



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Melbourne
Climate Futures

2024 Melbourne Climate Futures Annual Report



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Melbourne Climate Futures acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses), the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses), and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students, we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.



Melbourne Climate Futures

Melbourne Climate Futures is the University of Melbourne's strategic climate initiative, leading on transformative solutions to the climate crisis for a future worth living.

We bring together research and expertise from across the University and beyond, to share knowledge and provide a trusted, evidence-based voice for policymakers, communities and industry so that we can enact real change in the face of this urgent and complex issue.

Our purpose is to accelerate the urgently needed transition to a positive climate future, using transformative thinking to build resilient and thriving communities nationally and globally, with particular attention to serving our growing Asia-Pacific region. We aim to benefit people and planet through the transformative impact of our research, convening power and capability development.

While we develop inspirational ideas, policy proposals and tools to address the climate crisis, it is vital that the transitions and transformations we make as we strive for greater sustainability are evidence-based, healthy, and equitable.

To this end, Melbourne Climate Futures unites disparate, yet constantly interacting, disciplines – such as health, justice and law, finance, policy and science – to create integrated solutions.

Melbourne Climate Futures connects and amplifies the depth and breadth of University of Melbourne research, creates a portal to share ideas and collaborate on real action, and empowers the next generation of climate leaders.



Message from the Director

The Earth has continued to see increasing global emissions, temperatures, and extreme weather events, with 2024 declared the hottest on record, as fires raged in Los Angeles and at home in Victoria, and massive floods overwhelmed towns in far-north Queensland. We are now likely to have passed the 1.5 °C level of warming that underpins the Paris Agreement, to which Australia is a party.

This trajectory of global warming is already challenging every facet of our world: our environment, our health and wellbeing, our economy and the fabric of our societies.

2024 brought further unrest with shifting geopolitical tensions arising from a new Trump presidency in the US. In Australia, the federal election will determine our national climate policies for the years ahead.

At its core, MCF directly serves the Advancing Melbourne 2030 strategy's central tenet – to benefit society through the transformative impact of education and research – by empowering and applying rigorous, evidence-based research to transform our climate future to ensure it is one that is healthy, safe and equitable.

Over the four years since its launch in March 2021, MCF has fostered climate research and climate leaders among our University of Melbourne staff and students, so that they can have a real impact on the future of our planet and our societies.

We have built strong, interdisciplinary networks among our peers in academia, and with our partners in industry and policy, to catalyse the systemic changes necessary to navigate the challenges ahead.

And we have furthered the University of Melbourne's reputation as a regional and global actor, influencing future climate outcomes at the highest levels.

While a changing geopolitical landscape brings challenges, it also creates opportunities for deep systemic change. As we look ahead, MCF is laden with potential for continuing its swift and effective growth, increasing the University's positive role in shaping the world we live in.

The need for such work by a trusted, globally oriented institution like the University of Melbourne is heightened in a turbulent geo-political context where misinformation is rife but the very real impacts of climate change and the social inequities they exacerbate only continue to accelerate.

This report outlines our 2024 impacts, articulating the basis for continuing impact, in line with the University's proposed Advancing Research Strategy 2030 and its Melbourne Impact Accelerators, including Climate Resilience and Sustainability.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline Peel".

Professor Jacqueline Peel
Director, Melbourne Climate Futures

MCF achievements summary 2021-2024

Since its launch in March 2021, MCF has focused its resources on convening diverse stakeholders, developing rigorous, interdisciplinary research, and fostering collaborative partnerships to deliver urgent, effective action that will preserve a future worth living.

- 4 hubs
- >100 projects
- A\$24.2M additional funding secured
- A\$1.5M funding distributed

Sustainable Finance Hub

MCF launched the Sustainable Finance Hub (SFH) in 2023 as a nationwide expert hub investigating means by which we can increase green investment and build the resources required to pay for addressing the sustainability crisis in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

- 3 research streams
- 2 senior practitioners in residence
- 2 publications in *Science and Nature*
- A\$780K external funding
- 3 cross-institutional research collaborations

Climate CATCH Lab

MCF launched the Climate CATCH Lab in 2022 in partnership with the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, the Melbourne Medical School and the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, to accelerate the University's climate change and human health research, engagement and education for enhanced impact.

