



Hyams Beach, Jervis Bay  
Tourism Australia

## Ecotourism Australia Sustainability Impact Report 2025/2026



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## Foreword from the CEO

### Elissa Keenan

At Ecotourism Australia, sustainability is not simply a principle we promote - it is the foundation of who we are, how we operate and the future we are working to support for tourism in Australia.

This first Sustainability Impact Report marks an important step in our own transparency and accountability journey. While Ecotourism Australia is not required to report under formal sustainability or climate disclosure regulations, we believe leadership means voluntarily holding ourselves to a high standard. As an organisation that supports tourism businesses, destinations and communities to embed credible sustainability practices, we have a responsibility to reflect honestly on our own impacts, progress and areas for improvement.

This report is also grounded in a long history of leadership and learning. Established in 1991, Ecotourism Australia has spent 35 years supporting, shaping and strengthening ecotourism and sustainable tourism in Australia. We pioneered the world's first national ecotourism certification program through what is now ECO Certification, and our programs have continued to evolve in response to changing expectations across industry, communities, travellers and global sustainability standards. Today, that legacy continues through our certification programs, destination programs, industry partnerships and practical support for tourism businesses working to improve their environmental, cultural, social and business impacts.

Importantly, our approach to sustainability extends well beyond climate action. Reducing emissions is essential, and this report includes our organisational carbon footprint and the steps we are taking to minimise our environmental impact. But for tourism to be truly sustainable, it must also care for nature, respect culture and Country, support people and communities, strengthen responsible businesses and local economies, and be underpinned by accountable governance.

This broader view shapes the way we understand our own impact and the role we play in supporting the tourism sector. It recognises that environmental stewardship, socio-cultural responsibility, economic resilience and good governance are interconnected, and together contribute to long-term value for people, place and planet.

Over the past year, Ecotourism Australia has continued to strengthen its internal sustainability practices, support operators and destinations on their sustainability journeys, contribute to conservation and community initiatives, and demonstrate more responsible ways of delivering events and business operations. We are proud of this progress, while recognising that sustainability is a continuous journey. This report is not intended to present a finished story - it is a commitment to ongoing measurement, learning, improvement and public transparency.

As we publish this first annual impact report, we do so with humility, ambition and a clear sense of responsibility. The tourism sector has an important role to play in shaping a more sustainable future, and Ecotourism Australia will continue to work alongside our members, partners, Traditional Custodians, communities and industry stakeholders to raise standards and support practical, credible action across all dimensions of sustainability.

I would also like to thank our Board and staff, whose passion, commitment and feedback continue to drive this work forward. Their ideas, energy and willingness to challenge us to do better help keep Ecotourism Australia accountable, focused and continually improving as an organisation.

I am pleased to share this report as the beginning of a more regular and open account of our own sustainability performance. We look forward to building on this foundation in the years ahead.



Elissa Keenan  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ecotourism Australia

## Impact snapshot

- Prepared our first public-facing Sustainability Impact Report, establishing a practical baseline for future annual reporting.
- 35 years of experience, industry leadership and learning since Ecotourism Australia was established in 1991.
- More than 300 businesses coached and encouraged to strengthen their support for conservation and community initiatives during FY 2025–26.
- Scope 3 emissions accounted for 93.18% of reported emissions, identifying travel, commuting, accommodation and event-related activity as key focus areas.
- Supported tourism businesses and destinations through certification programs, destination programs, applicant pathways, coaching, resources, independent audits and capacity-building initiatives.
- Assistance was offered to 239 businesses impacted by natural and climate-related disasters across Australia.
- The Global Sustainable Tourism Summit 2026 was delivered in-house by Ecotourism Australia's team of 11, with sustainability considered across venue selection, waste, transport, suppliers and community contribution.
- One tree was planted for every Summit delegate through Reforest, supporting restoration work at Doonan Creek Environment Reserve.
- Paid access to an Employee Assistance Program has been available to staff since 2024.

## About this report

This report covers Ecotourism Australia's sustainability impacts, practices and improvement priorities for FY 2025–26. It is a voluntary public-facing report and is not prepared under a mandatory sustainability or climate disclosure framework. The report focuses on Ecotourism Australia's organisational operations, internal policies and practices, staff initiatives, emissions profile, major event impacts, member-facing support and selected sector contribution activities.

The report draws on internal organisational records, Climate Zero emissions data, event-related survey information, policy records and operational examples from the reporting period. As this is Ecotourism Australia's first public-facing impact report, we recognise that our reporting approach will continue to mature. Future reports will aim to strengthen data quality, clarify boundaries, improve year-on-year comparability and expand the way we measure outcomes across environmental, socio-cultural, economic and governance dimensions.

## Limitations and reporting maturity

This report represents an important first step in Ecotourism Australia's public impact reporting journey. Some data is currently based on internal records, staff input, supplier information, event survey responses and available emissions reporting tools, and may not capture every impact across all activities, contractors, suppliers or member-facing programs. Some outcomes, particularly those relating to business capability, destination stewardship, cultural engagement and community impact, are indirect and will take time to measure consistently. We have therefore taken a cautious approach to claims and focused on reporting what we can currently evidence, while identifying areas where our measurement, data quality and reporting boundaries can improve in future years.

As a national organisation supporting tourism businesses and destinations across Australia, Ecotourism Australia recognises that some sustainability trade-offs are difficult to avoid. Travel remains one of our largest emissions sources because some industry engagement, government meetings, events and onsite audits require in-person participation. Similarly, access to certified accommodation, lower-emissions transport options and detailed supplier data can vary by location and availability. This report therefore reflects both the actions we are already taking and the areas where our approach will need to keep improving as better data, systems and options become available.



