

Policy Library

for the three National Strategies

Just Adaptation



Oceans and Coasts



Cities and Regions



A National Strategy for Just Adaptation



Existing climate adaptation strategies often identify the additional barriers and impacts faced by 'vulnerable peoples' but rarely acknowledge the structural inequities that produce and maintain the uneven distribution of adaptive capacities in society. **This strategy understands adaptation beyond the ability to cope with climatic hazards, and addresses the uneven capacities, power dynamics, and persistent inequities that cause and sustain vulnerabilities**, which are structurally exacerbated by colonialism, patriarchy, and economic rationalism. Vulnerabilities are dynamic and do not exist in isolation, highlighting the need to better understand and respond to these concerns.

A National Strategy for Just Adaptations provides a **comprehensive framework for addressing inequities that impact the ability for 'vulnerable' community members to adapt to climate change**. This strategy was developed in a highly consultative and interdisciplinary manner to address some of the **complex, intersecting ways that marginalisation, discrimination, neglect, and other structural disadvantages affect the resilience and adaptive capacity of individuals and groups**. Just adaptation policies and practices recognise the diverse types of knowledge, needs, capabilities, aspirations and obstacles of Australian society, to implement transformational thinking and actions, and **strive for a more sustainable and more equitable future for all**.

This strategy meaningfully **engages with the diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and challenges that influence peoples capacity to adapt** to climate change and the degree that impacts are felt. A persons ability to adapt is informed by a complex range of contributing factors and historical contexts that are important to consider when working to facilitate positive transformational change. **This strategy aims to actively address injustices and inequalities within Australian society using five building blocks that underpin the strategy (Fig. 1)**. These building blocks act as a framework that can be applied to a range of areas and disciplines to encourage positive change, such as government, policy, research, education and private industry. Using these building blocks, **five priority reform areas were identified to address inequalities and encourage just adaptation for all**.

