



Environmental Sustainability Report

2020 - 2021



Acknowledgement of Country

UnitingCare acknowledges that we live and work on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Countries. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Australia's First Nations Peoples have cared for Country for over 60,000 years, and have long recognised the interdependency of ecological, spiritual and human health. We acknowledge and respect this deep relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their ancestral lands and seas. We recognise this custodianship and the contribution our First Nations Peoples continue to make to conservation, climate action and the management of lands and waters.

We commit to learn from, work with and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge of caring for Country, to build a brighter, greener future together.

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Who we are

Since the early 1900s, we've been helping people across Queensland live life in all its fullness.

Today, we're a courageous and creative health and community services provider and one of the largest charities in Australia, connecting with people in every corner of our community, from the Gold Coast to the Northern Territory.

Through our accessible services we're committed to empowering older people, those living with a disability, people requiring health care in hospital or at home, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, children and families.



Proudly representing



17,000 employees



9,600 volunteers



460 locations supporting more than 600,000* people



1.5 million volunteer hours



Four private hospitals



10 Lifeline Crisis Line contact centres



127 Lifeline retail stores



56 residential aged care facilities

* The number of people supported by our Aged Care and Community Services, Family and Disability Services, plus the number of people admitted to our hospitals



A year ago, in March 2021, UnitingCare strengthened its commitment to environmental stewardship with the release of our *Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021 – 2025*.



Underpinned by six action pillars, the strategy renews our ambition to green our built environments, improve resource efficiency, enable climate resilience, and reduce our carbon emissions even further across our operations.

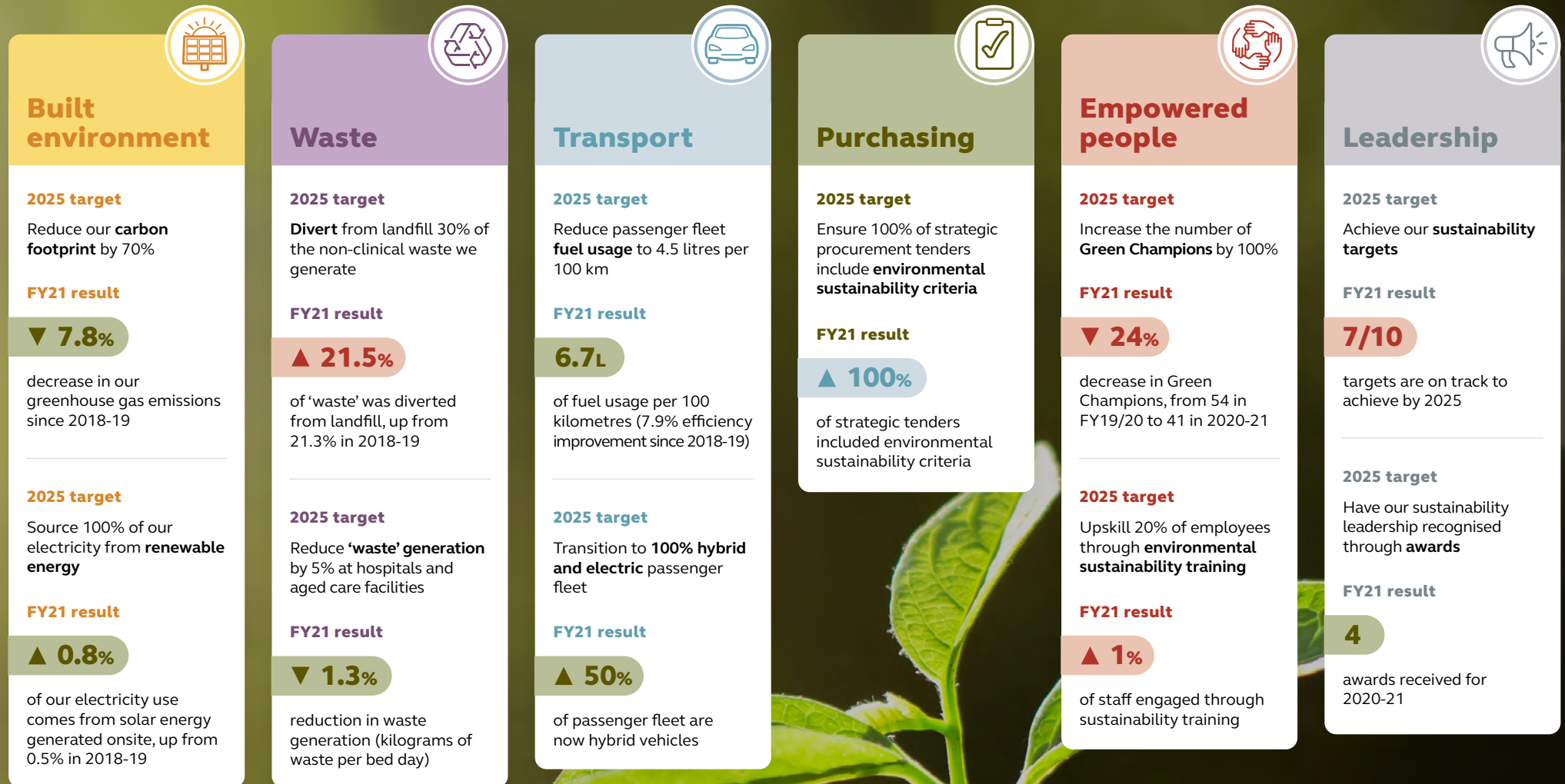
Read the *Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021 – 2025* →