- 9 research streams
- 15 fellowships facilitated
- 1 inaugural oration + 108 attendees
- A\$18.5M funding secured or awarded
- A\$400K interdisciplinary seed funding distributed

ARC Laureate Fellowship

Through this fellowship, Professor Jacqueline Peel aims to transform international law's role in incentivising and ensuring corporate accountability to global net-zero ambitions as the 2024 ARC Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellow.

- 3 post-doctoral positions
- 3 PhD scholarships
- A\$3.8M funding received
- 5+ global collaborations

INPACC Hub

MCF steers the Indo-Pacific Climate (INPACC) Hub, which leverages efforts in countries across the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, to create an expert network that enables research, knowledge-sharing and leadership on adaptation, resilience, and justice to build climate resilience across Asia and the Pacific.

- 4 priority thematic areas
- 7 key activities
- 100+ subscribers
- 90+ members across the region
- 20 Pacific policymakers sponsored to take Climate Fundamentals short course
- A\$150K funding received from DFAT for inception workshop

Climate Research Accelerator (CRX) Program

The CRX program supports interdisciplinary research projects with a high likelihood of making an immediate impact on the climate crisis by providing funding, facilitating capacity-building workshops, and convening researchers and partners across disciplines.

- 22 projects
- 73 researchers
- 41 external partners
- 100% faculties represented
- A\$830K funding distributed
- 8 capacity-building and engagement workshops

Australia Awards Fellowship

In partnership with the Melbourne School of Global and Population Health and the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC), MCF has received funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for two rounds of fellowships designed to improve climate outcomes in the Asia-Pacific region. The first seven-week fellowship was held in November 2023, and the second program took place in November 2024.

- 30 fellows from across the region
- A\$994K funding received
- 100+ expert presenters, mentors and facilitators
- 30 policy notes, research papers & literature reviews

MCF Research Cluster and Research Themes

MCF convenes researchers from across the University to share ideas and innovations across 13 research themes to promote cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary, collaborative climate research.

- 267 research cluster members
- 40 research cluster meetings
- 13 research themes
- 15 research theme leads
- 13 ECR co-leads
- 10 research theme lead meetings

UNFCCC Climate negotiations and the COP Universities Alliance

MCF has had a strong presence at UN climate negotiations from 2021 to 2024, during COP26 in Scotland, COP27 in Egypt, COP28 in the United Arab Emirates, and COP29 in Azerbaijan.

- 10 attending researchers
- 4 MCF-led official side events
- 13 researchers on official panels
- 34 thought leadership pieces

In 2024, Professor Peel was asked to lead the establishment of the COP Universities Alliance to coordinate collaboration between over 20 Australian, New Zealand and Pacific institutions in support of hosting the international climate summit, COP31, in Australia in 2026, and with a broader ambition to build a cohesive academic alliance for all climate negotiations.

PAVE-Health: Pacific action to enhance the visibility of evidence on health and climate impacts

PAVE-Health aims to strengthen Pacific populations' resilience to the health impacts of a changing climate by rapidly upskilling policymakers, researchers, and health practitioners to draw attention to and reduce climate-related health impacts across four Pacific Island Countries.

- A\$4.9M funding received from Wellcome Trust

University carbon targets

MCF worked alongside the University's Sustainability Team to advocate that new, more ambitious emissions reductions targets were incorporated into the Sustainability Plan 2030. With the University now ranked ninth in the world in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Sustainability Rankings, MCF continues to work alongside the Sustainability Strategy Team to improve University approaches.

- carbon neutral by 2025
- climate positive by 2030

MCF Academy

The MCF Academy fosters early and mid-career researchers working in climate-related fields within a diverse intellectual and interdisciplinary community, drawing from all areas across the University to promote a rich exchange of ideas.

