



Environmental Sustainability Report

2023 - 2024



Proudly representing

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



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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Message from the CEO

2024 was a dynamic year at UnitingCare, marked by progress and pivots as we navigated the fourth year of our *Environmental Sustainability Strategy*.

We are proud of our progress in the last twelve months to improve the climate resilience of UnitingCare and the communities we serve. We continued the year-on-year reduction of our carbon footprint, through improvements in onsite renewable energy generation and anaesthetic gas use.

While we have made meaningful progress in our Sustainability Strategy, some of our bold 2025 targets have required reconsideration.

In early 2021, UnitingCare set ambitious sustainability targets that included transitioning to 100% renewable electricity by 2025. We made these commitments in a period of historically low energy prices, confident that we could balance our environmental aspirations with sound financial stewardship. The electricity market has since shifted significantly, to a point where this target is no longer attainable.

To maintain our commitment to sustainability without compromising our financial stewardship responsibilities, in 2024 we made the decision to adjust our timeline and approach to renewable energy usage. By adjusting our renewable energy target to 25% by 2027, we will continue to progress towards our decarbonisation goals in a practicable and measured manner in the context of our current operating environment.

Alongside this shift, we are focusing on reducing emissions within our own operations by undertaking detailed energy audits of our largest facilities and planning future investments in energy efficiency and rooftop solar projects. This measured approach allows us to progress meaningfully towards our sustainability goals, manage rising energy costs, and maintain the financial health essential to sustainable delivery of UnitingCare's mission.

We are extending our current Sustainability Strategy by one year, to June 2026. This will allow for completion of the remaining key Strategy actions, as well as the implementation of several key enablers that will set our next Sustainability Strategy up for success.

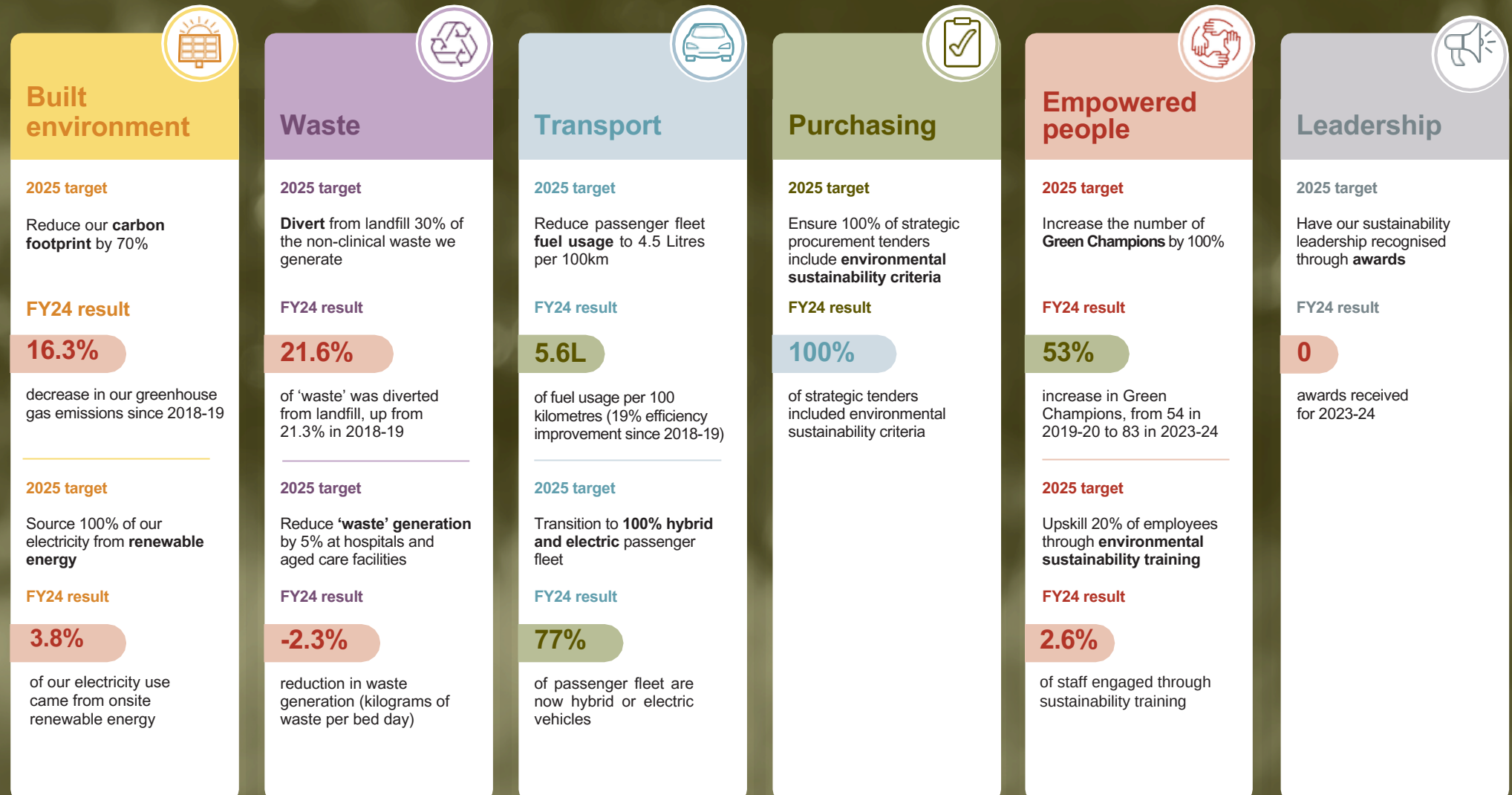
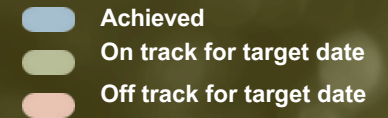
Our commitment to environmental sustainability is steadfast. UnitingCare remains committed to taking decisive action and continuous improvement in all areas that contribute to the sustainability of our operations, and the environment in which we live, work and care for those we serve.



