

Submission to:

NZ's first Voluntary National Review on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

From:

Universities NZ Working Group on Sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals

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Universities as catalysts and role models for sustainable development

New Zealand's eight universities are represented at a national level by Universities NZ - *Te Pōkai Tara*¹. Their Vice-Chancellors have unanimously resolved to work together and with other sectors, specifically central and local government, civil society, the private sector and youth, to show leadership in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at a national level. This includes membership of the UN-initiated Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the Sustainable Development Goals Accord and hosting a series of national SDG Summits that aim to promote, build and accelerate multi-sector action to implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in New Zealand. The first Summit was hosted by Victoria University of Wellington in April 2018 and the second will be co-hosted by the University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology in September 2019, with the South Island to follow.

To build multi-sector engagement, the Summit hosts have convened a Stakeholder Group with knowledge of—and strong connectivity to—Māori, Pasifika, and other community and environmental groups, non-governmental organisations, businesses, health providers, educators, young people, government agencies and who are passionate about delivering a more sustainable future. The group includes representatives from 350° Aotearoa, Auckland District Health Board, EnviroSchools, Forest and Bird, Huie-E!, Manaaki Whenua, Ministry of Education – NZ Commission for UNESCO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Division of United Nations, Human Rights, Commonwealth, NZ Council for International Development, NZ Green Building Council, Sustainable Business Council and Sustainable Business Network. They are engaging the sectors with whom they connect to ensure that preparation for each Summit reaches beyond existing actions and builds momentum for further actions that will follow.

To prepare for the Summits and show leadership in this regard, universities have reviewed their own status with regard to sustainability and the SDGs, their successes, key challenges they face and the means to overcome them. They've assessed maturity in terms of: institutional leadership and governance; internal and external engagement; research, teaching and learning; operations and services, and on-going institutional improvement. The results are helping them to build capacity and take action, within the sector and in partnership with other sectors. By similarly encouraging complementary and integrated planning and action in and across other sectors, the Summits are expected to play an important and on-going role in driving New Zealand's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

¹Universities NZ – Te Pōkai Tara <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz>

SDG 4 Quality education:

Universities enhancing access to educational opportunities and embracing diversity

New Zealand's universities are all strongly committed to ensure their diverse communities have equal access to a high-quality education and are able to flourish irrespective of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, disability or socio-economic background. While all of our universities have their own equity policies, programmes and practices, they also collaborate at a national level through Universities New Zealand - *Te Pūkai Tara's* initiatives that reflect our country's unique indigenous culture and position in the Pacific. They support and promote Māori and Pasifika aspirations and success through dedicated academic development, research and teaching; student support, transition pathways and scholarships, as well as appropriate facilities and community outreach.² These initiatives contribute towards government priorities for Māori and Pasifika achievement, as expressed through Priority 3 of the Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019 and Challenge 2 of the Blueprint for Education System Stewardship (2016).^{3,4}

Their efforts helped to increase Māori student numbers by 26 percent from 2008 to 2016 and increase Pasifika student numbers by 46 percent in the same period. Of the 16,705 Māori and 12,210 Pasifika students in 2016, 64 and 66 percent, respectively, were women.^{5,6} All universities also enhance participation of women students, particularly in non-traditional subjects such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and promote better performance in the sector by building diversity in institutional leadership, particularly through their Women in Leadership Programme (NZUWiL). This nation-wide leadership programme was developed by a steering group of experienced academic and senior women leaders and has as its patron New Zealand's Governor General, the Right Honourable Dame Patsy Reddy. In the past 12 years NZUWiL has been attended by 258 academic and 215 professional women.⁷

Because New Zealand's universities are ranked in the top three percent worldwide, they attract staff and students from all over the world.⁸ In 2016, 16 percent or 27,690 of university students in New Zealand were citizens of other countries.⁹ Pastoral care that is cognisant of diversity is therefore also a priority for all of our universities. They all also have programmes for supporting staff and students with disabilities. These programmes include increasing on-campus accessibility, assisting with—and providing access to—specialist equipment and services, advising staff on how to assist students with impairments and advocacy.

[Content also relevant for SDG 5 Gender Equality, and SDG 10 Reducing Inequalities]

² Universities New Zealand <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/sector-research/building-māori-and-pasifika-success>

³ Universities New Zealand <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/sector-research-issues-facts-and-stats/building-māori-and-pasifika-success/building-māori-success>

⁴ Universities New Zealand <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/sector-research-issues-facts-and-stats/building-māori-and-pasifika-success/building-pasifika>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Universities NZ <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/about-universities-new-zealand/expert-and-working-groups/new-zealand-universities-women-leadership>

⁸ Universities NZ <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/sector-research/advancing-international-education>

⁹ Ibid

SDG 11 Sustainable Cities & Communities:

Universities leading by example in sustainable operations

Together, New Zealand's eight universities educate over 173,000 students, employ around 20,000 full time staff, and occupy hundreds of buildings with a gross floor area of over two million square metres across 24 campuses.¹⁰ While research-led education is their focus, universities are also large service organisations with noteworthy environmental footprints that do not go unnoticed by staff members, students or members of the public. Universities therefore work hard to make their operations more sustainable. Most have long-standing and often award-winning programmes to reduce consumption of resources such as energy and water, and office consumables such as paper, and to minimise wastes to landfill through reduction at source, re-use, recycling and recovery. A recent survey of the sector (see also SDG 17) suggests consistently high levels of maturity in reducing resource use, wastes and emissions from service delivery, but less consistency in the inclusion of sustainability principles in building design, construction, fit-out, operation and maintenance, and tendering processes and supplier contracts.

