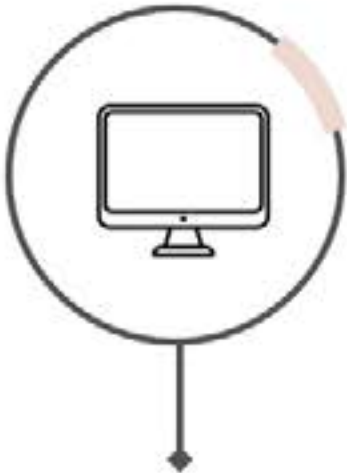
Material Testing

Alternative materials with lower embodied carbon



Integrated Modelling

ESD Tool (One Click LCA) used as a plugin for Revit



Results Analysis

Data interpretation and identification of 'problem areas'



Design Alternative

Alternative design options and material recommendations



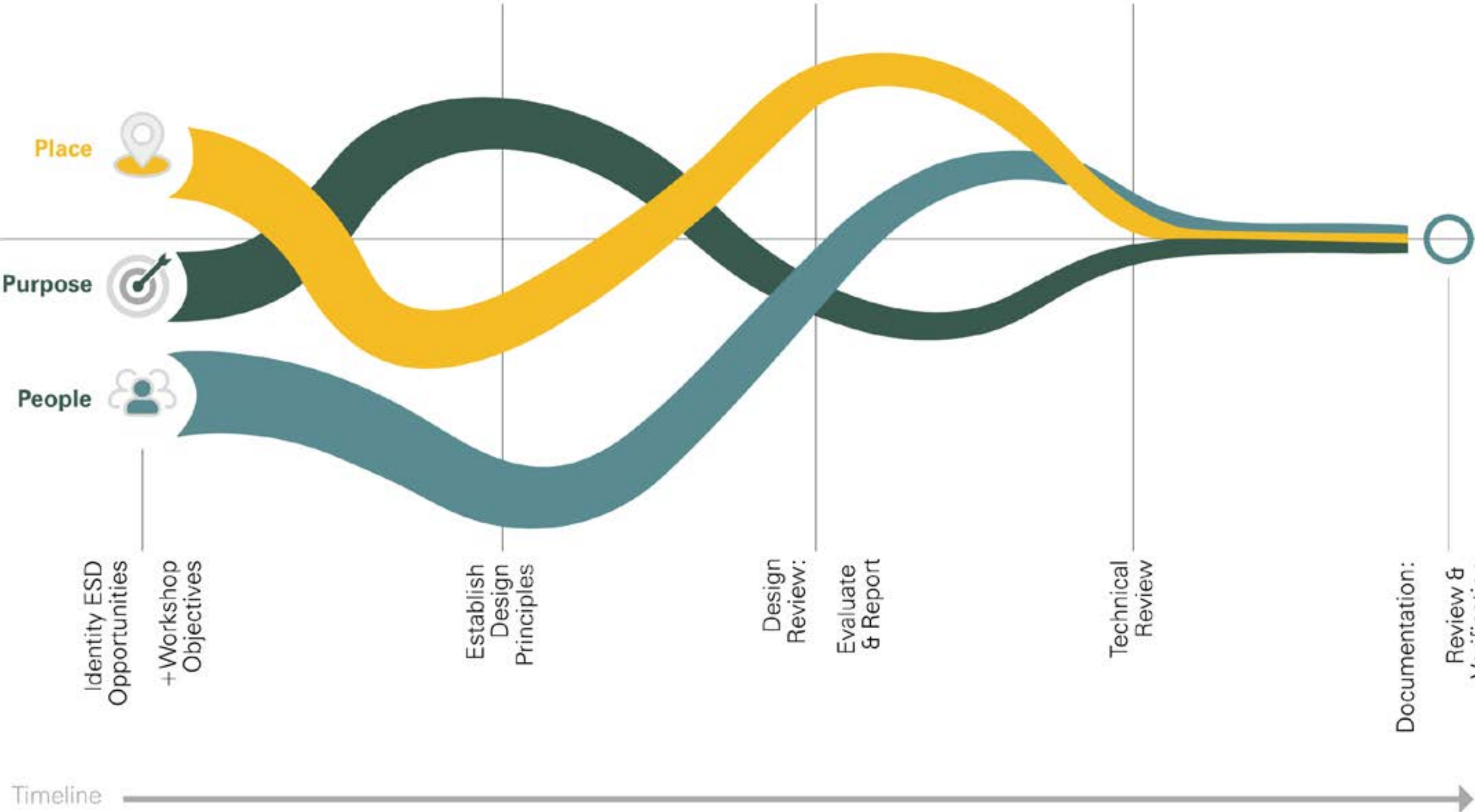
Successes in 2025

02

Adopting new tools and guidance has allowed us to continually improve our design processes and evaluate and report on outcomes.

Our design philosophy shapes projects for all sectors and scales. We identify sustainable design opportunities at each project's inception and establish objectives that inform clear design principles to underpin our concepts. These design principles reflect the project's purpose whilst considering the contextual needs of people and place.

Using our new ESD Framework as a guide throughout the design process has enabled all our staff to contribute more broadly to sustainable design initiatives. It ensures we achieve outcomes that embed circular systems, whilst meeting the needs of healthy and diverse communities.