- 75 graduate researchers
- 3 practitioners and policymakers in residence
- 18 training workshops
- 20 seminars

Performance against strategic objectives

MCF was established to drive the University of Melbourne's leadership role on one of the greatest and most urgent global challenges of our time – the future of our planet, and our society, in the face of climate change.

Our vision was to accelerate the transition to a positive climate future, focusing our efforts both nationally and globally, with particular attention to serving our growing Asia-Pacific region.

Following the tenets of the Advancing Melbourne 2030 strategy, we aimed to become a leading voice in Australia, the Asia-Pacific region and globally, to bring about greater action on climate change. We established three key strategic objectives, which intersect and interact to feed and inform activities across the entire MCF ecosystem.



Platform – to leverage the breadth and depth of the University of Melbourne's climate research capability, convening power and partnerships for meaningful impact.



Portal – to enable access to the University of Melbourne's deep climate research and expertise for external stakeholders and research end-users to collaborate, including in the Asia-Pacific region.



Pathway – to empower the next generation of researchers, students and our local and regional communities to strive for a sustainable climate future, while also working with the University of Melbourne itself to ensure it is a world leader in decarbonisation.

'Tackling humanity's greatest challenges requires an integrated approach, drawing on a depth and breadth of expertise from across academia and society, and this is exactly what Melbourne Climate Futures does. The Climate Council has greatly benefited from the expertise of Melbourne Climate Futures.'

Martin Rice, PhD
Research Director, Climate Council

Platform – Building research capacity

- 4 hubs
- >100 projects
- A\$24.2M additional funding secured
- A\$1.5M funding distributed

Fostering interdisciplinary research capacity

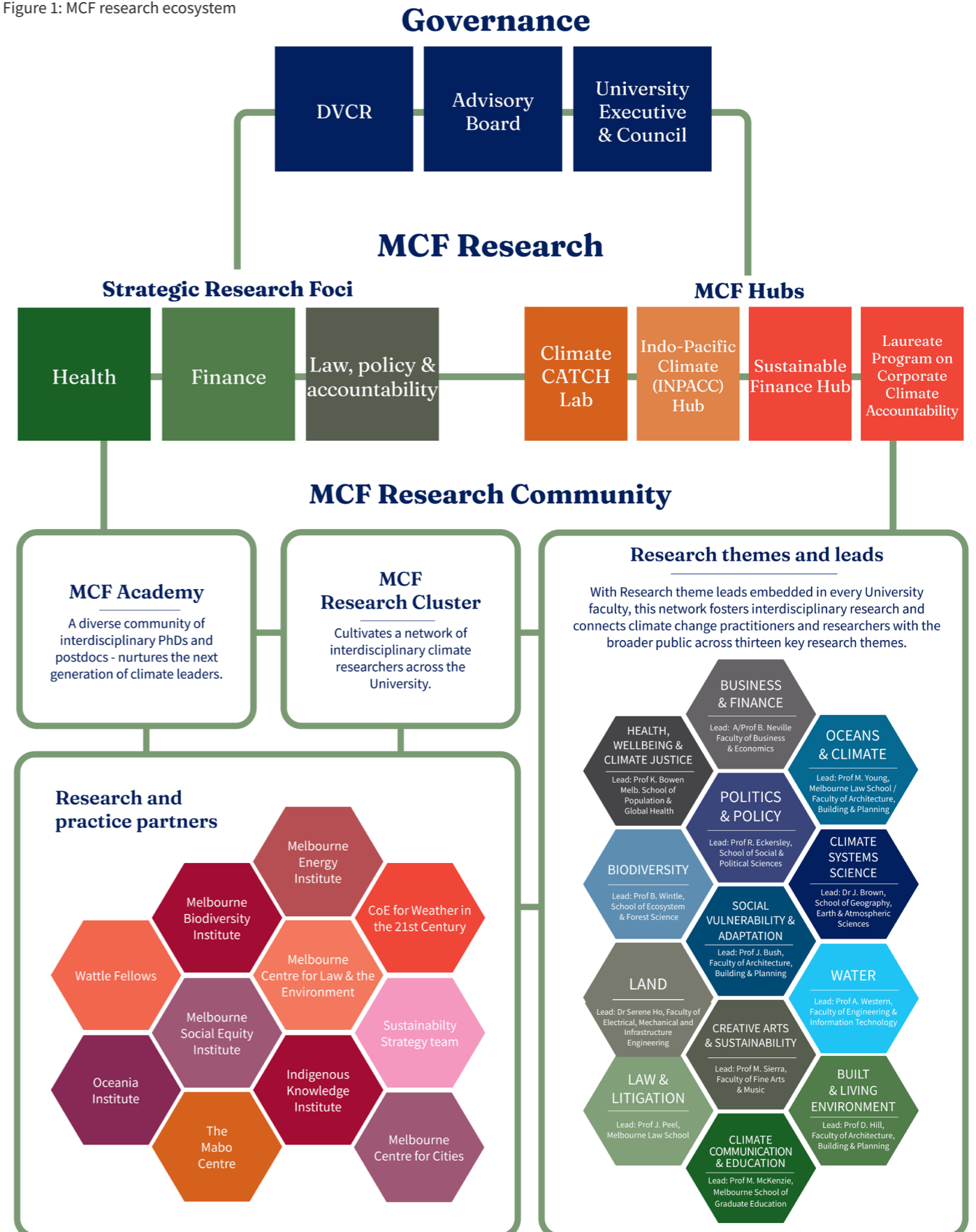
Since its inception, MCF has created interdisciplinary linkages to strengthen and enrich the University's climate research and its impact, in line with the Advancing Melbourne 2030 Discovery theme.