Franklin River Nature Trail, TAS  
Photo credit: Stu Gibson

# 1. Purpose and commitment

## Purpose

This Sustainability Impact Report has been prepared as part of Ecotourism Australia's commitment to transparency, accountability and continuous improvement. It is our first public-facing impact report and establishes a practical baseline for future annual reporting. While Ecotourism Australia is not currently required to report under mandatory sustainability or climate disclosure frameworks, we recognise that credible leadership requires more than compliance. As a national peak body supporting tourism businesses, destinations and communities to strengthen sustainability practice, we have a responsibility to reflect openly on our own impacts, progress and opportunities for improvement.

This report brings together our organisational operations, emissions profile, major event impacts, community and conservation contributions, cultural learning, governance practices and future priorities. In doing so, it helps us hold ourselves to the same standard of accountability we encourage across our certification programs and sector partnerships, while recognising that our approach to sustainability extends beyond climate action to environmental stewardship, respect for culture and Country, community contribution, responsible business, economic resilience and strong governance.

## Sustainability Commitment

Ecotourism Australia's commitment to sustainability is grounded in a broad understanding of impact. We aim to reduce negative impacts and create positive outcomes across the environmental, socio-cultural, economic and governance dimensions of our work. This includes how we operate as a business, how we support our members and stakeholders, how we contribute to communities and culture, and how we continue to strengthen the credibility and integrity of sustainability in tourism.

Guided by this commitment, we will continue to embed sustainability into our decisions, policies, partnerships and everyday operations. Our approach is practical, values-led and improvement-focused. It recognises that sustainability is not a single outcome, but an ongoing responsibility to care for nature, respect culture and Country, support people and communities, strengthen responsible business and govern with integrity.

This commitment is also embedded in Ecotourism Australia's Corporate Strategy 2024–28. One of the strategy's six pillars focuses on building a resilient, high-performing organisation positioned for sustainable growth. This includes maintaining strong governance and effective business processes, ensuring long-term financial sustainability, investing in staff and Board capability, creating pathways for staff development, remaining agile in response to opportunities and threats, and continuing to foster a culture of connection, positivity and authenticity that reflects both our pioneering legacy and future strategic direction.

- **Walking the talk** – applying the same high standards to our own operations that we expect of certified operators, destinations and partners.
- **Building a sustainable organisation** – maintaining strong governance, effective business processes, financial sustainability and the capability to respond to future opportunities and challenges.
- **Learning and improving** – measuring progress, being transparent about our challenges, celebrating positive outcomes and reviewing our performance annually.



Kingfisher Tours Garingbaa, Kununurra, WA  
ECO Certified  
Photo credit: Tourism Australia



Ningaloo, Exmouth  
Tourism Australia

## 2. Environmental stewardship and operational impact

Environmental stewardship is central to Ecotourism Australia's purpose and day-to-day operations. While our organisational footprint is relatively small, we recognise the importance of actively reducing resource use, limiting emissions, making responsible purchasing decisions and modelling the practices we encourage across the tourism sector. This section outlines the practical steps we take to reduce resource consumption, minimise waste, make more sustainable purchasing decisions, reduce travel-related impacts and embed environmental considerations into audit planning and day-to-day operations.

Our whole staff team contributes to this work as Ecotourism Australia's Green Team, meeting regularly to raise ideas, review practices and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. "Walking the talk" is also a standing item on our monthly team meeting agenda, giving staff a regular forum to share sustainability ideas, feedback and updates. This whole-of-team approach helps ensure environmental sustainability is not treated as a side project, but as part of everyday decision making.

### Resource efficiency and emissions reduction

- Integrate practical resource-efficiency practices into day-to-day office operations to reduce our operational footprint.
- Manage office operations in line with responsible environmental practice, including reducing unnecessary energy, water and fuel use.
- Adopt resource-efficient technologies and operational improvements that reduce consumption and support lower-emissions ways of working.
- Reduce avoidable energy use by switching off computers, lights and air-conditioning when the office is unattended.

## Waste reduction and circular economy practices

- Reduce waste to landfill through reuse, recycling and composting.
- Maintain a minimal-print approach in the office, use 100% recycled paper and recycle ink cartridges through Planet Ark.
- Use electronic business cards to reduce printing and paper use.
- Maintain an e-waste and assets register to support responsible purchasing, reuse, repair and end-of-life management of equipment and materials.

## Responsible purchasing and supplier choices

- Prioritise businesses and suppliers that demonstrate environmental and sustainability practices aligned with our procurement policies.
- Support local businesses when this aligns with quality, value and sustainability objectives.
- Use procurement decisions to encourage suppliers and stakeholders to reduce their environmental impacts.
- Purchase second-hand office furniture when suitable, including through circular economy suppliers such as Circonomy.
- Use preferred sustainable printing providers for business printing and prioritise recycled paper and soy-based inks.
- Source frames and plaques from suppliers that use recycled or repurposed materials when suitable options are available.

## Sustainable travel

- Prioritise direct flights when air travel is necessary and review offsetting approaches to ensure they align with current best practice.
- Choose public transport, carpooling or lower-emissions travel options before private vehicles or flights, where this is practical and safe.
- Stay in ECO or Sustainable Tourism Certified properties when they are available in the destination.
- Select hybrid or small-to-medium hire cars when suitable options are available.
- Book directly with operators wherever this supports local businesses, fairer returns and responsible tourism practices.
- Staff travel with reusable water bottles and coffee cups, and use reusable shopping bags, to reduce single-use products and waste to landfill.
- Prioritise Sustainable Tourism Certified and ECO Certified operators for conference venues, familiarisation programs and delegate accommodation, where suitable options exist.

