

GUIDELINES FOR LOW CARBON TRAVEL

ANU BELOW ZERO



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Understanding the impacts of climate change

Each year, we are confronted with challenges resulting from a changing climate. A [recent report](#) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has found that we are likely to reach the 1.5° global warming threshold within the next decade, unless we take urgent action.

We are already witnessing devastating impacts from current warming levels and Australia is particularly at risk. More extreme temperatures, sea level rise on our coasts, coral bleaching from warming oceans as well as intensifying drought, bush fires, storms and flooding events. Many of us are experiencing damaging health effects as a result, both physically and mentally.

Climate change is no longer a problem for the future, it's happening now and it's getting worse. To avoid the more extreme future climate scenarios requires a serious effort in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



Kristy Blake

The impacts of travel



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The **health and welfare** of our society depend greatly on a **stable climate**. Greenhouse gases (GHGs) destabilise our climate by warming our atmosphere and augmenting extreme weather events. A **recent study** found an unequal response in the climate-carbon cycle. Releasing one tonne of CO₂ into the atmosphere can be more damaging than the positive impacts of removing one tonne of CO₂. It is essential then that we **reduce the emissions** associated with our activities.

By **calculating our greenhouse gas footprint**, we can measure our impact on natural resources and communities.

Emissions are just one impact of travel on our environment and society. There are a number of things to consider when travelling sustainably. We **can exercise significant influence** through the **choices and purchases** we make around travel.

By choosing sustainably, we can **minimise our impact** on environmental resources like water, air, soil and biodiversity. We can also make a positive contribution by **supporting local businesses** and **respecting the people, cultures and heritage** of the places we visit.

ANU Below Zero

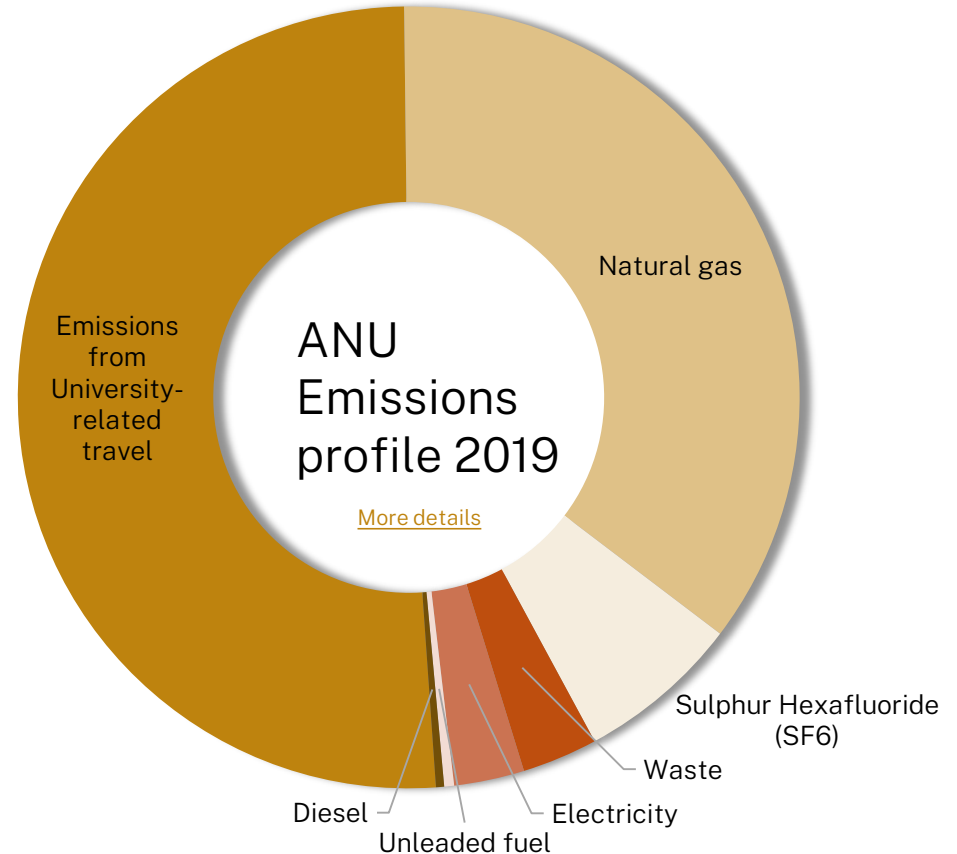
ANU has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to below zero by 2030.

Transformational change is needed if we are to reach our goal and **reduce our contributions** to climate change. We must all find ways to reduce these emissions whenever possible.