Craig Barke
Chief Executive Officer
UnitingCare Queensland

Our 2023 - 2024 scorecard

Here we share a snapshot of our progress and areas for improvement in the fourth period of our *2025 Environmental Sustainability Strategy* journey.





Built environment

Objective

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

2025 Targets

70%

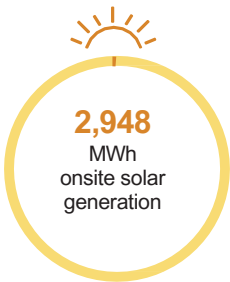
Reduce our carbon footprint by 70%

100%

Source 100% of our electricity from renewable energy

Our progress in 2023-24

Renewable energy

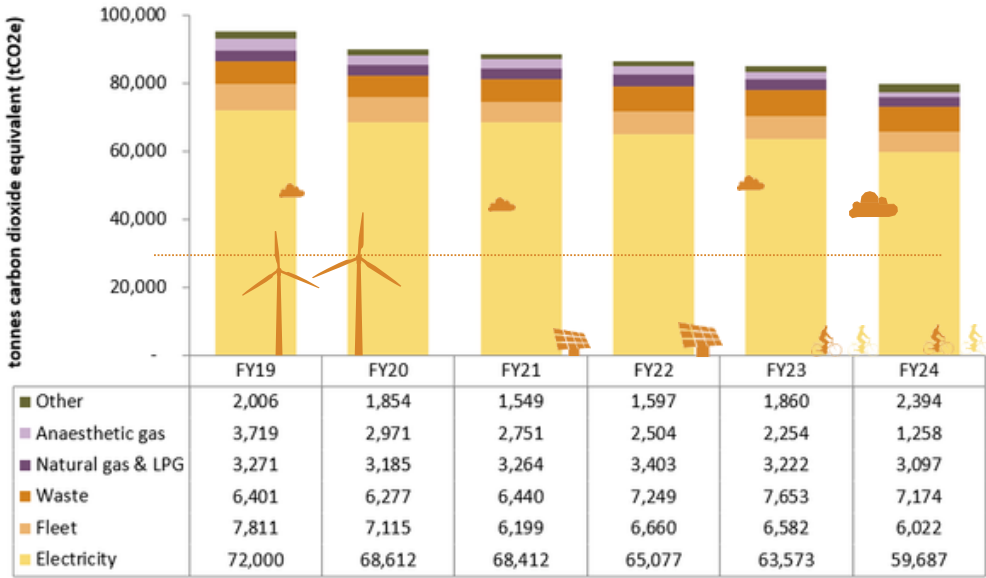


Reported **onsite renewable energy** generation increased to 3.8% of total consumption, up from 2.8% in 2022-23. The BlueCare rooftop solar project is now fully completed, adding 2.36MW of capacity to our rooftop solar portfolio.