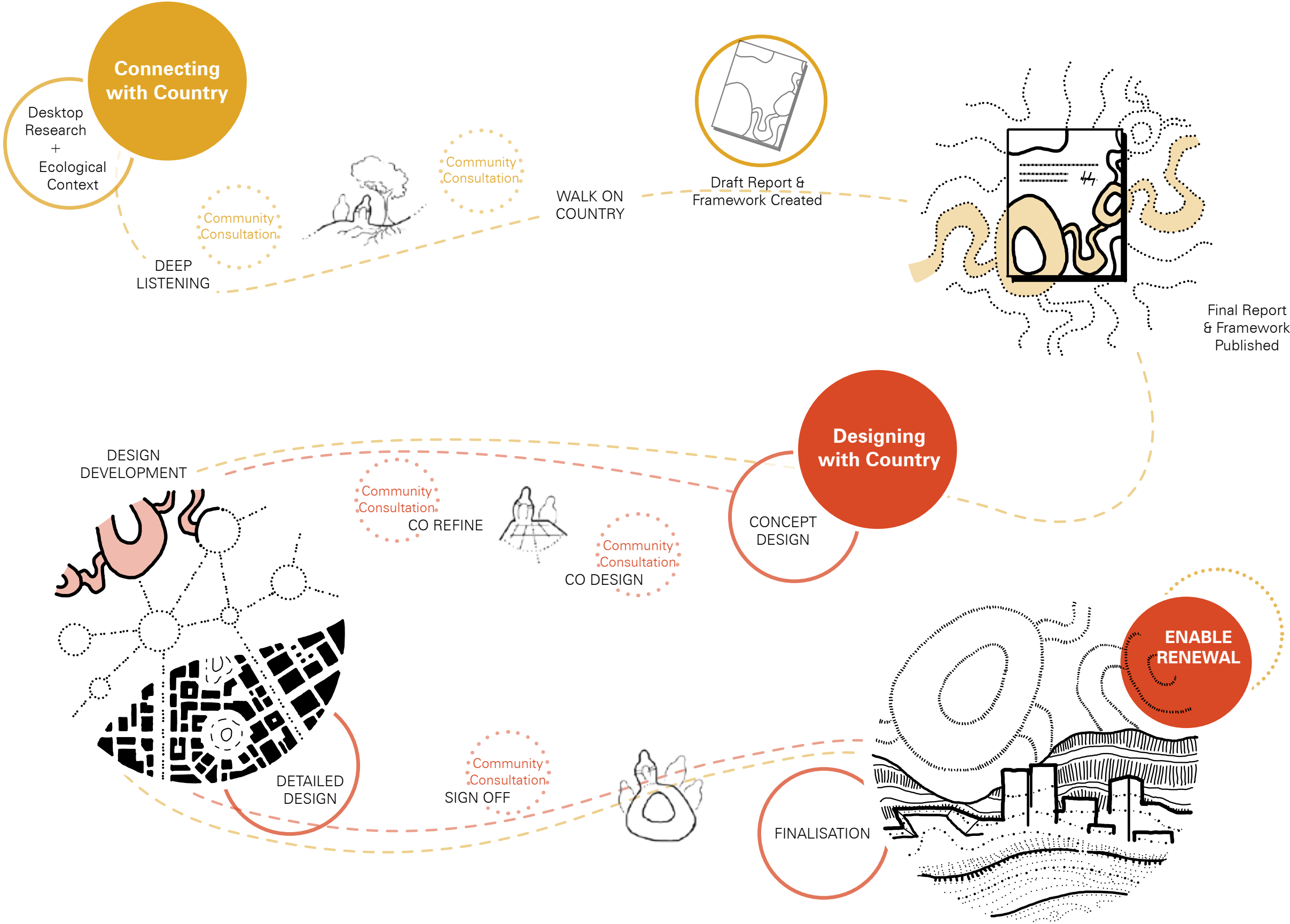
Successes in 2025

03

Through ongoing collaboration with Nguluway DesignInc we continued to incorporate Indigenous narratives into our projects that can help nurture improved relationships between people and nature—achieving long-term sustainability, a sense of belonging, and responsibility for caring for Country.



Namabunda Farm is a comprehensive community project led by Nguluway DesignInc for Bundjalung Tribal Society, comprising a new cultural and ecotourism centre, Elder housing, and more.



Designing from Country is a process created by Nguluway DesignInc in partnership with DesignInc, which combines comprehensive community engagement (Connecting with Country) and architectural responses (Designing with Country) which allows for seamless, informed built environment outcomes.

Successes in 2025

04

UNSW CBD Campus used One Click LCA, a lifecycle assessment tool, to measure and analyse embodied carbon across the fitout.

Our goal was to understand the carbon impact of our material choices and identify opportunities to reduce emissions.

Initially, by prioritising low-carbon products during design and procurement, we achieved an approximate 40% reduction in embodied carbon compared to a standard fitout. While this was a strong result, we extended the study post-completion—reimagining the design by nominating alternative materials, rethinking buildability, and identifying opportunities to retain existing materials.

This re-evaluation showed we could push the embodied carbon reduction to around 70%. This kind of data is critical. It doesn't just validate decisions; it actively informs better design, smarter procurement, and more responsible project delivery.

One key insight was the impact of traditionally constructed partition walls. These accounted for approximately 43% of the total CO₂e—the largest single contributor. This is largely due to the multi-layered requirements needed to meet acoustic, fire, and structural performance: metal studs, linings, insulation, fixings, finishing.