## Staff training and carbon literacy

Building internal capability is an important part of reducing our environmental impact and strengthening sustainability across the organisation. The majority of Ecotourism Australia staff have completed Climate Zero Carbon Literacy Training, helping build a shared understanding of emissions sources, reduction opportunities and the role each person can play in supporting lower-carbon decisions across our operations, events and member services. Further training and professional development opportunities are also actively supported and explored across a range of topics to strengthen staff capability, keep knowledge current and support continuous improvement.

## Efficient and sustainable audit planning

Efficient audit planning is one of the most practical ways Ecotourism Australia can reduce travel-related impacts while maintaining the integrity of onsite assessment. Where feasible, compliance audits are planned in regional clusters to reduce unnecessary travel, accommodation nights and non-audit days. This approach helps minimise emissions, reduce member costs, support auditor wellbeing and maintain audit quality.

Contractors are also encouraged, where reasonably practicable and operationally appropriate, to consider lower-emissions transport options, efficient route planning and opportunities to combine travel across multiple audits.

These practices provide a strong foundation, but we recognise there is more work to do. Our next opportunities include strengthening internal measurement of resource use, reviewing our approach to travel and offsets, improving procurement guidance, and continuing to use the Green Team as a practical mechanism for staff-led environmental improvement.



Adventure Bay, Bruny Island  
Tourism Australia

### 3. Ecotourism Australia's carbon footprint

#### Understanding our footprint

Measuring our carbon footprint helps Ecotourism Australia understand the emissions associated with our operations, travel, events and service delivery. For FY 2025–26, emissions were reported through Climate Zero's online software and categorised across Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 emissions. As a small organisation with no direct operational emissions from owned or controlled sources, our footprint is largely driven by indirect emissions – particularly business travel, employee commuting, accommodation and event-related activity.

#### Top Emissions

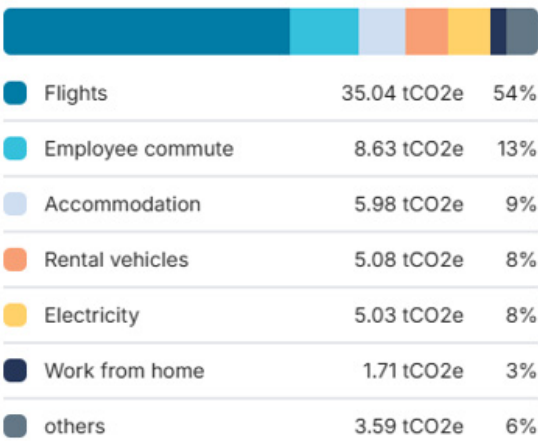


Figure 1: Ecotourism Australia's largest reported greenhouse gas emissions sources during FY 2025–26.

Flights were the largest reported emissions source, accounting for 54% of total emissions recorded through Climate Zero's online software. Employee commuting was the second-largest source at 13%, followed by accommodation at 9%, with rental vehicles and electricity each accounting for 8%. Rental vehicle emissions include vehicles used by staff to attend work-related events and vehicles used by independent third-party auditors to conduct onsite audits. While flights remain the most significant emissions source, Ecotourism Australia's total number of flights for industry events and government meetings was approximately 30 during the reporting period.

Scope 3 emissions contributed the largest share of Ecotourism Australia's reported footprint at 93.18%, followed by Scope 2 emissions at 6.81%. No Scope 1 emissions were reported, as Ecotourism Australia does not produce direct greenhouse gas emissions from sources it owns or controls. This emissions profile reflects the nature of our work, where many emissions arise from indirect activities such as flights, accommodation, employee commuting, rental vehicles, contractor travel and event-related activity. Ecotourism Australia's preferred meeting approach is online where this is suitable, while some industry events, government meetings and onsite audits require in-person attendance. Where feasible, audit trips are organised in regional clusters to reduce unnecessary travel and associated emissions.



