

Our commitment to sustainability

Acknowledgement of Country

At the NSW Department of Education, we recognise the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways where we study, work and live. We celebrate the First Peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationship to Country and value Aboriginal wisdom in caring for Country.

We recognise our responsibility

Our vision is to be Australia's best education system and one of the finest in the world. We strive to deliver quality education outcomes while protecting the environment, contributing to economic prosperity and helping our communities to thrive.

The world is changing rapidly. We are seeing the effects of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, global health challenges and social conflict around us. Thus, sustainability is a broader concept than resource conservation and environmental protection. As illustrated by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), it also encompasses health and wellbeing, equity and resilience.

We will demonstrate leadership in all areas of sustainability by:

- equipping our students and staff with the perspective, knowledge and skills for the future
- changing our own practices, to ensure we have a positive impact wherever possible
- showing others how we are changing our practices, to encourage them to do the same.



We can make real and lasting change

NSW Education can lead in key areas of sustainability. Every day, millions of people interact with us as an education provider and a NSW Government agency. Our influence extends past school gates into our local communities, to the wider education sector and beyond.

Areas where we can make a significant impact



Preparing young people

Equipping young people to respond effectively to emerging challenges, today and in the future.

Our culture

Empowering our students, staff and school communities to innovate and apply sustainability principles and innovation.

Built environment

With more than 2,200 schools across NSW, even small improvements in school design, construction and operation result in big outcomes.

Spend

Influencing supply chains by sourcing goods and services that are sustainable and ethical.

Reach

Leveraging our network to boost our impact through engagement, research and partnerships.

Our 5 sustainability priorities



Unlock human potential
Empower each person with the health, wellbeing, confidence, creativity and resources to succeed.



Foster connections
Embed respect and caring for Country, nature, history, diversity and community.



Act on climate change
Achieve net zero emissions.



Consume responsibly
Operate efficiently, design out waste & uphold high labour and environmental standards in our supply chain.



Build resilience
Equip school communities to withstand and adapt to change.

Our 9 goals to 2030 & 27 actions to 2023

We have mapped a set of initial actions to help reach towards our goals.

1 Sustainability is embedded into school practices

- Create a handbook to share successes and lessons learned.
- Develop an engagement program and a dashboard for students and staff to learn about their school's impact.
- Fund hands-on projects through the Sustainable Schools Grants program.

2 Every school is a verified healthy and inclusive learning environment

- Embed a Connecting with Country framework across school planning and design.
- Align design and performance standards with the latest advancements in health and inclusion.
- Research verification approaches for health and inclusive learning environments.

3 Every school is an asset for its community, all year round

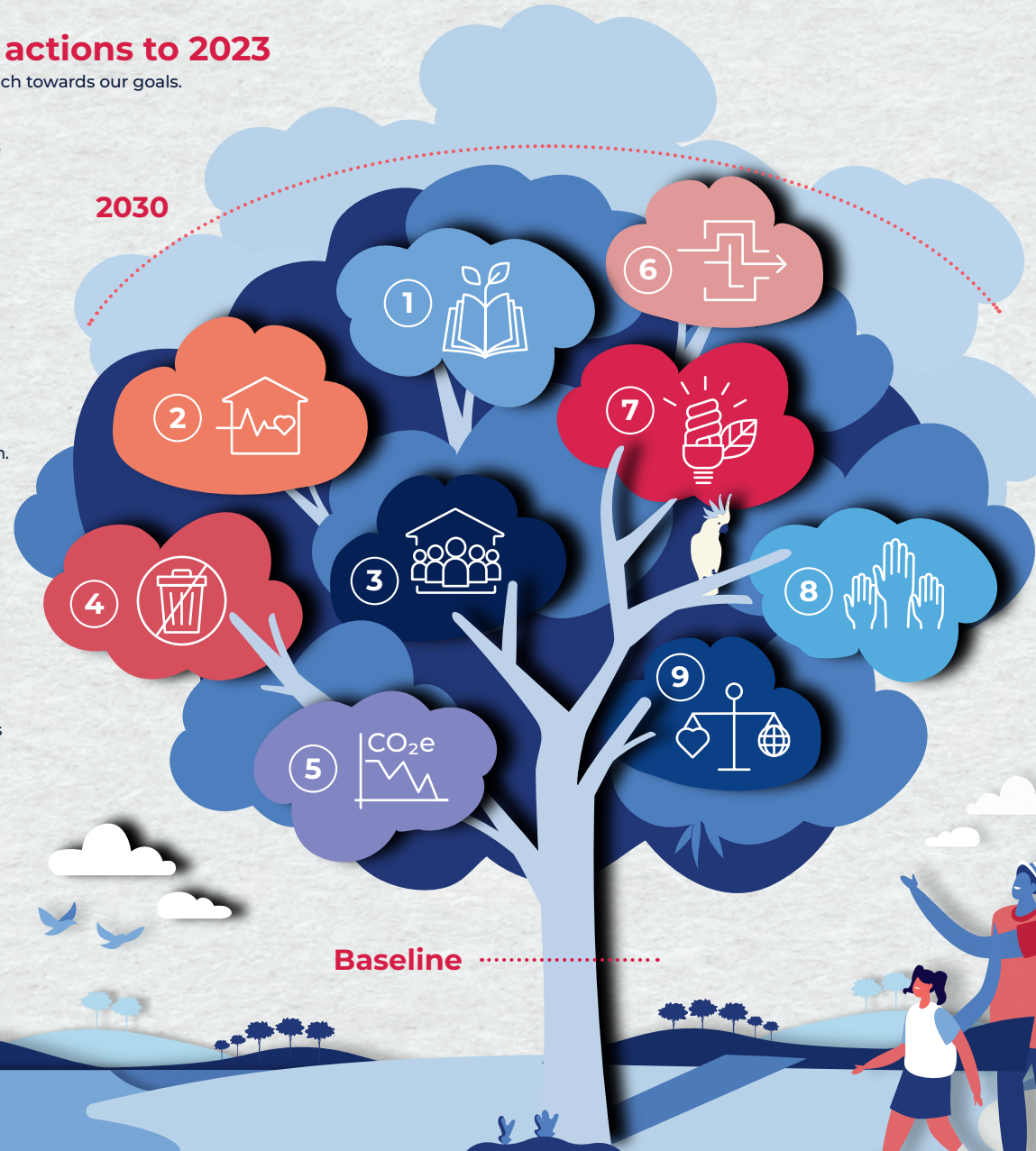
- Measure the social impact and economic value from shared use of schools.