Successes in 2025

05

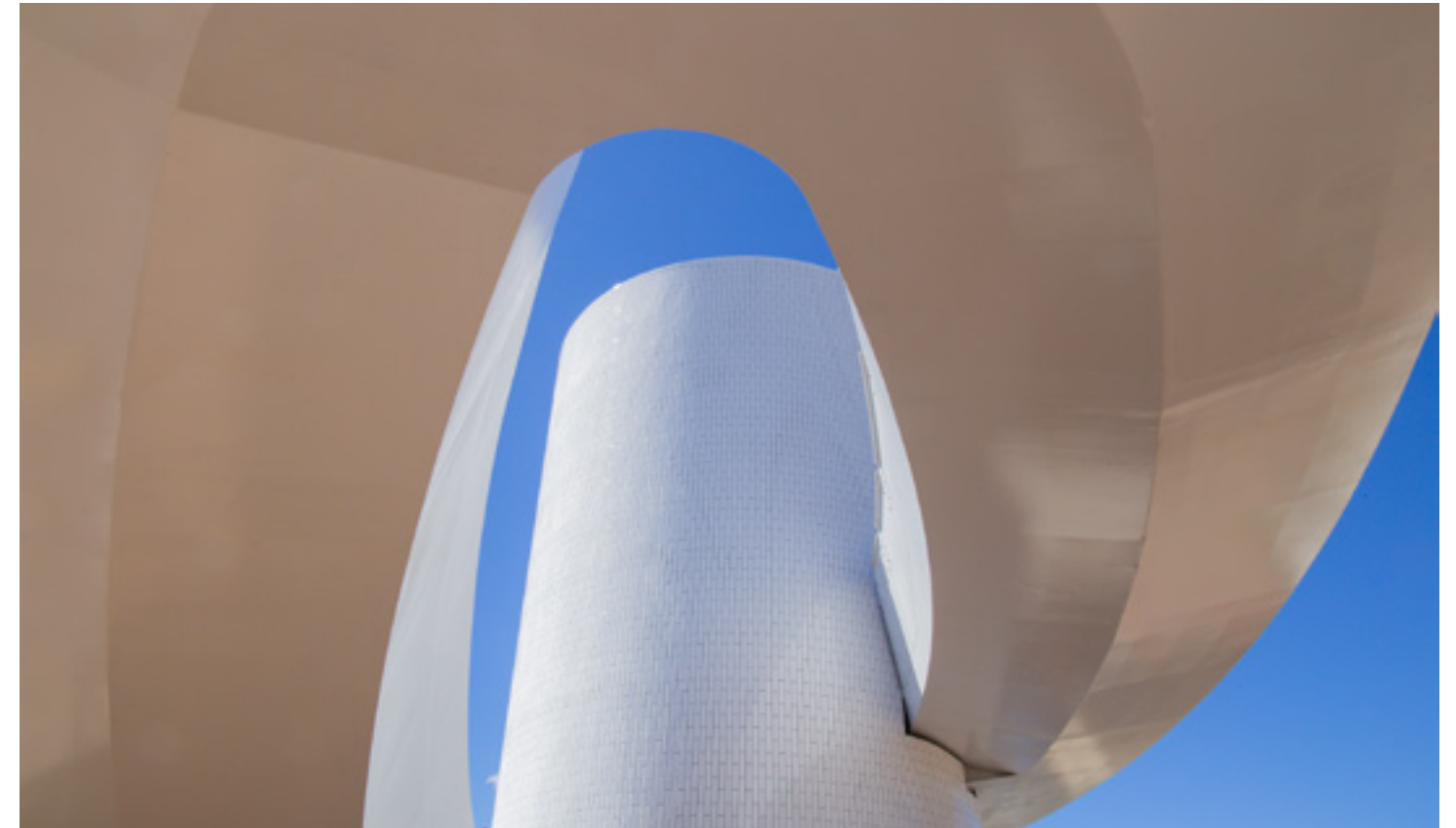
Medlow Bath Station Upgrade achieved a Platinum Project Rating under the TfNSW Sustainability Design Guidelines, which is the highest possible achievement level.

Performance was assessed against the various requirements including Urban Design Principles, GHG Emissions, Operational Energy, Waste, Water, Procurement, Innovation and Project Legacy.

The project successfully piloted the new TfNSW Carbon Tool, with data validated at all required project phases, achieving a 22% reduction in both construction GHG emissions and operational energy consumption from the project baseline.

The innovative structural steel design for the bridge, inspired by boat building technology, utilised modern construction methods with sculptural forms and long spans to minimise structural supports. Prefabricated elements constructed offsite allowed rapid assembly and minimal disruption during construction, whilst reducing carbon emissions.

Local Aboriginal artist Shay Jannowi-Jude Tobin created an Aboriginal heritage artwork and signage, which incorporated the ridgeline boundary, concentric rings to symbolise the connection of the local mountain communities, and the GaraMehda Garrayura (Black Cockatoo) to represent the ancestors that watch over Ngurra (Country).



Goals for 2026

Our next steps to help decarbonise the built environment and meet the future needs of healthy and diverse communities include:

01

Establish clear benchmarks

We will measure the embodied carbon in all our projects and establish relevant benchmarks.

02

Set targets to reduce carbon

We will set targets for the reduction of embodied and operational carbon against benchmarks for our projects.

03

Evaluate and report

We will implement carbon reduction strategies and evaluate, report and improve by undertaking carbon reduction checkpoints at Design Reviews.

04

Improve LCA Workflow

We will build and maintain a sustainable materials library for products we regularly specify whilst continuing to refine our workflow.

05

Early carbon analysis

We will evaluate impacts of building form, structure and primary materials where relevant for early design stages.

06

Designing from Country

We will continually seek to incorporate Indigenous voices and narratives into the design of all our projects.

