

RESEARCHING CREATIVELY AND SUSTAINABLY



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Creative Arts Research Institute (CARI) acknowledges the Original Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live, work, and create. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations Peoples across the many Countries where our research takes place. We honour the lineages of story, art, language, law, and culture that continue to shape and sustain this land and its peoples. We honour Country as kin—in deep reciprocity with human and more-than-human beings. Our research acknowledges that Country is not passive or separate from us, but a relative in ongoing relationship—one that listens, speaks, and responds.

Terms & Definitions

SDGs	The Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. (dpicampaigns, n.d.)
Sustainability	The process of living within the limits of available physical, natural, social, and cultural resources in ways that allow all living things -not just humans - to thrive long into the future.
Sustainable Development	Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (Brundtland Commission Report, 1987)
Sustainable Research	Designing and conducting research activities and processes throughout their life cycle in a way that minimises their negative impact on the environment and on social, cultural and economic aspects, while ensuring scientific excellence and societal relevance.
Ecological Footprint	are the measure of impacts of an individual or community on the environment and can be expressed as the amount of resources consumed. (Nautiyal & Goel, 2021)
Ecological Handprint	The environmental handprint refers to the good we do for the environment. (Biemer et al., 2013)

What do We Mean by Sustainability?

CARI views sustainability as a values-led, relational practice that integrates environmental responsibility with cultural continuity and social equity. We believe that sustainability can be guided by First Nations leadership and creative methodologies.

This definition is expanded through four key commitments expressed in these guidelines, our Strategic Plan 2025-2027, and our ongoing work:

1. **Cultural and Ecological Continuity:** Sustainability is not only about reducing environmental harm but also about maintaining and restoring cultural and ecological health through creative practice.
2. **First Nations Knowledge Systems:** Sustainability is deeply informed by First Nations ways of knowing, being, doing, and feeling which emphasise reciprocity, responsibility over ownership, and Country as a living entity.
3. **Relational and Reciprocal Approach:** Everything is connected—research decisions affect people, Country, and ecosystems. Sustainability must reflect this interconnectedness.
4. **Beyond Environmental Focus:** While practical recommendations (e.g., reducing emissions, reusing materials, sustainable ICT) focus on environmental impact, CARI frames sustainability as a holistic practice that includes social justice, cultural respect, and creative innovation.

First Knowledges as a Foundation for Researching Creatively and Sustainably

At CARI, we recognise that environmental sustainability is not a new idea—but an ancient and ongoing practice embedded in First Nations ways of knowing, being, doing, feeling, and valuing. We are committed to ensuring that First Nations-led knowledge systems are not only respected but grown in our creative arts and design research practice. This includes deep engagement with protocols, relationships, and responsibilities that honour Country as a living, sentient entity. We also acknowledge that First Nations Knowledges in Australia and globally are in an ongoing process of re-discovery and regeneration. At CARI, First Nations creative researchers and their allies aim to actively contribute to this vital work of cultural and environmental regeneration and stewardship.

The principles and recommendations outlined in these guidelines are not a checklist but a relational resource for researching creatively and sustainably. We acknowledge that this journey involves learning together—trying, failing, and trying again—while supporting and nurturing one another to do better. We also recognise that our work takes place within colonial, Western institutional frameworks, which may apply sustainability in ways that differ from First Nations perspectives. As creative researchers, we have a responsibility to question and critique all research practices to advance more inclusive understandings of sustainability, particularly those informed by First Nations knowledge systems.

As a community of researchers, creative practitioners, and collaborators, we strive to hold ourselves accountable to these values in every creative decision—for Country, for future generations, and for a more just and sustainable world.

Country is a Living Entity

Country is more than land—it is kin, teacher, archive, and law. Our creative research must listen to and be in right relationship with Country, not simply represent or use it.

Everything is Connected – Kinship Systems

First Nations kinship frameworks guide how we relate not just to people but to all living and non-living things. Such interconnectedness is part of deep reciprocity – what we do affects others, always. Sustainability in research must reflect this interconnectedness.

Deep Listening (Dadirri and other traditions)

Practices of deep listening teach us to slow down, observe, and act only when appropriate. These approaches are essential in understanding how to work respectfully with Country and community.

