Adelaide University

Sustainable Green Transition Research Strategy

Our strategic alignment

The Adelaide University Strategic Ambition and Direction 2024–2034 informs the Adelaide University Research Strategy, which connects the five Signature Research Themes (SRTs) strategies individually and collectively.

Adelaide University Research Strategy

The Adelaide University Research Strategy is guided by the Adelaide University vision, ambitions, strategic drivers, and operating model. Our vision for research is to be Australia's premier for-purpose research university, delivering outstanding locally-embedded, globally relevant research having impact.

Creative & Cultural

Food, Agriculture & Wine

Defence & National Security

Sustainable Green Transition

Personal & Societal Health

Our research ambitions

- Be recognised among the world's top 100 universities on an ongoing basis.
- Be globally recognised as Australia's leading for-purpose research university.
- Rank first in Australia for industry income in research.
- Be the destination of choice for the best global researchers, innovators, thinkers, and entrepreneurs in our priority areas.
- Be Australia's most connected university, partnering with the communities we serve, and an engine for innovation, productivity and growth.

Source: Ambitions were gathered from the Strategic Ambition and Direction 2024–2034 paper

🍃 Sustainable Green Transition Research Strategy

The Sustainable Green Transition SRT will drive research of the highest global standard, anchored in excellence and focused on real-world applications. By concentrating investment, multidisciplinary talent and strategic alliances on key research pillars and priority sectors, the SRT will position Adelaide University for global recognition, catalyse leadership, define South Australia as an innovation hub, and deliver significant, meaningful outcomes for society.

This approach is complemented by a genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and knowledge systems, that is supported by a dedicated research strategy and embedded throughout the SRT strategy.

Our vision, purpose and goals

The Sustainable Green Transition SRT has a vision, a purpose and goals to generate research outcomes and drive impact.

Vision

South Australia as a global leader in the sustainable green transition through research, innovation and partnerships to deliver social and economic prosperity while protecting and restoring the environment, together with respecting the deep connection to, and care for, Country.

Purpose

Through research excellence and impactful partnerships, keeping climate change and biodiversity front of mind, we develop and bring into action innovative solutions that deliver a sustainable society and economy while caring for Country and protecting and restoring the environment.

Goals

1 **Champion and celebrate** research linked to sustainability at Adelaide University.

2 Create an active, cohesive and interdisciplinary research environment for Sustainable Green Transition SRT researchers to **collaborate across the University ecosystem**.

3 **Support other SRTs** with achieving their sustainability-related research goals and evolve this SRT to meet new opportunities.

4 Contribute strongly to the research and innovation required for **global and local sustainable development** including Australia's and South Australia's ESG ambitions, net zero goals, nature positive and circular economy principles.

5 Enhance research impact through the **dissemination and translation** of our research findings and outputs across industry and communities.

6 Advance clean technologies and green industries to **drive economic growth and job creation** while protecting the environment and nature.

7 **Enhance SA's global connectivity and positive impact, and therefore its reputation**, through integrating knowledge development in the research of our four research pillars.

Our strengths and differentiators

The value proposition for the Sustainable Green Transition SRT is built on the existing unique strengths of Adelaide University.

Unique SA environmental advantage

Strategic advantage from SA's world-leading renewables (e.g. over 70% electricity generated via renewable sources, $2.4b investment in green iron), arid climate, natural resources, and government stability, creating a natural laboratory for tackling complex global sustainability challenges.

Our strategic locations enable us to attract high-value alliances, undertake authentic research, and build place-based value propositions unmatched across Australia.

Outstanding multidisciplinary scholarship

Multidisciplinary excellence in overcoming systematic barriers to environmental change, integrating social sciences, health, and policy through a cohesive ecosystem approach to drive research translation and impact, reinforcing our position as a global thought leader.

Our collaborative cross-SRT approach, enabled by ReAL Innovation, positions us to drive transformative solutions, influence policy and deliver meaningful impact.

Strategic regional campus proximity

Strategic advantage via regional campuses such as Mount Gambier, and Whyalla (co-located with the South Australian Government), offering direct access to place-based research in climate resilience, heavy industries and biodiversity through 'living labs' (e.g. wetlands).

