

Sydney Sustainability Action Plan

Updated January 2025



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, Perth 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



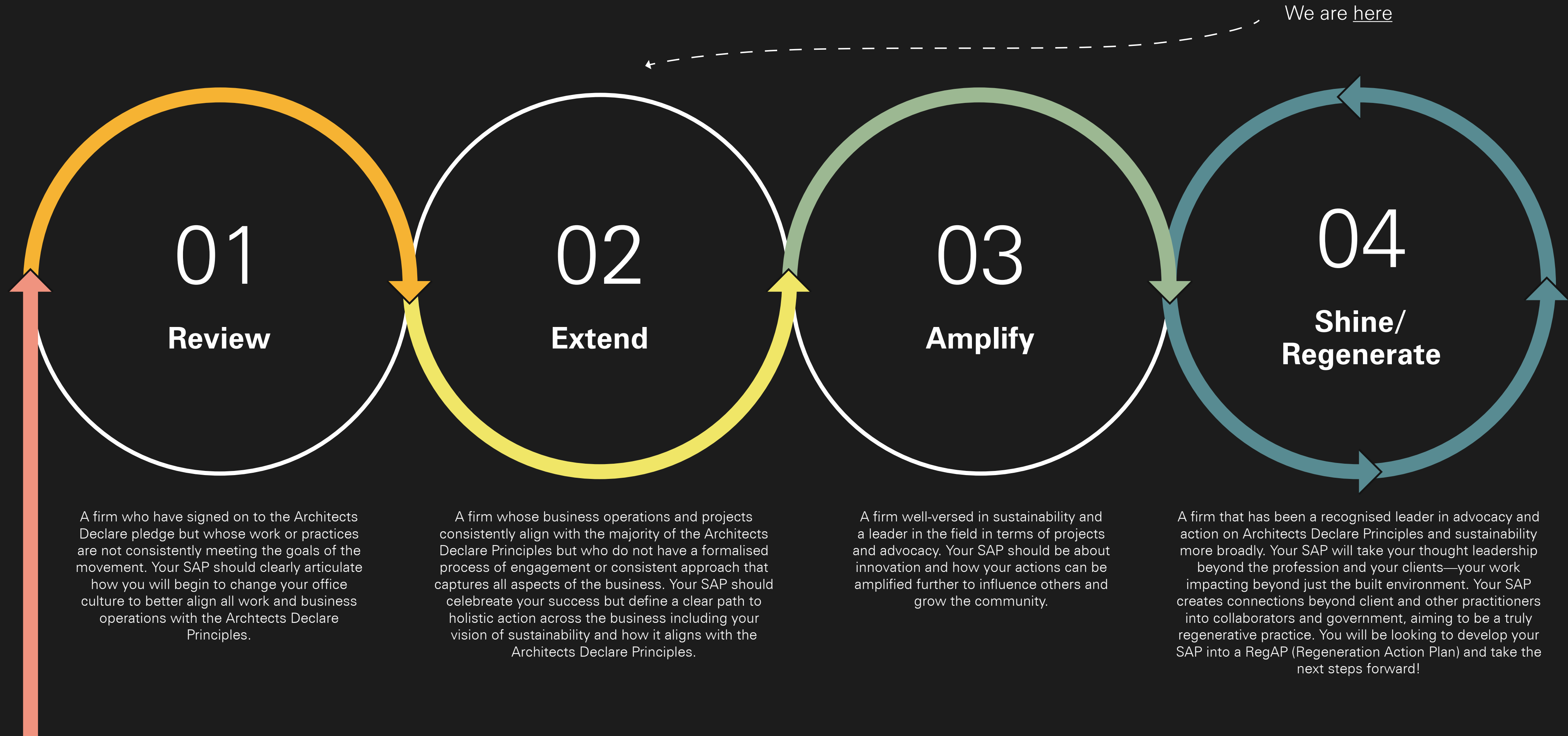
01

Sustainability at DesignInc Sydney

Current State

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

This SAP follows the goals and recommendations of the Architects Declare 'Extend' SAP. Upon successful completion of the goals in this plan, we will move to the next step.



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.