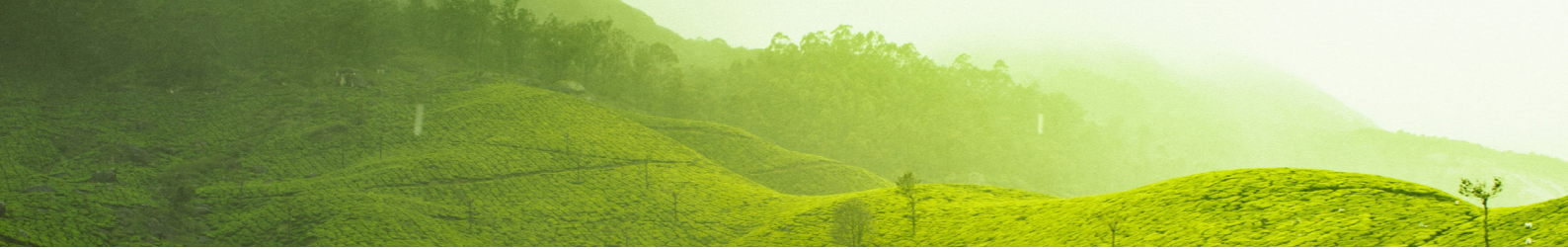
By fostering spaces where researchers from across faculties can confer and collaborate, such as the MCF Research Cluster, MCF has enabled our broader expert community to deliver robust, evidence-based advice to diverse audiences, including industry leaders, public policymakers and international intergovernmental bodies.

MCF further invites and nurtures faculty engagement through senior research fellows, such as Professors David Karoly and Peter Christoff, and through its 13 research themes, each co-led by faculty-embedded senior and early and mid-career researchers, who consult with the core MCF team through regular meetings on new means by which to engage their faculties in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary climate solutions.

These efforts to foster capacity serve as the foundation for grants and funding that flows through to faculties via the extensive MCF research network. Our efforts also enable meaningful engagement and partnership with external climate policy leaders and practitioners, all while strengthening the University's reputation as a leader in climate research and impact.

Figure 1: MCF research ecosystem





Building capacity in needed areas through core MCF research

To drive our own research impact contribution to the global climate challenge, MCF has chosen three key areas in which to focus – climate and health, sustainable finance, and law and policy for climate action and accountability – all of them scalable to our future growth. These were selected as areas:

- where there were existing University of Melbourne strengths or the opportunity to build needed research capacity
- that would be the most effective in creating systemic change and addressing barriers to ensuring a positive climate future.