Our 2020 - 2021 scorecard

Here we share highlights of our actions and progress in the first period of our *Environmental Sustainability Strategy* journey — 2020 - 2021.

- Achieved
- On track for target date
- Off track for target date





Built environment

Objective

Transition to greener, healthier buildings that reduce our demand for energy, water and resources.

2025 Targets

70%

Reduce our carbon footprint by 70%

100%

Source 100% of our electricity from renewable energy



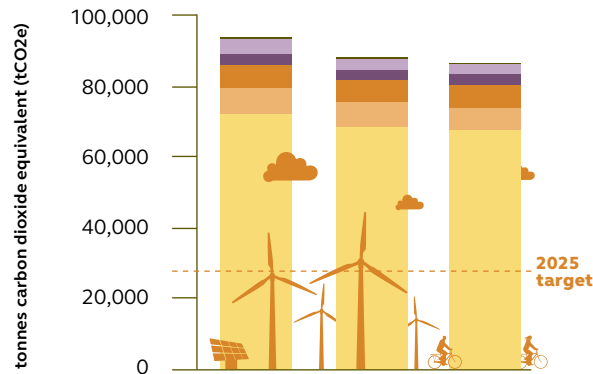
Blue Care Maintenance Officers, Mark and Alan, lighting up at the sight of the new LEDs at Lawnton Pinewoods Aged Care Facility.



Our progress in 2020-21



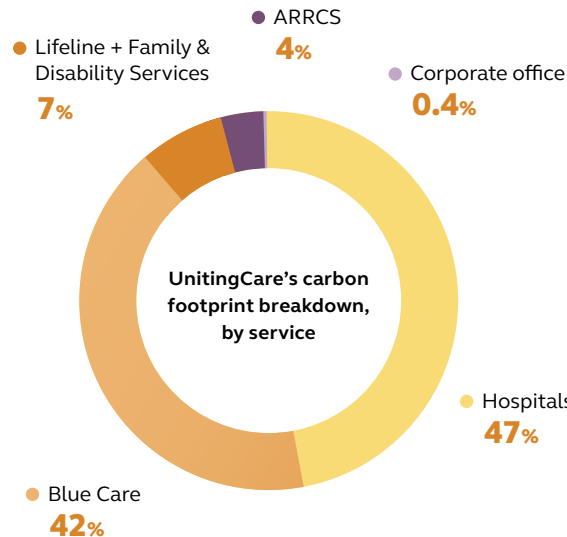
Carbon footprint¹



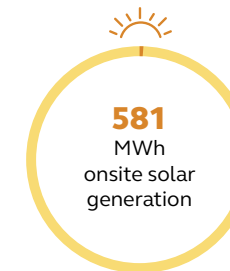
	FY19	FY20	FY21
Other	817	552	341
Anaesthetic gas	3,846	3,074	2,851
Natural gas & LPG	3,176	2,993	3,064
Waste	6,401	6,277	6,440
Fleet	7,811	7,115	6,252
Electricity	72,027	68,517	67,822
Total	94,078	88,528	86,770