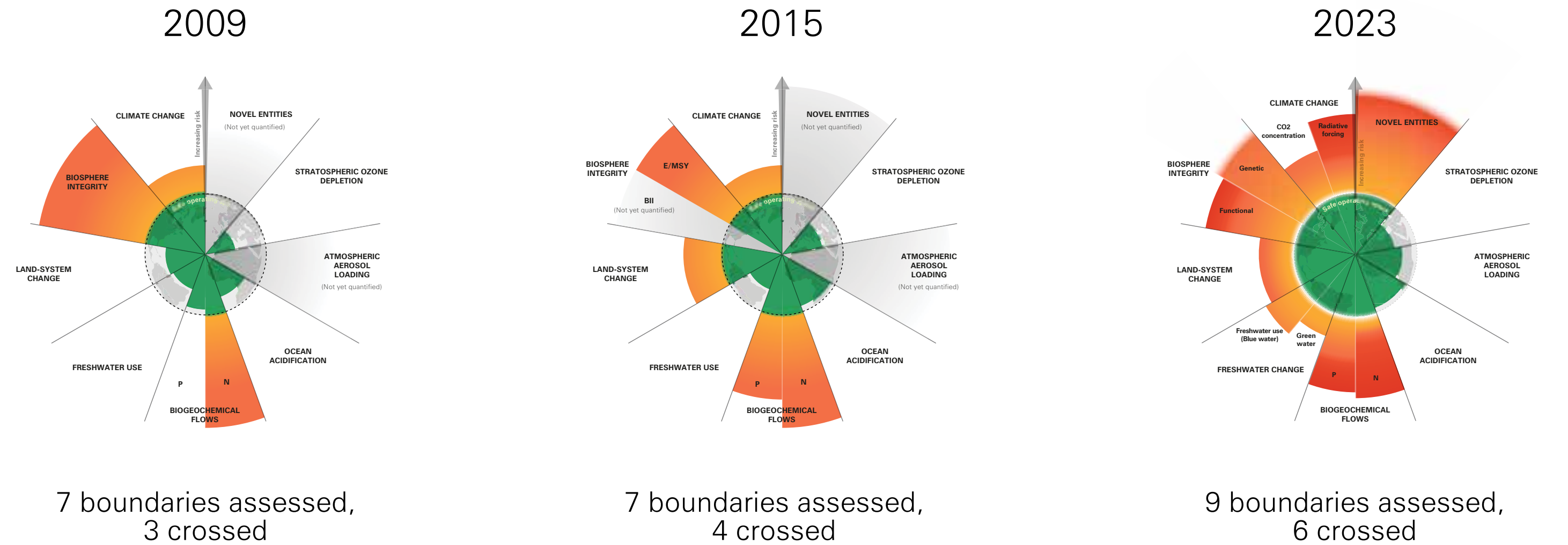
A firm that has been a recognised leader in advocacy and action on Architects Declare Principles and sustainability more broadly. Your SAP will take your thought leadership beyond the profession and your clients—your work impacting beyond just the built environment. Your SAP creates connections beyond 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.

Six out of nine “planetary boundaries” have been broken because of human-caused pollution and destruction of the natural world. 2024 has been confirmed as the hottest on record and the first year to pass the 1.5C global warming limit.

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 Richardson et al. 2023, Steffen et al. 2015, and Rockstrom 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.

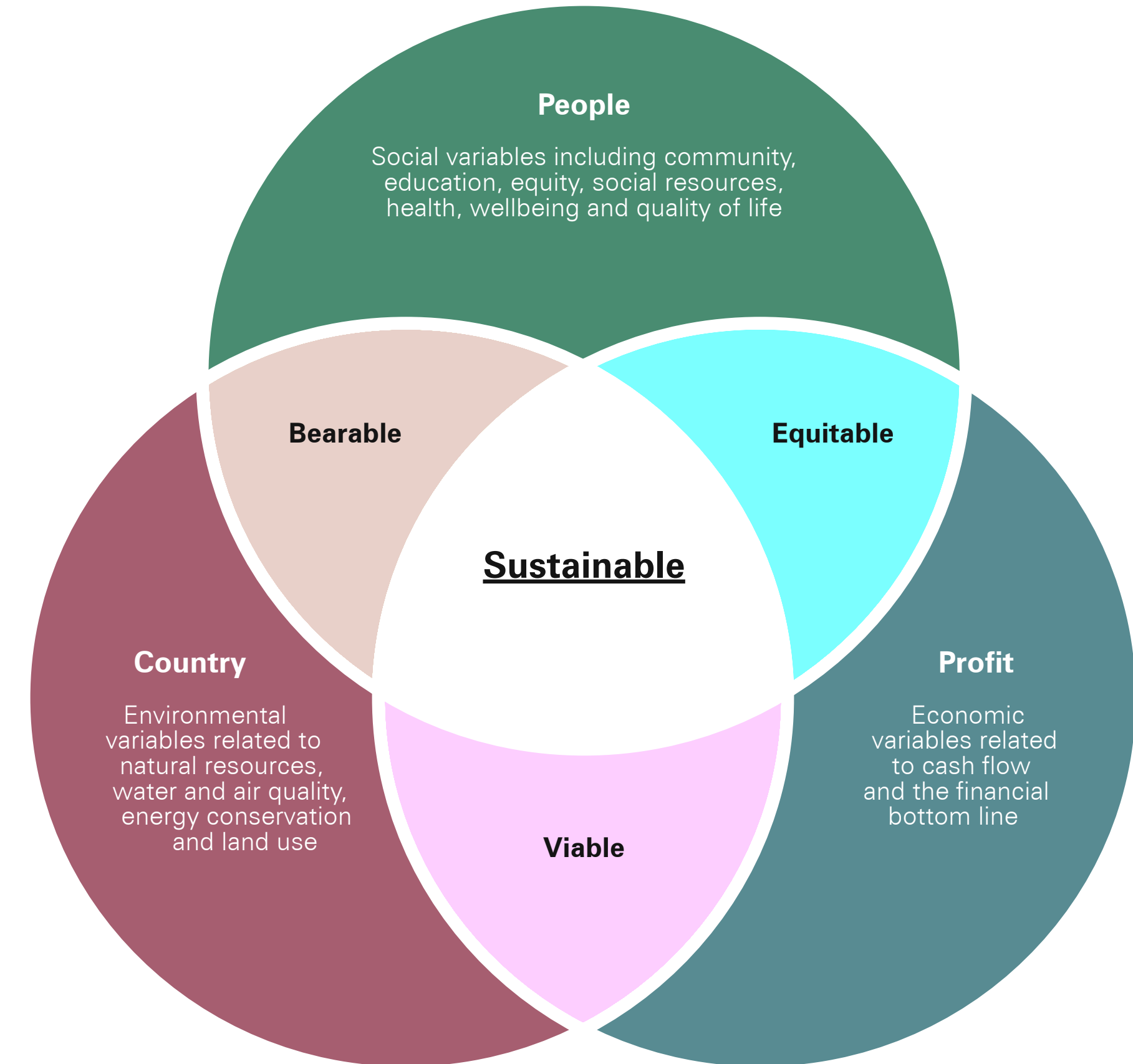
The establishment and successful implementation of our first Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) has allowed us to assess and understand the impacts of our work and business operations, and define steps to improve them.