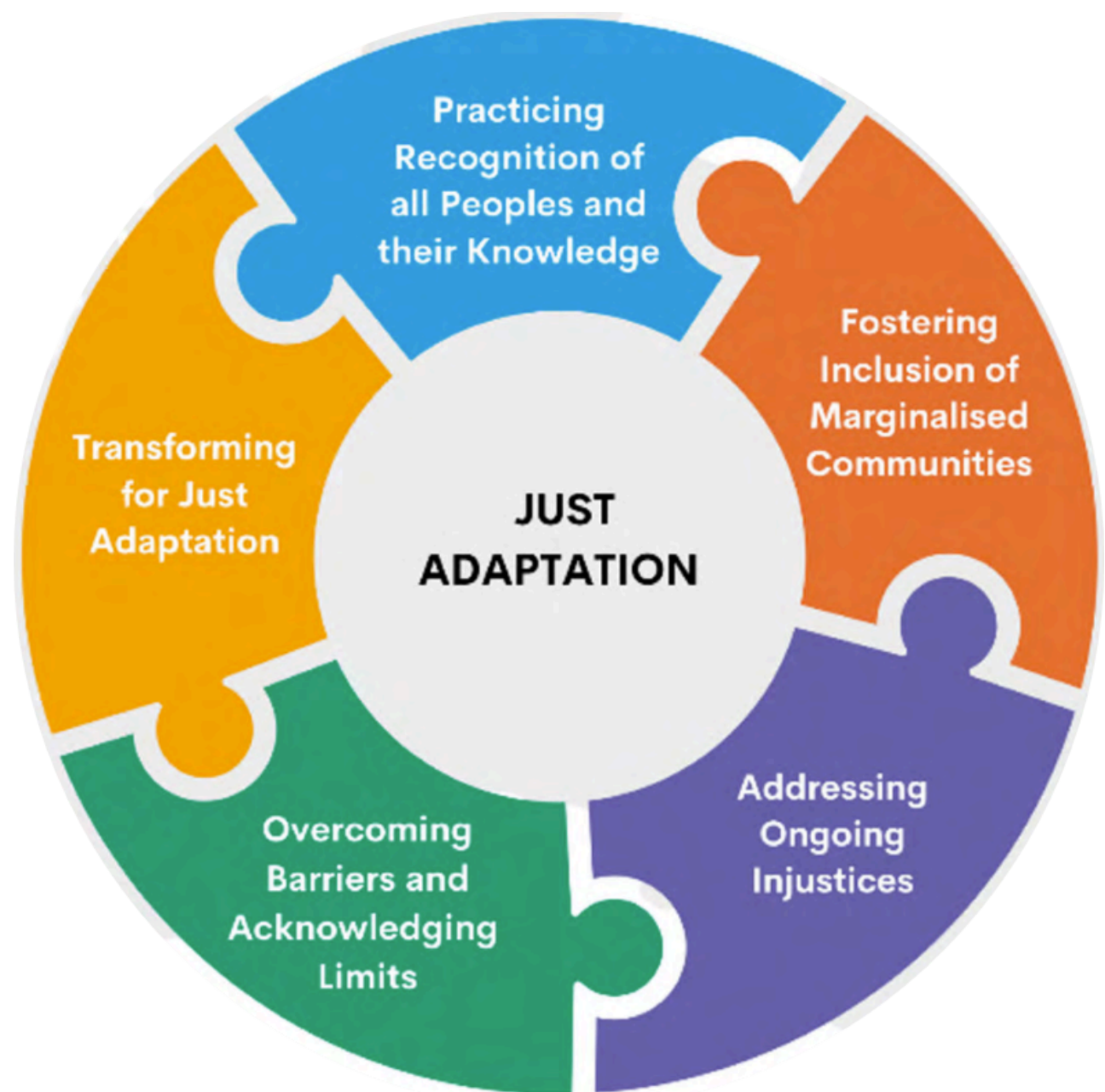


Figure. 1: Five Building Blocks of the National Just Adaptations Strategy



Understanding Just Adaptation

In order to engage meaningfully with the strategy, it is important to understand the key concepts, terms and theories that inform the report.

Decolonisation

Decolonisation is an active term that can be understood as “a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power” (Smith, 2021) and an increased critique of colonial and colonial settler powers and other oppressive structures (Neale et al. 2019). The process of decolonising societal systems, structures and ways of thinking and being, requires unlearning and rethinking the dominant power dynamics and discourses perpetuated by a given society. Decolonising climate change adaptation, discourse and responses is important and necessary to address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on disadvantaged communities in a just manner.

Justice

Justice is understood within the strategy as a juxtaposition to the multitude of complex injustices that undermine people’s ability to adapt to climate change. The strategy incorporates theories of economic, social, climate, intergenerational, non-human and systematic justice that are founded on concepts of fairness and equity.