Carbon footprint reduced by **7.8%**

Carbon footprint reduced by **7.8%** compared to our 2018-19 baseline.



Renewable energy



Onsite renewable energy generation increased modestly to **0.8%** of total consumption, up from 0.5% in 2018-19.

Reduced emissions

While the pandemic has undoubtedly put downward pressure on some activities (e.g. fleet and air travel), a sustained **five-year trend of reduced emissions** is also evident across UnitingCare's top two emission sources—electricity and fleet—which account for 85% of our total carbon footprint.



Partnered with **University of Sunshine Coast** and **Griffith University** on a 'green infrastructure' climate change adaptation project to reduce heat stress in aged care facilities, supported by funding from the Qld Department of Environment and Sciences.

+\$3.8m

Committed a further \$3.8m to a solar PV roll-out, which will commence in March 2022 across **22 Blue Care aged care facilities** and **one hospital**.



Completed energy and water efficiency upgrades at **29 Blue Care aged care facilities**, installing LED lights, water saving showerheads, and HVAC temperature controls.





Waste

Objective

Implement waste management practices that reduce waste generation, increase recycling and support the transition to a circular economy.

2025 Targets

30% 

Divert from landfill 30% of the non-clinical waste we generate

5%

Reduce waste generation by 5% at hospitals and aged care facilities

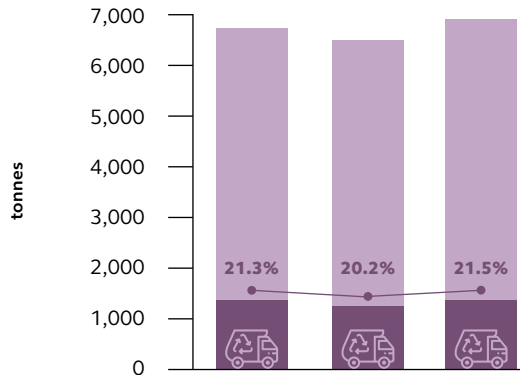


Our progress in 2020-21



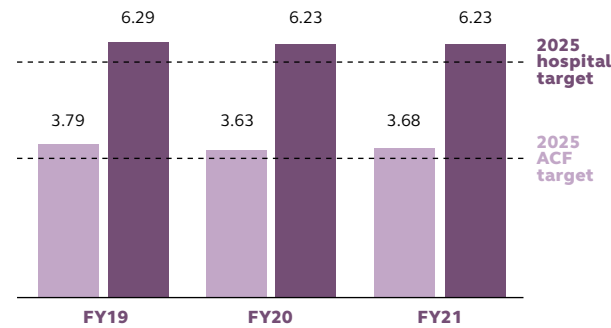
Waste

Waste tonnage² & diversion³



	FY19	FY20	FY21
Landfill	5,333.90	5,230.80	5,367.00
Recycled	1,354.80	1,237.50	1,361.20
Rehomed	-	0.1	6.6
Diversion (%)	21.3%	20.2%	21.5%

Waste intensity⁴ (kg per bed day)



Reduced waste output (kg per bed day) at our aged care facilities and hospitals by **3%** and **1%** respectively, compared to 2018-19 (pre-COVID).



● Aged care facilities



● Hospitals



Increased diversion to **21.5%**. Rapid progress is still needed to achieve our 2025 target, but we commend the efforts of our staff to improve diversion in the face of increasing non-recyclable PPE items (masks, gowns, gloves) as a result of COVID-19.