Story as Law and Ecological Knowledge

Creative practices—be they music, weaving, film, design, or visual art—carry knowledge systems. Stories are not metaphors; they are instructional systems for living well with all aspects of Country.

Sovereignty and Self-Determination

All research about Country and First Nations Peoples must be led, co-led, or deeply informed by First Nations Peoples with clear governance, cultural authority, and benefit sharing. Sustainability without sovereignty is extractive.

Responsibility Over Ownership

Materials, knowledge, and inspiration are not “ours to own”—they are shared through responsibility, care, and reciprocity. We do not enter Country or take materials without permission. We return what is borrowed (e.g. plant materials) to the land with thanks and good intention.

Sustainability as Cultural Continuity

Creative practice is a means of maintaining and restoring both cultural and ecological health, wellbeing, and healing. When we sustain healing cultures, we sustain Country—and vice versa.

Collective Actions

To strengthen institute-wide sustainability and complement team- and project-level actions, CARI leaders will implement the following collective actions.

1. Develop and promote shared registers of sustainable materials & equipment

- Establish and maintain registers of shared, reusable, low-impact materials and equipment across CARI.
- Promote borrowing, sharing, and repurposing to minimise duplication, emissions, and waste.
- Keep registers accessible and regularly updated so members can reliably plan sustainable creative projects.

2. Embed sustainability planning and reporting in seed grants

Require all CARI seed grant applicants to provide:

- A sustainability plan outlining intended low-impact and regenerative approaches.
- A brief sustainability report at completion to reflect on outcomes, challenges, and future improvements.

Provide templates and examples to support consistent, achievable reporting.

3. Encourage and enable sustainability reporting across all funding applications and research outputs

Support CARI members to embed sustainability considerations into:

- External research and arts funding proposals
- Creative works, exhibitions, performances, and publications
- Project websites, catalogues, and research statements

Offer institute-developed guidelines and sample language to make sustainability reporting discipline-appropriate and accessible.

4. Promote ongoing discussion, reflection & capability building

Facilitate regular opportunities for CARI members to deepen their sustainability knowledge and practice, such as:

- Yarning circles, deep-listening sessions, and reflective practice forums
- Workshops on low-impact methods, materials, and technologies
- Sharing exemplars of sustainable and regenerative creative research from within CARI

Build a culture of shared learning, accountability, and continual improvement.

5. Use sustainable catering and materials for all CARI-supported activities

For all CARI-funded events, meetings, launches, workshops, and gatherings, we will:

- Prefer majority plant-based catering, with minimal packaging and strong preference for local, seasonal suppliers.

- Select environmentally responsible materials for event design, signage, gifts, and operations.
- Encourage partners and collaborators to adopt similar practices through clear guidelines and event support.

Key Recommendations & Resources for Individual Researchers and Teams

The following recommendations and resources for researching creatively and sustainably are designed to foster collaboration, inspire creative thinking and accountability, and spark environmentally sustainable approaches within creative arts and design research projects and teams. Because there is currently a lack of guidance on how to make research in creative arts and design more environmentally sustainable, it is up to us to take the first step together.

Key Recommendations for Research Design

What can we do?

1. Consider whether the positive impact of the research outweighs the possible environmental and other harms.
2. Maximise the potential of your positive **ecological handprint** by conducting research.
3. Build strong, supportive transdisciplinary teams that value and promote sustainability.
4. Work with First Nations knowledge holders, ecologists, environmental designers, and climate scientists to shape and inform research.
5. Plan realistic research budgets that prioritise environmental sustainability.
6. Share data and resources where possible to minimise duplication and waste.

Key resources

Sustainability guide for research processes

<https://www.dfg.de/en/basics-topics/developments-within-the-research-system/sustainability-guide-for-research-processes>

This international guide provides a set of optional reflective questions designed to inspire and support sustainable research practices. These questions encourage researchers to consider resource-efficient trade-offs and innovate responsibly. For example, when planning travel, researchers might ask whether virtual or hybrid events could replace in-person meetings and what the associated CO₂ footprint would be. In terms of methodology and design, they could explore whether experiments can be simulated or scaled down and whether existing data can be reused. For materials and equipment, the questions prompt consideration of whether lab consumables can be reused, recycled, or sourced sustainably.