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, Country and Profit.

Successes in 2024

01

Became certified carbon neutral

We are certified carbon neutral as an organisation for our business operations and as a service for the architectural services we provide.

02

Education + policy updates

We have implemented new policies and trained staff on our emissions reduction strategies to minimise our carbon footprint.

03

Tools + workflows

We have acquired tools and established workflows to measure embodied carbon and undertake Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs).

04

New ESD Framework

We have updated our ESD Framework to guide our design processes and minimise adverse environmental impacts.

05

57% carbon emission reduction

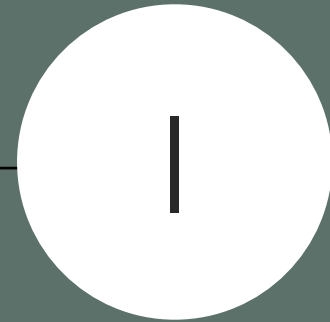
We reduced our full scope carbon emissions by 57% from 601.6 tCO₂-e for FY2023 to 260.2 tCO₂-e for FY2024.



Commitments + Next Steps

We will

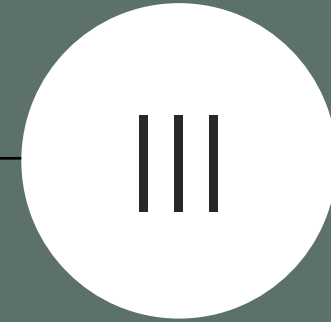
We are taking the next steps to help decarbonise the built environment and meet the future needs of healthy and diverse communities.



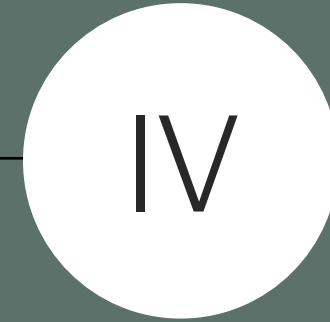
Audit our carbon footprint every year and maintain our carbon neutral certifications



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



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



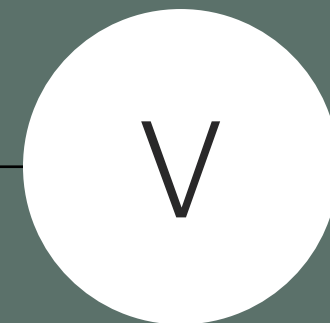
Set targets for the reduction of embodied and operational carbon against benchmarks for our projects



Review and update our Sustainability Action Plan annually



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



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

02 Design Practice



City of Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore AO, Mary Anne McGirr, Richard Does and Joyce Lim at the Australian Institute of Architects Awards of Excellence, NSW, 2024.
Redfern Station was the recipient of the City of Sydney Lord Mayor's Prize (City of Sydney catchment only), the Creative Adaptation Award for Heritage and dual commendations in Public Architecture and Urban Design categories respectively.

Successes in 2024

01

We have implemented updated processes proposed in our initial SAP to allow us to continually improve our work.

Evaluate New Projects—We evaluate all new projects and minimise adverse environmental impacts.