Our distinctive campus network enables research grounded in local climates and industries, fostering deep industry alliances, co-designed place-based solutions, and targeted regional funding and talent.

Impactful partnered research

Research success, driven by outstanding research talent alongside world-class expertise in environmental and ecological sustainability, resource management and conservation, future energy transition, built and natural landscapes, social and community engagement and impact, and other powering industrial systems research and innovation.

Our leading capability to attract significant funding in this research theme enables us to lead large-scale projects, attract and build trusted relationships with partners and talent, and deliver highly relevant solutions nationally and globally.

Our pillars of research focus and prioritites

Focusing on four research priorities positions the Sustainable Green Transition SRT to achieve its strategic goals.

Pillars of research focus

1

Nature

Environmental and ecological sustainability, resource management and conservation.

2

Industrial systems

Future energy transition and translation, minerals, energy resources and circular economy.

3

Built, production and natural landscapes

Built environment and infrastructure and climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

4

Society

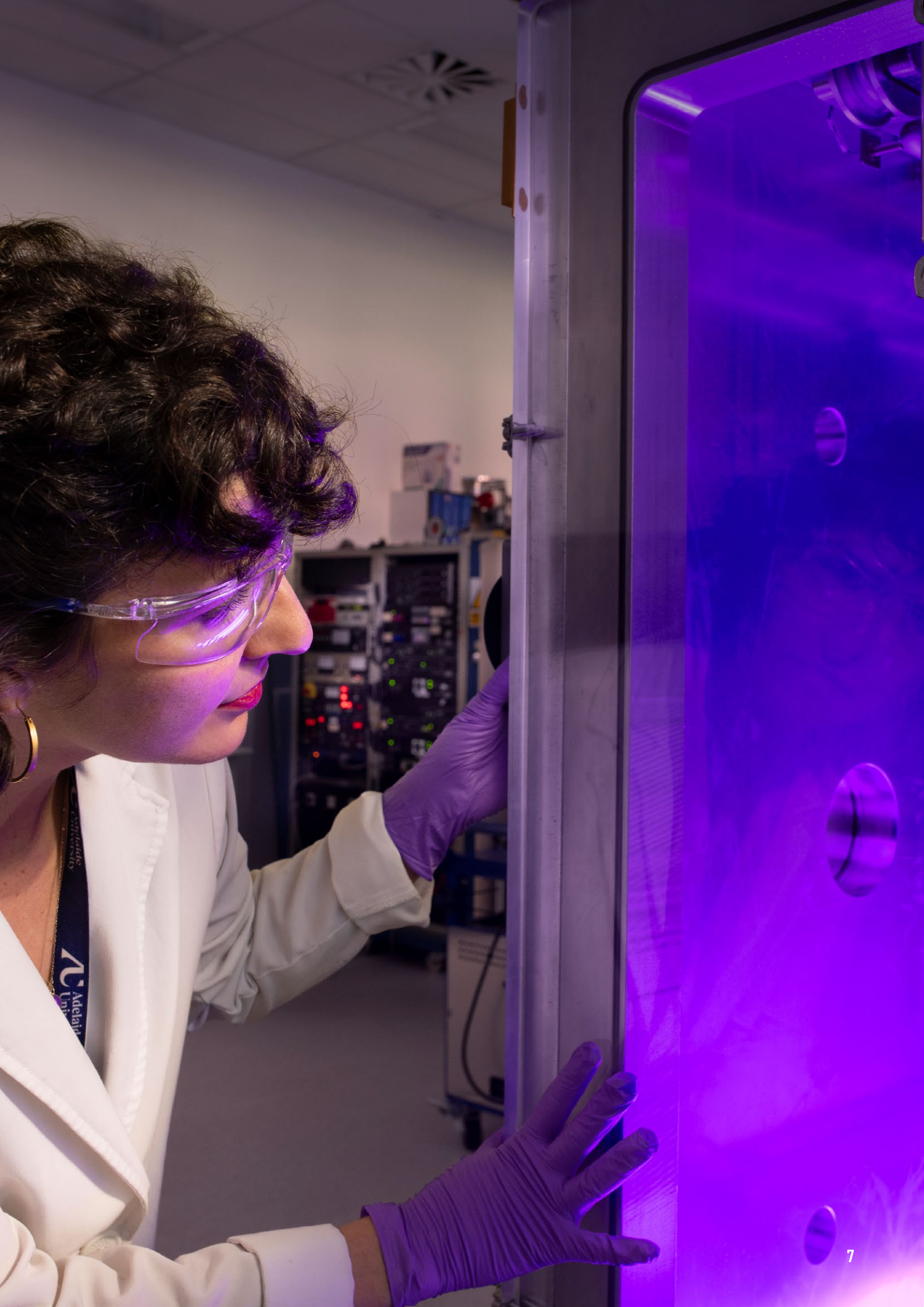Social and community engagement and impact, governance, policy, ethics, law, and education.