Carbon footprint¹



Our carbon footprint (Scope 1, Scope 2 and limited Scope 3) **reduced by 16.3%** compared to our 2018-19 baseline, continuing a year-on-year downwards trend since 2016-17. In addition to electricity and fleet fuel reduction, significant gains were also achieved for anaesthetic gases (Scope 1) with a 40% decrease in the last 12 months (66% reduction on 2018-19 baseline). Waste reduction and renewable energy sourcing remain challenges to reaching our 70% reduction target.





Waste

Objective

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

2025 Targets

30%



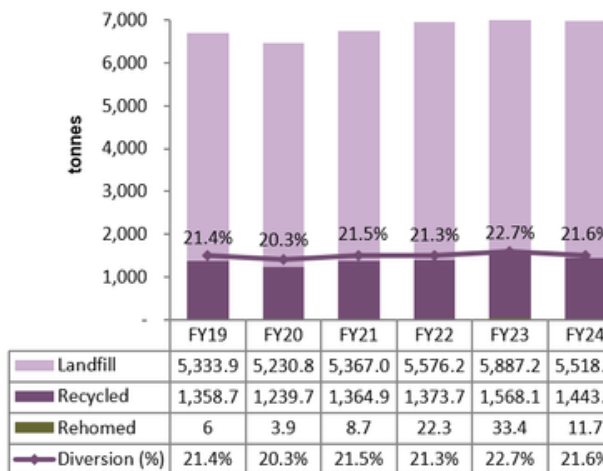
Divert from landfill 30% of the non-clinical waste we generate

▼5%

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

Our progress in 2023-24

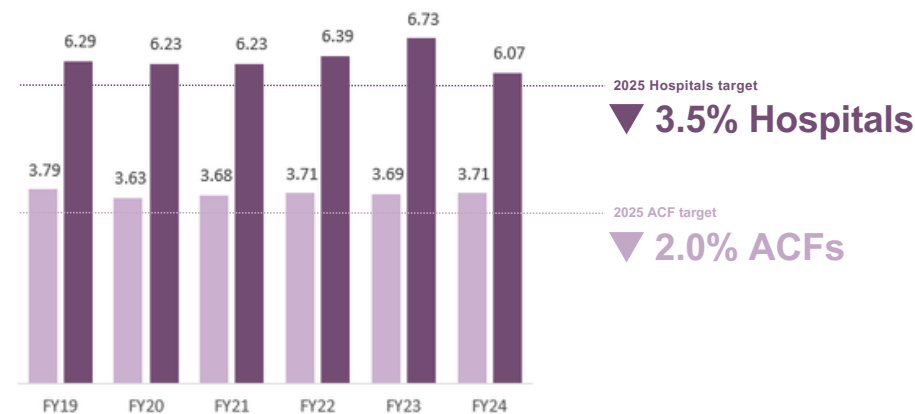
Waste tonnage² & diversion³



▼ **21.6%**

Diversion decreased to 21.6% (compared to 22.7% last year), largely due to lower volumes from *organics* and *metal* waste streams.

Waste intensity



2025 Hospitals target

▼ **3.5% Hospitals**

2025 ACF target

▼ **2.0% ACFs**

Waste intensity (kg per bed day) at our aged care facilities decreased marginally in the last twelve months; representing a 2.0% improvement against pre-Covid levels. A 3.5% decrease was reported for hospitals, driven by a slight decrease in total waste generated combined with an increase in total bed days.