We leverage this expertise alongside our networks to lead, convene and collaborate through strategic partnerships on a global scale.

Climate and health

A changing climate will have an array of direct and indirect effects on human health and wellbeing, from injury and death caused by extreme weather events to food insecurity, novel diseases and mental health impacts. Among its core research areas, MCF has prioritised research that addresses these risks, enabling a global adaptation response, with particular focus on our Asia-Pacific region.

MCF's climate and health researchers have leveraged their extensive network to consult with policy leaders on every level, partnering with Sustainability Victoria, sitting on the Federal Government's Climate and Health Advisory Group, and leading chapter authorship for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report, among a range of other work.

The **Climate CATCH Lab**, launched in 2022, is a joint initiative of MCF, the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, the Melbourne Medical School and the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (MDHS). Encompassing nine research themes from sustainable healthcare, to just energy transitions and art and creative responses, this interdisciplinary lab brings together the deep and broad climate and health expertise at the University and is a collaborative platform for researchers to provide integrated, evidence-based advice to policy leaders. In 2024, it hosted a number of events featuring high-profile speakers such as Professor Kris Ebi and Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care Ged Kearney MP.

Central to its vision is collaboration with our neighbours in the Pacific region. Alongside its ongoing partnership with the Pacific Climate Change Centre, the Climate CATCH Lab was instrumental in coordinating a Memorandum of Understanding between MDHS and the Government of Kiribati in 2024. The CATCH Lab also enabled further research and research capacity-building by disseminating A\$400,000 in seed funding last year, much of which has led to further research funding opportunities. To date, the Lab's research and capability-building programs have garnered over A\$18.5 million in grants and funding, distributed across MCF, MDHS and other faculties.

Sustainable finance

Experts currently estimate that mitigating and adapting to the climate crisis will call for funding in the order of US\$1.3 trillion per year by 2030. Sustainable finance, responsible investment and the redirection of capital are central topics at global negotiations and in efforts to transition the world's economies and energy systems. MCF has driven research that spans faculties and uses this expertise to advise and influence organisations such as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Treasury, the OECD and the Asian Development Bank.

The **Sustainable Finance Hub** was launched in 2023 as a nation-wide expert hub investigating means to increase green investment and build the resources required to pay for addressing the sustainability crisis in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. Leveraging three research streams and two practitioners-in-residence, it engages directly with members of the Faculty of Business and Economics, Melbourne Biodiversity Institute, and stakeholders in policy and investment to research and devise means by which to increase climate funding.

"With its independent, cross-disciplinary expertise, the Sustainable Finance Hub will play an important role as Australia's sustainable finance system matures and as investors, policymakers and others are increasingly focused on how finance can achieve economic and sustainability outcomes."

Kristy Graham
CEO, Australian Sustainable Finance Initiative (ASFI)

To date, it has received A\$780K in funding from the Australian Research Council (ARC), financial institutions and global philanthropic organisations. Among its research programs, the Sustainable Finance Hub works with MCF business and legal researchers on an ARC project, Advancing Investor Action on Energy Transition, which aims to increase finance flows from debt and equity investors towards low-carbon energy sources that reduce fundamental climate risks.

Law and policy for climate action and accountability

Policy and law, based on cutting-edge climate change projection and impact modelling, has the power to shape the roles and responsibilities of governments and private companies, to address climate change by putting mitigation and adaptation frameworks in place, creating accountability, and placing burdens of liability for harm.

MCF's law and policy research, led by MCF Director Professor Jacqueline Peel, brings together deep expertise from across the Faculty of Science, Melbourne Law School, the Melbourne Centre for Law and the Environment and the Faculty of Arts, and intersects with every facet of climate research to push forward law and policy developments.

In 2024, Professor Peel was awarded the **ARC Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellowship**, which will aim to transform how international law can ensure and incentivise corporate accountability to meet global net-zero ambitions.