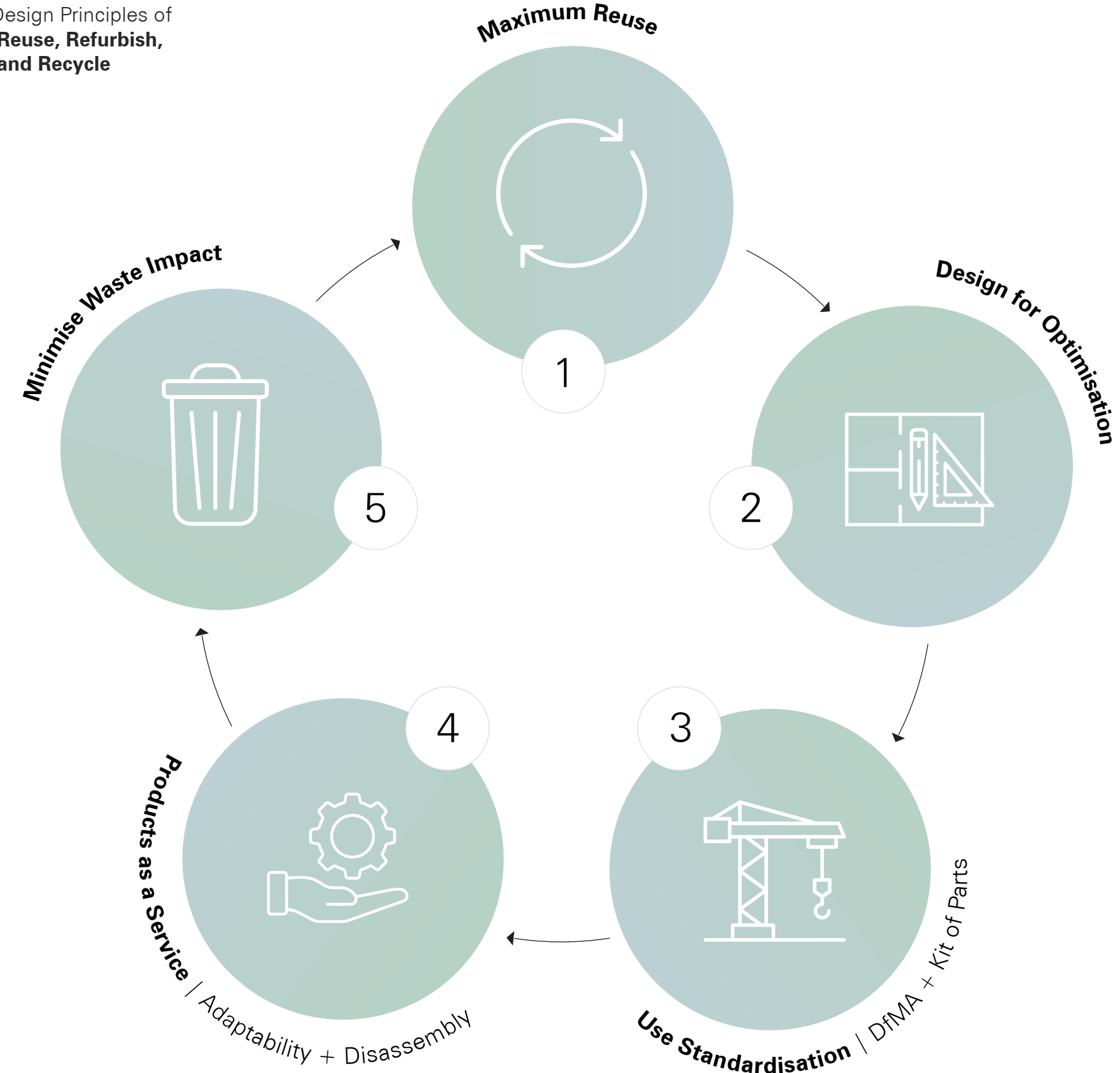
Reduce Construction Waste—We collaborate with engineers, contractors and clients to further reduce construction waste.

Lifecycle Analysis—We have acquired and tested tools to undertake Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs) and reduce both embodied and operational resource use.

Reduce Carbon—Our LCA software allows us to measure carbon and accelerate the shift to low embodied carbon materials in all our work.

Update our ESD Framework—Provides staff with guidance on our approach to sustainable design and includes a Sustainability Checklist for all our projects to track opportunities and initiatives.

Circular Design Principles of **Reduce, Reuse, Refurbish, Reclaim and Recycle**



Data and software used at DesignInc Sydney

Successes in 2024

02

Our Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) Framework enables a holistic approach to sustainability, empowering our team to create buildings and places that have a positive impact on people’s lives.

ESD Principles

- Circular Design ✓
- DfMA ✓
- Regenerative Design ✓
- Decarbonisation ✓
- Health & Wellbeing ✓
- Adaptive Reuse ✓
- Urban Ecology ✓
- Inclusivity & Accessibility ✓

Design Strategies

- Site Planning ✓
- Waste ✓
- Transport ✓
- Construction ✓
- Indoor Environment Quality ✓
- Energy & Water ✓
- Innovation ✓
- Designing from Country ✓

DesignInc Sydney’s updated ESD Framework released in 2024.



Successes in 2024

03

Our carbon reduction strategies and LCA workflow were applied to our new office fitout with stunning results.

