

# Sustainability Strategy

July 2021 - June 2026





## Legacy statement

**Our vision is to lead extraordinary environmental change and amplify our social impact, by forging partnerships and inspiring our people, to leave a positive legacy.**

### Acknowledgement of Country

Built on the banks of the Birrarung (Yarra River), Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Narm, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and to Elders of all First Nations communities that visit MCEC.

We recognise the significance of the Birrarung to Traditional Owners as a life source and a meeting place and seek to honour a 40,000-year tradition of building community and exchanging ideas on these lands.





# Chief Executive foreword

Natalie O'Brien AM

Chief Executive,  
Melbourne Convention  
and Exhibition Centre



Our sustainability strategy embraces everything Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) stands for. It puts people at its centre. It commits us to doing things differently. It's bold in its targets, pursues strong partnerships and aims to leave a legacy.

For this strategy to be successful, and to truly drive sustainable outcomes for the wider community, four factors are critical:

1. Mutually beneficial partnerships
2. Responsible procurement
3. Customer engagement
4. Employee engagement

At MCEC, we continue to be a leading sustainable event destination for several reasons.

Firstly, the city we call home is considered a global leader in sustainability. The City of Melbourne has an ambitious agenda to create a carbon neutral city powered by renewable energy and we are proud to have partnered with them in the development of the Melbourne Renewable Energy Project.

Our people are passionate. The success of this strategy rests with our employees, who continue to be advocates with a willingness to do things differently.

We do know we cannot do it alone. Our partners are just as committed in achieving sustainable outcomes for our industry. We are a proud signatory of the Exhibition & Event Association of Australasia's 2021 – 2025 Sustainability Memorandum.

There are undoubtedly global challenges, with Coronavirus (COVID-19) putting pressure on environmental advances, particularly with respect to single-use items. But we will continue to make decisions that are both safe and sustainable.

We acknowledge the responsibility we have to reduce our demand on the planet's finite resources, minimise our carbon footprint and help meet the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Through the targets in this strategy, we are sending a clear message. We can and will do more to provide better outcomes for our community, our customers and our environment.

In 2021 we celebrated our 25th anniversary, however we know MCEC's next 25 years will be even more important.

# Our collective responsibility

We drive social and environmental solutions, and are in a position to share these solutions with the world. That's why we want to share our story.

We control what we buy, how we run our buildings, and how we support our customers, partners and visitors to make a real change. We're committed to working with event organisers to reduce their environmental footprint and increase their positive social impact.