ANU aims to **support our community** by

- **making the environmental impacts of travel more transparent**
- **facilitating alternatives to travel**
- **supporting access and inclusion for all individuals**

This document and others provide **options for best practices** for reducing emissions associated with travel and maintaining meaningful collaboration with our networks.

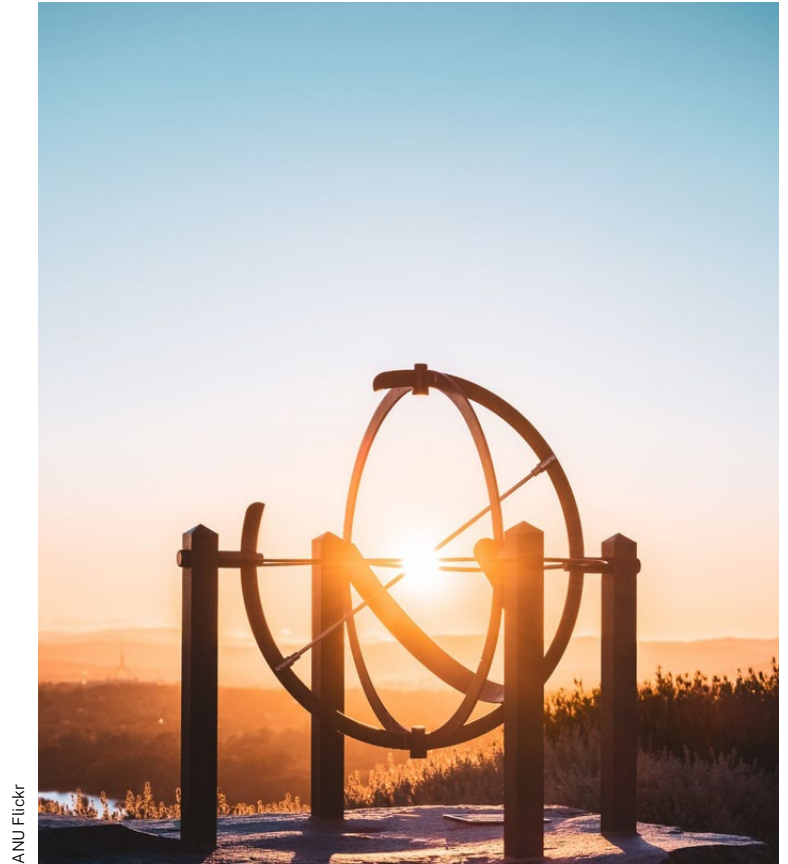


How can we change our travel habits?

Travel is an integral part of the University's goals for growing knowledge. Similarly, it is a valued part of the university experience for staff and students with positive impacts for career development, building relationships, extending networks and beyond.

It can be challenging to balance our desire to reduce our carbon footprint and undertake meaningful travel for our work or study. This travel guide aims to help our community understand options for travel and empower their decision-making processes through consideration of these impacts.

By reflecting on our impact and choosing lower carbon options, each of us has real power to make a positive difference. It will be through our collective effort to act sustainably that we can generate lasting change.



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Travel at ANU

There are times when travel is necessary for staff and students to perform activities related to their research, professional and educational goals. These activities support the mission of the University, and in kind, are supported by ANU policies, facilities, services and finance, where appropriate.

There are two types of travel that are necessary to meet these goals:



- **University-related travel** - refers to travel linked to activities associated with ANU business and is normally supported by the University. This includes travel for research, conferences, fieldwork, meetings, recruitment, philanthropy, events and specified educational activities. It comprises all travel arrangements including transportation and accommodation.
- **Commuter travel** - relates to the movement of staff and students from their homes to and from ANU campuses to work or study.

This guide focuses on University-related travel as these emissions are directly linked to ANU supported activities. In future, we will develop tailored guides to help staff and students understand options for low or no carbon commuter travel.