While the average office fitout equates to approximately 1,800kg of CO2 per square metre, our fitout resulted in an estimated 17kg of CO2 emissions per square metre.

This low-carbon solution is attributed mainly to the reuse of existing assets (approx. 85%), including the office's structural composition and layout, combined with the specification of low-carbon materials.



By designers, for designers. DesignInc Sydney x Nguluway DesignInc Studio Fitout at 126 Phillip Street, Sydney, unfolded as an opportunity to redefine our workspace: a new, low carbon home for over 100 staff in the heart of Sydney's CBD.

Buildings

Refurb

Reuse

Design

Circular Thinking

Disassembly

Materials

Reuse + Recycle

Low Carbon

Supply Chain

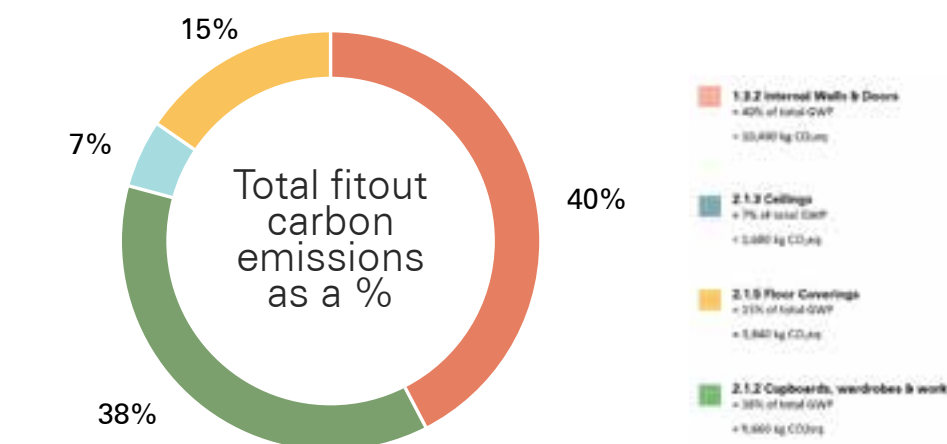
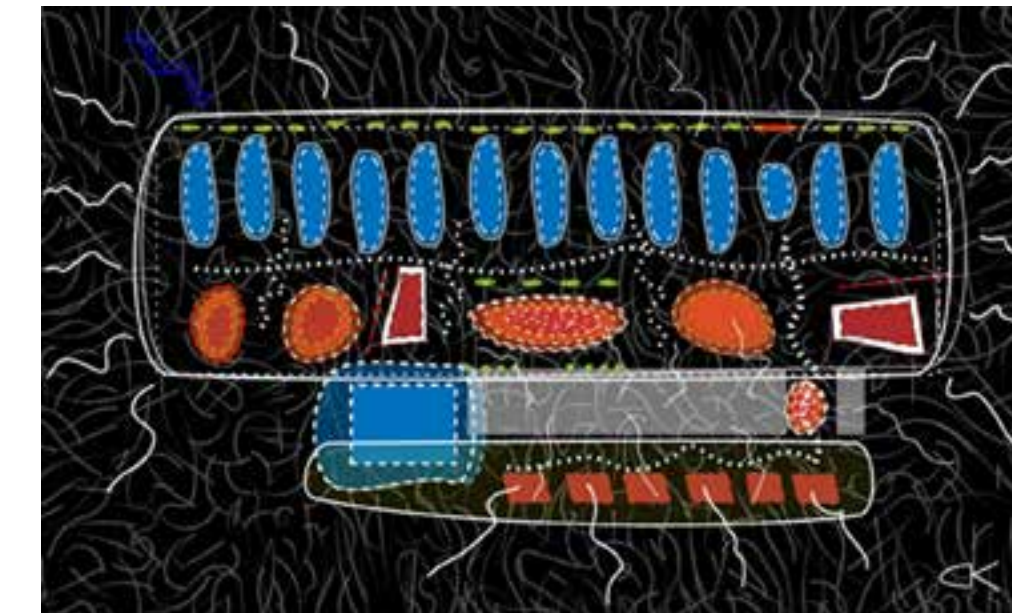
Minimise Transport