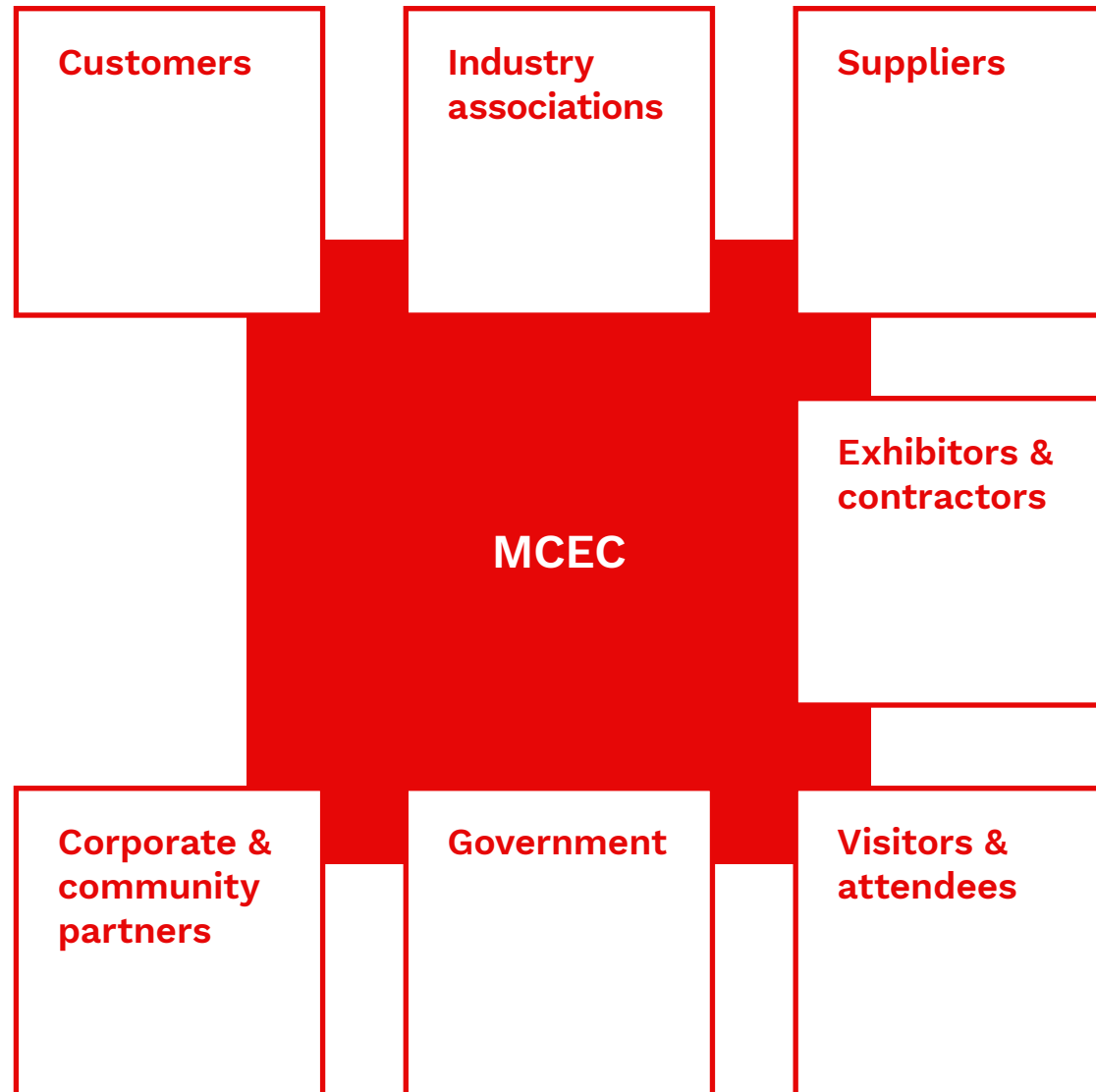
As an industry, the events sector needs to be accountable for the impact it has on the world around us. This means, in order to make a meaningful shift across the sector, we must all commit to a shared vision of change.





## Our stakeholder groups and scope of influence

We can't do this alone. Working in partnership with our stakeholders is crucial. We need a unified approach to achieve the targets within this strategy and to solve our industry's wider sustainability challenges.



**We've championed environmental sustainability for a long time with a goal to improve our performance year on year. We're proud to be the industry leader in our region.**

# Key achievements

Our key highlights from 2016-2020 include:

## Melbourne Renewable Energy Project

In 2018 we joined 13 other reputable Melbourne organisations to support the development of a wind farm in regional Victoria. This agreement has enabled us to offset the entire electricity use of our 20,000 square metre expansion space with renewable energy. This is equivalent to 15 per cent of the entire venue's electricity consumption.

## In-house expertise

In 2020 we appointed a full time Sustainability Manager.

## Addressing food waste

In 2019 we recovered more than 68 tonnes of food waste by donating over 74,000 meals to OzHarvest and processing 44 tonnes using our onsite organics dehydrator. That's the equivalent to the carbon emissions associated with the electricity consumption of 52 households for one year.

## Reduced CO2 emissions

We reduced carbon emissions per square metre by 22 per cent between 2015 and 2019, despite an increase in revenue.

## Growing food

We partnered with local company Biofilta to install 36 permanent food cubes in our courtyard. They are made from recycled plastic and are used to grow herbs, citrus and flowers for our Goldfields Cafe & Bar.

## Sustainable building design

Our Convention Centre has a 6-Star Green Star rating for building design, and our Exhibition Expansion has a 5-Star Green Star rating.

## Energy management

We commissioned an Energy Management System in the Exhibition Centre in 2015 complete with variable speed drives and a CO2 monitoring system. The new system resulted in a 30 per cent reduction in energy use since 2016.

