

Sustainability Action Plan





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Revision A
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Introduction

Guiding ONA toward comprehensive sustainability milestones and methodologies, this action plan serves as a blueprint for enhancing our studio’s sustainability performance and design accomplishments. Acknowledging the significant environmental impact of the industry, where construction contributes nearly 40% of energy-related CO2 emissions globally (Architects Declare, 2019). Our practice is committed to addressing these challenges head-on.

As designers, we recognise our power to influence positive change despite not controlling building development. Our interactions with stakeholders grant us the ability to inspire clients, consultants, contractors, and suppliers, as well as the broader community. By committing to sustainable principles, we believe we can organically drive change in our ecosystem.

This Sustainability Action Plan outlines our practice’s envisioned sustainable goals, sharing our guiding principles with our peers and the broader community. Developed collaboratively by the entire ONA team, it encapsulates our collective commitment. As we evolve, this plan will evolve with us, reflecting our growing knowledge, intentions, and aspirations. By sharing this version publicly, we hold ourselves accountable for our ongoing efforts.



Our Commitment

At our core, we are dedicated to integrating a culture where the health of our natural habitat is considered in every facet of our architectural practice. Our commitment lies in confronting the urgent environmental challenges that define our time. As designers, we choose to take responsibility for shaping a sustainable and just future for both our environment and its inhabitants.

Fostering leadership within our team is paramount to us. Our practice encourages open dialogues at all levels, empowering each member to champion transformative change in the built environment. By engaging in constructive conversations with collaborators and the wider public, we aspire to drive positive discourse that accelerates meaningful change.

Collaboration is the cornerstone of our approach. We pledge to share knowledge generously, cultivating a community of industry professionals united in purpose. Embracing the tenets of adaptive reuse and multiple functionality, and the circular economy principle, we pledge to explore innovative design strategies that integrate sustainability seamlessly while delivering functional, aesthetically pleasing spaces.

We recognise that sustainability extends beyond design and into the choices our clients make. We commit to engaging with and educating our clients about sustainable options and their long-term benefits.

Realising our sustainable vision demands sustained effort over multiple years, and ongoing commitment thereafter. The inaugural step towards this realisation is the enactment of our comprehensive Sustainability Action Plan. Through transparent, measurable, and shared goals, we chart our progress and hold ourselves accountable. Proudly joining the Australian Architects Declare movement in 2022, we commit to embodying its principles within our daily operations.



Principles + Framework

As signatories of Australian Architects Declare, the main framework which we align our sustainable targets and commitments is the Ten Principles of Declare.

While our current practice meets many of these principles, we are committed to developing an approach and culture which consistently aligns with all ten principles.

This Action Plan institutes curated Targets and Commitments into the workplace operations and design practices of ONA, addressing and fulfilling all ten principles.

ARCHITECTS DECLARE 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1.

Raise Awareness of the climate and biodiversity emergencies and the urgent need for action amongst our clients and supply chains.
2.

Advocate for faster change in our industry towards regenerative design practices and higher government funding priority to support this.
3.

Establish climate and biodiversity mitigation principles as the key measure of our industry's success: demonstrated through awards, prizes and listing.
4.

Share knowledge and research to that end on an open-source basis.
5.

Evaluate all new projects against the aspiration to contribute positively to mitigating climate breakdown, and encourage our clients to adopt this approach.
6.

Upgrade existing buildings for extended use as a more carbon efficient alternative to demolition and new build whenever there is a viable choice.
7.

Include life cycle costing, whole life carbon modelling and post occupancy evaluation as part of our basic scope of work, to reduce both embodied and operational resource use.
8.

Adopt more regenerative design principles in our studios, with the aim of designing architecture and urbanism that goes beyond the standard of net zero carbon in use.
9.

Collaborate with engineers, contractors and clients to further reduce construction waste.
10.

Accelerate the shift to low embodied carbon materials in all our work. Minimise wasteful use of resources in architecture and urban planning, both in quantum and in detail.
While our current practice meets many of these principles, we are committed to developing an approach and culture which consistently aligns with all ten principles. O'Neill Architecture is currently aligned with the 'Review' level of commitment. It is our goal to reach the 'Extend' level by 2024 by incorporating the targets laid out in this Action Plan.

Targets + Commitments

REVIEW

A firm who has signed the declaration but whose work or practices are not consistently meeting the goals of the movement

EXTEND

A firm whose business operations and projects consistently align with the majority of the architects declare but who do not have a formalised approach that captures all aspects of the business.

AMPLIFY

A firm well versed in sustainability and a leader in the field in terms of project and advocacy.

REGENERATE

A more broadly recognised leader in advocacy and action, whose SAP tackles areas beyond the profession.