Resilience

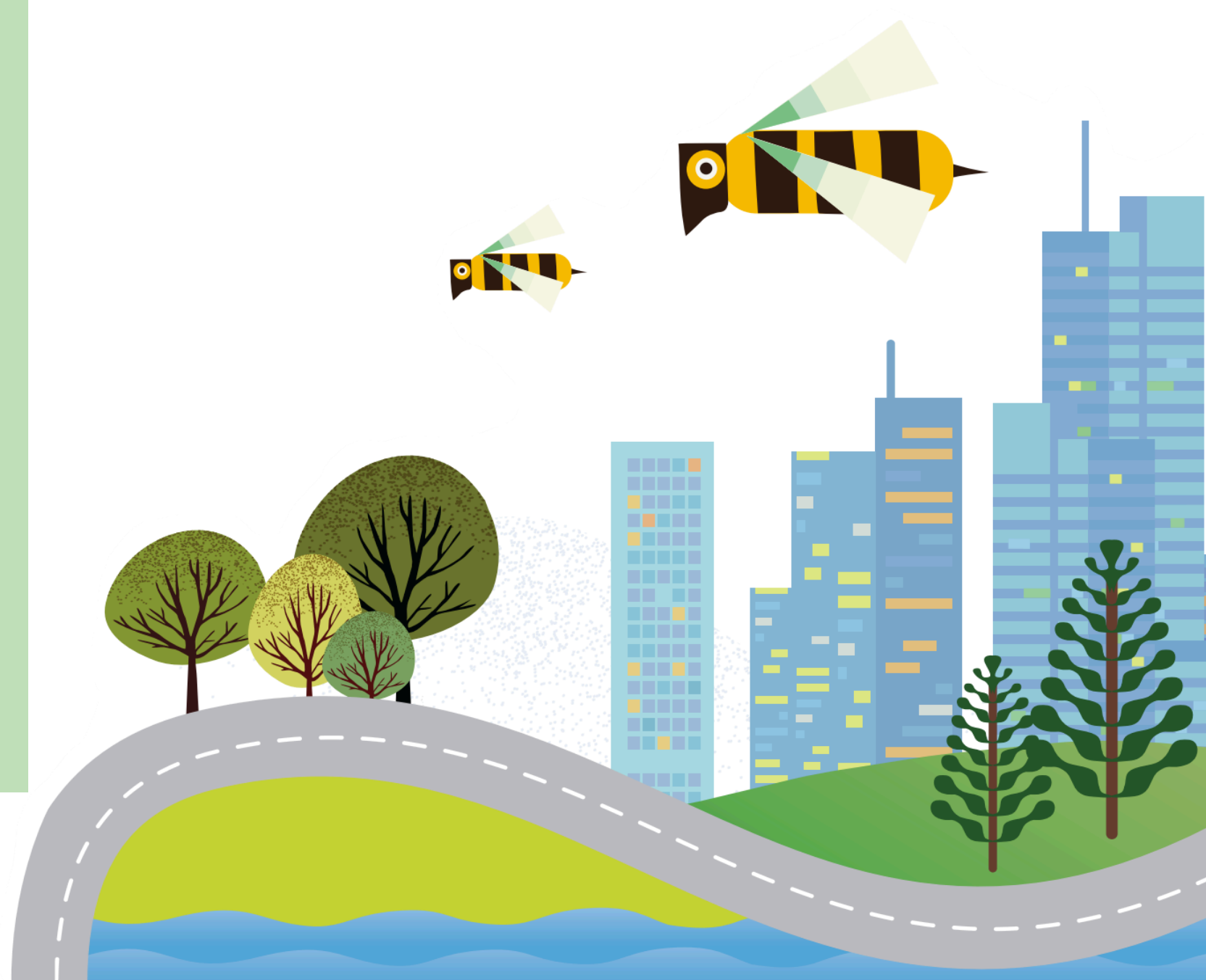
Resilience can be defined as “The capacity of communities, environments and economies to cope with a hazardous event or disturbance, while maintaining their essential functions and structure” (DAWE, 2021). Resilience is often mistaken as the opposite of vulnerability, however many communities with increased vulnerability to climate change demonstrate high levels of resilience and adaptive capacity. This highlights the need to separate structural, historical and institutional barriers that create vulnerability from resilience and recognise the strength, knowledge and experience of many disadvantaged communities.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the concept that addresses how the “interconnected aspects of social difference, including gender, race, caste, and class, co-constitutively shape individual experiences in complex and shifting ways” (Garcia & Tschakert, 2020). The term highlights the ways in which societal power dynamics interact to greater expose someone to discrimination and marginalisation due to intersecting aspects of their identity (Crenshaw, 1989).

Adaptation

Adaptation to climate change has become an increasingly important global priority since the 2015 Paris Agreement and the results from the 2022 IPCC report which demonstrated that society-wide adaptation is essential to increasing community resilience and reducing the negative consequences due to a changing climate (IPCC, 2022). Adaptation is defined by the IPCC (2022) as “as the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects in order to moderate harm or take advantage of beneficial opportunities”.