Transitioned to eco-friendly shipping packaging at **Lifeline Online**. Almost all packaging is now reused, recyclable or compostable.



Partnered with **Cleanaway** to roll-out recycling training, bin signage, new recycling collection services and colour-coded receptacles at **20 Blue Care facilities**.



Focused hospital waste efforts 'beyond the bin', through initiatives such as **OzHarvest food rescue**, donating expired medical consumables to animal rescue charities, and buying outdoor furniture and flooring made from recycled kimguard.



Implemented an online volunteer management portal, **Better Impact**, replacing paper-driven processes such as application forms, induction checklists and timesheets.



Our progress in 2020-21

Equipment rehoming for greater health access

At the height of the pandemic in 2020, Fiji's health systems were struggling, and simultaneously St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital (Brisbane) was upgrading hospital equipment. Led by passionate hospitality staff, Bai and Charlie, St Andrew's partnered with the Rewa Club—a local group of Fijian ex-pats—to establish a direct donation program to rehome retired medical equipment with the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, Fiji.

The stringent standards of St Andrew's Hospital asset management program mean that some functional equipment is replaced before the end of its usable life.

“ I began thinking about how I could repurpose them to a good home... Having family and friends in Fiji, we know that their hospitals don't have the same equipment we do here in Australia. ”

So, Charlie and Bai began collecting retired equipment such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, IV towers, and anaesthetic trolleys. In December 2020, a 40-foot shipping container was filled with 148 packages weighing over 4 tonnes, destined for Fiji's Colonial War Memorial Hospital.

With Project Fiji receiving strong support from both St Andrew's and Colonial War Memorial staff, plans are afoot for a second shipping container to be sent in 2022.

Watch this video to hear Bai and Charlie's 'Project Fiji' story →



Waste



Transport

Objective

Reduce our contribution to air pollution and emissions through improved fuel efficiency and reduced travel.

2025 Targets

4.5L

Reduce passenger fleet fuel usage to 4.5 litres per 100 km

100%

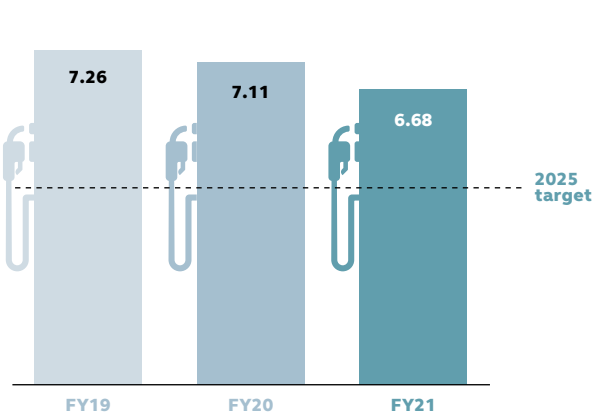
Transition to 100% hybrid and electric passenger fleet



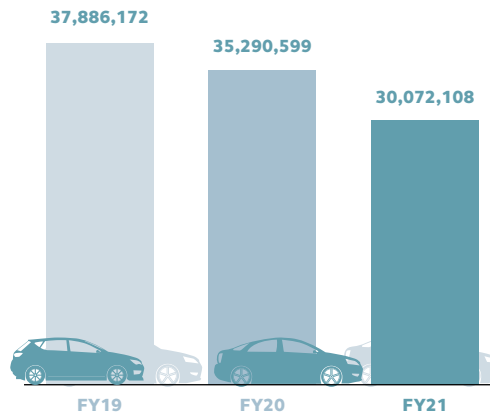
Our progress in 2020-21



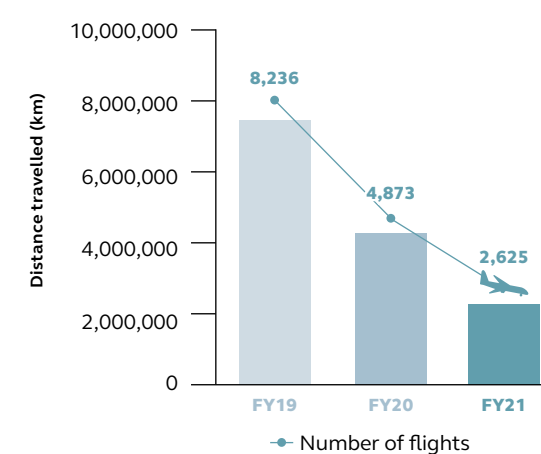
Fleet fuel efficiency (L per 100 km)