We as architects are aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long espoused the cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits embedded in the holistic relationship of Caring for Country. Each Signatory should define their current location and a develop a plan to improve. The degree of commitment by an architectural practice to these ten principles, defines the level of the Sustainability Action Plan (SAP).

O'Neill Architecture is currently aligned with the 'Review' level of commitment as defined by the Australian Architects Declare Principles. Our Targets and Commitments, as defined below, ensure that our renewed focus of sustainable design, operations, and culture will result in consistent growth and movement through the levels defined above.

Through completion and implementation of our Targets and Commitments we will move into 'Extend' by the end of 2024. By 2027, we will be established as a practice within the 'Amplify' commitment level. By the end of the decade, as this Action Plan is concluded, we will review the growth, progress and achievements of the practice. With the elevated knowledge, networks, and influence our changing practice gains we will establish a Regenerative Action Plan that will guide us towards the 'Regenerate' commitment level.

Internal Operations

Now	Future	Long Term
2024	2026	2030
Establish SAP, making it fully accessible to the public to ensure accountability.	Establish the positions and roles of the Sustainability Facilitation Team and the member requirements.	Develop a Regenerative Action Plan
Retrofit office space with energy efficient lighting, heating and cooling.	ONA team members attend at least one CPD accredited presentation focused on sustainability each year.	Participate in environmental volunteer work to help keep our community clean.
Exclusive use of sustainable cleaning and communal products.	Set rules for suppliers: Digital brochures, return policy for samples, recycling all hardcopy forms.	Achieve BCorp Certification
Establish waste management system that utilises recycling and composting to minimise landfill.	Achieve Carbon Neutral certification	
Sustainability Team to research and present at quarterly team talks on initiatives, precedents, materials, etc.	Promote locally sourced, organic catering options for office events and meetings.	
Promote employees sharing their learning experiences of sustainability through digital means or in-person presentations.	Utilise Justin O'Neill's position on the AIA National Council to promote and advocate for sustainable standards across the Architecture industry.	

Design Outcomes

Now	Future	Long Term
2024	2026	2030
Incorporate sustainability parameters into our project material schedules.	Develop brochures/presentations to inform clients of sustainable design options, costs, and benefits.	Establish sustainable requirements for AIA design awards as the minimum benchmark for projects.
Establish a matrix by which we track the sustainable achievements of our completed projects. .	Incorporate a sustainability workshop with clients into the briefing stage of projects to accurately establish their goals.	Collate a range of highly sustainable case studies which are utilised to establish the benchmarks for projects.
Create a simple sustainability consideration guide for residential and commercial projects. Include fact sheet for clients.	Develop register of recovery resource centres with responsible disposal and recycling practices.	Establish a Regenerative Action Plan and the timeframe to achieve carbon positive targets.
Establish realistic sustainability goals and objectives for all projects in the functional brief.	Develop sustainability checklist and evaluation framework document for each phase of the design process with measurable targets for carbon mitigation.	Include within standard drawing pack a deconstruction plan with guide for end of life-cycle options for materials.
Establish a register of local suppliers to maximise use of locally sourced materials, highlighting sustainable parameters of products.	Establish a standardised office template for conducting post-occupancy evaluations and exit interviews.	Target diverting all waste from landfill, achieving zero waste on projects
Cultivate a network of clients, suppliers, and consultants with a shared mindset towards sustainability.	Incorporate energy modelling systems/programs to assist informed design decisions.	Incorporate post-occupancy evaluations to monitor that initiatives and designs achieve anticipated outcome.
	Utilise shadow analysis studies to lower solar radiation gain and optimise building envelopes.	Ensure all materials and products specified are compliant with The Living Building Challenge Red List.

Design + Approach

Design holds the key to sustainable buildings by influencing every aspect, from material choices to energy efficiency. It optimises orientation, spatial use, minimises waste, and enhances functionality. Thoughtful design integrates nature, technology, and human needs, forging a harmonious balance that reduces environmental impact and ensures long-term viability and even net benefit and positive impact.

OUR VISION

By the end of 2030, our architectural journey will be defined by a holistic approach to a design strategy that underscores our unwavering commitment to sustainability and innovation.

Central to our vision is the pursuit of industry-leading ‘green performance’ across all projects, establishing these benchmarks, and delivering. We are dedicated to establishing a deep understanding of sustainable design principles, fostering collaboration with clients from project inception. By continuously informing them about options and cost estimates, including consideration for operational and maintenance factors, we ensure informed decision-making.



Evaluation + Reporting

Evaluation and reporting are vital for sustainable practices and industries as they drive continuous improvement. They shed light on successes, failures, and areas for growth, fostering accountability and informed decision-making. Transparent reporting accelerates collective learning, elevating standards and propelling the entire industry toward a more sustainable future.