03 Business Operations

Dr Sara Pedgett Kjaerregaard
Director Landscape Architecture
Program, UNSW

Kate McElhone
Associate Director Design
Sydney Metro

Julien Van Den Berg
Strategic & Operational Leader

Michael Doak
Principal - DesignInc Sydney

HOSTED BY
Jane McGarry
Principal - DesignInc Sydney



Successes in 2025

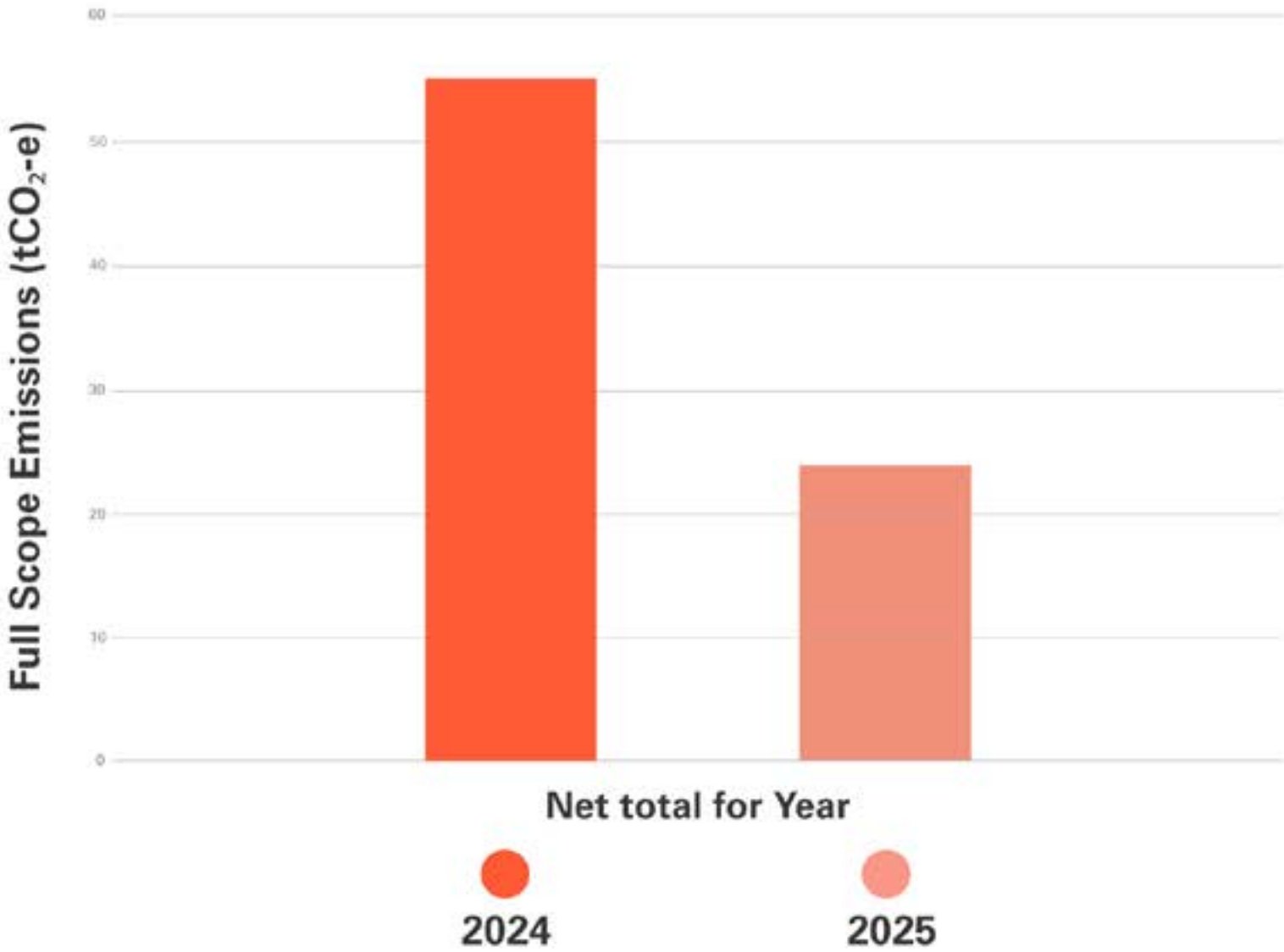
01

We promoted green transport options for all our staff.

Our updated Travel Policy supports the use of public transport, avoids flying where possible, maximises the use of EVs and hybrid vehicles and discourages private car use.

Monthly reporting of data helped encourage the adoption of improved travel habits and resulted in a 56% reduction of gross carbon emissions for business travel and transport fuels from 55.3 tCO₂-e in 2024 to 24.1 tCO₂-e.

Travel: FY2024 – 2025 Comparison



56% Emissions Reduction

Travel FY2026 TYD (Q3&Q4 2025)



