

ECU Strategic Plan 2026-2031

Connecting to make a difference





Contents





1.0

Kaya (Hello)

Ngalak djoorabiny noona djinanginy. Ngalak kaaditj koora koora Noongarang, balang Noongar Birdiya. Ngalang yaanginy Noongar boodjera nyin.

We are happy to see you. We acknowledge all Noongar people, including the Noongar Elders, as we share this space (Noongar country) together.

ECU acknowledges and respects our continuing association with the Whadjuk people and the Wardandi people of the Noongar nation, the traditional custodians of the land upon which our Australian campuses stand.

Edith Cowan University (ECU) is a leading university in Western Australia (WA), distinguished by its commitment to high-quality teaching, student experience and research impact.



Over the last decade, our emphasis on student support has created a vibrant learning environment resulting in consistently positive student outcomes and high levels of satisfaction. The University ranks highly among WA institutions for providing access and participation opportunities to students from regional, remote and low socioeconomic backgrounds, underscoring its role as an inclusive institution that broadens higher education opportunities across the state.

Over this period, we have strengthened our research, showing significant improvement in research quality and impact. We have maintained a strong financial position, facilitating sustainable growth and investment in key areas such as research and infrastructure. High staff satisfaction and a collaborative university culture have consistently reinforced ECU's ability to deliver quality teaching and sustained student support.

As Edith Cowan University approaches its 40th anniversary in 2031, the external environment presents remarkable opportunities. Government and community expectations of universities are appropriately high.

The evolving tertiary education landscape in Western Australia and globally, shifting student needs, advances in technology and emerging societal challenges requiring innovative solutions informed by research demand that we focus our ambition on how we can make a unique difference.

We are well-positioned to respond to these opportunities, leveraging our financial stability and strong collaborative culture. We will demonstrate how a contemporary university can serve its people and communities.

This plan charts the way forward. Our University will transform lives and enrich society.

Thank you to the staff, students, alumni and broader community for their contribution to the development of the strategy.

Gaye McMath

Chancellor

March 2026



In 2026 Edith Cowan University enters an exciting next phase in its history.



The opening of the bold, brilliant city campus is not simply another building in Perth's central business district. It is a symbol of who we are and how we approach our work.

- It demonstrates our ability to deliver on our courageous vision.
- It embodies our commitment to providing an outstanding student experience.
- It celebrates innovation and excellence.
- It represents how a university can have a positive impact through its education and research.
- And it does so with a clear commitment to connection: between our staff and students; with and for our local and global communities.

We have much to celebrate; but we will not rest on our laurels.

We know there is more to do and are determined to do even greater things in the years ahead.

We reflect at this time on the legacy of our namesake, Edith Dircksey Cowan, the first woman to be elected to any Australian parliament. Edith Cowan was driven to make a difference for her community through her service. She challenged the status quo, she worked tirelessly to effect change.

And so will we.

We commit to honour our history, and our legacy through our actions outlined in our *Strategic Plan 2026-2031: Connecting to make a difference*.

Professor Clare Pollock

Vice-Chancellor

March 2026



Our strategy

We remain steadfastly committed to our Purpose to transform lives and enrich society. Over the course of this Strategic Plan, our Vision is to achieve our Purpose through connecting and focusing on impact – for WA and globally.

Success will be reflected by how we are seen by future generations – of students, staff and the wider community – framed by thoughts on what ‘postcards from the future’ might say about what ECU means to these key stakeholders. That we are education innovators advancing and influencing the nature of higher education learning. That our research is centred on a strong commitment to partnership in a model without boundaries. That we continue to focus deeply on people – with sector-leading equity outcomes and a clear commitment to our staff, their careers and their wellbeing. In being deeply embedded in how WA evolves, we will ensure that we gain global respect for our commitment to skills, economic, social and cultural development.

Our strategy recognises that this will happen when we draw on what it means to be ECU: a community which provides opportunity, cares, collaborates and is future-focused. Being connected means eschewing siloed thinking and embracing innovation, which is why we have articulated our vision using strategic threads. Our goals operate at the intersection of these threads, representing our determination to think differently and act decisively to achieve our fullest impact.



4.1 Our purpose

ECU's purpose is to transform lives and enrich society.

4.2 Our vision

We are a university of connection, purpose, and high impact, driven to deliver for Western Australia and the world in all that we do.