OUR VISION

In our commitment to sustainability, we recognise that the journey doesn’t end with design; it extends to thorough evaluation and transparent reporting. This holistic approach propels us to foster real change within the construction industry, prompting a paradigm shift toward sustainable practices.

An essential aspect of our strategy is raising awareness of sustainability as the new industry norm. We view it as our responsibility to advocate for and exemplify the integration of sustainable practices within architectural projects, inspiring a broader movement of change. Our commitment to improvement fuels the evolution of our evaluation process. Every project becomes a learning opportunity, as we meticulously assess what succeeded, where we encountered challenges, and whether there were unexplored avenues we could have pursued. Leveraging the rapidly advancing landscape of technology and tracking software, we will design and refine our own systems, ensuring that our evaluations are realistic and informative.

Our aspirations extend further, aiming to offer comprehensive life-cycle costing, whole-of-life carbon modelling, and energy efficiency analysis for all projects. These evaluations encompass not only the design decisions but also delve into the materials specified. This meticulous approach allows us to curate an up-to-date catalogue of sustainable materials and reliable suppliers, streamlining our commitment to environmentally conscious construction.

We understand that our ambitions hold greater power when shared collectively. It’s our belief that sustainable change must resonate throughout the architecture industry and beyond. By transparently sharing our benchmarks, evaluations, and innovative systems, we aim to spark a collaborative effort, raising the standards for all and turning sustainability from an aspiration into standard practice.



Outreach + Advocacy

Architects have an important role as facilitators as we interact with all stakeholders within the built environment industry. This gives us an ability to promote our values and commitments to a wide audience, utilising our platform and educating whenever possible.

OUR VISION

Our commitment to outreach and advocacy is rooted in our belief that driving sustainability necessitates collective action and informed engagement. It was with pride that we announced our Partner, Justin O'Neill, as a newly elected Councillor on the AIA National Council. Justin's belief in sustainable design and industry evolution propels him to champion our findings on the path to regenerative designs from his prominent position.

We recognise that sustainability advocacy encompasses a wide spectrum, from educating others on proper recycling to lobbying for increased government funding and regulations. Armed with an evolving understanding of sustainable design, we are determined to empower our clients with knowledge. By transparently illustrating the costs and benefits of sustainable choices, we strive to facilitate well informed decision making.

Public understanding and education are pivotal to the sustainable movement. We look to actively engage with industry and community discussions, both hosting and participating, to amplify awareness. Our commitment extends to developing solutions and educational materials tailored for average families and standard building typologies. Through targeted efforts, we aim to magnify the impact of small changes on overall carbon mitigation, advocating for sustainability at all levels of society.



Training + Education

OUR VISION

At ONA, our commitment to fostering a culture of knowledge-sharing and continuous improvement underscores our pursuit of robust sustainability principles. Our approach revolves around offering a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, a curated in-house lecture series, and external presentations from industry experts focused on sustainability and cutting-edge technologies.

A core aspect of our strategy is cultivating a collaborative environment where sustainable knowledge is woven into the fabric of our team. We empower employees to share their learning experiences, be it through digital platforms or in-person presentations. This approach not only bolsters individual growth but also cultivates a collective pool of expertise.

A distinctive highlight is our Green Building Reviews, a collaborative exercise that involves the team in design sessions to elevate the environmental sustainability of our projects. This inclusive approach harnesses the collective intellect of our team to generate innovative ideas and questions that enhance our commitment to sustainability. Our ultimate vision is to cultivate an office populated with sustainable champions. These champions are empowered to permeate project design decisions with consideration for environmental repercussions. Through continuous training and education, we aim to not only improve our internal practices but to extend our influence on the industry.



Operations + Outlook

Office culture and operations are the foundation of a sustainable practice and industry. A culture that embraces sustainability nurtures innovation, fosters responsible decision-making, and inspires collective action. Sustainable operations minimise environmental impact, reduce waste, and set an example, ensuring that sustainability is not just a concept but a way of life in the practice and industry.

OUR VISION

The foundation of our internal office operations and culture is our unwavering commitment to sustainability. Central to this commitment is the establishment of a dedicated sustainability team that will lead the charge in ingraining sustainability into every aspect of our office life. Our upcoming transition to a new sustainable office space exemplifies our dedication to environmentally conscious practices. The fit-out design will be a testament to our commitment, incorporating sustainable design principles to inspire us to create more eco-friendly designs.



We take a proactive stance in monitoring and reducing our carbon footprint, striving for continuous improvement. Our goal is not only to track our emissions but also to target reductions wherever possible. To further reinforce our commitment, we offset our carbon emissions with credits, working diligently towards achieving carbon neutrality. Additionally, we foster a culture of waste reduction, encouraging employees to minimize waste by bringing reusable items, emphasising our collective responsibility for sustainability.