Priority Reform Areas & Recommendations

1 EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

Recognise, support, and learn from the unique experiences and knowledges of Indigenous Peoples.

2 EMBEDDING A JUST ADAPTATION FRAMEWORK ACROSS GOVERNMENTS AND SECTORS

Conventional approaches to adaptation need to change in all levels of government, sectoral bodies, industry, community organisations, and in research, including reframing perceptions of 'vulnerability' to better recognise structural disadvantage.

3 INCLUDING THE VOICES AND EXPERIENCES OF DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS AREAS OF MARGINALISATION IN JUST ADAPTATION PROCESSES

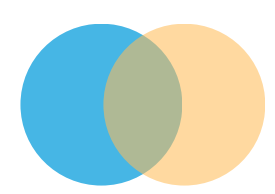
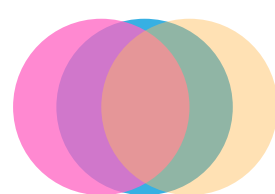
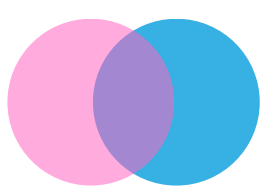
Public, private, and community resources can be used to support diverse groups to grow their capabilities to become actively involved in decision-making, increasing community recognition, inclusion and countering injustices.

4 SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS TO DRIVE TRANSFORMATION

Local communities and community groups must be given agency and trust to create their own relevant pathways in just adaptation.

5 ADVANCE RESEARCH AGENDAS THAT PROMOTE JUST ADAPTATION

Decision-makers should be supported by the research community and other knowledge sources to foster cross- and trans-disciplinary methods of innovation, establish data demonstrating the benefits of just approaches, identify drivers of disadvantage, and support just, sustainable and transformative outcomes for future generations.



Using the Just Adaptations Strategy

Due to the complex and intersectional nature of just adaptation, the strategy addresses a range of important topics, that are applicable to various disciplines. The below guide can be used to identify relevant areas of interest within the strategy, to encourage further understanding and engagement.

Researchers

Gender Transformative Adaptation pg. 49

Colonialism pg. 22

Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and the Rights of Self-Determination pg. 26

Addressing Injustices to Non-human Species pg. 38

Barriers to Engaging with Indigenous Peoples pg. 41

Addressing Intergenerational Injustices pg. 37

Economic barriers and normative alternatives for economics pg. 45

Policy and Decision Makers

Addressing Injustices to Indigenous Peoples pg. 34

Decision Makers and Leaders pg. 43

Sectoral Barriers and Limits pg. 42

Deliberative Pathways Toward Just Transformation pg. 50

Decision-support Tools and Processes for Just Adaptation and Transformation pg. 52

Incorporating Justice into Policy and Institutional Settings pg. 56

Supporting Indigenous Knowledges to Transform Adaptation Practices pg. 50

Community and NGO's

Everyday Limits pg. 41

Country pg. 20

Communities pg.23

Including Diverse Communities pg. 27

Addressing Injustices in Urban Settings pg. 36

Policy Barriers to Climate Change Adaptation in Australia's Housing Sector pg. 44

Community-based Adaptation Pathway Mapping Toward Desirable and Just Climate Futures pg. 53

Relevant Recommendations

5. Advance research agendas that promote just adaptation pg. 7

2. Embedding a just adaptation framework across governments and sectors pg. 4

4. Supporting communities and community groups to drive transformation pg. 6

3. Including the voices and experiences of diverse stakeholders across areas of marginalisation in just adaptation processes pg. 5

1. Empowering indigenous leadership pg. 3

Acknowledgements and Further Reading

- [Download the full report](#): Future Earth Australia (2022). A National Strategy for Just Adaptation. Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, Australia.
- A special thank you to the contribution of our [Just Adaptations Expert Working Group](#)
- Also read Future Earth Australia's [Sustainable Oceans and Coasts National Strategy 2021-2030](#) and [Sustainable Cities and Regions: 2024 Update National Strategy](#)