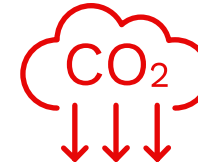
## Rainwater capture

In 2019 we harvested over 3,100 kilolitres of rainwater from the Melbourne Convention Centre roof. In 2019 we consumed an industry best practice of 445 litres of potable water per square metre.

## Waste diversion

In 2018-19 we diverted 62 per cent of all waste from landfill using 17 waste streams.

# A snapshot of this strategy



**25 per cent reduction in CO2 emissions** for our buildings by 2026 (scope 1 and 2 emissions).

Implement a **pathway to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030** (scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions).



**90 per cent of waste diverted** from landfill by 2025.

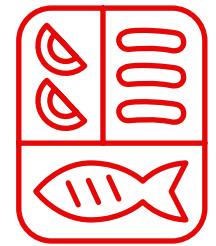
**Phase out** problematic and unnecessary **single-use plastic packaging by 2025**.



Powered by **75 per cent renewable electricity by 2025** (100 per cent by 2028).



Contribute to a **net increase in biodiversity, habitats and ecosystem health in Victoria by 2025**.



Provide a minimum of **40 per cent low carbon meals** at events by 2025.

All events held at MCEC (including internal events) include an **Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners as of 2022**.



**Increase employee engagement** in activities that give back to the community.

Increase the percentage of **employees commuting using public and active transport** to 75 per cent by 2026.



Maintain our **leadership position in water savings**.



**Reduce the environmental impact of our purchases** by incorporating objectives and criteria in our procurement processes.



**Trace our supply chains** to better understand the indirect impact of our business.



Develop a **Sustainable Events Guide**.



# The global goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States including Australia, in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries to address the world's most pressing challenges by 2030.

The SDGs form the foundation for MCEC's Sustainability Strategy, which contributes to 14 of the 17 SDGs and aligns our business accordingly. The goals and targets included in this strategy reflect the most urgent and pertinent goals that we believe we can contribute towards within the lifetime of this Strategy. As the next iteration of our Sustainability Strategy is developed, there will be scope to include more SDGs and further improve our progress.



**Figure 1**  
The global goals

# Priority areas

## Climate change

### Our commitment

Reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and take action to minimise our effect on climate change.

### Targets

1. 25 per cent reduction in CO2 emissions for our buildings by 2026\* (from 2019 levels: 175kg CO2-e per sqm).
  - Interim target**  
2023: 18 per cent reduction (144kg CO2-e per sqm).
2. Implement a pathway to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
  - a. establish a science-based carbon target for 2025.
3. Provide a minimum of 40 per cent low carbon meals at events by 2025.
4. Maintain EarthCheck Gold Certification (or equivalent) annually.

### Key actions

1. Develop a Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions inventory and implement an emissions reduction plan to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.
2. Commence certification process towards attaining carbon neutral certification against the Climate Active Carbon Neutral Standard.
3. Increase low carbon meal offerings and further promote our 100 mile menu to amplify its impact.
4. Continue to participate in the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index in partnership with Melbourne Convention Bureau to advance Melbourne's ranking as a leading sustainable events destination.

### Global Goals



\*Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions. Including the retirement of LGCs.

# Waste and resource recovery

## Our commitment

Embed circular economy principles across all aspects of the business to reduce waste, improve resource efficiency and help Melbourne's transition to a zero waste city.

## Targets

1. 90 per cent of waste diverted from landfill by 2025.\*

### Interim targets

2021: 70 per cent waste diversion  
2023: 80 per cent waste diversion

2. Zero organic waste to landfill by 2025.\*
3. All event packaging is 100 per cent recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025.
4. Phase out problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging by 2025.\*\*

\* For MCEC Serviced Areas. Baseline figure does not include waste generated in Licensed Areas (exhibition bays) as data currently does not exist. Future waste figures will account for entire venue waste as data becomes available.

\*\* Problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging identified by [APCO](#) as a priority for phase out. In addition to the [APCO target](#), MCEC will also voluntarily phase out (where we haven't already) the distribution of single-use plastic straws, stirrers, plates, cups, bowls, sachets and all single-use plastic bags (not just lightweight).