EPDs

Declare

Measure

Optimise + Share



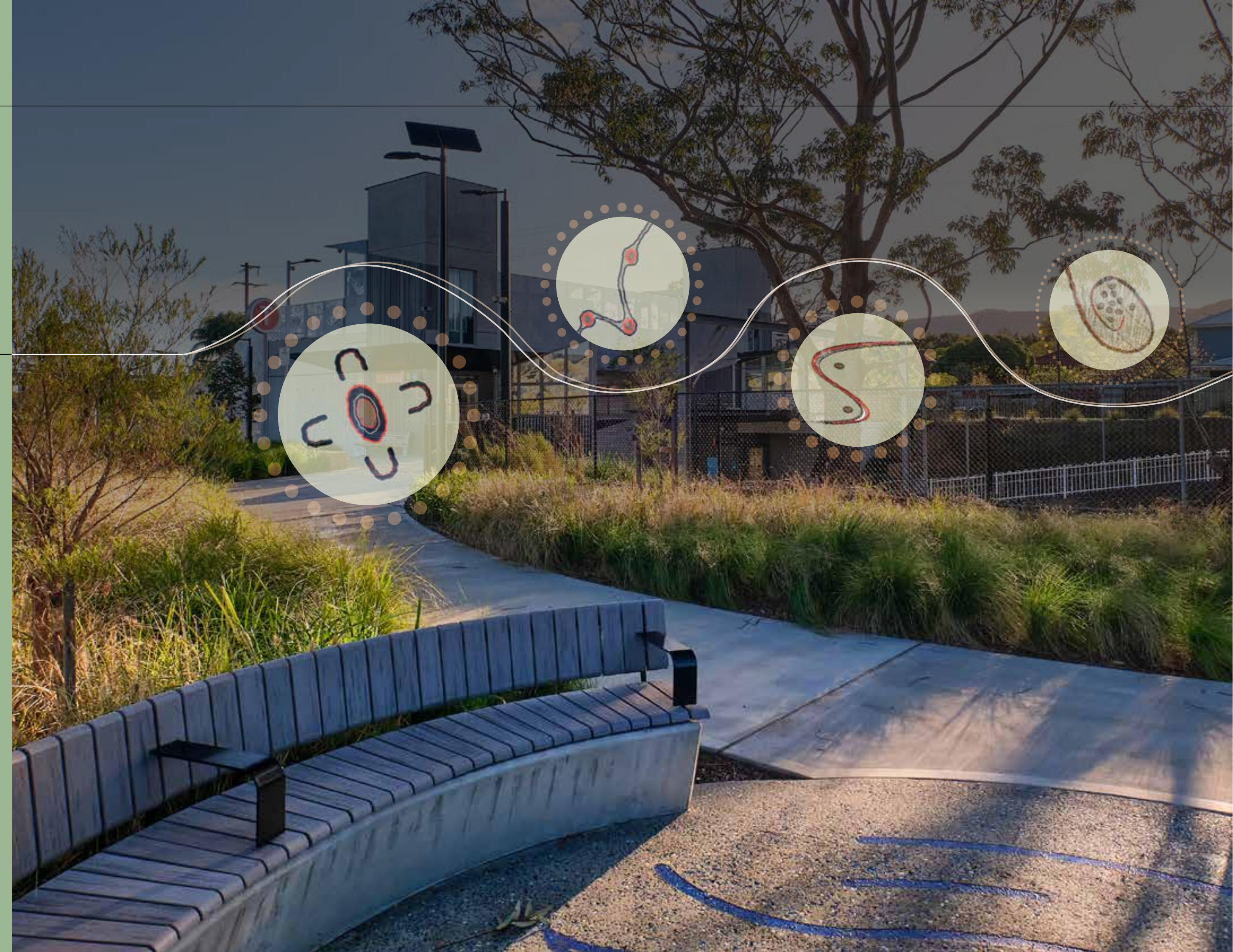
Above: At the heart of our workplace design is the concept of **Brackish Space**. Inspired by the confluence of sweet and salt water, this idea positions our workspace as a meeting place for collaboration, exchange, and chance encounters.

Successes in 2024

04

In close collaboration with Nguluway DesignInc, we've embedded our Designing from Country Methodology that connects and collaborates with Traditional Custodians, allowing us to incorporate Indigenous narratives into many of our projects.

This helps nurture improved relationships between people and nature and achieve long-term sustainability, a sense of belonging and responsibility for caring for Country.



Nguluway DesignInc and DesignInc Sydney's 'Designing from Country' Framework for engagement with First Nations communities.

One example of Designing from Country in practice is Towradgi Station, located on the land of the Wodi Wodi and Dharawal People. Consultation with Traditional Custodians highlighted the importance of the 'seven warriors' story and the relationship to the land below the Illawarra escarpment and out into the ocean. Stories reflecting the geographic setting, indigenous vegetation and native fauna are woven into the design, symbolizing the transition from the mountains to the sea, with the upper station levels reflecting the escarpment and the lower levels evoking the ocean. Passengers experience a journey from the mountains to the sea as they move through the station, symbolising the transition from the escarpment through the plains to the coast and from sweetwater through bitter water to saltwater.