4.3 Our strategic threads

At the core of our strategy are our strategic threads – key organising elements that embody the essence of ECU's identity and purpose. These threads serve as the foundation upon which our goals are built, ensuring that every initiative and action reinforces the distinctive aspects of who we are. By structuring the strategy around these interconnected threads, we create a dynamic framework that not only preserves ECU's core strengths but also enables coordinated efforts that advance multiple objectives simultaneously. This approach fosters clarity, alignment and impact, empowering the University community to pursue ambitious goals while staying true to the values and mission that define ECU.

Equity: Breaking down barriers to provide opportunities for every individual to be who and what they want to be.

Culture: Caring for each other and committing to delivering our best.

Collaboration: Working together and with our partners to create value.

Sustainability: Being an enduring institution into the future.



Our purpose

To transform lives and enrich society

Our strategic threads

Equity

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Caring for each other and committing to delivering our best.

Collaboration

Working together and with our partners to create value.

Sustainability

Being an enduring institution into the future.

2031 goals

We will be **sector leaders** in educational **innovation** and known for the outstanding capabilities of our **students**

We will solve **critical problems** through **collaborative research, innovation and societal engagement**

Our values



Integrity



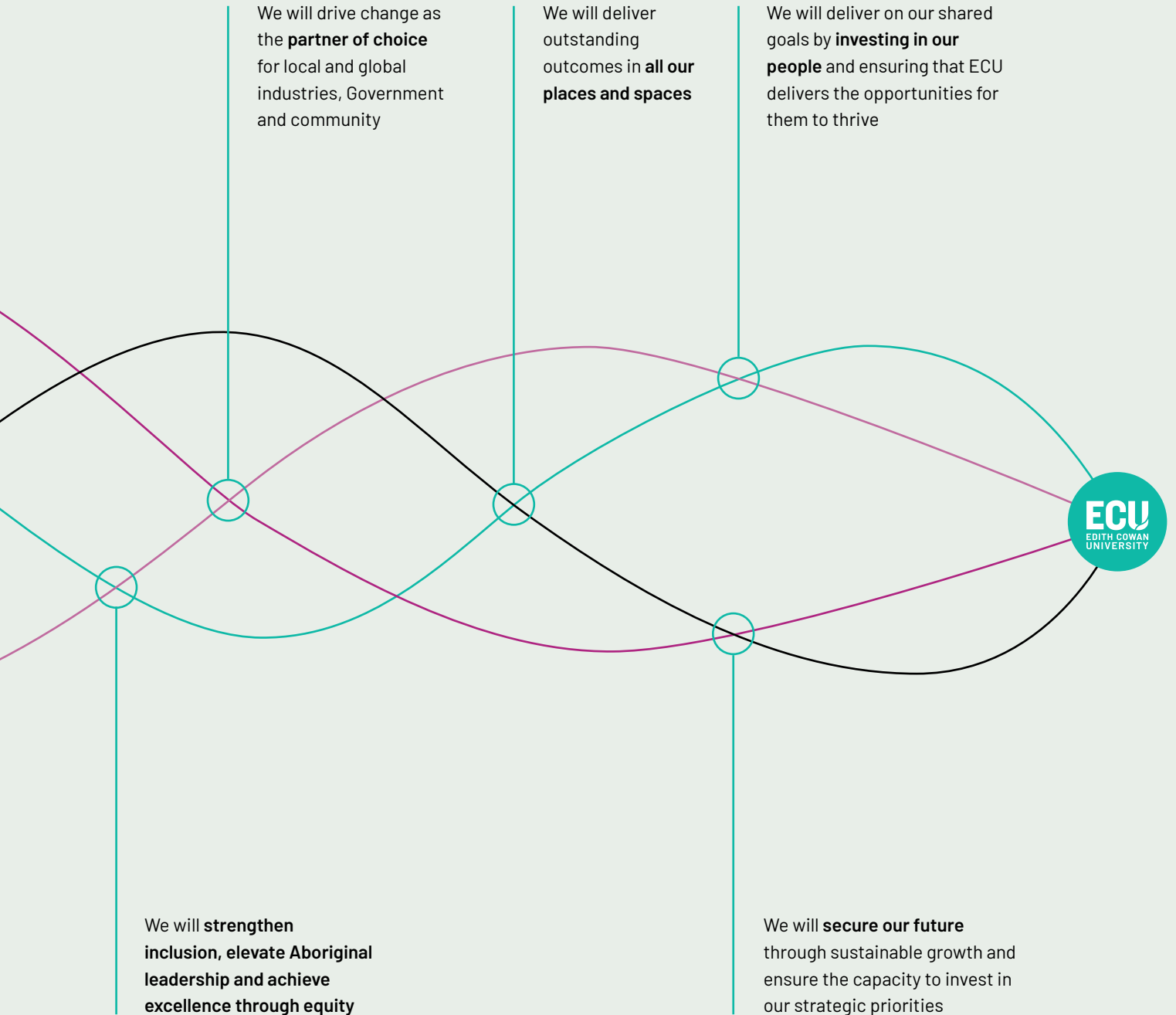
Respect



Rational inquiry

Our vision

We are a university of connection, purpose and high impact, driven to deliver for Western Australia and the world in all that we do



Personal excellence



Courage

4.4 Our goals

We have defined our ambition for the future by setting seven bold strategic goals.