MCEC will mandate the following in-line with the Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia (EEAA) Sustainability Memorandum:

1. Zero signage waste to landfill by 2025.
2. More than 50 per cent of materials used in custom stands are recoverable (i.e. reusable or recyclable) by 2025, with interim target of more than 30 per cent by 2022.
3. Phase out use of PVC in stand design by 2025.

## Key actions

1. Introduce a phase out of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging through policies and reuse schemes.
2. Seek ways to avoid consumption, reduce waste and maximise resources by applying circular methodology.
3. Expand food waste collection to ensure all organic waste is recovered.
4. Continue to donate surplus, quality food to charities for redistribution to the community.
5. Improve resource recovery and reuse solutions for end-of-life assets, e-waste, furniture and other goods.

## Global Goals



# Energy

## Our commitment

Continually improve energy efficiency, reduce our energy consumption and transition to renewable energy.

## Targets

1. 75 per cent renewable electricity by 2025 (100 per cent by 2028).
2. Reduce total energy consumption by 10 per cent by 2026 (from 2019 level: 945MJ/sqm).

## Key actions

1. Enter into another Power Purchase Agreement to increase our share of renewable energy.
2. Conduct an energy audit to determine where further energy efficiencies can be made and implement recommendations.
3. Increase capacity for onsite solar generation and renewable energy storage such as hydrogen or batteries.
4. Replace all remaining lights with LED.
5. Implement the asset lifecycle replacement schedule so that building assets are upgraded to become more energy efficient and less reliant on gas.
6. Conduct the necessary investigations for improving the energy efficiency of MCEC's data centre and server room.

## Global Goals



# Water

## Our commitment

Conserve precious water by limiting our consumption of potable water, using it efficiently and harvesting rainwater for reuse.

## Targets

1. Maintain our leadership position in water savings (445 L/sqm in 2019).

## Key actions

1. Investigate the feasibility of increasing our capacity for harvesting rainwater on site.
2. Undertake an analysis of site-wide water consumption to determine whether data capture and/or water management can generate further efficiencies.
3. Explore and implement any further water saving measures.

## Global Goals







## Nature

### Our commitment

Contribute to improving and protecting biodiversity and our ecosystem through initiatives that connect our employees, visitors and community with the natural environment.

### Targets

1. Contribute to a net increase in biodiversity, habitats and ecosystem health in Victoria (on-site/off-site).
2. Minimise the impact of our operations on the local environment by mitigating pollution.

### Key actions

1. Implement a program (on-site/off-site) designed to increase tree canopy, understory habitat, species biodiversity, soil health, or habitat for rare and threatened species.
2. Continue to collaborate with [Melbourne Skyfarm](#) in the development of the urban farm site and ongoing promotion and utilisation of the space. Identify opportunities for co-benefits and community education.
3. Investigate whether our onsite food production can be expanded.
4. Ensure no environmentally harmful substances are used by the organisation and our contractors.

### Global Goals



## Infrastructure and transport

### Our commitment

Design and operate all new and existing infrastructure and building upgrades with environmentally sustainable considerations at the forefront.

Ensure our employees, customers and visitors are encouraged and able to make active and sustainable transport choices.

### Targets

1. 100 per cent of new infrastructure\* to comply with a minimum 5 Green Star Rating for Design and As Built.
2. Increase the percentage of employees commuting using public and active transport to 75 per cent by 2026.

\* Design and construction, or major refurbishment, of new buildings (as per [Green Building Council of Australia's Guidelines](#))

### Key actions

1. Investigate the suitability of attaining certification against Green Star Rating for Performance, to complement MCEC's Green Star Rating for Building Design, and seek certification if viable.
2. Implement facilities and infrastructure to encourage active transport, e-bikes and/or electric vehicles.
3. Introduce a program to minimise employee car use.

### Global Goals





# Procurement

## Our commitment

Harness our purchasing power as a force for good by prioritising local, ethical and sustainable suppliers.