Transport

Objective

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

2025 Targets

↓4.5L

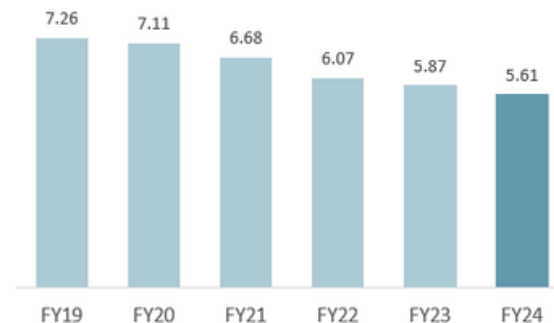
Reduce passenger fleet fuel use to 4.5 litres per 100 km

100%

Transition to 100% hybrid and electric passenger fleet

Our progress in 2023-24

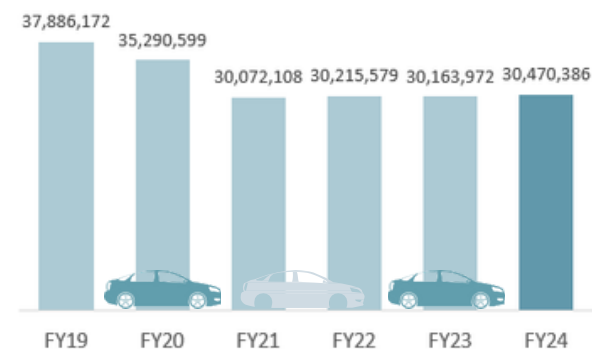
Fuel efficiency (L per 100 km)



77% hybrid + electric

Continued to upgrade our fleet, however most of the new hybrid vehicles were purchased to replace our older hybrid models. Therefore, our mix of hybrid and electric vehicles in our passenger fleet improved marginally from 76% in 2022-23 to 77% this financial year.

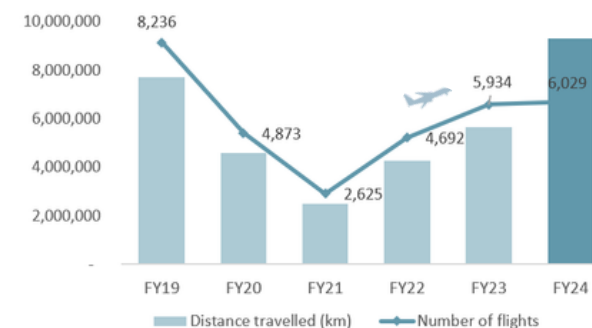
Fleet travel (km)



▼ 8.5% fleet carbon footprint

While a 1% increase in total km travelled was reported, fleet carbon footprint decreased by 8.5% year-on-year due to increase efficiency and 35.2% compared to baseline year 2018-19.

Air travel (km)



Flights on the rise

While the total number of flights (6,029) marginally increased from 2022-23, a sharp increase in the total kilometres travelled (+65%) was reported. This is due to more medium haul flights (>500km) completed and longer travel distances in general.



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

Our progress in 2023-24

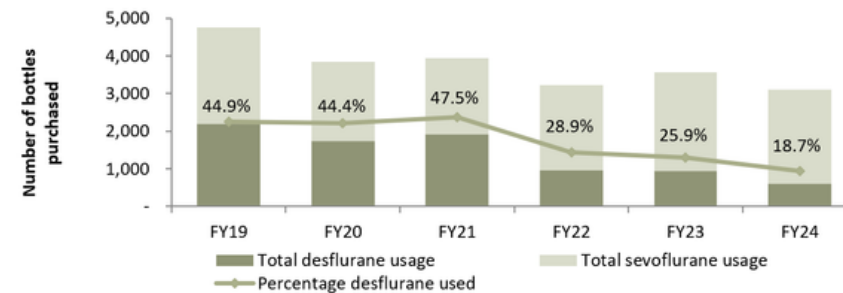
Embedding sustainability in procurement

9/9 strategic tenders (100%) included evaluation criteria about companies' sustainability practices.