Carbon Offset No Carbon Offset
Offset 28



Uber Green Other
Green 183 / 1085 km
Other 57 / 423 km



EV Hybrid Other
Electric 4 / 819 km
Hybrid 7 / 459 km
Other 12 / 2527 km



EV Hybrid Other
Electric 0 / 0 km
Hybrid 1 / 427 km
Other 16 / 2720 km

Successes in 2025

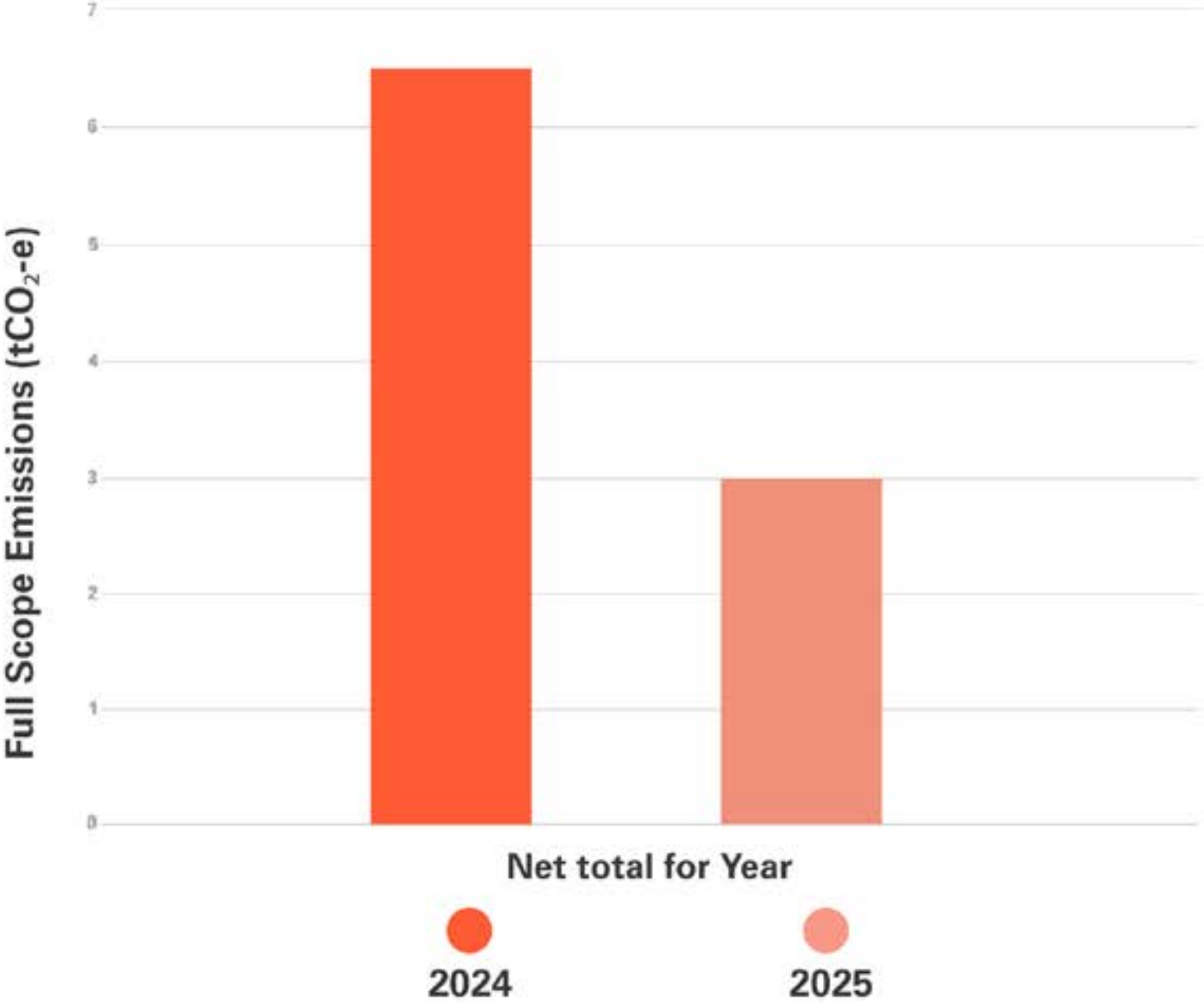
02

We improved our waste management and provided additional options for recycling.

We streamlined our waste management processes and reported monthly to all staff on the amounts of waste and contamination in each stream to continually assess our performance and raise awareness.

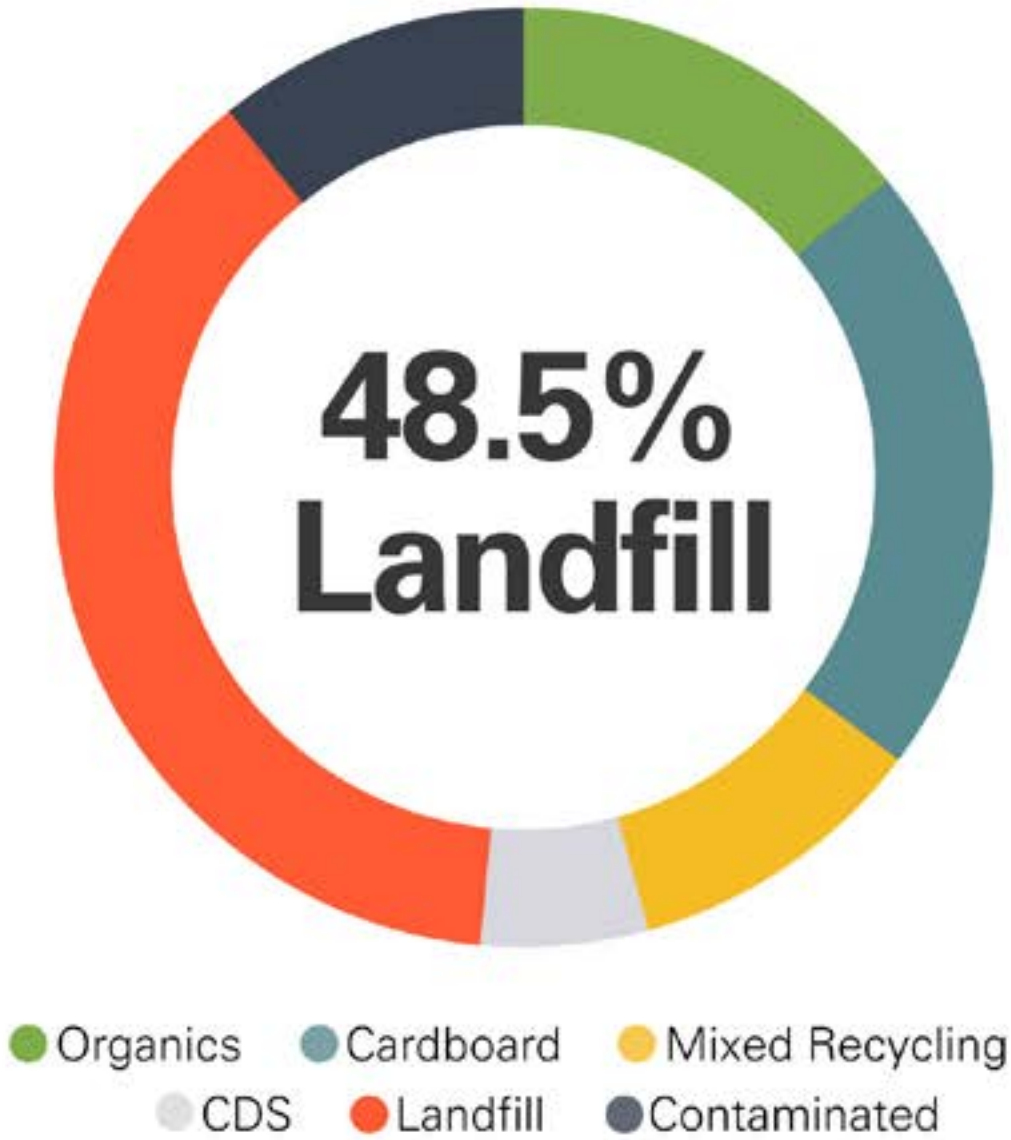
This resulted in a 54% reduction of gross carbon emissions from waste and water from 6.5 tCO₂-e in 2024 to 3 tCO₂-e.