Figure 2: Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions breakdown

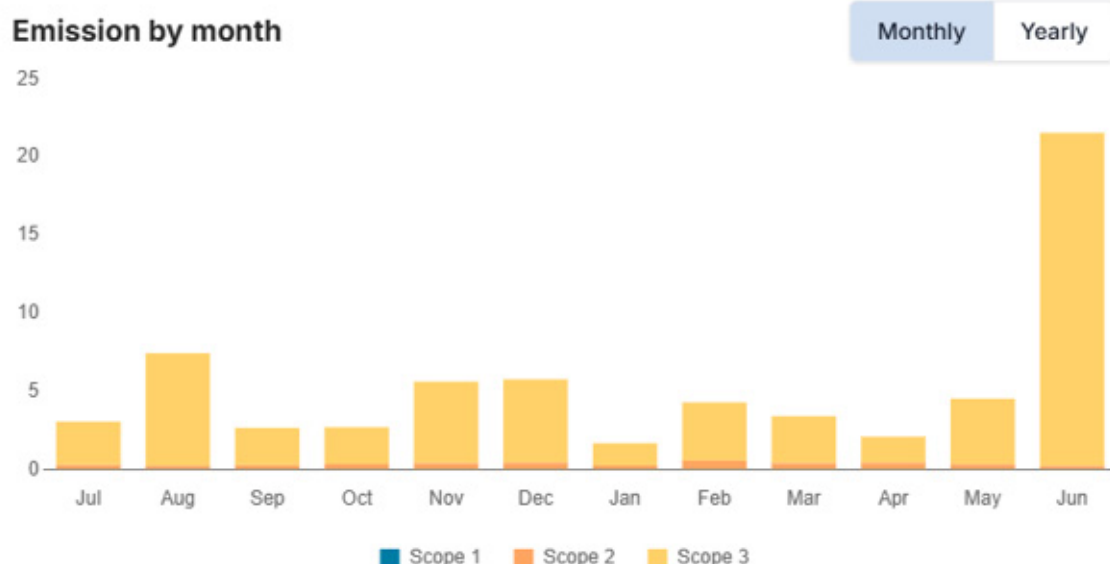


Figure 3: Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions by month

The increase in June emissions reflects the inclusion of travel and accommodation emissions associated with the Global Sustainable Tourism Summit 2026. Delegate travel and onsite accommodation emissions were calculated for survey respondents, meaning the June result captures both organisational activity and the additional event-related footprint reported through the Summit survey.

## Scope 1 emissions: no direct emissions reported

### Top emissions



Figure 4: Top emissions sources Scope 1

Ecotourism Australia does not produce direct greenhouse gas emissions from sources it owns or controls. No Scope 1 emissions were reported for FY 2025–26.

## Scope 2 emissions: purchased electricity

### Top emissions

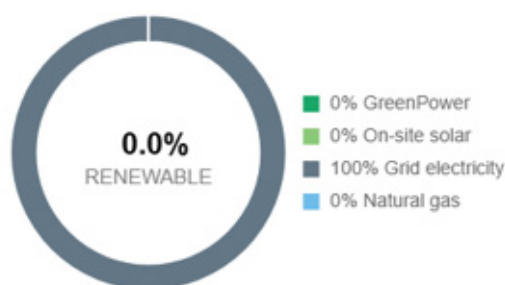


Figure 5: Top emissions sources Scope 2

Scope 2 emissions were entirely associated with purchased electricity. During the reporting period, Ecotourism Australia's office electricity was supplied through the grid. Due to the office being leased and serviced through a shared electricity meter with multiple tenancies, Ecotourism Australia is not currently able to source accredited renewable electricity independently. We have raised this opportunity with the landlord and will investigate renewable energy options should they become feasible in the future.

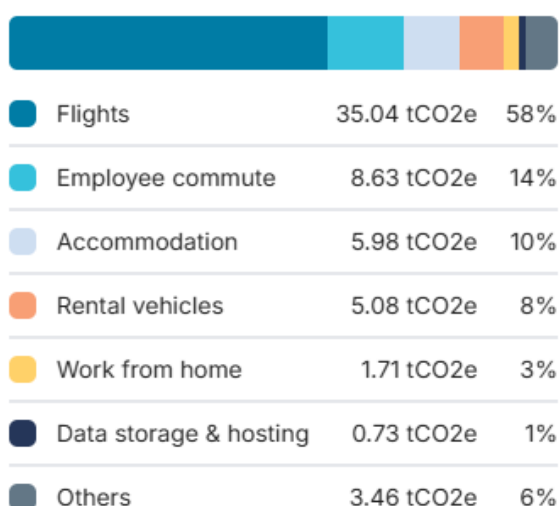
## Energy Sources

FY26 ▼



## Scope 3 emissions: indirect operational and travel impacts

### Top emissions



Scope 3 emissions made up the largest share of Ecotourism Australia's reported footprint. Flights were the largest Scope 3 source, contributing 58% of Scope 3 emissions. Employee commuting was the second-largest Scope 3 source at 14%, supported by Ecotourism Australia's hybrid working arrangements, which allow staff to work from home two days per week. Accommodation emissions were managed in part by prioritising ECO and Sustainable Tourism Certified accommodation where available.

Figure 6: Top emissions sources Scope 3

These results show that Ecotourism Australia's greatest emissions-reduction opportunities sit within Scope 3, while also reflecting the nature of our role as a national peak body. Face-to-face engagement with operators, destinations, government and industry partners is essential to our advocacy, capacity-building and sector leadership work. Our priority is therefore to make travel as purposeful and efficient as possible, continue reducing avoidable travel, plan audit trips in regional clusters where feasible, prioritise lower-emissions transport and accommodation options where practical, improve emissions data quality and review the role of offsets in line with current best practice.

As this is our first public-facing impact report, we recognise that our measurement approach will continue to mature. Future reporting will aim to strengthen data quality, clarify reporting boundaries and improve the consistency of emissions tracking across operations, events and contractor activity.



Ecotourism Australia Team

## 4. Global Sustainable Tourism Summit 2026

The Global Sustainable Tourism Summit 2026 was one of Ecotourism Australia's most visible opportunities to demonstrate our sustainability principles in action. Held from 2 to 5 June 2026 at Mercure Gold Coast Resort, a Sustainable Tourism Certified property, the Summit was designed to reduce environmental impacts, support responsible suppliers, encourage connection and learning, and support community and environmental outcomes.

Selecting a Sustainable Tourism Certified venue was a deliberate decision to align the Summit with Ecotourism Australia's certification values. Mercure Gold Coast Resort's sustainability initiatives include solar energy, onsite composting, biodiversity programs and reduced waste through its Clean for Green program. These initiatives helped reduce specific event impacts, particularly in relation to waste, composting, energy and biodiversity initiatives at the venue.



