

Case Study

Sustainability during lockdown

Keeping sustainability alive

From March 2020 when COVID-19 restrictions prevented the University community from meeting on campus, the Sustainability Team pivoted engagement programs and activities to online delivery. This included taking **Green Impact** – the University’s flagship sustainability behaviour change and engagement program – to an online format, producing a virtual Sustainability Tour of the Parkville campus, and collecting valuable community feedback on sustainability topics and initiatives.

Green Impact from home

Moving Green Impact to an online format brought a new level of accessibility to the program, allowing staff and students from all locations, faculties and departments to participate with more flexibility. A total of 446 people across 52 teams were signed up to the 2020 program, with 26 teams audited and 227 active team members.

The program supported staff and students to stay engaged with sustainability from home, helping them to positively influence friends and family to make sustainable changes while maintaining social connections with peers and colleagues. This extended the program’s impact to a wider audience than ever before. A total of 1,229 colleagues of participants engaged with the program in some way while a total of 712 sustainable actions were

recorded. All surveyed participants reported that the program helped them to feel connected to others during COVID-19 restrictions, to better understand how sustainability relates to them, and to better understand how their actions impact on issues connected to sustainability.

Virtual Tour

As campus activities transitioned online, new demand for a way for staff and students to connect to campus was identified. Based on the popularity of on-campus sustainability and biodiversity tours, the Sustainability Team developed an **online platform** through which users can explore sustainable initiatives, services, and infrastructure on the Parkville campus remotely. Users can navigate 13 stops across the online map, with experts across the University explaining each stop through an embedded video.

The map provides an opportunity to showcase a broad range of sustainability activities from around the University to new audiences, including international and interstate students, organisations, alumni, prospective students and industry partners. The stops are diverse and include sustainable operations, research, student-led programs and broader community engagement initiatives. The platform has since evolved into a valuable teaching and learning resource and is being used in the newly developed Joining Melbourne Module. There are plans to expand this to other campuses.

University of Melbourne



Image Green Impact from home actions: backyard composting/gardening.

Sustainability Survey online between May and June (see case study). More in-depth and interactive consultation with the wider University community, as part of the development of the new Sustainability Plan, occurred online over a 14-week period in late 2020. Across 12 feedback sessions and an anonymous online form, 439 students, staff and alumni shared their views on the priorities they would like to see reflected in the next Plan. Feedback and recommendations from both consultation processes are being used to evaluate the University’s existing sustainability initiatives and to inform the priorities and targets of the University’s new Sustainability Plan.

Positive news in a year of uncertainty

Sustainability was given excellent visibility in 2020 with both the Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer promoting the survey, consultation opportunities and Green Impact program to staff and students. This welcomed a broader section of the community to express their views, engage with sustainability issues and participate in sustainable activities.

Energy savings from building de-operationalisation

With COVID-19 restrictions significantly reducing the number of staff and students frequenting campuses, the University took action to save energy and emissions through de-operationalisation of Parkville buildings with significant ongoing energy demand. Approximately 4.95 million kWh of energy was saved (a 36% reduction from baseline energy consumption), resulting in financial savings of over \$630,000. The energy saved from de-operationalising these eight buildings is equivalent to 5,050 tonnes of carbon or the energy required to power 678 houses for a year.

Listening to our community

During the slowing of on-campus activities due to the pandemic, the University took the opportunity to gather feedback from staff and students on sustainability across the organisation. The Sustainability Team conducted the biennial University-wide

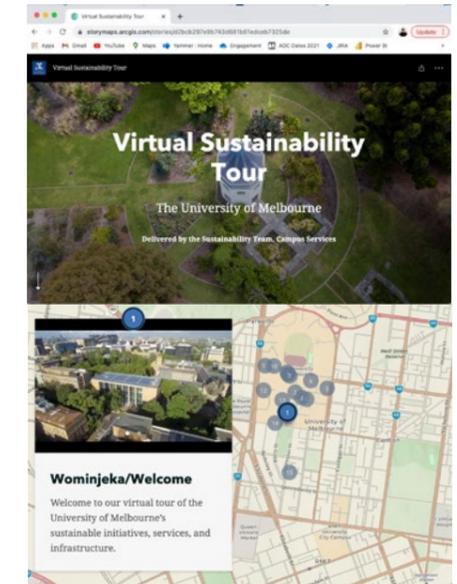


Image (from top) Sustainability Team virtual tour, biodiversity collection data, Green Impact Awards Ceremony 25 November 2020.