References

- Crenshaw, K. 1989. 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,' University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
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Relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals



BELMONT FORUM

Opportunities for Australia in the Belmont Forum

Established in 2009, the [Belmont Forum](#) is a partnership of funding organisations, international science councils, and regional consortia committed to the advancement of transdisciplinary science. **The Belmont Forum is one of the globe's largest and most influential research networks, membership of which is a tremendous opportunity for Australia.** As the member for Australia, **Future Earth Australia (FEA) is the vehicle through which Australian Government Departments, agencies and scientists can access and be awarded funding for projects from the Belmont Forum.**

[Future Earth Australia](#) is the Australian arm of Future Earth, a global sustainability, research, and innovation network. Future Earth Australia connects, convenes, and coproduces solutions to the sustainability challenges facing Australia, our region, and the globe. We achieve this by coordinating, enabling, performing, and promoting research and practice to address our most pressing sustainability challenges.

SUSTAINABLE OCEANS AND COASTS NATIONAL STRATEGY

Key Opportunities

- **A robust blue economy**
 - That uses sustainable techniques to ensure long-lasting prosperity for many generations to come
- **Resilient coastal communities**
 - Encompassing both people-centred communities and ecosystems that are equipped for changes and damaging events;
- **Sustained cultural heritage**
 - Especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, that connects people and their health and wellbeing to the land, coasts, and oceans

The Sustainable Oceans and Coasts National Strategy provides a comprehensive decadal plan including **seven holistic recommendations and an implementation plan, to achieve sustainable Australian oceans and coasts by 2030**. These recommendations outline how Australia can maintain positive economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes in a just and sustainable manner by **utilising the blue economy, respecting cultural values, and building resilience in coastal spaces**. This strategy was developed in collaboration with experts in the field, relevant stakeholders and First Nations Peoples through extensive consultation within each state and territory. This was combined with current research via a literature review, analysis and synthesis to produce this strategy.

Key Barriers to Sustainable Oceans and Coasts

From the literature reviewed, 311 threats to Australian oceans and coasts were identified with **human-induced climate change being the most severe threat to ocean and coastal ecosystems, infrastructure and businesses**. The key threats were categorised into the following groups:

- **Threats from use and extraction**
 - Impacts from utilitarian uses of marine environments, including essential industries, urban development, recreation, fishing, agriculture, and shipping.
- **Broader environmental and human induced threats**
 - Human activities exacerbate threats from climate change including increasing temperatures (ocean and atmospheric), ocean acidification, changes in ocean currents, risk of mass coral bleaching and changes to the range of species and reproductive success. Threats to coastal regions include sea level rise, extreme weather events, inundation, and erosion which have environmental and urban impacts.
- **Policy and socio-political threats**
 - Politicisation of environmental issues, disconnect between researchers and civil society, and prioritisation of profit over broader social and environmental wellbeing, have formed gaps between intended conservation outcomes and resulting actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The in-depth recommendations and implementation plan can be found in the [Full Report](#).

1

EMPOWER INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP

Elevate First Peoples' knowledge and practices into ocean and coastal management

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have been sustainably caring for Land and Sea Country for tens of thousands of years. Greater recognition and championing of First Nations Peoples rights, knowledges and practices are important for the just, sustainable and effective management of these spaces.

- Establish an alumnus of First Nations Peoples leading in sustainable oceans and coasts work.
- Achieve a more holistic approach that improves wellbeing, sustainable livelihoods, and ecosystem outcomes.
- First Nations Peoples Knowledges, rights and perspectives are upheld, respecting free, prior, and informed consent.

2

BUILD RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Restore, protect, and sustainably utilise ocean and coastal ecosystems to enable resilient coastal communities

85% of Australians live within 50 kilometres of the coastline and the increasing risk from climate change makes it imperative to build resilient coastal communities, ecosystems and infrastructure to ensure the continued use and appreciation of these spaces for future generations.