Fleet travel (km)



Air travel



50% hybrid

Added **220 new hybrid vehicles** (replacing internal combustion engine vehicles), which now make up **50%** of our passenger fleet.

▼24%

Improved fleet fuel efficiency along with reduced car and air travel combined to reduce UnitingCare's transport-related emissions by **24%** compared to our 2018-19 baseline.

5,611 fewer flights

Unsurprisingly in the context of pandemic-related travel restrictions, UnitingCare staff took **5,611 fewer flights** compared to 2018-19, reducing air mileage by **68%**.

We also developed a corporate travel policy, targeting a **30%** reduction in travel and travel-related expenses.



Created new driver training videos covering eco-efficient driving tips, such as; maintaining optimal tyre pressure, using 'eco mode' in hybrid vehicles, and avoiding idling and harsh acceleration.



Promoted virtual meetings through a video on 'challenging your need to drive'.



Developed policies and leader support resources that increase acceptance of and access to flexible working opportunities for staff.





Purchasing

Objective

Reduce environmental harm arising from the products and services we procure.

2025 Target

100%

Ensure 100% of strategic procurement tenders include environmental sustainability criteria



Jed Carey and Tracey Laird from the Lifeline Online team showing off their plant-based compostable mailers

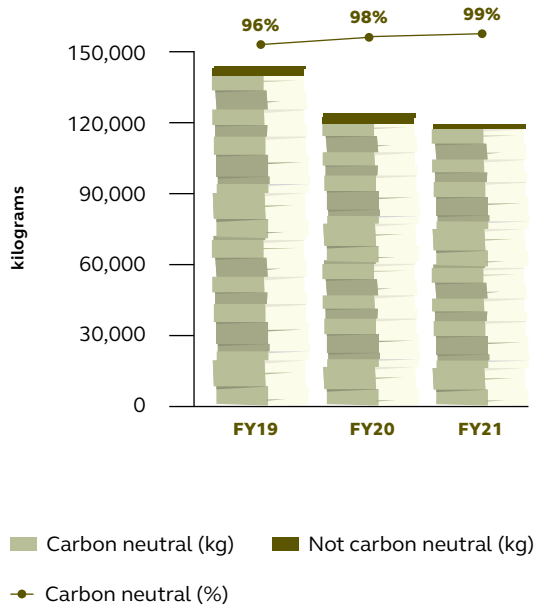


Our progress in 2020-21



Purchasing

Paper type & usage



99% of paper purchases were carbon neutral.



Additionally, we have reduced paper usage by **18%** (five million sheets of A4 paper!) since 2018-19.

While this decrease has certainly been accelerated by more staff working remotely, the biggest drop in purchasing occurred in 2019-20 following a **'Mindful Printing'** campaign focused on colour printing limits, internal messaging about cost and environmental impacts, and targeted feedback to staff with high print volumes.



Eco merchandise

Introduced a new 'eco' range of branded merchandise, including reusable produce bags, keep cups, washable paper totes, and recycled paper notepads.

100% strategic tenders including environmental sustainability criteria

Vendor selection

Embedded environmental sustainability in the vendor selection processes for all high-value contracts, including waste, solar PV, and non-medical consumables.



Our progress in 2020-21

A lifeline for the planet

In 2020, **Lifeline** rapidly scaled up its online retail operations – a critical strategy for maintaining funding for the Lifeline telephone crisis counselling service during the pandemic. Prompted by customer feedback about the plastic satchels, bubble wrap, and padded mailers that products were being shipped in, the **Lifeline Online** team were alarmed to realise the new e-commerce venture was set to contribute hundreds of kilograms of plastic waste to landfill each year.