While universities have more recently begun to target carbon emissions emitted as a result of the energy used in their buildings and for work-related travel, there is also inconsistency in the extent to which they promote and support active and shared transport modes. These inconsistencies are seen as opportunities for further improvement within the sector and are buoyed up by the collaborative and mutually supportive approach fostered by facilities managers and sustainability practitioners within the tertiary sector over a number of years through the Sustainability in Tertiary Education New Zealand (STENZ) network, and reinforced recently by Universities New Zealand's resolution to adopt a collaborative approach to sustainability and the SDGs.

Further assistance comes in the form of the Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association (TEFMA) that has for the past few years included environmental sustainability indicators in the annual benchmark reports it solicits from its institutional members, including all New Zealand and Australian universities as well as polytechnic institutes, and technical and further education institutions (TAFEs). On-going improvement is further assisted by training and resource material available through Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability (ACTS), that includes amongst its 37 members ten NZ universities and polytechnic institutes, and is able, through partnerships with the north American Association of Sustainability in Tertiary Education (AASHE) and the UK Alliance of Sustainability Leadership in Tertiary Education, to further enhance our access to knowledge and experience for capacity building and consistency across the sector.

[Content also relevant to SDG 4 Quality Education, SDG 12 Responsible Production and Consumption, SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals]

¹⁰ Universities NZ <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/universities>

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals:

Universities excelling in research-led education for sustainability

The education provided by New Zealand's eight universities has been found to raise New Zealand's GDP by 3-6%; GDP is on average 4.1% higher in regions that have universities, and they contribute between 1.6 and 6.5% of GDP to their regions.¹¹ Excellence in research is fundamental to the quality and value of a university education. Universities are therefore hosts and/or partners in New Zealand's Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) and National Science Challenges, all of which generate knowledge of direct relevance to the SDGs. They also make research results accessible through the education they provide.

All or most universities are partners in: *Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga* that focuses on *Te Reo me Ngā Tikanga Māori* (Māori language and culture), *Te Tai Ao* (the natural environment), *Whai Rawa* (Māori economies) and *Mauri Ora* (human flourishing)¹² (SDGs 1-4, 8-11, 14-17); Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities (*Ko ngā wā kāinga hei whakamāhorahora*) that aims to improve the quality and supply of housing and create smart and attractive environments¹³ (SDGs 3, 9, 11, 17); New Zealand's Biological Heritage (*Ngā Koiora Tuku Iho*) that aims to reverse the decline of our biological heritage by protecting and managing native biodiversity, improving biosecurity, and enhancing resilience to harmful organisms¹⁴ (SDGs 6, 9, 13-17); Science for Technological Innovation (*Kia kotahi mai - Te Ao Pūtaiao me Te Ao Hangarau*) that aims to tackle New Zealand's big, high-tech challenges to grow the economy¹⁵ (SDGs 8, 9); A Better Start (*E Tipu e Rea*) that aims to improve the potential for young New Zealanders to have healthy and successful lives¹⁶ (SDGs 1-4, 10, 17); Ageing Well (*Kia eke kairangi ki te taikaumātutanga*) that aims to understand how to sustain health and well-being as people age, enabling all New Zealanders to reach their full potential into the later years of life¹⁷ (SDGs 1-4, 10, 17), and Healthier Lives (*He Oranga Hauora*) that aims to significantly reduce the death and disease burden of some of New Zealand's leading health problems¹⁸ (SDGs 1-4, 10, 17).

Critical to this work are also partnerships with New Zealand's Crown Research Institutes, Māori development organisations, the private sector and government agencies.

[Content also relevant to SDG 3 Health & Wellbeing, SDG 4 Quality Education, SDG 8 Decent Work & Economic Growth and SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure]

¹¹ Universities NZ <https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/sector-research/growing-new-zealand-economy>

¹² *Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga* <http://www.maramatanga.co.nz/>

¹³ Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities (*Ko ngā wā kāinga hei whakamāhorahora*) <http://www.buildingbetter.nz/>

¹⁴ New Zealand's Biological Heritage (*Ngā Koiora Tuku Iho*) <http://www.biologicalheritage.nz/>

¹⁵ Science for Technological Innovation (*Kia kotahi mai - Te Ao Pūtaiao me Te Ao Hangarau*) <https://www.sftichallenge.govt.nz/>

¹⁶ <https://www.abetterstart.nz/>

¹⁷ <https://www.ageingwellchallenge.co.nz/>

¹⁸ <https://healthierlives.co.nz/>