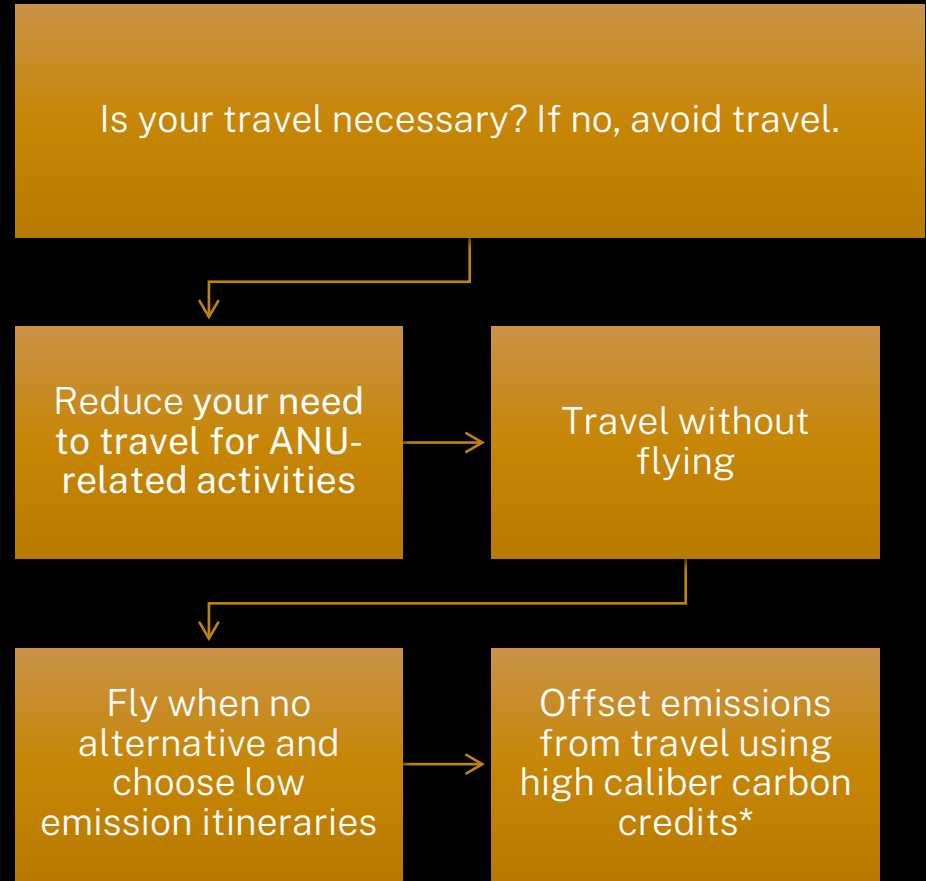
NECESSARY TRAVEL

After broad consultation with ANU staff and students, a definition of *necessary travel* was developed to align ANU travel policy with Below Zero commitments. It intends to assist staff and students when deciding whether they should undertake University-related travel.

The ANU Community is encouraged in all circumstances to consider alternatives to travel but it is recognised that some travel is necessary to achieve scholarly, professional and institutional outcomes and impact. Necessary travel is travel which demonstrably and significantly enhances research, teaching, learning or engagement.



Best practice in a snapshot



*ANU is developing a University carbon offset scheme to be launched by 2025



Best Practice: Choose to Travel

Less

Our first opportunity to mitigate emissions from travel is to travel less.

1. Avoid travel

Consider whether you actually need to travel. Identify opportunities afforded by using online resources for the same activities

2. Use digital technologies and online communication tools

Find out if you can join a meeting or event using digital platforms

3. Combine multiple activities into one itinerary

Is there a city or region that you visit regularly? Schedule multiple activities or stops within one itinerary to make the most of that trip thereby reducing the number of trips you make per year

4. Consider the number of people needed travel

Reducing the number of people travelling to the same meeting or event will reduce emissions. Instead, create opportunities for you or your colleagues to knowledge share the event or meeting outcomes

5. Collaborate with your local networks

Consider travelling shorter distances to collaborate with regional partners. Establish a regional hub or node for a larger national or international conference, where you can network with nearby colleagues on common interests and activities



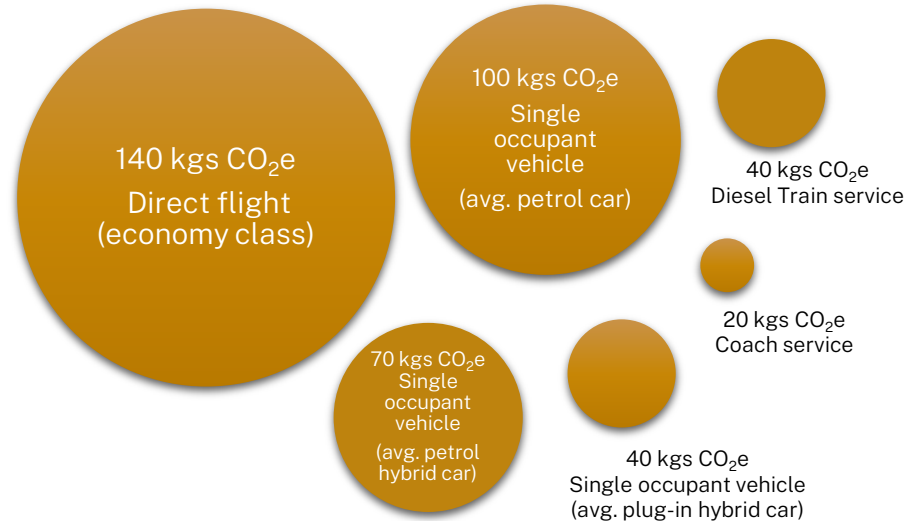
Best Practice: Choose Low Carbon Travel Options



If you decide to travel, you can reduce your impacts from your trip by choosing lower emission forms of travel.