Over six months, Lifeline Online implemented a suite of strategies to reduce this environmental impact:

- Reducing purchased packaging materials through reuse of cardboard boxes from incoming deliveries
- Switching to packaging supplies made from post-consumer waste (e.g. recycled paper) and renewable materials, to improve ‘upstream’ supply chain sustainability
- Choosing packaging that can be easily recycled or reused by customers, to reduce end-of-life impacts
- Minimising downstream impacts by including a ‘how to recycle your packaging’ flyer with orders, to maximise the chance of customers recycling, composting and reusing packaging correctly

The results? Nearly **100%** of Lifeline Online’s shipping packaging is now repurposed, made from recycled materials, recyclable and/or compostable. This is estimated to avoid over 880 kilograms of plastic per year!

According to Lifeline’s Business Development Manager, Jed Carey:

“ The feedback we have from our customers about the new eco packaging is fantastic. It’s a real win-win situation; it makes good commercial sense and it’s better for the planet. ”

Find out more →



Purchasing





Empowered people

Objective

Embed environmental sustainability within our work culture and practices, and support our staff and clients to contribute to UnitingCare's sustainability goals.

2025 Targets

20%

Upskill 20% of employees through environmental sustainability training

100%

Increase the number of Green Champions by 100%



Our progress in 2020-21



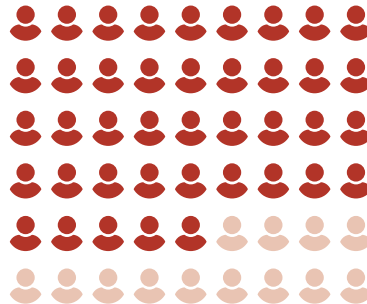
Empowered people



Green Champions staff video

Developed and published a staff video of green champions sharing their hopes and vision for a greener future.

Watch the “Greening UnitingCare” video on YouTube →



Active Green Champions

A shift in organisational focus to core service delivery to meet increased pressures of the pandemic has seen the number of active Green Champions decrease from **54** in 2019-20 to **41** in 2020-21... those still actively working in this area are no less committed!

Sustainability training and engagement initiatives were also scaled back in the face of pandemic response efforts.



Embedded messaging in Senior Leaders’ orientation about internal environmental sustainability program, expectations and opportunities.



NAIDOC Week ‘Heal Country’ event

UnitingCare’s Sustainability and Reconciliation teams partnered to deliver a major **NAIDOC Week ‘Heal Country’ event** in Hervey Bay, inviting the local community to gather for a flag raising ceremony, native tree planting, bush tucker morning tea, and opportunity for yarning.

Hosted at St Stephen’s Hospital, it brought together Butchulla Traditional Owners, Elders from Kal’ang Respite Centre, State Member Adrian Tantari MP, and community from Blue Care Masters Lodge, Fraser Shores retirement village, and UnitingCare’s Family and Disability Services.



Our progress in 2020-21

Growing plants and wellbeing in aged care

On a sunny winter's day in June 2021, residents and staff at **Blue Care's** Kallangur Pilgrim Aged Care Facility gathered for a street party to celebrate **World Environment Day**.

Residents enjoyed a special morning tea of petit fours, and planted some bird-attracting grevillea trees near the front entrance to mark the occasion.

Several residents commented on the peace and joy they find in watching birds and butterflies visit the garden. Recognising these wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature, Activity Officer Karen Meiklejohn and the Pilgrim residents' Social Club have plans underway to create a bird garden—an outdoor space for residents to enjoy fresh air, shade, seasonal blooms and plenty of wildlife visitors.

As Karen points out, it also:

“ *creates a focal point for lifestyle and craft activities – we have grand plans for making bird feeders, bird baths, bee hotel and wind chimes!* ”

An assortment of native seedlings was gifted to residents at the World Environment Day event to support the upcoming bird garden project. In months and years to come, these flowering trees and shrubs will attract more birds and insects to Pilgrim Aged Care Facility.