We will be a sector leader in educational innovation and known for the outstanding capabilities of our students.

We are proud of our student experience and are committed to ensuring that our students see us as a leader in Australia, recognised globally for the excellence of their experience. Aware of the rapid changes in student expectations, industry needs and technology, our commitment is to provide an innovative, flexible and high-quality curriculum that serves on-campus, online, international and hybrid learners. We want to define for our students the 'edge' that coming to ECU brought for them – what they experienced at ECU that would not have been possible elsewhere, and what it is that gives them their confidence in stepping through life and career.

These efforts will be guided by a bold and broad transformative agenda that focuses on leading the way on programmatic learning and delivering an engaging student experience that supports retention and success.

To achieve this, we will continue the implementation of our Curriculum Transformation Project, which will transform education through programmatic assessment. We will support our students in their endeavours through work integrated learning and opportunity and focus on delivering lifelong learning opportunities to a broader range of students.

A qualification from ECU will be the beginning of a lifelong relationship. This focus on curriculum innovation and delivery excellence will ensure ECU remains responsive to the needs of its students, enhancing both academic outcomes and employability.



We will solve critical world problems through collaborative research, innovation and engagement.

Over the past decade, we have made significant strides in strengthening the quality and impact of our research. This progress reflects the dedication and expertise of our researchers and the supportive environment we have cultivated. Looking forward, our approach will focus on addressing some of the most critical challenges facing society today.

To maximise impact, we will deepen our partnerships with industry and community stakeholders, ensuring our research is closely aligned with real-world needs and opportunities.

To support and drive this, we will develop the skills of our staff to innovate and engage, and ensure more people can develop advanced skills through excellent and innovative programs.

This strategic focus will enhance ECU's reputation for excellence and relevance, delivering solutions that contribute meaningfully to knowledge, innovation and societal wellbeing.





We will drive change as the partner of choice for industry, government and community.

We are committed to becoming the partner of choice for industries, government bodies and communities - locally and globally. Our partnerships are essential to driving impactful change, accelerating innovation and ensuring that our research and expertise translate into critical global benefits. ECU will be an open and engaged partner, easy to work with, including harnessing the ideas and energy of our students through their entrepreneurial efforts.

To realise this goal, we will enhance our partnership capabilities, and foster ongoing, meaningful relationships grounded in the needs of students, community, industry and government.

Going further, we will deepen our international collaborations that expand our global footprint, facilitate cross-border knowledge exchange and open new avenues for joint research, innovation and learning.

This will position us as a trusted and responsive partner and will strengthen ECU's reputation for collaborative leadership, enhancing our contribution to economic and societal development to foster vibrant, resilient communities worldwide.



We will strengthen inclusion, elevate Aboriginal leadership and achieve excellence through equity.

Our University embraces diversity as a source of strength and a catalyst for innovation and excellence. We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where every student and staff member feel valued, supported and empowered to thrive. Achieving greater equity is fundamental to our vision of academic and community excellence.

We will deliver outstanding equity outcomes for our students and staff.

This commitment to diversity, inclusion and equity will not only enrich our University community but also enhance our contribution to societal wellbeing and cultural resilience.

As a leader in Australia, we will demonstrate how to centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in our decisions and strategic priorities as a reflection of our respect for the wisdom within our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We will create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead, co-create and contribute actively, including supporting creative arts initiatives that highlight and celebrate Indigenous expression and storytelling.

We will deliver on our shared goals by investing in our people and ensuring that ECU delivers opportunities for them to thrive.

Our staff play a fundamental role in shaping an exceptional university environment and driving our success. Over recent years, we have fostered a supportive workplace culture that values collaboration, wellbeing and professional growth. We value this deeply – and see it as fundamental to what we are as an institution.

As we look ahead, our commitment is to deepen this foundation by delivering a staff experience that is not only meaningful but also purposefully designed to nurture long-term careers within ECU – both for those with us now, and those we hope to attract to join us. Achieving this requires an integrated approach that embraces the diverse needs of our people and equips them with clear pathways for development and engagement.