Waste: FY2024 – 2025 Comparison



54% Emissions Reduction

Waste FY2026 TYD (Q3&Q4 2025)



1321 kg total

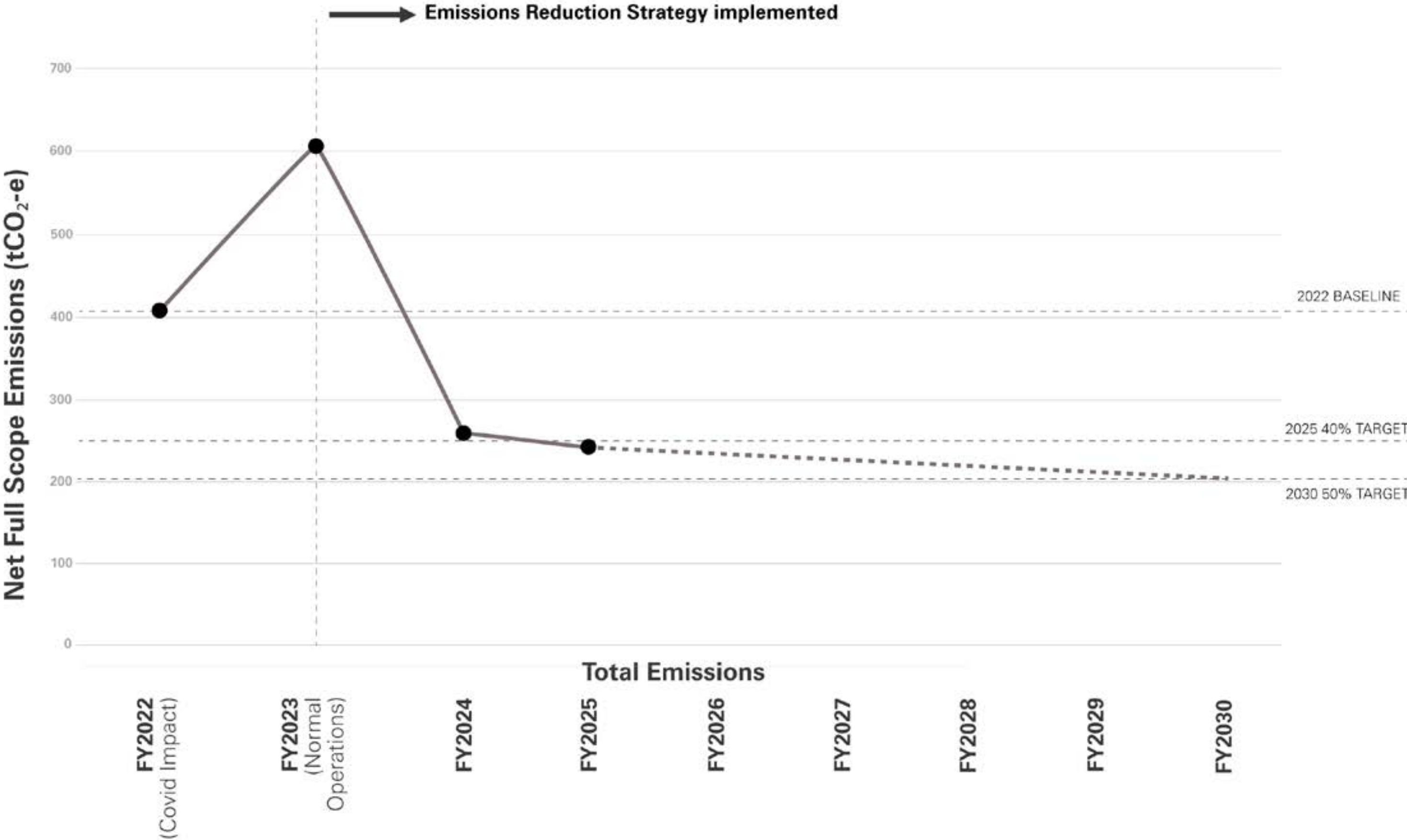
Successes in 2025

03

Targeted reductions in waste and fuel use as part of our overall Emission Reduction Strategies helped achieve a 9.5% year on year reduction of our full scope carbon emissions.

This contributed to us meeting our goal for 2025 of a 40% overall reduction in carbon emissions from our FY2022 baseline, going from 253 tCO₂-e in FY2024 to 231 tCO₂-e in FY2025.