- Invest in practical, scalable adaptation options, provision of new industries and mechanisms against maladaptation.
- Management arrangements address cumulative effects; responses and offsets are ecologically feasible.
- Increase mobilisation of resources to fund sustainable use and conservation.

3

DECARBONISE THE BLUE ECONOMY

Actively decarbonise the blue economy while sustainably fostering energy security

Decarbonising the 'Blue Economy' using emerging technologies and nature-based solutions, is a vital part of creating long-term solutions for a sustainable, thriving Australian economy.

- Support new markets and economies while increasing innovation within Australia's economy.
- Recognise the role of supply chains in signalling market innovation opportunities.
- Improve energy security.
- Increase capacity building and job creation in CDR and related areas.

4

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

Adopt an integrated and ecosystem-based management approach to ocean and coastal planning coordinated across all levels of government

Ecosystems, organisms, and threats do not conform to jurisdictional boundaries, therefore a shared, integrated approach across local, state, and federal governments is necessary to deliver sustainable outcomes for Australian oceans and coasts.

- Responsibilities across three tiers of government are clear and accounted for.
- Reduce wastage in planning and development processes.
- Deliver international commitments.
- Enhance knowledge sharing and social capital via learning exchange.

5

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Use best available data and science to support decision making in ocean and coastal management and planning

Best available research and data being accessible to all stakeholders ensures decision-making processes are consistent, accurately informed and increases trust in science and relevant institutions.

- Increase trust in data and science with open access platforms and strengthen evidence-based decision-making
- Train a workforce for new transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral careers.
- Create shared information platforms that support faster innovation and effective information delivery.
- Reduce data duplication, unintended consequences, opportunity costs, and cumulative effects.

6

SUPPORT STEWARDSHIP

Support grassroots initiatives that increase community trust and promote local stewardship of oceans and coasts

Australian grassroot and community groups are often overlooked and underfunded but play a vital role in building trust, maintaining a sense of community, and acting as stewards for their local oceans and coasts.

- Coordinate activities that support the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainability.
- Increase connectivity, information exchange, and collaboration between grassroots organisations.
- Support genuine participatory processes, community stewardship and ocean literacy.

7

PRIORITISE DIVERSE VALUES

Foster champions and incorporate cultural values into ocean and coastal policies and plans

Australia as a nation holds deep cultural values associated with oceans and coasts, however these diverse values are often underrepresented in planning and cost-benefit analyses and policy-making.

- Grow a cohort of diverse champions across jurisdictions and enhance ocean and coastal leadership from all Australians.
- The value of oceans and coasts to Australians is explicit, highlighting the importance of intergenerational equity and First Peoples' knowledge and perspectives.

BELMONT FORUM Opportunities for Australia in the Belmont Forum

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- Amplify our distinguished track record in marine, coastal and oceans research
- Better link that research to applied outcomes for our region
- Contribute to implementation of our draft Sustainable Oceans Plan priorities and enablers and Nature Positive Plan commitments
- Demonstrate leadership for Oceania on issues of regional significance

Our Blue Ribbon

The term the 'blue ribbon' illustrates that Australian land and seas are complex interconnected and interacting environments that do not exist in isolation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia have recognised these dynamic relationships between humans, more-than-humans, land and ocean for thousands of years. Threats to the 'blue ribbon' are extensive and continue to worsen, highlighting the need for adaptive measures that promote the resilience of ocean communities and ecosystems.