Net zero on campus

https://files.unsdsn.org/net-zero-on-campus_interactive.pdf

The *Net Zero on Campus* guide offers universities a practical roadmap to achieve carbon neutrality and align with global climate goals. For CARL, this means embedding low-emission strategies into creative research and institutional practices. The guide emphasizes assessing emissions, setting science-based targets, and implementing measures across energy, travel, materials, and procurement. It also highlights the importance of governance, stakeholder engagement, and partnerships to accelerate progress. By integrating these principles, CARL can lead in reducing its carbon footprint while fostering innovation and cultural responsibility in creative research.

Sustainable screens

<https://www.sustainablescreens.au/tools-resources>

Sustainable Screens Australia's Tools & Resources page offers a comprehensive suite of practical guides, checklists, templates, and explainers designed to help screen productions reduce their environmental impact across every department, from pre-production to post. It includes carbon literacy explainers, sustainability frameworks, departmental checklists (covering art, locations, makeup, post, sound, electrics, runners, and more), data-tracking tools, cost-saving templates, and strategic guides such as the Sustainable Production Roadmap and Carbon Action Plan resources. Together, these materials provide a holistic, easy-to-use toolkit for embedding sustainable practices into all aspects of screen production.

Key Recommendations for Sustainable Use of Technologies

What can we do?

1. Plan and use information and communication technologies consciously to reduce energy consumption while maintaining quality and accessibility.
2. Use remote methods (e.g. video conferencing, phone, email) for meetings, collaborations, and data collection whenever possible to avoid unnecessary travel (especially long-distance) and reduce emissions.
3. Reduce energy demand in computing tasks (e.g. simulations, visualisations, animations) by optimising parameters and scheduling processing efficiently.
4. Reuse existing or simulation data where possible and make research data openly available to reduce duplication of effort and energy use.
5. Favour cloud-based solutions that are more energy-efficient and support collaborative work.
6. Manage and annotate literature efficiently, using digital tools (e.g. EndNote, Zotero) to reduce time and data redundancy.
7. Monitor your ICT usage (e.g. storage, software, processing power) to identify opportunities for environmental sustainability improvements, where feasible.
8. Minimise the use of AI tools and large-scale models to reduce their environmental impact and ensure they are only used for essential tasks.

Key resources

OpenLCA – A Tool for Sustainable Research

<https://www.openlca.org/>

OpenLCA is an open-source software designed for Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), enabling researchers to evaluate the environmental impacts of products, processes, and systems across their entire life cycle. For CARl, this tool can support sustainable creative research by helping teams measure resource use, emissions, and ecological footprints of materials, technologies, and workflows. OpenLCA integrates global databases and offers flexibility for modeling scenarios, making it ideal for assessing trade-offs and improving sustainability in design, production, and research practices. Using LCA tools like OpenLCA ensures that creative projects align with ecological responsibility and informed decision-making.

Labos 1point5 – Measuring Research Emissions

<https://labos1point5.org/>

Labos 1point5 is a collaborative initiative that provides tools and methodologies for calculating and reducing the carbon footprint of research activities. It focuses on emissions from travel, energy use, digital infrastructure, and procurement, offering practical calculators and benchmarks for academic institutions and research groups. For CARl, this resource can help track the environmental impact of creative research projects, set reduction targets, and identify strategies for low-emission practices. Using Labos 1point5 supports transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making toward sustainable research futures.

Key Recommendations to Reduce, Reuse & Recycle

What can we do?

1. Shift from sustainability to regeneration: lead projects that heal, restore, or renew land, water, and ecosystems.
2. Apply principles of reduce, reuse, and recycle across all stages of research planning, production, and dissemination.
3. Avoid printing or photocopying wherever possible—work digitally and use collaborative online tools.
4. Maintain electrical equipment such as printers, cameras, and computers to ensure optimal energy efficiency.
5. Reduce reliance on single use plastics, excess packaging, rare materials, and consumables by adopting “refine, reduce, replace” principles.
6. Reuse materials wherever possible by borrowing, sharing, or repurposing items across projects—build relationships with colleagues and external partners to share equipment, props, software, or materials.
7. Recycle paper, canvas, textiles, personal protective equipment, metals, batteries, and ewaste through approved campus or community recycling channels.