Progress in desflurane phase out

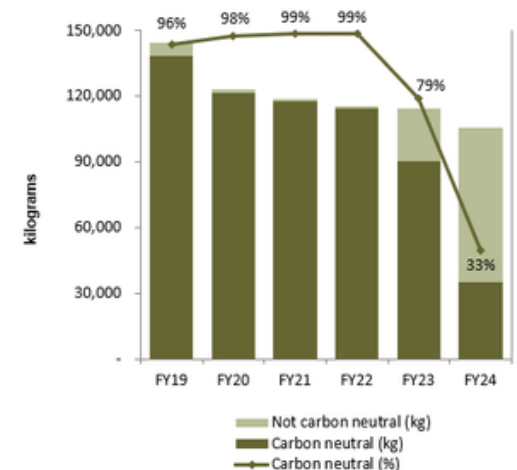
In UnitingCare hospitals, anaesthetic gases are responsible for around 6% of our hospital carbon footprint. Amongst anaesthetic gases, desflurane is one of the most common, but also one of the most harmful in terms of climate change. In fact, using one 240mL desflurane bottle has the same global warming effect as burning 440 kg of coal; 26 times higher than the readily available alternative anaesthetic gas, sevoflurane.

For the first time since baseline year 2018-19, the share of desflurane usage compared to sevoflurane was below 20%, representing 310 tonnes of carbon emission equivalent avoided year-on-year.



Paper type & usage

While the total amount of paper purchased reduced by at least 8% year-on-year, a change in paper supplier during this financial year resulted in a sharp reduction in carbon neutral paper supplied. This translated to a 200% increase in the paper carbon footprint compared to 2022-23.





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 2023-24

Staff training

▲ 2.6%

435 staff engaged through behaviour change campaigns, team training sessions, senior leader orientation, and engagement events.

Green Champions

▼ 6%

Slight decrease in Green Champions since last year, from 89 in 2022-23 to 83 in 2023-24. This is due to a higher turnover in employees this year with some Green Champions leaving and not replaced. Our hospitals continue to drive their internal Green Champions networks.

Recognising excellence

UnitingCare's annual Full Circle & Reconciliation Awards celebrate our staff and volunteers who go above and beyond in their work. In 2023, were proud to celebrate 12 nominees in the 'Go for Green' award category, which recognises our sustainability changemakers who promote new ways to reduce our environmental footprint. An especially big congratulations to our 2023 finalists:

David Gale and Sonja Urban (Lifeline Retail) were recognised for fostering circularity in the retail industry, transforming textile 'waste' from secondhand goods into new products through a partnership with Allround Recycling.

St Andrew's Environmental Sustainability Group (St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital) was recognised for empowering its Green Champions to be leaders and innovators in the hospital's industry-leading soft plastics recycling program.

Zak Adams (Group Procurement) was recognised for his efforts to recycle/rehome 1,500 beds in partnership with BlueCare's bed supplier, AlphaCare, and Rotary Australia.



Click the names above to watch their nomination stories.

Caring For Country

On World Environment Day (June 5), UnitingCare, our sister agency Wesley Mission Queensland, and the Uniting Church of Australia Queensland Synod came together to co-host a special panel discussion on 'Ways to Care for Country'. Four inspiring speakers—including two external First Nations experts Madonna Thomson (Jagera), Justine Dillon (Kombumerri, Quandamooka) alongside UnitingCare's James Stanley (Kabi Kabi, Wakka Wakka)—explored the topics of caring for Country, custodianship, and the unique opportunities that lie before us to safeguard our precious natural environment. The event was attended by 126 staff and Uniting Church community members, who took away new ideas on how we can help to heal Country and ourselves through actions in the workplace, community and home.



Watch the panel discussion recording [here](#).



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 2023-24

BlueCare Heat Health Campaign

Climate change is driving increased heat-health risks, with elderly people most at risk. This is why BlueCare is building heat safety capability to protect our most vulnerable clients, and the people who serve them.

Supported by funding from the Queensland Government and partnering with Griffith University, BlueCare ran an internal- and external-facing Heat Safety campaign during the 2023-24 summer. We used a three-pronged approach to distribute targeted heat safety tips, fact sheets and resources to staff (via toolbox talks, posters, internal newsletters, intranet knowledge hub); clients (via fridge magnets, fact sheets, and customer invoices); and the general public (via social media ads, BlueCare 'Heat Safety' website, and news media).