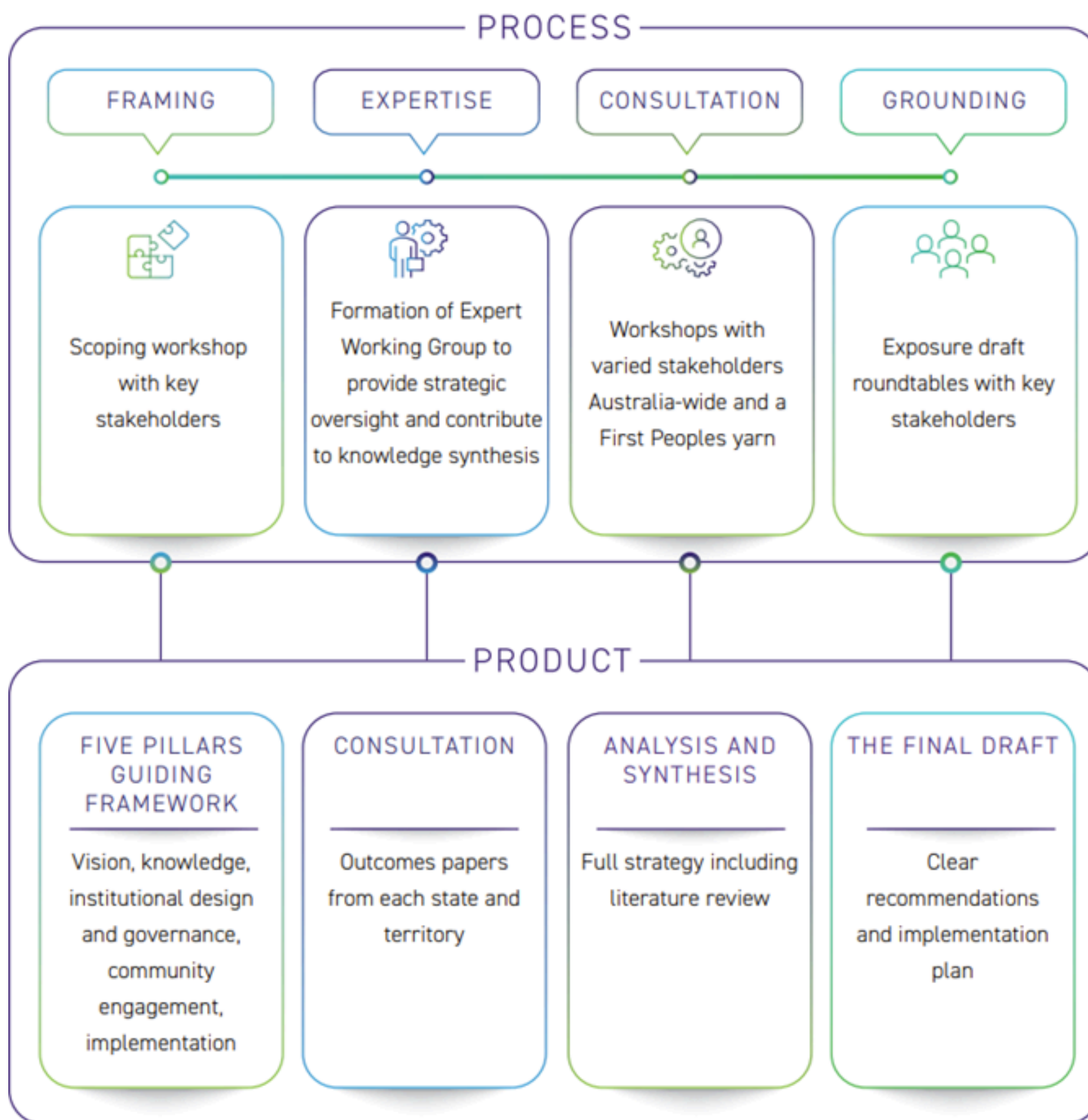
Values of Oceans and Coasts

Environmental Cultural Social

Intrinsic Indigenous Recreational

Economic (direct and indirect)

Well-being Spiritual National identity



About the National Strategy

The National Strategy is the product of extensive consultation held across every state and territory, with over 261 contributors and an expert working group of 31 prominent researchers across government, academia, and industry. Consultations adopted the 5 pillars approach to consultation of Vision, Knowledge, Institutional Design and Governance, Community Engagement and Implementation.