To achieve this, we will provide structured support and transparent development opportunities for staff at all levels, with an emphasis on developing our next generation of leading researchers. As part of this, we will build staff capability and understanding of the digital frontiers of AI and technology solutions to help colleagues in their working life. This strategic emphasis will empower our staff to thrive, reinforcing ECU's reputation as an employer of choice committed to diversity, inclusion and excellence.



We will deliver outstanding experiences in all our places and spaces.

Our University is committed to creating environments, both physical and virtual, that inspire excellence, innovation and inclusivity. For ECU, place is not about a physical location, but a feeling of belonging and of being part of the community of the University. Our commitment extends beyond infrastructure to cultivating spaces that foster collaboration, wellbeing, creativity and community connection across all campuses in WA and Sri Lanka, and across all of our virtual realms.

To achieve this, we are committed to delivering positive impact for Perth and for ECU in the Perth CBD, and to ensuring all our physical and digital environments are welcoming, vibrant and environmentally sustainable. Of deep importance is to create greater impact for regional, rural and remote WA – vital to our mission. This emphasis will ensure excellence in every place and space we inhabit, enriching outcomes and experiences for all.





We will secure our future through sustainable growth and ensure capacity to invest in our strategic priorities.

We recognise the critical importance of securing a sustainable future that supports our ongoing growth and impact in a rapidly changing world. Over recent years, we have laid the groundwork for the University through sound financial management and progressive adoption of digital technologies.

Our approach is to ensure we create a legacy to invest in future priorities, whilst also using advanced technologies to drive transformation across our operation, research and education.

We will remain committed to sustainable growth in our domestic and international education and research, recognising our responsibility to the planet, to our people and to the broader community.

Our initiatives will secure ECU's long-term success by positioning the University as a resilient, forward-thinking institution ready to meet future challenges and opportunities.



4.5 Our values

ECU's students, staff and Council members will always conduct their study, work and service to the University in ways that embrace the following values:



Integrity

We are ethical, honest and fair and demonstrate trust and personal responsibility



Personal excellence

We demonstrate the highest personal and professional standards



Respect

We treat everyone within our diverse community with dignity and respect



Courage

We are bold and resolute in our thinking and actions in pursuit of our goals



Rational inquiry

Our decision-making is driven by evidence, sound reasoning and creative thinking

4.6 Measuring our success

We strive for excellence in all we do and have selected a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets that challenge us to act boldly to achieve our Strategic Goals.

| | Target | When |
|--|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1: Education | | |
| 1.1 Teaching Quality (SES) | Nat. top 3 public uni | By 2028 |
| 1.2 Course completion rate (domestic, bachelor, 6yrs) | ≥ Nat. av. | By 2031 |
| 1.3 Graduate employment rate (GOS)(domestic) | #1 in WA | By 2031 |
| 2: Research | | |
| 2.1 Field-weighted citation impact score | Nat. top 15. | By 2031 |
| 2.2 Higher Degree Research enrolments as a proportion of total | ≥ 3.5% | By 2031 |
| 2.3 Research income (Cat II-IV) | ≥ Nat. median. | By 2028 |
| 3: Equity | | |
| 3.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success rate | = ECU av. | By 2031 |
| 3.2 Award course load from VET pathway | ≥ 25% | By 2028 |
| 3.3 Disability access and inclusion index score | ≥ 60 | By 2031 |
| 4: Staff | | |
| 4.1 Staff engagement (%) | Top quartile | By 2028 |
| 5: Sustainable growth | | |
| 5.1 ECU Future Fund | \$500M | By 2031 |
| 5.2 Operating surplus (%) | ≥ 4% | Each year |
| 5.3 International student load offshore as a proportion of total | 10% | By 2027 |



4.7 Embedding our aspirations

Our strategy identifies the key priorities that will guide Edith Cowan University's growth and impact over the next five years, setting a clear and focused direction for our collective efforts. While these priorities represent critical areas of emphasis, they do not reflect all that we do. A suite of supporting plans will be developed to ensure alignment and excellence across our portfolios. These additional plans will demonstrate clear and direct links to the overarching strategic framework while capturing vital activities essential to the University's success:

- Education
- Research
- International
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Equity and Inclusion
- People
- Campus Environment
- Digital
- Engagement

Together, these supporting plans and their associated performance indicators and targets will provide detailed roadmaps for specific areas, reinforcing our collective commitment and providing a comprehensive approach to achieving our institutional goals.