A 2021 report found that low-emission flight itineraries can emit **63% less** than the *same route* with high emission options, and **22% lower** compared to the average emissions itinerary. Often the **less expensive tickets** are associated with lower emissions itineraries, making the choice easier to reduce your emissions from travel.

When we calculate the number of kilograms of CO₂e* associated with the various modes of travel for a **return trip from Canberra to Sydney**, we can see just how much our choices can impact our GHG footprint.



*Carbon dioxide equivalent or CO₂e is a term for describing different greenhouse gases in a common unit. For any quantity and type of greenhouse gas, CO₂e signifies the amount of CO₂ which would have the equivalent global warming impact. ([Matthew Brander: Ecometrica](#))





Joshua Earle Unsplash

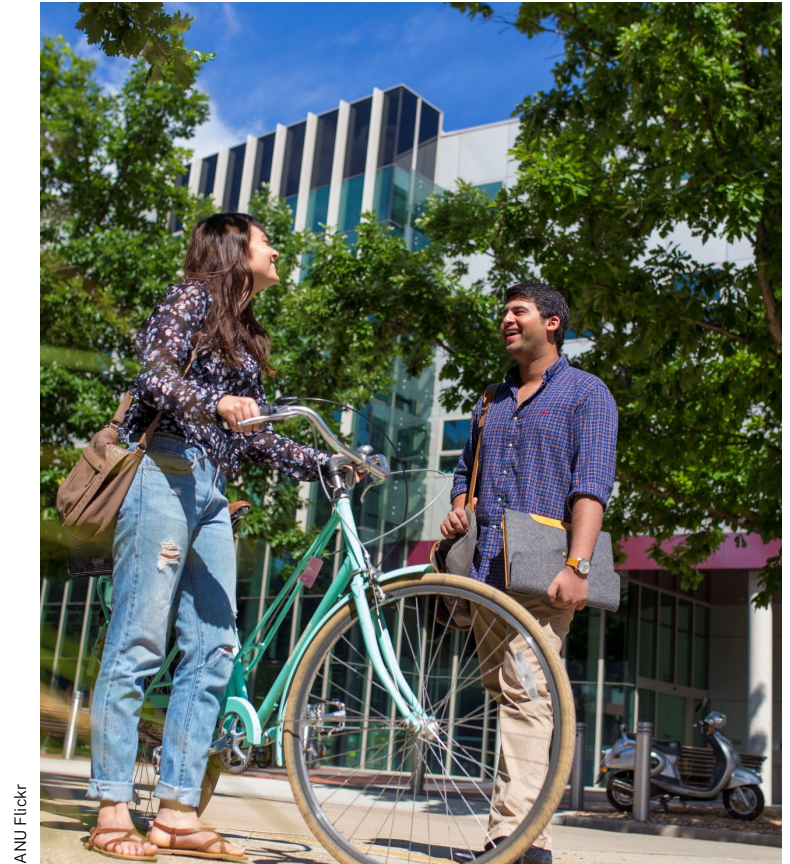
Low Carbon Travel Options

- 1. Choose land-based shared transportation over flying for shorter trips.** – Rail and coach services are often the lowest emissions form of transportation. The majority of flight emissions are at take-off and landing, making avoidance of short-haul flights a great opportunity to reduce emissions. Shared transport services such as coach are your best low-carbon travel option if travelling to Sydney from Canberra, or rail if travelling across Asia, Europe or North America.
- 2. When travelling in a group, choose car travel over air travel.** – If it is necessary for multiple people to travel to an event or meeting, car travel can be more emissions efficient than air travel. Or even better, use a low emissions car for your trip.
- 3. When flying is the only viable option, choose lower emissions itineraries.** – Flying is sometimes the only viable option for visiting major Australian cities and for overseas travel. If you must fly, choose the most direct route and fly economy. You can also choose a provider and route that uses aircraft with [more efficient fuel consumption](#).
- 4. Use public transportation when at your destination.** – Taking a taxi or using a rental car at your destination can greatly increase your GHG footprint. When safe to do so, choose public transportation options for getting around.
- 5. Help the University to account the emissions from your trip.** – ANU is seeking to be transparent and accurate in its emissions reporting. Help this effort by calculating your emissions associated with your trip through our [carbon footprint calculator pilot program](#).