MCF researchers regularly liaise with policymakers and climate leaders, such as the Climate Council, to provide advice and have made 13 submissions to government regarding current and prospective policy changes across topics such as corporate accountability, duty of care, sustainable finance strategy, and many more. Professor Peel was a lead author on the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, Working Group III, which dealt with policy options for reducing global emissions.

Climate litigation has emerged as a major site for climate governance and law-making in countries around the world and particularly in Australia, which has the second-highest number of climate cases globally. It is seen as a central tool in the fight for climate justice for vulnerable communities by providing for remedies and compensation for climate-related harms.

MCF oversees management of the Australian Climate Litigation database, a repository of all past and current climate litigation cases in Australia, which has had 39,663 pageviews over 20,535 website sessions since March 2021 and is widely consulted by environmental civil society groups and practitioners.

Generating research income and enabling further research funding

MCF has generated significant research income, quadrupling the University's A\$6M investment over the past four years to receive an additional A\$24.2M in funding from government, industry and philanthropic sources.

In addition, MCF works to enable further, deeper research and research funding across the University through its interdisciplinary seed and 'sapling' funding initiatives and support for climate-related start-ups.

Climate Research Accelerator (CRX) program

Since August 2021, MCF has awarded three rounds of 'seed' and 'sapling' funding through CRX to 22 diverse interdisciplinary projects with a high likelihood of making an immediate impact on the climate problem. In 2024, the CRX program provided A\$150,000 in funding across five projects, to nurture new interdisciplinary collaborations and to provide teams with an existing collaboration with additional funding to partner externally and/or accelerate their impact, respectively.

Climate CATCH Lab seed funding

On behalf of MDHS, the Climate CATCH Lab has funded interdisciplinary researchers from across the University of Melbourne to catalyse action and immediate impact towards climate-resilient, sustainable and equitable communities and health systems. To date, the Climate CATCH Lab has distributed A\$400,000 in funding to 11 projects over two rounds.

Melbourne Accelerator Program

In 2024, MCF once again sponsored an eleventh place in the Melbourne Accelerator Program for a start-up that is working to address the urgent challenges of the climate crisis. It provided A\$20,000 in funding to After, a start-up pioneering a circular economy by recovering, recycling and recirculating unwearable textiles back into the industry.

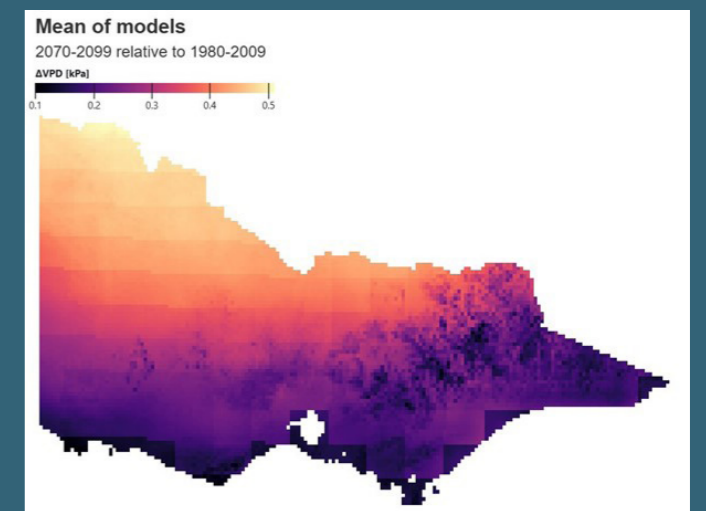
2024 Climate Research Accelerator Projects

In 2024, the CRX program provided A\$150,000 in funding across five projects:

- Promoting climate-smart school kitchen gardens in the Indo-Pacific region
- Towards a shared understanding of climate change impacts on wildfire
- Nested Phoenix - Infrastructure
- Developing a generative AI model for debunking climate misinformation
- Evidencing Healthy Djandak (Djaara Country) for Climate Resilience

The program will continue into 2025 with further support provided through capacity-building workshops and a rich interdisciplinary cohort to support researchers.