Priorities

Lead Australian research for 'nature positive' outcomes by focusing on **biodiversity conservation**, **ecosystem restoration** and **sustainable water management**, with a specific lens on arid and semi-arid environments given our regional presence across South Australia.

Increase research outcomes across the **net zero transition**, **circular economy and sustainable minerals value chains**, leveraging deep engineering and materials expertise and research income to drive **industrial transformation** in alignment with relevant policies.

Develop integrated, practical research solutions for **climate adaptation and resilience** across built, production and natural landscapes, leveraging our design, engineering and water management research expertise in alignment with national policy.

Shape national policy and practice for **equitable and sustainable futures** through leading social sciences and humanities research relevant to society across the university ecosystem creating lasting impact.

Our initiatives and strategic enablers

Pursuing five initiatives, supported by strategic enablers, generates value for the Sustainable Green Transition SRT.

Strategic initiatives

These concepts will help us to deliver on our priorities:

ReAL Innovation

Research-engaged Action Laboratories for Innovation, a new model of engaged impact

ReAL - Sustainability

Accelerates the 'net zero' transition and home-grown job creation by connecting sustainability research from across Adelaide University with the regions, in research areas including business law and economics, built environment, conservation and biodiversity, intense farming, forestry, energy and resources, allied health, policy and First Nations.

ReAL - Whyalla

Centred on our Whyalla campus with a focus on local opportunities – including in critical resources, green iron and health – ReAL Whyalla provides connectivity to research capacity across all Adelaide University locations and all ReAL Innovation initiatives to drive regional socioeconomic progress.

ReAL - Mount Gambier

Centred on our Mount Gambier campus, with a focus on local industries including forestry and wine, ReAL Mount Gambier provides connectivity to research capacity across all Adelaide University locations and all ReAL Innovation initiatives to drive regional socio-economic progress.

ReAL - Space

ReAL Space brings together key Adelaide University infrastructure and expertise across campuses (e.g. Extraterrestrial Environmental Simulation (EXTERRES) laboratory and the Australian Institute for Machine Learning, Trailblazers, Cooperative Research Centres) to drive space innovation in fields including human factors, governance, sustainable agriculture, automated construction, and low impact resource processing.

First Nations Academy

Dedicated First Nations Academy, serving as the connecting 'structure' across SRTs and the home for relevant talent. It will be resourced to attract, steward and mentor talent, and support the implementation of the Sustainable Green Transition strategy. It will also integrate sustainable development with cultural heritage, native title, and land remediation.

Strategic enablers

Institutional capabilities support our research efforts:

Engaged research translation

Leverage the Enterprise Hub to equip researchers with skills, resources, and connections for two-way industry engagement, uniting multidisciplinary expertise to translate research into impactful, evidence-based outcomes.