Empowered people





Leadership

Objective

Accelerate societal progress towards climate resilience and environmental sustainability through advocacy, collaboration and modelling the way.

2025 Targets



Achieve our sustainability targets



Have our sustainability leadership recognised through awards



Our progress in 2020-21



Strategy launched

Developed and launched UnitingCare's *Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2025*.

Read the *Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2021-2025* →



Collaborated with Queensland Synod's **'Transforming Communities'** Environmental Sustainability working group.

Plan showcase

Presented at the Asia-Pacific launch event of the *Global Road Map for Decarbonisation*, showcasing UnitingCare's 100% renewable electricity plan.

Commenced a **pilot project** for an industry-led community outreach model to reduce health impacts of heatwave events, with funding from the Queensland Government's Climate Adaptation program.



Part of a global movement

For the third year running, UnitingCare took part in the Health Care Climate Challenge; an initiative that mobilises health organisations around the world to play a leadership role in addressing climate change.

More than 300 healthcare institutions across 36 countries have joined the Challenge, collectively committing to reduce carbon emissions by more than 37 million tonnes – the equivalent of a year of emissions from nine coal-fired power plants.

In recognition of our 2021 climate action progress and achievements, UnitingCare received four 'Silver' Health Care Climate Challenge Awards for:

- **Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Energy);**
- **Greenhouse Gas Reduction (Non-Energy);**
- **Climate Resilience; and**
- **Climate Leadership.**

Find out more →



Leadership



Aligning to our long-term 2030 strategy

In 2019, UnitingCare embarked on our long-term strategy to achieve our 2030 vision of becoming Australia's most trusted and respected health and community services provider. To achieve this vision, we established the 2030 Regeneration Program – an organisation-wide planning and idea generation process.

People from across UnitingCare have been involved, creating a pipeline of new initiatives that are delivering improvements in our service quality, organisational culture, and a financial 'surplus for purpose' that we can reinvest in service delivery.

One of the ambitions underpinning UnitingCare's mission and our 2030 Regeneration Plan is to "be responsible stewards of the resources entrusted to us". This is helping to align our core business with our sustainability commitments, delivering environmental benefits alongside operational and financial improvements.

These are some of the 2030 initiatives that contributed to UnitingCare's sustainability targets in 2020-21:



Reducing electricity use and emissions through energy and water efficiency upgrades (#334)



Reducing transport emissions through the introduction of a corporate travel policy (#6264)



Increasing diversion through recycling training, bin signage, and colour-coded receptacles (#808)



Reducing cleaning chemicals and waste by changing to reusable microfibre cloths in residential aged care facilities (#74)



Reducing staff commuting through the development of UnitingCare's Flexible Working Strategy (#8844)



Reducing paper usage by implementing an online volunteer management portal (#263)



Reducing printing through user setting controls and a behaviour change campaign (#1588)










Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

UnitingCare's mission has a strong alignment to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a shared blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for everyone.

Recognising the fundamental importance of planetary health for achieving human health and prosperity, this Environmental Sustainability Report focuses on the seven environment-related SDGs where we believe UnitingCare can play a transformative role based on our current impacts and risks, strategy, core capabilities and partnerships.