Figure 7: Clean for Green



Figure 8: Local and freshly produced elixir.

Suppliers and partners were selected based on their commitment to sustainable and ethical practices, including waste reduction and responsible sourcing. Catering was guided by sustainable food principles, with a focus on seasonal and locally sourced produce.



Figure 9: The Green Menu

All dietary requirements were catered for, ensuring inclusive and responsible food service. A high proportion (66%) of vegetarian and plant-based options were included as standard.

Travel emissions from delegates who completed the GSTS26 Survey were calculated; this includes their travel to and from the destination and carbon emissions related to their on-site accommodation, resulting in a considerable spike in Scope 3 emissions during the month of June 2026.

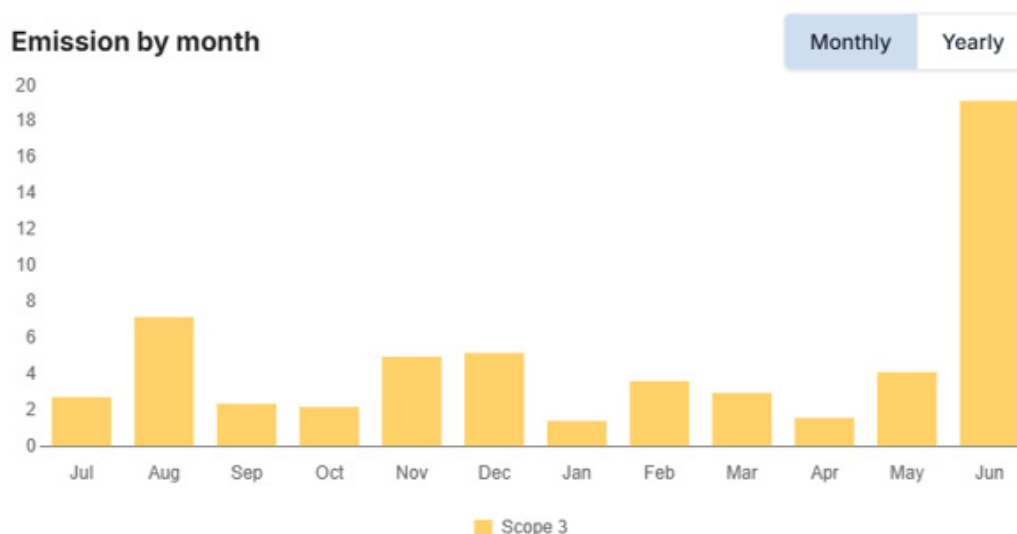


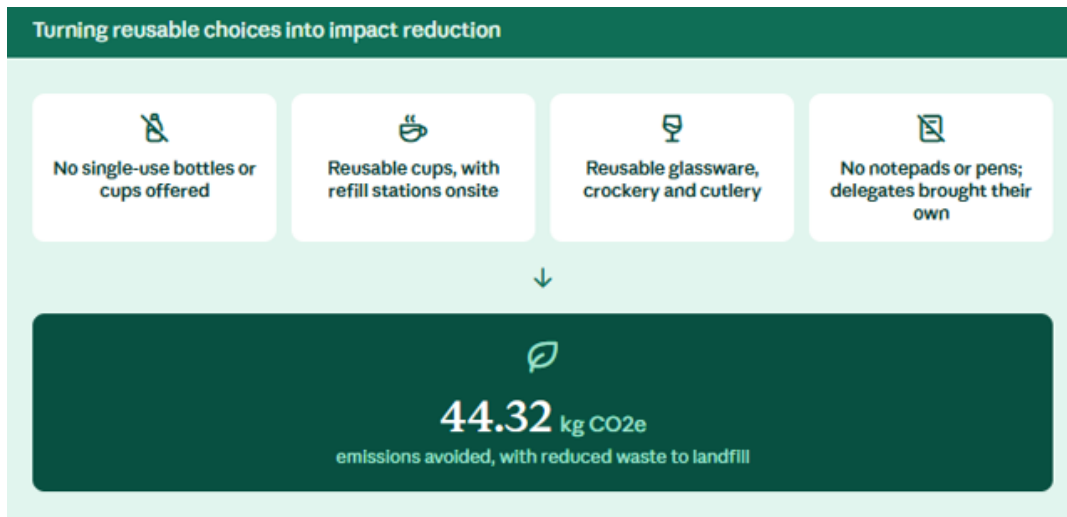
Figure 10: Scope 3 Emissions by month

## Reducing waste through reusable choices

All food and beverage service at the Summit was delivered using reusable glassware, crockery and cutlery to minimise waste and environmental impact. Delegates were encouraged to bring reusable cups, notebooks or laptops, and conference merchandise was intentionally minimised. Notepads and pens were not provided, reducing unnecessary materials and reinforcing the expectation that sustainable events can be practical, professional and low-waste by design.

## Results

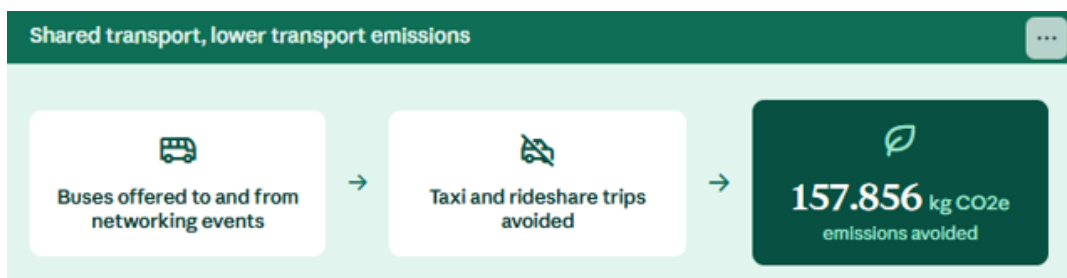
These measures reduced reliance on single-use items, minimised unnecessary conference merchandise and helped divert avoidable waste from landfill. They also reinforced a simple but important message for delegates – lower-waste events are achievable when sustainability is considered from the planning stage.