Throughout the 2023-24 summer campaign:

- 30,000 home care clients received heat safety advice on their invoices;
- 13,000 fridge magnets were provided to aged care workers to distribute to clients across Queensland;
- 502,000 people were reached through Facebook ads, which shared heat safety tips to regions which had extreme heat events forecasted.



See the campaign in action on [BlueCare's website](#).

Leading the way in climate change resilience

Significant uplift in UnitingCare's climate governance was delivered in the last 12 months, including:

- The establishment of a permanent Climate Risk Working Group, to inform and operationalise climate risk actions across our services.
- The development of UnitingCare's first Climate Change Risk Assessment, to better understand how climate change may impact our people, clients, property, and service model in the decades ahead. This identified a shortlist of 14 climate-related physical and transition risks prioritised for treatment over the next few years.

National Health and Climate Strategy advocacy








UnitingCare contributed a submission to the Australian Government's inaugural *National Health and Climate Strategy*, advocating for a nationally consistent emissions measurement methodology, early mover incentives and recognition, and practical approaches to effectively engage First Nations peoples in the Strategy's design and delivery.

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 2023-24 (compared to 2018-19 baseline)
	3.6 Halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car accidents—from both the corporate fleet and staff commuting—marginally increased in the last 12 months, and representing a 1% reduction since 2018-19
	6.4 Substantially increase water-use efficiency and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No actions reported in 2023-24
	7.2 Increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reported onsite renewable energy generation increased to 3.8% of total consumption, up from 2.8% in 2022-23 From July 2023 to June 2024, a further 0.84MW of rooftop solar was installed and energised as part of a 2.36MW BlueCare solar rollout that is now fully completed
	11.5 Reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented BlueCare's Heat Health Campaign to build the capability of aged care workers and clients to prevent and respond to heat-related health impacts
	12.5 Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21.6% diversion rate (down from 22.7% last year) On average, waste intensity (kg per bed day) decreased by 2.3% across our hospitals and aged care facilities Signed an organisation-wide Deed of Donation with the Rotary Australia Rehoming Equipment (RARE) program, to improve resource stewardship and waste diversion
	12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9/9 strategic tenders (100%) included evaluation criteria about companies' sustainability practices
	12.3 Halve global per capita food waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimised food waste at The Wesley Hospital by adopting tailored 'room service' for food menu, resulting in the removal of organic waste stream due to insufficient volume
	13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a permanent Climate Risk Working Group following the completion of our first Climate Risk Assessment
	13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon footprint reduced by a further 6.5% in the last twelve months 1% decrease in electricity (scope 2) related emissions and 7.1% decrease in natural gas (scope 1) related emissions compared to 2022-23
	17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributed to the development of Australia's first <i>National Health and Climate Strategy</i> with a focus on meeting the health needs of all people in Australia in the face of the climate crisis External advocacy of sustainability action reaching an audience of 640 people, through industry and university seminars

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-COVID-19) 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, grey fleet, 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 operations 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
Generator fuel (The Wesley Hospital)	In some instances, diesel consumption from internal generator reports were not matching up with invoiced diesel from our maintenance suppliers. For FY20, FY22, and FY23, diesel consumption with more conservative values from suppliers invoices were applied.	Increase in reported diesel use in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FY20: 9,625L => 10,125L (+5%) FY22: 12,815 => 14,456L (+12%) FY23: 10,713 => 10,814L (+1%)
LPG (ARRCS)	Historic consumption reports from one of our LPG suppliers were missing two sites, resulting in an underestimation for each year dating back to FY19. Requested backdated reports of actuals for missing sites.	Increase in reported LPG use in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FY20: 102,502L => 161,050L (+57%) FY21: 112,100L => 174,219L (+55%) FY22: 79,388L => 114,637L (+44%) FY23: 89,111L => 102,029L (+14%)



National Tree Day (August 2023) was celebrated with residents, staff and Toyota Fleet Management at BlueCare's Kenmore Aged Care Home



Proudly representing

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

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