Designed by Nguluway DesignInc and DesignInc

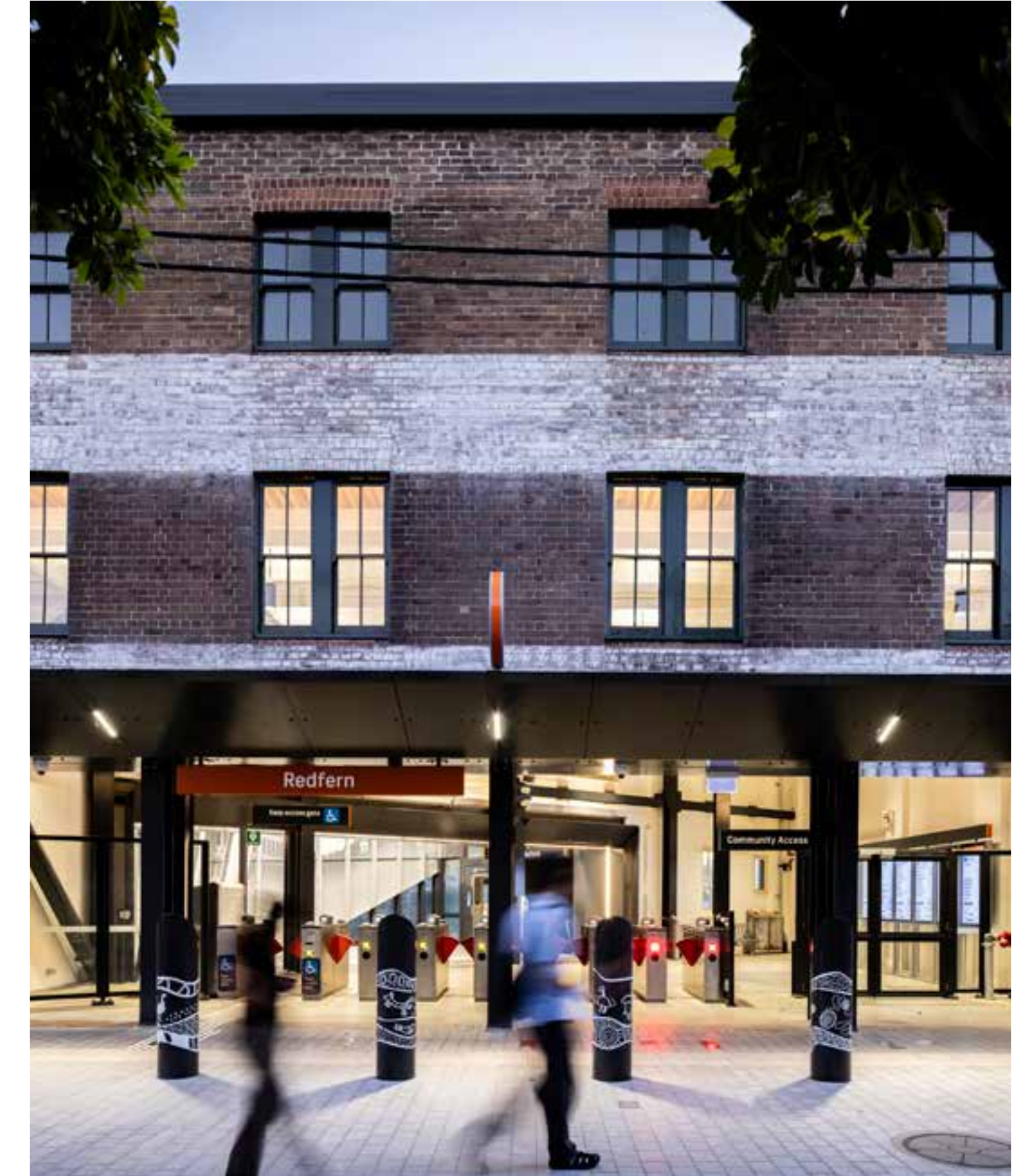
Successes in 2024

05

Our ongoing commitment as leaders in the field of sustainable design was recognised by the following industry accolades this year:

PHIVE—Parramatta Civic Hub (left) received Highly Commended at the World Green Building Council’s prestigious Leadership in Sustainable Design and Performance Award for an institutional project.

Redfern Station Upgrade (right) won the Landscape and Urban category at the 2024 Sustainability Awards hosted by Architecture & Design.



Goals for 2025

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

Healthy design criteria

We will establish criteria for assessing what makes healthy buildings and great places.

05

Integrate green technology

We will leverage 6D BIM technology and processes including testing Carbon Designer 3D to enable optimisation through rapid, data-driven early carbon assessments.

06

Designing from Country

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

03 Business Operations



Successes in 2024

01

We implemented the Emission Reduction Strategies in our initial SAP to reduce our carbon footprint.

Enhance Electricity Use

- Switch to 100% accredited green power ✓
- Ensure all appliances and lights are energy efficient ✓
- Power off all equipment when not in use ✓

Reduce Waste

- Improve waste management ✓
- Give staff keep cups ✓
- Minimise printing ✓
- Purchase recycled paper ✓
- Don't use printed business cards ✓

Reduce Fuel Use

- Promote use of company Opal cards and public transport ✓
- Avoid flying where possible, offset flights and don't fly business class ✓
- Use GoGet hybrid or EVs when available ✓
- Use Uber Green ✓
- Avoid private car use ✓

Use Economic Forces

- Use Carbon Neutral suppliers and service providers ✓
- Purchase meaningful offsets aligned with our vision, including Greenfleet, Canopy Blue and Mt Rothwell ✓

Successes in 2024

02

While diverse in thought and background, we are united and driven by shared values of Collaboration, Flexibility, Support, Innovative Thinking and Respect.