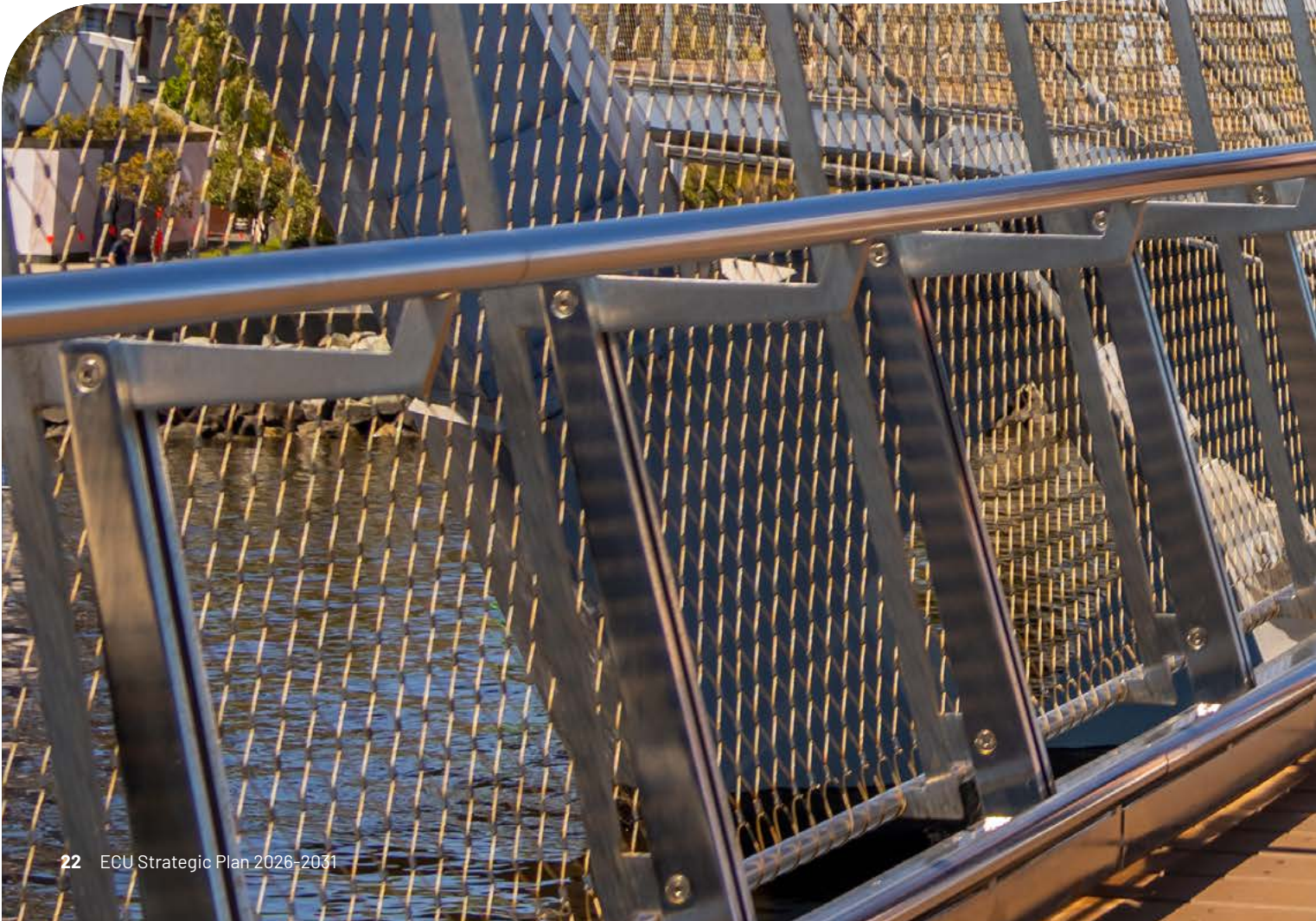
Pathway forward

This strategy is a bold step forward for ECU and one that reflects our ambition to set new benchmarks for excellence, innovation and impact in higher education.

We have deliberately set our sights high because we believe in the potential of our students, staff and partners to shape the future of our University and the communities we serve. Yet we know too that the world we operate within will continue to evolve. Our strategy and its strategic threads provide us with a framework to adapt to change, but also to influence it by our actions.

To remain connected and eschew silos, we will be putting in place cross-ECU strategy implementation governance which will promote greater accountability for delivery within the context of all the competing pressures we operate under, hold us true to our ambition and ensure we are able to adapt our implementation where needed.

Our goal is to always ensure that we are amplifying the connections between our strategic threads. By listening to our community and holding ambitions high, together, we will continue to innovate and make ECU an even greater force for positive change in WA and beyond.









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