We are making excellent progress towards our overarching target of a 50% reduction by 2030.



Successes in 2025

04

We continued to support Reconciliation and social change, with our second consecutive Innovate RAP now formally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

DesignInc is embarking on its second consecutive Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. The business, through its partnership with Nguluway DesignInc, continues to embed Indigenous voices and narratives into the built environment as part of its commitment to reconciliation and First Nations representation in the industry.



DesignInc Sydney

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

September 2025 - September 2027



NAIDOC Week 2024 - Walk on Country with Us to Reconcil. [Learn about Country](#)

Goals for 2026

We will continue to reduce our carbon footprint and support social change by:

01

Climate Active Certification

We will audit our carbon footprint, maintain our carbon neutral certifications + only purchase unavoidable offsets.

02

Firm emissions reduction target

We aim to reduce our carbon emissions by 50% by 2030 from a FY2022 baseline.

03

Review supply chains

We will target the procurement of sustainable goods for office supplies and ICT equipment, along with professional services.

04

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

We will continue to support Reconciliation and social change.

05

Diversity + inclusion

We will actively foster diversity and inclusion across our organisation and promote the health and wellbeing of our staff.

04

Education, Outreach + Advocacy

Urban Design Principal, Dr. Michael Kahn, delivering a presentation to the Acciona team about the Western Harbour Tunnel—a major road upgrade which promotes greater access across Greater Sydney.



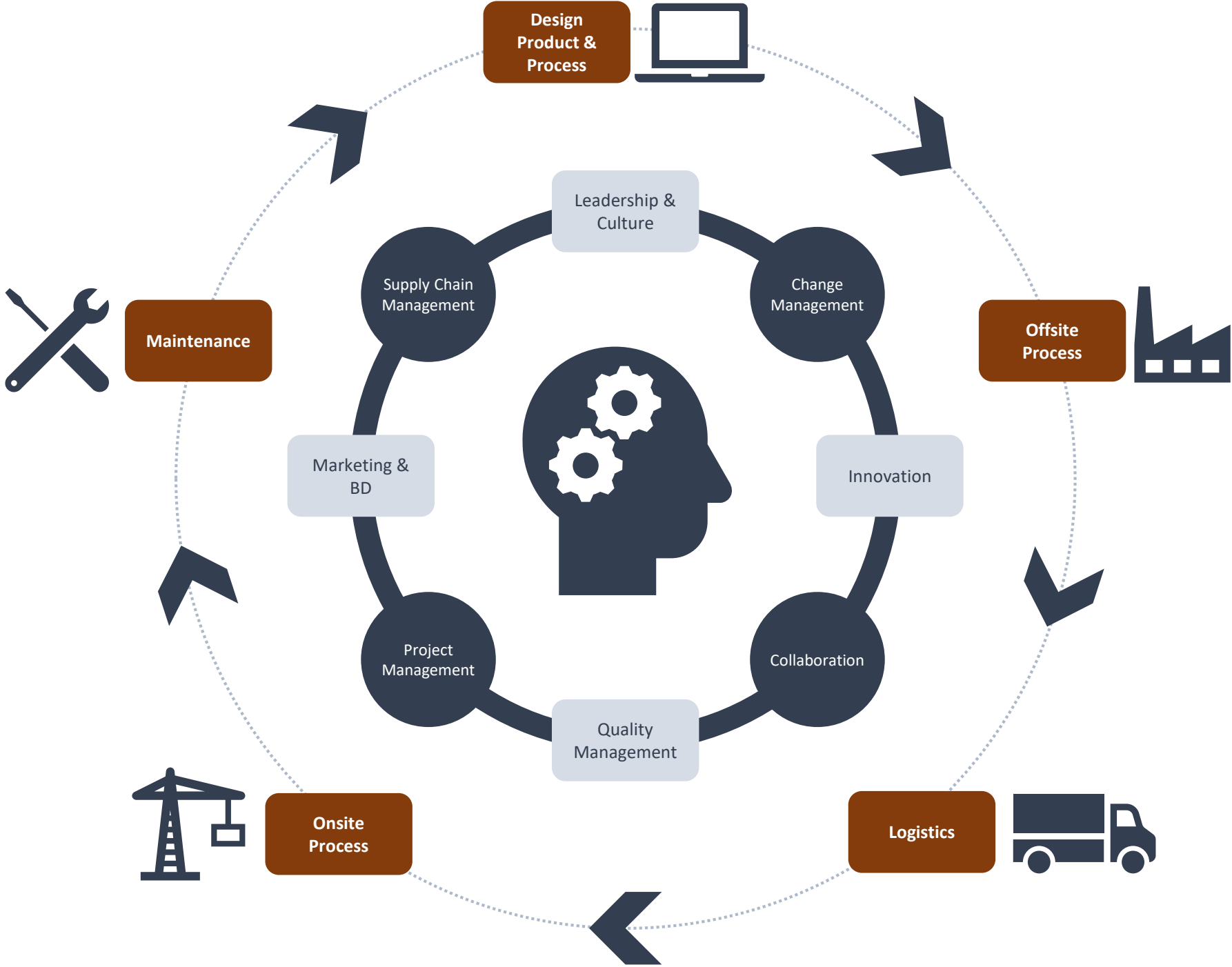
Successes in 2025

01

We have provided training seminars and workshops for all our staff on our new sustainable design processes.

Topics have included Whole of Life Carbon, our new ESD Framework and our Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) Workflow.

This training has provided detailed information on the principles of passive design, circular systems, DfMA, WSUD and adaptive reuse, along with reduction strategies for both embodied and operational carbon.



