

People, Nature, Climate Research Capability 2025+ Priorities

Environment Institute





Practical research that helps communities, industry and government act on climate and biodiversity - fairly, fast, and at scale.

- Connecting climate, culture, wellbeing and justice.
- Working alongside communities, not on them.
- Producing evidence that government and industry can act on.
- Supporting Indigenous communities, young people, and future generations who are already carrying significant climate stress.
- Helping to ensure environmental action is not only effective, but just and fair.

The Environment Institute advances research that protects the environment whilst promoting and strengthening environmental and social wellbeing. We work at the critical interface between society and nature to co-design sustainable solutions, inform policy and regulations, and support communities to act - particularly in response to climate crisis and heritage and biodiversity loss. We partner with First Nations organisations, local governments, industry and community groups.

Our work addresses the impacts of human activity through innovative approaches and practical solutions - from pollution prevention and environmental management to policy development and on-Country protection of heritage under climate stress. Our research examines how socio-economic and cultural drivers impact resolution of environmental challenges and promotes authentic community partnerships and engagement in decision making: from Indigenous groups to local governments and fishing communities.

Scope

Consolidate and facilitate existing inter- and trans-disciplinary research across Adelaide University to position the Environment Institute as a global leader in people-nature-climate research and impact.



Key Goals

To deliver research that promotes and supports behavioural change, including:

Value: Connect how people live with - and value - the people-nature nexus, recognising and integrating natural and social sciences, engineering, and First Nations perspectives.

Translation: Strengthen education, cross-cultural understanding, and communication about nature and policy to ensure that environmental messages are understood, trusted and translated into action.

Partnerships: Build strong inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations with communities, First Nations groups and organisations, government and industry to unlock funding and deliver impact.

Reputation: Be known for research and projects that measurably connect people and nature with impact and drive positive behavioural change whilst contributing towards social sustainability.

First Nations Research Objectives

1. Co-leadership and governance - to establish co-governance with Aboriginal and TSI corporations in partnership with EI colleagues, with clear decision rights and resourcing. Operate under FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) and CARE (Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, Ethics) principles; apply Indigenous Data Sovereignty MnW Principles and AIATSIS Code of Ethics and culturally appropriate data management.
2. On-Country research and capability - prioritise On-Country methods, training and paid roles that build local capability for monitoring, mapping and adaptation.
3. Respectfully weave First Nations knowledge and Western science, documenting methods so agencies can adopt them without dilution.
4. Cultural wellbeing and heritage - develop indicators that track cultural continuity, connection to Country and impacts of heritage change/loss alongside biophysical metrics.

Key Research Objectives

Social Justice and Equity

Aims to create and contribute to social justice and equity in environmental decision making and implementation of solutions

- Social Justice for climate change
- Justice adaptation, policy change, communication, education
- Embedding social justice in SLO
- Social vulnerability, exposure to environmental harm, and risks to heritage and Country
- Social sustainability
- Social determinants of climate risk and environment

Community, Wellbeing and Behavioural Change

Aims to build understandings of and solutions to enhance community and individual wellbeing and sustainable behavioural change

- Compliance and behaviour change to new initiatives
- Communication, behaviour change for risk and anxiety reduction
- Community empowerment and community engagement
- Knowledge and cultures
- Place-attachment and cultural identity, impacts of heritage change/loss on wellbeing
- Youth and ecological grief and solastalgia

Climate and People

Aims to create linkages and understanding of relationships between climate and people to facilitate adaptive change and resilient societies

- Community and environmental resilience, anticipatory action including Community-based driven, climate solutions
- Youth wellbeing and climate change - education and participation
- Hope and wonder
- Climate adaptation
- Care, connection to place and cultural continuity
- Safeguarding cultural landscapes and significant place and ecosystems (of significant cultural value) affected by climate-crises related sea-level rise, floods and fires

Systems Thinking

Aims to develop system wide and interconnected solutions to challenges facing socio-ecological systems

- Rethinking economic, social and ecological systems
- Harmony with nature
- Risk management
- Socio-ecological resilience
- Transformational adaptation
- Integrating heritage, tourism, land use, and conservation in regional planning

Valuing Nature

Aims to build societal connection to and awareness of the importance of nature

- Carbon and Biodiversity Markets
- Value of nature to people
- Valuation of nature and heritage (especially in cost-benefit and risk analysis)
- Climate nature

Policy

Aims to create, inform and influence policy change

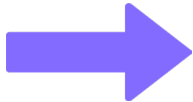
- Achieving policy impact
- Policy change
- Knowledge translation into policy

Implementation

We will build visibility, partnerships and demonstrable impact in staged steps.

Short Term

- Identify and map networks/ data bases/relationships and possible partners
- Identify key funding opportunities
- Deliver a capability statement for theme, for Adelaide University
- Establish webinar series
- Build AlterCOP-aligned engagement plan



Medium Term

- Secure seed funding for a flagship project per theme
- Deliver three webinars per year
- Produce joint cross-disciplinary publications
- Perform skills and capability mapping of related researchers
- Maintain consistent outward communications on projects and outcomes



Long Term

- Deliver signature multi-year projects with significant engagement with government, industry and communities
- Achieve high profile and visibility
- Demonstrate measurable impact on policy and community



Further enquiries

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