



Green Gown Awards
Australasia

Creating Impact

2020 Case Study



RMIT

Let's Lead the Way – Sustainability Engagement at RMIT

The Sustainability Team collaborated with over 25 internal and external partners to deliver 125 hours of sustainability content over 40 events in 2019 (over a 60 per cent increase from 2018) for staff, students and our wider RMIT community. With an average of three sustainability events per month, there was strengthened collaboration with different departments including RMIT Activator, Student Life and the Job Shop, increasing capacity to embed sustainability on campus. Through these partnerships, the Sustainability Team has been able to showcase various sustainability initiatives to the wider University via stronger communication platforms, a new and improved on-campus 'Sustainability Space' and a full annual engagement calendar. In turn, this has raised the profile of the Sustainability Team and provided new skills, interests and exchanges with the RMIT community, making our campus a living lab for sustainability. Some of the 2019 activities included:

Sustainability Space

Having previously had a central display space on campus, an opportunity arose to move into a vacant tenancy on the City Campus. This provided a more flexible enclosed space, with AV support and large display windows to give a real home to sustainability. The Sustainability Team and other sustainability experts from RMIT were able to facilitate meetings, workshops and displays in the space. Each week the staffing of the space alternated between the Sustainability Team with their varied specialties, the SDGs Senior Advisor and the Student Union Sustainability Rep so that each day there were people on hand to provide information or field questions from passing students and staff. Groups such as the Green Impact Teams, Sustainability Ambassadors and the various research centres at RMIT had a space to gather and feel a sense of ownership. The space is also available on the central venue management system, enabling any staff member or student to book out the space for free to hold sustainability-related activities. A strong sense of place has been created through the curation of workshops, talks and events.

Tiny House Project

The Tiny House project, was the central showcase feature of the new Sustainability Space in 2019. The space featured multidisciplinary student work from the Furniture Design, Textile Design and Graphic Design programs. It generated a lot of interest from students, staff and the social media channels about the concepts of small living, circular economy and multipurpose furniture. The students' work focused on what could be found inside a Tiny House ranging from modular, multi-functional furniture to sustainable fibres and prints made into soft furnishings. The focus of the project was to predominantly use upcycled and repurposed materials in new and interesting ways, as well as integrating sustainability into every aspect of product design.

Textile Design students were asked to research global and domestic trends in sustainable interior textile products, highlighting any design or material innovations in technology or manufacturing. The research phase was critical in the development of their collections as they became aware of current trends in interior sustainability and it highlighted some very exciting designers and innovative material use. They then set out to develop two textile collections; one for printed textiles and one for constructed textiles. The emphasis was on incorporating sustainable design strategies and think about circularity and repurposing.

The Furniture Design students' brief investigated the growing demand from customers who are choosing to live in small living spaces because of lifestyle, economic or environmental benefits. Students were required to demonstrate how their design affects the physical, social and cultural environments into which it will be implemented. This brief was also about making

sustainability central to problem-solving within new furniture designs and developments to minimise the footprint and impact on natural resources.

Graphic Design students focused on designing a suite of brand assets to accompany the Tiny House display. All groups were supported by industry experts and benefited from working as cross-disciplinary teams to produce the final products to a high standard.

The opening night of the Tiny House Exhibition saw more than 70 people attend and the exhibition continued throughout the full month of August. The successful exhibition attracted great interest and cemented the space as an approachable, central hub encouraging anyone to drop in, ask sustainability-related questions or simply to put a face to the Team.

Entrepreneurship Week

As part of RMIT University's Entrepreneurship Week, RMIT Sustainability hosted a Sustainability Symposium Panel at the Bundoora East Campus. Attendees heard from unique businesses, start-ups and the University on how they embed sustainability in their business model and seek to reduce their environmental impacts through efficiencies in supply chains and ethical sourcing.

Sustainability Week

Sustainability Week is held annually at the end of March to give new and returning students, as well as staff, a comprehensive understanding of what sustainability means to RMIT University and the important role they can play. Over 200 staff and students attended a range of events and workshops held across the Brunswick and City campuses.

National Tree Day

RMIT staff and students volunteered to plant more than 700 seedlings for the City of Whittlesea where the RMIT Bundoora Campus is based. This activity also gained credit for the Green Impact Program. This type of grassroots engagement really resonated with our RMIT community and we received strong interest to run further planting sessions.

SDGs Hackathon

The SDGs Hackathon is a two-day event where creative teams work together to tackle local challenges related to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is hosted in more than 90 cities globally, connecting over 5,000 change-makers. RMIT Sustainability partnered with RMIT Activator (our enterprise program) and the Yarra River Keeper Association to tackle SDG14 'Life Below Water'.