Design for Manufacture & Assembly (DfMA) Process -
Prefabrication, Modular Design, Material Efficiency.

Successes in 2025

02

We supported the restoration of Sydney's lost underwater forests through voluntary contributions to Operation Crayweed.

This marine restoration project works to bring back Sydney's lost underwater forests of crayweed (*Phyllospora comosa*). Crayweed is a seaweed that provides an important habitat and food for marine life, whilst removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Once abundant along ~70 km of the city's coastline, crayweed disappeared in the 1980s from Palm Beach to Cronulla, likely due to water pollution.

The project transplants healthy adult individuals to carefully selected sites, where they reproduce and kickstart a new local population. The project also regularly engages the community through outreach, citizen science, and education.



Photo Credit: John Turnbull

Successes in 2025

03

We hosted the first event in the Materials Shift Series by Australian Architects Declare.

The Material Shift Series was a 3-part presentation and panel series that explored the urgent need to shift away from fossil fuel based building materials and reimagine a healthier and more equitable, regenerative material future.

Through open, practice-based conversations, the series brought together designers, manufacturers, builders, and advocates to reflect on where we are now, what's emerging, and how we can change specification culture for the better.

This series invited the industry to question defaults, share knowledge, and take collective steps toward materials that support both people and planet.

At this first event our four guest speakers discussed how the materials that shape our built environment impact climate, health, social equity in the supply chain and design culture -- and how we might begin to shift.



Successes in 2025

04

We participated in industry panel events and discussions including the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA)'s flagship regional conference TRANSFORM.

Nguluway DesignInc's Craig Kerlake took part in an expert panel discussion on how we can we integrate a Caring for Country philosophy to create spaces that protect both people and the environment, which was summarised by the GBCA:

We slowed down to listen, to feel and to connect with the Country beneath our feet. Four Indigenous leaders joined us on stage and the panel invited the audience to reflect on what home means to each of us. Two powerful phrases resonated. The Wiradjuri concept of yindyamarra winhanganha speaks to the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in. And the Dharug words bugi bagi – meaning “bark of tree, skin of person” – remind us that we are all part of nature. As Craig Kerlake put it: “The problem with being connected to nature is you become responsible for it.”

Craig Kerlake, Nguluway DesignInc



Craig Kerlake from Nguluway DesignInc speaking at the TRANSFORM conference.

Successes in 2025

05

DesignInc and Nguluway DesignInc celebrated 'Reconciliation Month'— a series of events and activations bridging Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week in 2025.

Our National Reconciliation Week Panel had the key focus of “what does a reconciled built environment look and feel like - and how do we get there?” We were honoured to host some incredible panelists who shared stories, challenges, and visions for a future where design is culturally grounded, inclusive, and led by truth.

Another highlight was teaming up with Bush to Bowl, Yindyamarra Walkabouts and Investa for a B2B. The day began with a smoking ceremony alongside our other neighbours at 126 Phillip Street, before moving into raw, open and honest conversations about reconciliation in practice - what's working, what's challenging, and what's next.

During NAIDOC Week, our team took a lunchtime excursion to walk the Barangaroo art trail. As architects and designers, it's a firm reminder of the power of art; its ability to bring culture into our streets, to show a unique perspective, to tell a story, to look back at history, to connect people to place.

We rounded out the events with an immersive culinary experience led by the team from Bush to Bowl - bringing culture, cooking and knowledge together in the most delicious way. From tea tastings to spiced snacks, we explored the medicinal properties of native myrtle varieties while learning how to bring these powerful ingredients into our own kitchens.



Reconciliation Month at DesignInc: Smoking Ceremony as part of a Reconciliation Week B2B between Investa; Bush to Bowl and DesignInc; Native Food; Pathways session with Bush to Bowl during NAIDOC Week; NAIDOC Week Art Trail excursion in Barangaroo; National Reconciliation Week Panel.

Successes in 2025

06

ARC Application: Accelerating Circularity Adoption

We joined an international research consortium application to the Australian Research Council that will generate specialised workforce capacity, platforms, practices and processes to accelerate the Australian architectural sector's role in achieving national circularity targets.

The consortium includes 14 architecture and multidisciplinary design firms, eight peak national professional and advocacy bodies, three organisations representing builders, developers, or clients, 4 building product and material suppliers and seven Australian and international universities.

If successful the consortium will educate 23 PhDs, four Postdocs, deliver 70+ CPD courses, 7+ hackathons, 7+ digital tools, 7+ demonstrator projects, and 100+ publications.

We developed the application together with all partners involved under the leadership of Arch_Manu, a research center at UNSW focusing on digital sustainability.



Goals for 2026

We will continue to embrace change and respond to new challenges to satisfy the needs of our communities whilst caring for the natural environment by:

01

Training and new technology

We will provide ongoing CPDs and training workshops for all staff as we implement our workflows to measure and benchmark embodied carbon on all new projects.

02

Participate in public discourse

We will attend conferences, seminars, workshops and presentations to stay abreast of emerging technology and best practices.

03

Lead + host public discourse

We will host RAP and sustainability events.

04

Sustainable procurement

We will continue to implement our Sustainable Procurement Strategy.

05

Pivot as required

We will review and update our Sustainability Action Plan.



DesignInc

DesignInc Sydney

Our studio is on Gadigal land.

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NSW Nominated Architects:
Cathryn Drew Bredin 7269 Mary Anne McGirr 10946



Nguluway DesignInc

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NSW Nominated Architects
Craig Kerslake 7789 Cathryn Drew Bredin 7269 Mary Anne McGirr 10946



Indigenous design elements for the project Suntory Oceania - Swanbank Manufacturing Facility were achieved by local Yuggera elders and local indigenous artist Kylie Hill.