“The most difficult challenge will not be the development of sustainable practices, it will be their implementation. This will require the prioritisation of a common wellbeing and the deep acknowledgement through all levels of society, industry, and government, that healthy people rely on healthy Country. Our future depends on the creation of just, agile, and highly integrated governance for our rapidly changing oceans and coasts.”

~ Professor Emma Johnston AO FTSE FRSN Dean of Science University of New South Wales, Co-Chief Author of the Australian Government’s State of the Environment Report 2021

References, Acknowledgements and Further Reading

- [Download the full report](#): Future Earth Australia (2021). Sustainable oceans and coasts national strategy 2021-2030. Australian Academy of Science, Canberra, Australia
- A special thank you to the contribution of our [Oceans and Coasts Expert Working Group members](#)
- Also read Future Earth Australia's [National Strategy for Just Adaptation 2022](#) and [Sustainable Cities and Regions: 2024 Update National Strategy](#).

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Addressed by this Strategy:



Sustainable Cities and Regions Strategy

The *Sustainable Cities and Regions Strategy* outlines **eight recommendations and actions** with an implementation roadmap for federal, state, territory, and local governments to partner with stakeholders, communities and researchers on urban systems transformation. It is the result of extensive cross-sector consultation from diverse cities and regions across Australia to offer a **systemic, collaborative and community-engaged approach to urban development**.

Opportunities

Australia can be a leader in the space of urban development, by adopting an **integrated systems approach** to transition towards sustainability. Innovation within the circular economy, environmental resilience and digital technology present new systemic and institutional approaches to achieving improved mental and physical health, wellbeing, economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes. **Acknowledging the extensive interconnectivity of cities and regions will encourage the coupling of these goals towards creating more affordable, accessible, sustainable and positive spaces.**

“Our natural environment, and the changes it is experiencing, will play a central role in forcing our transition towards sustainability. A critical question is whether Australia will be reactive to these changes, or proactive”

Key Challenges

90 per cent of Australians live in urban places, highlighting the importance of sustainable, equitable and innovative development. Urban challenges such as climate change, decarbonisation, social inequities, housing, transport, employment and education interact in complex ways and have direct implications for the natural environment, social wellbeing and national productivity. Urban development issues disproportionately effect systemically marginalised and disadvantaged communities and exacerbate environmental consequences that are not adequately accounted for, or prioritised during planning stages. **Cities and regions are often isolated and siloed in their actions**, reducing the potential for transformational change. The fragmentation of initiatives limit the knowledge sharing, capacity building and innovation that facilitate larger-scale positive impact.

Future Earth Australia’s 2024 Sustainable Cities and Regions Update comprises four key strategies and related actions for urban transformation:

1. Consistent and sustained urban **leadership and governance** across sectors and levels
2. More inclusive and effective **stakeholder and community engagement**
3. Extensive urban **innovation and knowledge** co-development, sharing and uptake
4. Enhanced **policy-practice-research** collaborations and capabilities



OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND REGIONS STRATEGY



The updated strategy considers the **diverse needs** of Australian urban and regional communities to provide an **integrative and collaborative approach** to development across all sectors of government. Decision-makers should consider **livability, productivity, resilience, equity and sustainability as important positive indicators** of thriving urban systems. A Roadmap for Implementation was created to maximise the impact of these four primary strategies and highlight their coordinated approach whilst offering a practical way forward.



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Relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals



The interconnected nature of the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework is important in enabling the transition to sustainable urban systems

References, Acknowledgements and Further Reading

- Download the full report: Webb, R., Dodson, J., Steele, W., Stafford Smith, M., Pradhan, A., Nairn, K. 2024. Sustainable cities and regions: 10 year strategy to enable urban systems transformation. 2024 Update to the 2019 Strategy, Future Earth Australia, The Australian Academy of Science. Canberra, Australia
- A special thank you to the contribution of our reference working group
- Also read Future Earth Australia's National Strategy for Just Adaptation 2022 and Our Sustainable Oceans and Coasts National Strategy 2021-2030.



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