Our next Innovate RAP has been conditionally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia. Our team have participated in cultural sharing experiences, discussions, ceremonies and workshops, increasing their cultural literacy and ability to confidently and appropriately engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



DesignInc Sydney are conditionally endorsed for its second consecutive Innovate RAP

NGULUWAYDesignInc

DesignInc Sydney continues its proud partnership with majority Indigenous owned-and-operated design studio, Nguluway DesignInc. The two share a unique relationship which deepen staff understandings of Indigenous cultural values and strengthens community relationships through the projects we deliver.



Nguluway DesignInc are a Supply Nation-certified business.



Successes in 2024

03

We've shored up our certifications, policies and processes as part of our commitment to sustainable business practice.

- Implemented new policies and trained staff on our emissions reduction strategies to minimise our carbon footprint ✓
- Introduced an Indigenous and Sustainable Procurement Strategy to increase our procurement of goods and services from Indigenous and Carbon Neutral-certified businesses ✓
- Improved our waste management and introduced new waste streams for organics, disposable coffee cups and Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) ✓
- Published our Employee Value Proposition to communicate the values, policies, programs and events that support employees ✓
- Implemented an Overtime Policy to prevent burnout and protect employee wellbeing generally—beyond legislative requirements ✓
- Became certified carbon neutral for business operations and service offering through Climate Active ✓



Preferential procurement of Indigenous and/or carbon neutral-certified businesses has been written into company policy.

Goals for 2025

We will continue to reduce our carbon footprint and work towards achieving carbon neutrality by:

01

Commit to benchmarks

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

02

Firm emission reduction target

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

03

Sustainable procurement

We will implement our Indigenous and Sustainable Procurement Strategy to prioritise procurement of sustainable goods and services.

04

Green transport options for staff

We will focus on further reducing waste and business travel emissions.

05

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

We will continue to support Reconciliation and social change.

06

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



Nguluway DesignInc Managing Director, Craig Kerlake (centre) and the Blak Hand Collective speaking at Vivid Festival, 2023

Successes in 2024

01

We continue to raise awareness of the importance of integrating nature, place and community by undertaking the initiatives outlined in our initial SAP.

We undertook research and shared knowledge



We provided formal training for all staff on our new design processes, whole life carbon and circular economy principles



We delivered a series of lectures at the University of Sydney on various aspects of sustainability including Decarbonisation, Circularity and Designing from Country



We partnered with two UNSW Computational Design students and developed automated workflows that integrate environmental assessments of materials into our BIM processes



We hosted the UNSW CoDe Conference 2024 where students presented research projects at the forefront of design technology innovation



Redfern Station received an award in the 'Landscape and Urban' Category at the Sustainability Awards, which was hosted by Australian publication, Architecture & Design at Sydney Town Hall in November, 2024

Successes in 2024

02

We leveraged our project experience and expertise to raise awareness of the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

We participated in industry panel events and discussions including the Impact X Sydney Summit, Australia’s largest global summit for climate and nature



We have hosted various RAP and sustainability events



La Perouse Elder Aunty Barb Simms addresses the room at DesignInc Sydney’s National Reconciliation Week Panel, 2024

Successes in 2024

03

We advocated for action amongst our clients and supply chains.

Our Indigenous and Sustainable Procurement Strategy allows us to identify and favour Carbon Neutral suppliers and subcontractors



We identify and prioritise products and materials with EPDs through the use of our LCA Workflows and One Click LCA database



We encouraged clients to consider project carbon by providing them with LCAs enabling them to make informed decisions



DesignInc Sydney's process for utilising LCA Workflows and One Click LCA database integrations for sustainable design optioneering.

Project Selection

Process varies depending on stage of project



Base Case Documentation

Material specification and embodied carbon estimation



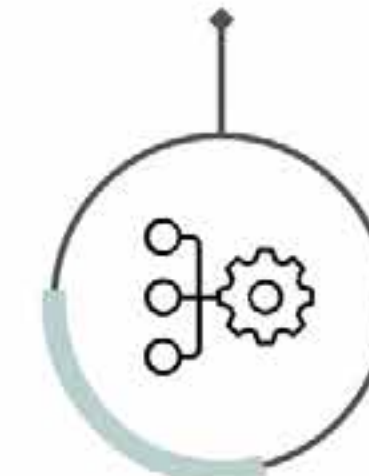
Integrated Modelling

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



Results Analysis

Data interpretation and identification of 'problem areas'



Material Testing

Alternative materials with lower embodied carbon



Design Alternative

Alternative design options and material recommendations

Goals for 2025

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 CPD and training workshops for all staff including on our new LCA Workflow so we can measure and benchmark embodied carbon on all new projects.

02

Participate in public discourse

We are speaking at Green Building Council Conference in 2025. We will attend 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

Sydney

Our studio is on Gadigal land.

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