4 We eliminate resource waste

- Deliver funded efficiency (energy, water and waste) programs.
- Shift to more proactive maintenance programs.
- Explore resource efficiency opportunities across our assets.
- Research our role in the circular economy.

5 We are net zero emissions in operation

- Develop a roadmap towards net zero emissions in operations by 2030.
- Deliver funded renewable energy pilot and projects.
- Align design and performance standards for new schools to this goal.



6 We have a robust plan for adaptation

- Define our approach to resilience and integrate it into our decision-making and operations.
- Develop initial plan for responding to climate change risks.
- Deliver our commitments under the Greening our City Secretaries' Pledge.

7 We demonstrate leadership by investing in innovation

- Establish a sustainability innovation fund for real-life demonstration projects.
- Contribute to cross-government sustainability strategies, policy reforms and programs.

8 Department staff confidently contribute to our sustainability priorities

- Develop and deliver collaboration and learning opportunities.
- Celebrate successes and recognise contributions.
- Align procurement policies and practices with our sustainability priorities.

9 We measure our social & environmental impact

- Develop metrics and baseline our performance.
- Establish an approach for measuring social impact.
- Mandate that all new schools and upgraded buildings (≥\$10M) are in the top 2 bands in industry sustainability ratings, where possible.
- Collect social and environmental impacts from suppliers and contractors.
- Assess our performance through regular and transparent reporting.

We will be guided by these principles



Connect with Country and learn from Aboriginal knowledge.



Respect the role and lived experience of every student, teacher, staff and community member.



Find the best solutions through collaboration and engagement with school communities, other government agencies, industry, experts and beyond.



Allocate adequate resources to support us to achieve our goals.



Take an evidence-based approach while remaining adaptable, innovative, inspiring and hopeful.



Identify and avoid unintended consequences.

Our plan for action

Adopting more sustainable practices is one of the great challenges of our time. We know high expectations in the classroom drive academic results, so we have high expectations for ourselves to deliver on this commitment.

We have many live examples of sustainable practices already. As a learning community, we will use these examples to inspire, inform and accelerate positive change.

Our leaders will oversee the delivery of our commitment to sustainability. We will establish a baseline to measure our progress against and we commit to:

- report on our progress
- continue to improve the quality of our data
- refine metrics to best measure our outcomes and impact.

We all must play an active role in supporting the delivery of our sustainability commitment. Let's embrace the opportunity to shape a positive legacy for our students and future generations.

For further information visit:
edu.nsw.link/OurCommitmentToSustainability

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019)

NSW Education is a signatory to the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (2019).

As outlined in the Declaration, we will deliver a world-class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.

Our sustainability commitment will help us achieve our obligations under the Declaration, so that students:

- become active and informed members of the community, who have empathy for the circumstances of others
- work for the common good
- sustain and improve natural and social environments.