## Reducing transport emissions

Group transport was provided via buses to and from networking events, reducing reliance on individual taxis and rideshare services. This helped lower vehicle movements, support delegate convenience and reduce transport-related emissions associated with Summit activities.

## Results



During the Global Sustainable Tourism Summit 2026, Ecotourism Australia partnered with Reforest to plant one tree for every delegate in Doonan Creek Environment Reserve, Sunshine Coast (Doonan Creek Restoration). Reforest estimates that this contribution will support the restoration of 170 m<sup>2</sup> of wildlife habitat and contribute to the removal of 6.2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over time. This initiative was a contribution to habitat restoration as a standalone environmental contribution, not an offset of the Summit's operational or delegate travel emissions. ([Please click here to find more information about this project.](#))

Instead of traditional speaker gifts, Ecotourism Australia donated \$1,000 each to three organisations, [Country Needs People](#), [WIRES](#) and [Paralympics Australia](#), supporting broader community outcomes through the Summit.

The Summit demonstrated that improving sustainability in event delivery depends on early planning, supplier engagement, clear delegate expectations and strong internal collaboration. The entire event was organised in-house by Ecotourism Australia's small team of 11, and we are proud to have delivered such a successful national event while continuing our day-to-day work supporting members, partners and the broader tourism sector. It also highlighted areas for improvement, including strengthening delegate emissions data collection, continuing to reduce event-related travel impacts, further embedding local and responsible procurement, and using future Summits to showcase the four pillars of sustainability in action.



## 5. Supporting conservation, communities and culture

Ecotourism Australia's impact extends well beyond our own operations. Through our certification programs, destination programs, applicant pathways, coaching, resources and member support, we help tourism businesses and destinations embed sustainability into everyday practice. In FY 2025–26, more than 300 businesses were coached and encouraged to strengthen their support for conservation and community initiatives.

## Supporting sustainable tourism businesses and destinations

One of Ecotourism Australia's most significant areas of impact is the support we provide to tourism businesses and destinations to strengthen sustainability in practice. This work supports environmental stewardship, cultural respect, community contribution, responsible business and good governance. It also contributes to economic sustainability by helping businesses build credibility, improve market readiness, strengthen operational resilience and demonstrate sustainability commitments to visitors, partners, destinations and government stakeholders.

Independent third-party audits are an important part of this impact. Beyond assessing compliance with certification requirements, audits provide operators and destinations with practical observations, improvement ideas and feedback that can support stronger sustainability performance over time. This helps ensure certification is not treated as a one-off achievement, but as part of an ongoing journey of learning, accountability and improvement.

While some of this impact is indirect and will take time to measure more consistently, it is central to Ecotourism Australia's purpose. Future reports will aim to better capture how our programs and support services contribute to business capability, destination stewardship, member resilience and the broader transition toward more sustainable tourism across Australia.

Examples of organisations and programs promoted through this work include:

### *Marine and coastal conservation such as*

- Take 3 for the Sea
- Eye on the Reef
- Project Manta

### *Biodiversity and wildlife such as*

- Bush Heritage
- WWF Australia
- Currumbin Wildlife Hospital
- BirdLife Australia
- iNaturalist

### *Community and place-based stewardship such as*

- Clean Up Australia
- Yarra Riverkeeper Association
- Friends of Parks Queensland

Ecotourism Australia also developed a Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship resource to support tour guides to confidently embed sustainability and environmental stewardship into everyday guiding practice. The resource includes best-practice regenerative tourism examples from across Australia and was presented at the Caravan Industry Association of Australia National Conference 2026. It has also been made available through the Queensland Guiding Community of Practice portal, extending its reach to guides and tourism professionals seeking practical examples of better practice.

## First Nations engagement and cultural contribution

Respect for culture and Country is an important part of Ecotourism Australia's approach to sustainable tourism. Through our certification programs, resources and sector engagement, we encourage tourism businesses and destinations to consider cultural respect, meaningful engagement and responsible visitor practices as part of their sustainability journey. This includes recognising the importance of Traditional Custodians, supporting respectful language and interpretation, and encouraging approaches that contribute to culturally appropriate and place-based tourism experiences.

We also recognise that this is an area where our own organisational practice must continue to mature. Staff have access to cultural awareness opportunities, including AIATSIS Core Cultural Learning, to strengthen understanding, respect and confidence in engaging with First Nations perspectives, culture and Country. Future work may include further strengthening internal processes, staff capability, respectful communications and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism businesses, communities and stakeholders, subject to appropriate consultation, consideration and approval.

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, QLD  
Advanced ECO Certified  
Photo credit: Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary



## Staff contribution and cultural learning

Staff are encouraged to contribute directly to environmental, conservation, cultural, educational and community outcomes through Ecotourism Australia's paid Volunteer Leave Policy. This enables eligible staff to take up to two days of paid volunteer leave each year to support approved not-for-profit, conservation, cultural or community organisations. By supporting staff to give their time and share the outcomes of their volunteering, the policy helps turn Ecotourism Australia's values into practical action and creates a visible good-news story about our culture of contribution, learning and community impact. In FY 2025–26, one staff member used this opportunity to participate in a revegetation project on Lady Elliot Island, the southernmost island of the Great Barrier Reef.