Key resources

Sustainable Events Guide

https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0035/1814669/Sustainable-Events-Guide.pdf

The Sustainable Events Guide helps creative researchers design and deliver events—such as performances, workshops, exhibitions, and showcases—that minimise environmental impact while strengthening social and cultural responsibility. By offering practical guidance on reducing waste, lowering travel emissions, choosing sustainable venues, and supporting local suppliers, the guide provides a clear framework for embedding sustainability into every stage of creative project planning. Its focus on responsible resource use, energy efficiency, and alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals supports researchers to model climate-aware creative practice and contribute to a more sustainable arts and research culture.

Sustainability Tips for Green Living

https://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0042/1977738/Sustainability_tips.pdf

The Sustainability Tips for Green Living resource offers practical, everyday actions that help creative researchers reduce their environmental footprint while working, studying, or producing creative work. It provides simple guidance on conserving energy, reducing waste, choosing sustainable transport, adopting low-impact food and water practices, and engaging in community sustainability initiatives. These tips support researchers to make small, achievable changes that collectively strengthen a culture of environmental responsibility across creative projects and research environments.

Green Music Australia – Green Artist Guide

https://drive.google.com/uc?export=download&id=1c4-7OlZvi4eio7wjJgexx_bPGxi3e6nH

The Sound Country: Green Artist Guide is a comprehensive sustainability resource designed to help artists make their creative practice more environmentally responsible. It breaks down effective green actions across key areas—including waste, transport, food, merchandise, studio practices, and music releases—offering clear, practical steps for reducing your ecological footprint. The guide also features real-world case studies from established artists and provides tools for integrating First Nations knowledge, advocating for environmental action, and leading positive cultural change in the music and creative industries.

Sustainable Screens Supplier Directory

<https://www.sustainablescreens.au/supplier-directory>

Sustainable Screens Australia's Supplier Directory is a curated list of vetted vendors that support environmentally responsible screen production, featuring businesses across Australia that offer sustainable products, services, and innovative solutions. The directory highlights suppliers with verified sustainability attributes—such as renewable energy use, electric or HVO fleets, circular solutions, carbon offsetting, and B-Corp certification—and allows users to filter by location, service type, and sustainability features. With 32 suppliers spanning categories like catering, logistics, power, wardrobe, waste management, digital tools, and reusable products, the directory helps productions easily identify partners aligned with greener industry practices.

Key Recommendations for Materials & Equipment

What can we do?

1. Choose materials with low environmental impact, prioritising biodegradable, recycled, upcycled, or locally sourced options (e.g., natural dyes, earth pigments, native fibres).
2. Minimise the use of toxic, synthetic, or non-renewable materials such as plastics, acrylic paints, industrial resins, or synthetic textiles—dispose of unavoidable materials responsibly.
3. Favour local suppliers and environmentally responsible vendors to reduce freight emissions and packaging waste.
4. Engage with First Nations knowledge holders and Country-specific protocols when sourcing ochres, fibres, plants, or other land-based materials to ensure cultural safety and ecological respect.

Key resources

Griffith University Sustainability SharePoint

<https://griffitheduau.sharepoint.com/sites/GRP-SustainabilityCommunityofPractice/SitePages/crisisCommunicationHome.aspx>

The Sustainability Community of Practice (CoP) provides a collaborative space for Griffith staff and graduate researchers to connect, learn, and share strategies that advance the university's sustainability goals. Through initiatives such as peer learning, shared resources, and participation in wider campus campaigns, the CoP helps embed the principles of Griffith's Sustainability Strategy—including SDG alignment, emissions reduction, and community engagement—into everyday research and professional practice. It enables creative researchers to access institutional support, join sustainability-focused networks, and contribute meaningfully to Griffith's broader cultural shift toward environmentally responsible and socially just ways of working.

Sustainable Procurement Guide

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/sustainable-procurement-guide-2024.pdf>

The Sustainable Procurement Guide (2024) provides practical direction for embedding environmental sustainability into every stage of procurement—from planning and tendering through to contract management and reporting. Developed by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the guide helps organisations choose goods and services that minimise emissions, reduce waste, support circular-economy principles, and align with evolving Commonwealth procurement expectations. Flexible enough to suit diverse institutional contexts, it equips researchers and project teams with straightforward steps for making procurement decisions that contribute to lower environmental impact and better long-term value.