City Challenge

In partnership with Common Purpose and the City of Melbourne, RMIT students came together with frontline organisations to tackle one of Melbourne's biggest challenges: waste. As the City of Melbourne aims to send no waste to landfill by 2030, waste management has become a pressing issue. Held over two days, the annual City Challenge tasked students with finding viable

solutions for the waste industry by inviting 500 students to research and develop their own innovative solutions, with the chance for their ideas to become a reality through the help of RMIT Activator.

Green Impact

Participating in the program for a second year, Green Impact encourages the adoption of sustainable actions across RMIT staff portfolio. In 2019 RMIT University had representation across all three of our Melbourne campuses (City, Brunswick & Bundoora) as well as both campuses in Vietnam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City). Having the Green Impact Staff Engagement program out across all campuses significantly strengthened engagement across our wider community. It also generated high interest on our Yammer staff channel, building a wider network of like-minded staff interested in sharing stories, tips and ideas. The program has also been integrated with the RMIT staff development framework allowing participants to recognise the program as a key workplan outcome, encouraging staff to demonstrate the impact they are making.

Student Sustainability Ambassador Program

RMIT's student sustainability ambassador program continued to gain momentum in 2019 (third year of the program) with 29 students trained. The program provided students with an opportunity to get involved in sustainability-related workshops, events and initiatives throughout the year. Students who fulfil induction training requirements and 15 hours of voluntary work, received academic recognition through the 'Future Edge' program, aimed at supporting and improving key skills for future employment. This program has been essential for building sustainability advocates and ensuring our students have the desired graduate ready attributes.

Living Lab Projects

Each year the Sustainability Team Supports student learning by providing guest lectures, giving campus tours and supporting projects. Many of the projects supported came from the Greenhouse and Sustainability Program, which connects RMIT students with industry to implement sustainability projects. Projects supported by the Sustainability Team in Property Services in 2019 included:

- Climate Change events impacts on students
- Landscape Design Standards
- Green Travel Planning
- Sustainable Transport App

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Leadership & Engagement

To create a genuine lasting impact our team has looked beyond the boundaries. Each year we find ways to remain relevant and take a fresh perspective to engage with the RMIT community. In 2019, this was illustrated through the new space, events and partnerships that were created as well as the Tiny House Project.

This strong engagement program has allowed us to have a consistent presence on-campus and create a level of visibility and transparency with our staff and student which we have struggled to have previously due to operating predominantly from the departmental office. The Tiny House Exhibition was the biggest curation of the new Sustainability Space in 2019, which commenced with a Tiny Housewarming to recognise all the hard work that made this project come to life, followed by a successful month-long exhibition which attracted great interest.

The Tiny Housewarming was an opportunity to showcase the final product that resulted from a collaboration with the School Vocational Design and Social Context and the RMIT Sustainability Team. This project uniquely demonstrates the long-term collaborative approach the Sustainability Team takes to living lab projects. The team is based in Property Services, but worked with academics from three distinct disciplines over two years to make the project come to fruition, devising the project and outcomes the year prior so it could be embedded into the curriculum. Supporting the project with sustainability inductions, workshops and site visits to industry sustainability experts in the furniture industry, before working with students on their concepts prior to them creating the pieces for display.

Environmental & Social Benefits

By collaborating with different departments across the University as well as building partnerships with industry, we have been able to illustrate and embody the complex links that are required to balance social, economic and environmental outcomes in sustainability. Each activity for 2019 was linked to the relevant Sustainable Development Goal, this not only improved awareness of the SDGs, but also tangibly linked the on-campus activities to global impact. These sustainability initiatives have drawn likeminded people together from various part of the University and created a vibrant community of advocates within the University. These advocates have a ripple effect on their wider circle within the University and as a result, has attracted staff and students who may not have had a solid understanding of sustainability.



Wider Societal Impact

RMIT is a microcosm of society, which is why our aim to be a 'living lab for sustainability' resonates so strongly with our community. Through internal and external partnerships, RMIT provides leadership and best practice which can then be replicated or adopted into wider society.

Through external partnerships, RMIT remains relevant and not simply a university concerned with internal operations. We uplift our student and staff to feel empowered to share their passions, experiences and knowledge throughout their careers, community and homes.

Top 3 Learnings

Creating a lasting impact can be delivered through meaningful partnerships, rather than a generous budget

Creating an on-campus 'Sustainability Space' and activating it via a strong engagement program has increased the Sustainability Team's profile amongst staff and students and resulted in more organic connections and conversations

Walking the talk has allowed the RMIT Campus to become a 'living lab' for sustainability