Embed socially responsible and circular economy principles into our purchasing decisions to drive positive social, environmental and economic impacts for the wider community.

## Targets

1. Align procurement processes so that at a minimum, purchases comply with the Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework by 2023.

2. Continue to ensure that at least 95 per cent of suppliers are Australian-based and at least 85 per cent of suppliers are Victorian-based.

Note: this target refers to MCEC's total spend with suppliers whose business address is registered in Victoria or Australia. It does not necessarily mean that the products or materials are sourced locally. MCEC is committed to tracing our supply chains to better understand the origin of our products and materials.

3. Reduce the environmental impact of our purchases by incorporating objectives\* and criteria in key contracts for products.

## Key actions

1. Review criteria for tenders and suppliers so that social and environmental sustainability outcomes are prioritised (eg: recycled content, low carbon footprint, local content, single-use plastic free, chemical free).
2. Trace our supply chains to better understand the indirect impact of our business.
3. Ensure we are meeting any legislative requirements under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* and the Victorian Social Procurement Framework.
4. Work with our suppliers so that together we can achieve the [National Packaging Targets](#).
5. Increase sourcing of goods and services from local suppliers, Victorian social enterprises and social benefit suppliers.
6. Pursue opportunities to increase the recycled content in materials and products purchased, especially locally.

## Global Goals



\* Social and sustainable procurement objectives as defined by the Victorian Government's [Social Procurement Framework](#)

# Education, awareness and engagement

## Our commitment

Inspire our people and our community to champion sustainability by creating awareness and leading by example.

Consistently communicate our sustainability objectives and our achievements.

## Targets

1. Increase level of employee awareness of sustainability through a number of training and education opportunities.
2. Increase employee engagement in activities that give back to the community.

## Key actions

1. Organise training and education opportunities to increase our employee's awareness of sustainability and influence positive behaviour change.
2. Conduct sustainability tours for employees, customers, exhibitors, contractors and visitors and educate stakeholders on sustainable practices.
3. Increase employee engagement in community volunteering activities.
4. Develop a coordinated approach for departments and committees to work on the sustainability goals and embed them into their own plans.
5. Embed environmental sustainability requirements into customer and exhibitor contracts. Work directly with customers to help reduce the environmental footprint and increase the positive social impact of their events.
6. Develop a Sustainable Events Guide for customers to use as a tool for planning a sustainable event.
7. Develop and deliver a Communications Plan to consistently communicate our Sustainability Strategy and achievements.

## Global Goals





# Equality, recognition and reconciliation

## Our commitment

Acknowledge Traditional Owners, celebrate cultural diversity, raise public awareness and improve MCEC's cultural capacity.

Maintain an environment that is free from discrimination and where employees, customers and visitors are treated fairly and with respect.

## Targets

1. Celebrate diversity and inclusion by hosting or supporting at least one event each year that focuses on equality and reconciliation.
2. All events held at MCEC (including internal events) include an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners as of 2022.

## Key actions

1. Host or support at least one annual event celebrating diversity, inclusion or culture.
2. Introduce a procedure to ensure that Traditional Owners are acknowledged at all events held at MCEC (where appropriate), including internal events and events where employees or Trust members are publicly representing MCEC.
3. Advocate for the appointment of a dedicated resource to write and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for MCEC.
4. Support P&C and MCEC's diversity & inclusion working groups in reaching equality targets and building awareness and understanding within the organisation.

## Global Goals



## Reporting & review

MCEC's Sustainability Strategy is in place for the period of July 2021 - June 2026 and will be reported against annually. The accompanying internal Sustainability Action Plan (FY 21/22 - FY 25/26) will be reviewed and updated annually as progress is made and as new opportunities arise.

## Acknowledgements

We'd like to express our gratitude to those who provided input into the Sustainability Strategy, including:

- City of Melbourne
- Sustainability Victoria
- Melbourne Convention Bureau
- IKON Services
- Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions
- Plenary Group
- Harry the Hirer
- Diversified Communications
- Australian Ecosystems/ Melbourne Skyfarm
- Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia
- Paul James, Club Melbourne Ambassador and University of Western Sydney
- Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust (MCEC)



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