Environmental Impact Calculator for Art Materials

<https://momaa.org/environmental-impact-calculator-for-art-materials/>

The Environmental Impact Calculator for Art Materials helps artists and creative researchers understand the ecological footprint of the materials they use. By assessing factors such as carbon emissions, water and energy consumption, waste generation, toxicity, sourcing, and disposal methods, the tool provides a clear breakdown of environmental impacts and suggests lower-impact alternatives. It supports more informed, sustainable decision-making in studio practice and encourages creators to reduce harm while maintaining artistic quality.

Green Music Australia – Green Artist Guide

https://drive.google.com/uc?export=download&id=1c4-7OlZvi4eio7wjJgexx_bPGxi3e6nH

The Sound Country: Green Artist Guide is a comprehensive sustainability handbook created to help artists reduce the environmental impact of their creative practice. It offers practical guidance across key areas such as waste, transport, food, merchandise, studio operations, music releases, and advocacy—supporting musicians and creatives to make informed, climate-responsible choices. The guide also features case studies from well-known artists and provides clear, actionable steps for embedding sustainability into everyday creative workflows, touring, and production.

Key Recommendations for Field Work & Travel

What can we do?

1. Critically assess whether travel is necessary, prioritising low-impact or collaborative alternatives.
2. Replace travel with virtual options where possible for meetings, knowledge exchange, conferences, and supervision.
3. When travel is essential, choose low-emission options such as direct flights, public transport, or carpooling, and coordinate field activities to reduce repeat visits.
4. Measure and track travel-related emissions and set internal reduction targets.
5. Offer or request hybrid/digital conference formats and share fieldwork outcomes to reduce duplication of site visits.
6. Support local researchers and economies by sourcing equipment and supplies locally.
7. Reduce on-site impacts during fieldwork by using reusable equipment, limiting packaging, and following “leave no trace” principles.
8. Prepare field teams to enact environmentally sustainable behaviours (e.g., water-saving practices, waste reduction, sustainable catering options).

Key resources

Griffith University Sustainability SharePoint

<https://griffitheduau.sharepoint.com/sites/GRP-SustainabilityCommunityofPractice/SitePages/crisisCommunicationHome.aspx>

The Griffith Sustainability SharePoint provides staff and graduate researchers with access to university-wide sustainability initiatives, resources, and communities of practice. It supports engagement with Griffith's broader sustainability strategy—including SDG alignment, net-zero targets, and campus-wide programs—while offering opportunities to collaborate, learn, and contribute to institutional sustainability efforts.

Sustainability Guide for Research Processes (DFG)

<https://www.dfg.de/en/basics-topics/developments-within-the-research-system/sustainability-guide-for-research-processes>

The DFG Sustainability Guide for Research Processes outlines guiding questions to help researchers integrate ecological sustainability into the planning, design, and implementation of research projects. It encourages reflection on emissions, resource use, data reuse, travel alternatives, and energy-efficient methodologies—aiming to spark innovative, lower-impact research practices without compromising scientific quality.

Travel Carbon Footprint Calculator

<https://sustainabletravel.org/our-work/carbon-offsets/calculate-footprint/>

The Travel Carbon Footprint Calculator helps users estimate emissions from flights, accommodation, car travel, cruises, and other trip components. It offers clear calculations alongside options to reduce, compare, and offset emissions through verified climate projects that support forests, clean energy, blue carbon ecosystems, and innovative climate technologies. The tool also links to resources that promote climate-conscious travel practices.

Acknowledgements

These guidelines were drafted by CARI Intern Cosima Hoppe and refined with input from many CARI researchers across disciplines. We acknowledge and thank all CARI co-convenors and members who contributed. We acknowledge and thank the Griffith Sustainability team, in particular Professor Jennifer Boddy, for their help and support in generating these guidelines.

CoPilot AI was used to generate summaries of the resources included in this document. It was used to consolidate CARI member feedback into the draft and embellish First Nations principles drafted by CARI Director Professor Naomi Sunderland with input from other First Nations CARI members.

CREATIVE ARTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Creative Arts Research Institute is a thriving academic community presenting performances, talks, workshops, keynotes and research outputs locally, nationally and internationally. Stay up to date with CARI's activities and news by following us on social media and by subscribing to our quarterly e-newsletter.

griffith.edu.au/creative-arts-research-institute

cari@griffith.edu.au



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Creative Works

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