SDGs	SDG target	Our progress in 2020-21
	3.6 Halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents	Car accidents —from both the corporate fleet and staff commuting—have reduced by 20% since 2018-19, highlighting the win-win of reduced travel for environment and safety
	6.4 Substantially increase water-use efficiency and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity	No actions in 2020-21
	7.2 Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix	Onsite renewable energy generation now 0.8% of total consumption , up from 0.5% in 2018-19 \$3.8m committed to a solar PV rollout , which will commence in March 2022 across 22 Blue Care aged care facilities and one hospital
	11.7 Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces	Progressed 'green infrastructure' pilot project to improve heat resilience in aged care facilities
	12.5 Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse	21.5% diversion rate (up from 20.2% last year), despite widespread increase in non-recyclable PPE items (masks, gowns, gloves) as a result of COVID-19 Reduced waste generation (kg per bed day) at our hospitals and aged care facilities by 1% and 3% respectively, compared to 2018-19 (pre-COVID)
	12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle	Seven (out of seven) tenders, included evaluation criteria about companies' environmental sustainability practices
	12.8 Ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature	Environmental sustainability messaging embedded in Senior Leaders' orientation program Sustainability training and engagement initiatives were scaled back in the face of pandemic response efforts
	13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters	Progressed pilot project for an industry-led community outreach model to reduce health impacts of heatwave events for elderly Queenslanders living in their own homes
	13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning	Carbon footprint reduced by 7.8% compared to our 2018-19 baseline 24% decrease in transport-related emissions (fleet and corporate air travel)
	17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships	Collaborated on five cross-organisational sustainability-related projects : <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Uniting Church's 'Project Plenty' environmental sustainability working group, alongside Queensland Synod and Wesley Mission Queensland2. Greening infrastructure project with University of the Sunshine Coast, Griffith University and Queensland Government3. Heatwave resilience project with Queensland Government and Griffith University4. Urban Utilities' Customer & Community Reference Group5. Energy Queensland's Customer Council



Our reporting approach

This Environmental Sustainability Report provides an aggregated snapshot for all UnitingCare services in Queensland and Northern Territory, including hospitals, aged care, family and disability services, retail thrift shops, and offices.

In most cases—where sufficient data is available—the 2018-19 financial year is used as a baseline for comparison, to represent a ‘normal’ (pre-coronavirus) operating year.

Technical notes

¹ UnitingCare’s reported carbon footprint currently includes emissions from Scope 1 (direct), Scope 2 (indirect from electricity) and limited Scope 3 (other indirect) sources – these include air travel; upstream emissions from use of paper, bottled water, and energy; and downstream emissions from waste sent to landfill. Work is underway to expand to more comprehensive Scope 3 measurement.

² Waste data is available only for sites included in UnitingCare’s consolidated waste service contract, which covers 170 of our largest sites.

³ ‘Diversion’ is calculated as the weight of recycled or rehomed items as a percentage of total non-clinical waste (i.e. all solid and liquid waste excluding clinical, pharmaceutical, cytotoxic, anatomical and sharps waste streams).

⁴ Waste intensity is calculated as the total annual waste at measured hospitals (4) and residential aged care facilities (26), divided by annual bed days (‘total bed days’ for hospital and ‘occupied bed days’ for aged care facilities).

Data corrections & developments

UnitingCare has adopted a continuous improvement approach to our sustainability reporting, and will seek to progressively increase data coverage and quality over time. Where data and reporting methodologies evolve and become universally standardised, we will retrospectively apply this to prior years and highlight where these updates have occurred.

Impact area	Development	Resulting change
Built environment		
Carbon footprint – Anaesthetic gases	Previous reporting years have captured scope 1 emissions from inhaled anaesthetic agents desflurane and sevoflurane, but omitted nitrous oxide. In 2020-21, nitrous oxide data was added to our carbon footprint, including for previous reporting years.	Baseline: Increased total carbon footprint by 1,775 tCO ₂ e (1.9%)
Transport		
Fleet – fuel efficiency	Broadened definition of ‘passenger fleet’ to include SUVs, as well as including all fuel types (previously this L/100km metric captured only unleaded petrol).	Baseline: Decreased fuel efficiency to 7.3 litres per 100 km (previously reported as 6.7).
Fleet – hybrid/EV %	Broadened definition of ‘passenger fleet’ to include SUVs.	Baseline: Decreased to 29% (previously reported as 42%) 2020-21: Decreased to 50% (previously reported as 86%)





Proudly representing

Blue Care | Lifeline | ARRCs | The Wesley Hospital | Buderim Private Hospital
St Stephen's Hospital | St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital

unitingcareqld.com.au