Low Carbon Travel at your destination

1. **Whenever possible, choose active travel.** – Walking and cycling have the best environmental, health and economic impacts of any form of transportation.
2. **When you cannot use active travel, choose public transportation over private vehicle.** – Using public transportation options will reduce your personal GHG footprint significantly. Train travel, in particular, is a very low emissions transportation option in Europe, Asia and North America.
3. **If you require a private vehicle, consider carpooling with others to reduce associated emissions.** – Increasing the number of passengers will reduce each individual's GHG footprint as well as reduce the number of cars and congestion on the road, making for a safer and healthier trip.
4. **If you are renting a private vehicle, choose a low emissions vehicle.** – Ask the car rental company for a hybrid or low emission car options for your trip.
5. **Help facilitate active and public travel options.** – There can be extra time and other considerations when taking active travel or public transportation options. Factor these into your activities so it is simple and easy to stick with these choices.



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Best Practice: Choose Accommodation Wisely



Accommodation has many direct and indirect impacts on the local environment, society and economy that need consideration when we are choosing a place to stay. Providing clean, safe and comfortable lodgings requires energy, clean water, food and other services that support local employment but can have negative impacts on the safety and health of that community and the local resources.

- 1. Research sustainable lodging options in the area.** – Some hotels and lodgings are highly engaged in sustainable actions and are eager to tell their customers about these activities. Actively search for these on their webpages as well as certification for sustainability or positive climate-related actions.
- 2. Enquire about sustainability commitments.** - If you cannot find information on their website on their commitments, ask about these when you are thinking of booking. Do they have a sustainability strategy or policies that actively reduce their negative impacts on the environment? Stay informed about rhetoric or marketing gimmicks used to mislead consumers on sustainability actions.
- 3. Choose accommodation that reduces need for travel.** – If possible and safe to do so, choose lodgings that are near the venue where your activities are held. You can then prioritise active travel for getting to and from your accommodation each day.
- 4. Be a conscientious visitor.** – Take small though impactful actions on your trip that reduce your impact. Turn off lights and air conditioning or heating in your room when you leave. Take your own toiletries so you do not have to use the single serve items provided in the room. Opt-out of daily replacement of your towels and sheets. Unplug unused appliances in the room where appropriate to reduce latent and unnecessary energy consumption. Be mindful of the culture and heritage of the place you are visiting and take time to learn about the local history and culture. Purchase local goods and services, and buy local produce.



Best Practice: Support Travel Sustainability Efforts



To reach our below zero goals, we must build a community around our sustainability efforts and make these the default choices and actions to take. You can help by making more sustainable choices in your travel decisions, speaking to your networks about making sustainable travel decisions and be accountable for travel emissions by logging these through the appropriate channels.



Spread the word on sustainable travel. – Be a leader in your area and help your colleagues and peers to make choices that consider wider environmental, social and economic impacts. Share these guidelines with them and lead by example when making your own travel itineraries.

Plan sustainable events that factor in travel considerations. – Use our guide on hosting Net Zero events at ANU and consider the travel needs of those who will attend these events as well as other important impacts like catering, waste, water, local economy and others. (Coming early 2022)



A special thanks

A special thanks to our colleagues at the Sustainability Office at the McGill University. Their [Sustainable Travel and Mobility Guide](#) was the inspiration for this document. With their permission and enthusiasm for sharing sustainability action worldwide, much of the practical advice and actions contained within their guide has been shared here. Thank you McGill team!



Resources and Further Reading

Resource	Access link
McGill Office of Sustainability - Sustainable Travel and Mobility Guide	Access here
The carbon footprint of business travel in the knowledge-intensive service sector. Transportation Research.	Access here
Handbook of sustainable travel. Springer.	Access here
Variation in aviation emissions by itinerary: The case for emissions disclosure. International Council on Climate Transportation.	Access here
Size matters for aircraft fuel efficiency. Just not in the way that you think. International Council on Climate Transportation.	Access here
Climate change: Should you fly, drive or take the train? BBC News	Access here
ICAO Carbon Emissions Calculator Methodology	Access here
Carbon Footprint Calculator Methodology	Access here
Our actions for the environment. International Air Transport Association.	Access here



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