

Higher education + sustainability brightens our future

It's been an exciting few weeks at the University of Tasmania. We recently farewelled a passionate group of higher education sustainability professionals from all over the country, who attended this year's ACTS Conference: the Future of Sustainability.

With the goal of collaborating to improve sustainability on Australasian tertiary campuses, the conference was run over four days at the beginning of November and welcomed attendees from a range of universities and vocational education providers.

Delegates had the opportunity to play an interactive climate resilience game, tour the incredible Inveresk community garden and the whimsical Riverbend Park, brainstorm how to bring sustainability and wellbeing together and nut out issues around travel, energy, food systems, climate reporting, mapping sustainability in our curricula and much, much more. It was a diverse program and a highly engaged gathering of people.



Green Gown Awards Australasia

In one of the conference highlights, a number of University of Tasmania's most deserving people and projects were recognised at the prestigious 2024 Green Gown Awards Australasia.



Student Engagement Award - Winner

Three of the priority initiatives of the 'Healthy, Sustainable and Equitable Food Strategy 2023-2029' came together to form 'Sustainable Food Solutions', which showcases the holistic approach we take to improving students' access to affordable, nutritious and sustainable food. This includes our Ebble Campus approach, the Student Foodies program and the Food Hub and Food Education Programs run on campus by TUSA.

Creating Impact Award - Winner

Led by Dr Clare Hawkins, the Kelcey Tier Extinction Matters Bublitz held in October 2023 was 'A 30-hour Festival of Science in Nature'. This initiative was recognised for its significant engagement and impact, including 421 species recordings, 140 new records for the Kelcey Tier Greenbelt Reserve and over 300 participants (almost a third being school-aged students).

Climate Action Award - Winner

This award recognises the comprehensive, walk-the-walk approach taken by University of Tasmania to enact 'Effective Climate Action through a Holistic Lens'. This encompasses our carbon neutral certification, fossil fuel divestment, the Curious Climate Schools and SIPS programs and the publishing of an ambitious Emissions Reduction Strategic Plan (ERSP) for 2022-2030, among other measures.

Find out more about University of Tasmania's other awards and commendations: Next Generation Learning & Skills Award (winner); Sustainability Champion Dr Emily J Flies (winner) and; Powerful Partnerships (highly commended). Congratulations to all those recognised for their inspiring work.



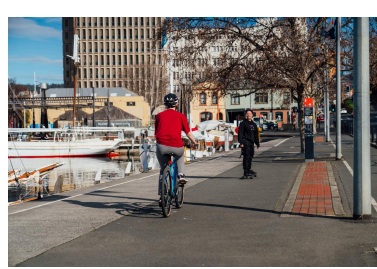
Restoring Newnham Creek

Back in September, led by Sustainability team member Lars Roberts in partnership with Tamar NRM, a group of 17 Year 12 students from Launceston Grammar braved the windy conditions to plant over 100 native trees, shrubs, and grasses along the eastern end of Newnham Creek in Launceston. Dr Joanna Ellison also attended to talk about the importance of riparian areas and how vegetation benefits the site.

For the bigger community event a few days later, 15 UTAS students and locals came along to continue the hard work the Grammar students had begun, planting over 400 natives and spreading 14 cubic metres of mulch. The mulch was created from branches that had not survived the stormy conditions a few weeks earlier and will aid in weed suppression for the plants.

The volunteers were a diverse bunch: UTAS Environment Society members, Inveresk Swamp Veggie students, participants from the Tamar Peace Festival and people who live locally. One young community member came armed with gumbosols just so she could plant in the muddiest spots!

Stay tuned for more opportunities to care for the creek.



Transport with impact

While it might not be the tale of remote and regional living you'd hear in Oodnadatta or the vastness of the Tazman, this newsletter author had the formative experience of growing up half an hour from anywhere.

Our rubbish did not get collected, there was no bus service (even school buses turned around a 20-minute trudge up the road) and in order to do the shopping, get to work, visit a friend or go basically anywhere, you had to get in the car.

As the state with the highest vehicle ownership per capita (and consistently the oldest cars), many of us Tasmanians have become accustomed to seemingly immovable barriers to greater transport choice. However, options have slowly begun opening up in recent years that didn't exist previously.

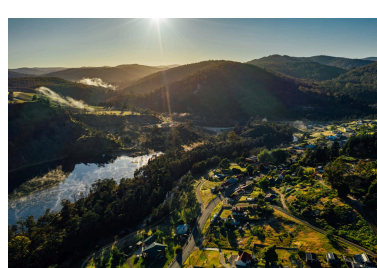
A huge array of mobility devices are now accepted on our cycleways and footpaths. Ride share apps make it easy for you to pick up a colleague or two on the way to work. We're also seeing Metro continuing to offer half-price fares until June 2025 and the Derwent Feries trial expanding.

Perhaps our most noticeable shift though, has been in the world of bikes; particularly the electrified kind. E-bikes are helping people get up bigger hills and go further, with ever increasing cargo. Between 2017 and 2022, Australian sales exploded from 3,000 per year to over 100,000, making them our country's most popular electric vehicle.

In University of Tasmania's 2023 Transport Survey, we found that just under 8 per cent of staff and students used bikes as their main form of transport (students studying at the Hobart city campus up around 14 per cent). Meanwhile, the share of cyclists pedalling e-bikes is on the up – from 18 per cent in 2021 to 24 per cent in 2023.

University of Tasmania staff can lease an e-bike through salary sacrifice and access a growing network of end-of-trip facilities including showers, chargers, secure parking hubs and maintenance stations, all of which can be found on [Unimaps](#).

You can now find EV chargers at each of our Tasmanian campuses and by the end of 2024, the University's fleet cars will all be electric.



We wish you a peaceful break

Thank you for your readership this year. We hope you find some time over the summer for nature, quietness and reflection.

Subscribe

The stories in the Sustainability Bulletin are written on the Country of palawa pakana people in kutzuwita/Tasmania. We acknowledge that their sovereignty was never ceded and we pay deep respect to palawa pakana people as they continue to care for Country.



UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA



© University of Tasmania, Australia
CRICOS Provider Code 005868

Copyright (C) 2024 University of Tasmania. All rights reserved.

If you have a story idea to contribute to the Sustainability Bulletin, please contact Laurel at sustainability.utas@utas.edu.au