Embedded outreach and engagement

Enhance visibility and engagement through clear and coordinated channels and a dedicated Canberra presence, featuring workshops and networking to connect our expertise with federal stakeholders.
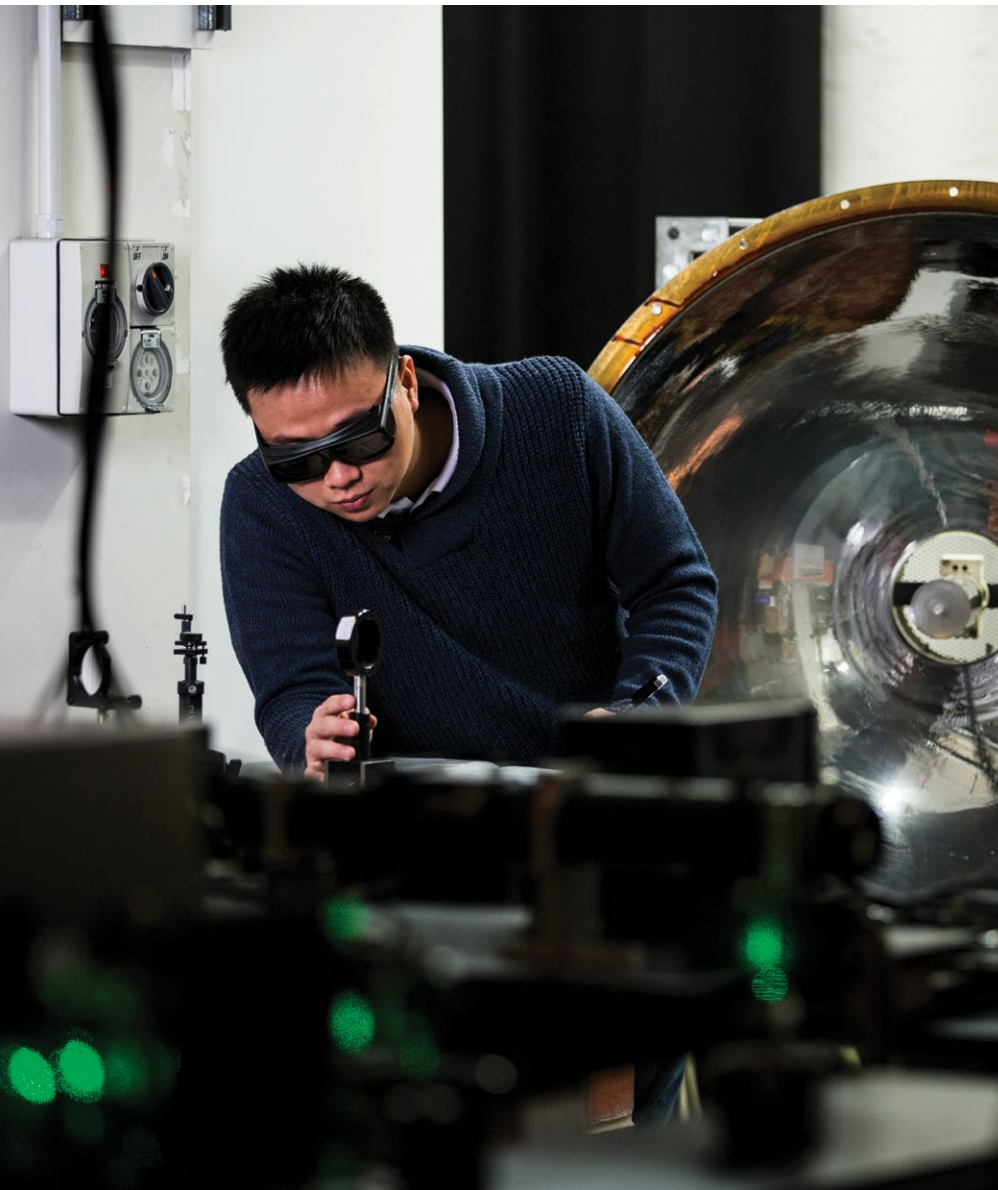
Research accelerator funding

A university-wide fund supporting researcher capacity and high-potential projects, accelerating early-stage development and collaboration to address critical sustainability challenges and enable scalable, real-world impact.

Research support services and infrastructure

Dedicated professional support connecting diverse expertise across sustainability priorities to drive multidisciplinary research, ensuring project relevance and impactful outcomes.

Top talent attraction

Attract and retain top global researchers, industry experts, and technical staff through targeted recruitment, industry appointments (fellows, professors, PhDs), and rewarding, integrated talent pathways.

Sustainable Green Transition also requires a strategic framework that systematically aligns its research and initiatives with external priorities (e.g. UN SDGs, national and state agendas), while informing internal KPIs and reward and recognition systems to drive both research excellence and demonstrable real-world impact.

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Further enquiries