During the annual staff team day, Ecotourism Australia staff participated in an immersive wildlife experience with a local ECO Certified operator in Southeast Queensland. This provided an opportunity to learn directly from a certified operator, strengthen team connection and experience the types of nature-based visitor experiences our programs support.

Cultural learning is also supported through formal and informal staff development opportunities that strengthen understanding, respect and confidence in engaging with First Nations perspectives, culture and Country.

Together, these activities demonstrate how Ecotourism Australia contributes to conservation, community and cultural outcomes both through the tourism businesses we support and through our own staff actions. They also reinforce the importance of connecting sustainability with practical participation, learning and local contribution.





Tasman Venture, QLD  
Advanced ECO Certified  
Photo credit: Tasman Venture

## 6. Governance and sustainable operations

Strong governance is central to Ecotourism Australia's credibility, impact and long-term sustainability. As a certification body and leader in ecotourism and sustainable tourism, we recognise that responsible management is not separate from sustainability – it is one of the ways we ensure our decisions, systems and culture support positive outcomes for people, place and planet.

Ecotourism Australia is committed to observing high standards of professional conduct and ethical behaviour in all our activities. We comply with applicable laws, regulations and standards, and embed compliance and risk management into our business operations through policies, procedures and regular review. We identify, assess and monitor the impacts generated by our organisation each year and use this information to review our management systems, policies and improvement priorities.

### Walking the talk through our Corporate Strategy

This commitment is reflected in Ecotourism Australia's Corporate Strategy 2024–28. One of the strategy's six pillars, Organisational Resilience and Growth, focuses on building a resilient, high-performing organisation positioned for growth. The pillar reinforces our commitment to walk the talk, maintain strong governance and effective business processes, ensure long-term financial sustainability, strengthen staff and Board capability, create pathways for staff growth and development, and remain agile in response to opportunities and threats.

For this report, Organisational Resilience and Growth provides the strategic foundation for how we understand our own organisational impact. It recognises that sustainability depends not only on environmental performance, but also on sound governance, financial sustainability, effective systems, capable people, responsible culture and the ability to keep improving over time.

## Policies, risk and responsible management

Our governance approach is supported by a policy framework that guides staff wellbeing, responsible recruitment, workplace health and safety, complaints management, leave, mental health, natural disaster response and professional conduct. These policies help ensure our internal practices are consistent, fair and aligned with our purpose as a sustainability-focused organisation.

Some of our policies include:

- Code of Conduct Policy
- People Policy
- WHS Policy
- Natural Disaster Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- Volunteer Leave Policy
- Parental Leave Policy
- Complaint Management Policy

The Natural Disaster Policy is particularly important for supporting our members who are often disproportionately affected by environmental and climate-related disasters. In FY 2025–26, Ecotourism Australia offered assistance to 239 businesses impacted by natural and climate disasters across Australia. This included businesses affected by flooding in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory; bushfires in Victoria, cyclone events across Queensland and New South Wales; and the South Australian algal bloom.



## Certification integrity and assurance

Governance is particularly important because Ecotourism Australia's work is built on credibility and trust. Our certification programs rely on clear standards, consistent processes, independent assessment and ongoing assurance. Maintaining certification integrity means ensuring that program requirements are applied fairly and transparently, auditors and contractors are appropriately supported and managed, conflicts of interest are identified and addressed, and complaints or appeals are handled through clear processes.

This governance framework supports our role in helping tourism operators and destinations demonstrate credible sustainability practice, while also keeping Ecotourism Australia accountable to the standards, values and behaviours we promote across the sector.

## People, Board capability and culture

A sustainable organisation depends on capable, engaged people and a culture that supports learning, accountability and improvement. Ecotourism Australia's staff and Board play an important role in keeping the organisation focused on its mission, challenging us to improve and contributing practical ideas that help strengthen our sustainability performance. This includes supporting staff capability, creating pathways for professional growth and maintaining a dedicated Board with the skills, experience and renewal needed to guide the organisation over the long term.

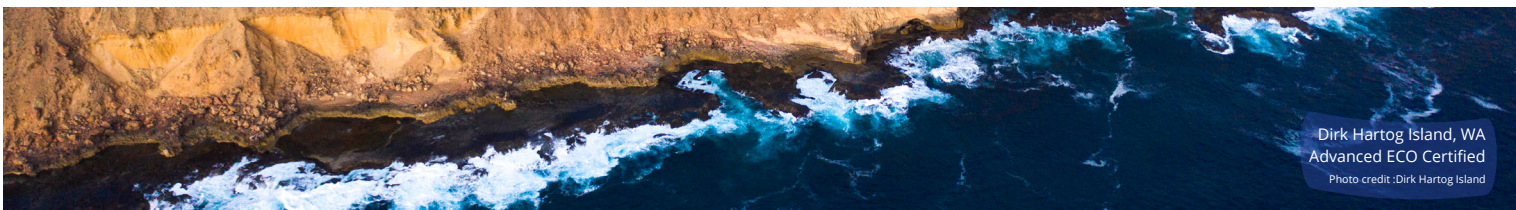
The Board also supports organisational sustainability through clear corporate governance. During the reporting period, most Board meetings were held online via Teams, reducing the need for travel while maintaining regular oversight, discussion and decision making. The Board met face to face only once during the year, reflecting a practical approach that balances effective governance, relationship building and lower-impact ways of working.

Supporting staff wellbeing is an important part of building a resilient, high-performing organisation. Ecotourism Australia's Mental Health Policy provides a framework for promoting psychological health, wellbeing and respectful workplace practices, while recognising that staff may need support at different times. Since 2024, Ecotourism Australia has also provided paid access to an Employee Assistance Program, giving staff access to confidential external support when they need it.

## Financial sustainability and business resilience

Financial sustainability is also a core part of our organisational impact. Ecotourism Australia's Corporate Strategy identifies the importance of a business model that supports long-term financial sustainability, diversified income streams, fee-for-service opportunities, licensing and preferred supplier arrangements, corporate and in-kind support, and the ability to respond to changing risks and opportunities. Strengthening our financial resilience helps ensure we can continue delivering certification, capacity building, advocacy and sector leadership into the future.

This financial accountability is supported through annual independent audit processes and formal reporting to members through Ecotourism Australia's Annual General Meeting. The AGM provides an important governance mechanism for sharing audited financial information, reflecting on organisational performance, engaging with members and maintaining transparency around the organisation's direction, priorities and long-term sustainability.



Dirk Hartog Island, WA  
Advanced ECO Certified  
Photo credit :Dirk Hartog Island



## Digital systems and operational efficiency

The Corporate Strategy also recognises the role of digital technology in maximising product and service offerings, streamlining operations and creating business efficiencies. Continued investment in fit-for-purpose systems will support better service delivery, reduce administrative burden, improve the experience of members and stakeholders, and help Ecotourism Australia operate more efficiently as it grows. As our digital systems and data use continue to evolve, we also recognise the importance of responsible digital governance, including cyber security, confidentiality, protection of member and stakeholder information, and respect for intellectual property. These commitments help safeguard the trust placed in Ecotourism Australia and support the secure, ethical and effective use of information across our operations.

Ecotourism Australia also continues to assess the accessibility of our materials, logos and website as part of our commitment to inclusive communication. As part of website updates undertaken over the past 18 months, we added a dedicated accessibility widget to support users with vision impairment and other accessibility needs. We also made small accessibility improvements to our logos, including adjustments to contrast levels and readability. We will continue reviewing our digital and written materials to improve usability and access over time.

## Responsible use of artificial intelligence

As artificial intelligence becomes more common in sustainability, ESG reporting and organisational efficiency, Ecotourism Australia recognises the importance of being clear about where AI does and does not belong in our work. We categorically do not use, and will not use, AI to assess certification compliance, make certification decisions or replace the professional judgement, independence and integrity required within our certification system. Certification assessments remain grounded in clear criteria, evidence-based review, independent auditing, human judgement and accountable decision making.

At the same time, we recognise that AI may offer opportunities to improve efficiency, reduce administrative burden and support better use of information where this is appropriate, secure and carefully governed. Ecotourism Australia is therefore exploring practical uses of AI for internal productivity and operational improvement, but only where these uses align with our ethical standards, confidentiality obligations, privacy responsibilities and commitment to certification integrity. AI will not be used in place of robust assurance processes, transparent governance or responsible human oversight.



## 7. Next steps and continuous improvement

This first public-facing Sustainability Impact Report establishes an important baseline for Ecotourism Australia. It highlights areas of progress, confirms where our largest environmental impacts sit, and reinforces the importance of being transparent about the operational realities of our role as a national peak body. Our advocacy, certification and sector leadership work depends on strong relationships, practical engagement and trusted presence with operators, destinations, government and industry partners across Australia and internationally. Our next steps will focus on making travel as purposeful and efficient as possible, improving data quality, strengthening responsible procurement and continuing to embed sustainability across our operations, governance, people and culture.

### Priority improvement areas

- **Emissions** – continue to reduce avoidable travel through online meetings, careful planning and efficient audit delivery.
- **Travel and commuting** – continue to use face-to-face engagement strategically where it strengthens advocacy, sector leadership, certification support, government relations and industry collaboration, while making travel as purposeful and efficient as possible through regional clustering, online meetings where suitable and lower-emissions travel choices where practical.
- **Data and reporting maturity** – improve emissions data quality, clarify reporting boundaries and strengthen data collection for events, contractor travel, advocacy activity and audit-related emissions.
- **Procurement and supplier influence** – strengthen procurement guidance for sustainable suppliers, recycled and repurposed materials, local purchasing and circular economy choices.

- **People and culture** – maintain “Walking the talk” as a standing monthly team meeting item and continue supporting staff training, professional development and staff-led sustainability ideas.
- **Reconciliation and cultural leadership** – explore opportunities to strengthen Ecotourism Australia’s internal reconciliation approach and cultural leadership over time, including options to support stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tourism businesses, communities and stakeholders.
- **Governance and accountability** – continue annual review of sustainability impacts, policies and management systems, and report progress publicly through future annual impact reports.

These priorities will guide our next reporting cycle and help Ecotourism Australia continue improving how we walk the talk. As our reporting matures, we will continue to share progress transparently, acknowledge where more work is needed and use our experience to strengthen both our own organisation and the sustainable tourism sector we support. This includes balancing responsible management of our operational footprint with the face-to-face engagement needed to advocate effectively, build trust and support meaningful change across the visitor economy.



YHA Gramplans Eco (Halls Gap), VIC  
Sustainable Tourism Certified  
Photo credit: YHA Australia

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