"Climate change could not have been added to our wildfire risk communication and modelling platform without the funding provided by CRX. It has given us the opportunity to investigate the impacts that climate change may have to drivers of wildfire risk in Victoria."



Hamish Clarke

Project Lead, Towards a shared understanding of climate change impacts on wildfire



Portal – Collaboration, partnerships, engagement and reputation

MCF has worked consistently to develop its relationships and reputation. We have built strong collaborative networks and partnerships across research, policy and industry, at national, regional and global levels, while also increasing the University's standing as a climate research and impact leader.

'Melbourne Climate Futures is a valued partner of the World Health Organization Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health. Our longstanding collaboration is built on deep trust and a shared commitment to tackling the climate and health challenges of our time. Their impact-driven research is exactly what is needed to drive urgent transformations — locally, regionally, and globally. By bridging knowledge and action, MCF plays a vital role in shaping a healthier, more sustainable future and delivering meaningful change where it matters most.'

Dr Sandro Demaio, Director and Head of Office
WHO Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health

Activating internal linkages to enable external partnerships

By collaborating across disciplines, MCF has leveraged the relationships University researchers and research groups have built to develop new external partnerships. The results of this work speak to our strategic focus on enabling and supporting our neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region by further increasing capacity where the need has been identified.

PAVE Health

Through the Climate CATCH Lab, MCF has partnered with the Pacific Climate Change Centre to rapidly upskill policymakers, researchers, and health practitioners to draw attention to and reduce climate-related health impacts across four Pacific Island Countries: Samoa, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, and Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). In 2024, the project was awarded nearly A\$4.9 million in funding from Wellcome to strengthen Pacific populations' resilience to the health impacts of a changing climate.

INPACC Hub

Established in 2023 at an inception workshop in Bangkok funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, MCF steers the Indo-Pacific Climate (INPACC) Hub. The INPACC Hub leverages efforts in countries across the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, to create an expert network that enables research, knowledge-sharing and leadership on adaptation, resilience, and justice to build climate resilience across Asia and the Pacific.

The network consists of more than 90 members from across the region, and has been briefed to representatives of high-level policy groups such as the US embassy and the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment. In 2024, the INPACC Hub sponsored 20 regional policymakers to undertake the MCF Climate Fundamentals: Risks and impacts for decision-makers short course.

'We have worked with Melbourne Climate Futures extensively in driving sustainability initiatives for Australian corporates. They have linked us to speakers, resources and collaborative opportunities at the University of Melbourne in relation to sustainable finance, just and equitable transition, business and biodiversity and mandatory climate reporting.'

Kate Dundas
Executive Director, UN Global Compact Network Australia

Convening policy discussions at the highest levels

MCF activates its internal University linkages by leveraging its research cluster, research themes and hubs, in order to expand the network of external partners with which it engages. This has significantly increased MCF's visibility and that of the University of Melbourne's climate research over the four years we have operated, growing from a new initiative to a recognised and trusted source of expertise and advice in Australia, the region and internationally. In addition, the MCF Advisory Board, comprising recognised climate leaders across different fields of endeavour, links MCF with members of their networks in order to enhance the impact of MCF's events and policy roundtables and provide the expertise of University of Melbourne climate researchers to where it will have the most impact.

Policy and industry roundtables

In 2024, MCF held over 10 high-level policy and industry roundtables with partners, including:

- Kristen Tilley, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ambassador for Climate Change, who participated along with colleagues from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water, industry and policy leaders in a roundtable examining climate and sustainable finance levers.
- Ged Kearney MP, Deputy Minister for Health and Aged Care, who held a roundtable with the Climate CATCH Lab to discuss climate and health policy in Australia, with members Professor Kathryn Bowen and Professor Eugenie Kayak both sitting on the Federal Government's Climate and Health Expert Advisory Group.
- Participation of Professor Jacqueline Peel, Professor Kathryn Bowen and Ms Janine Felson, along with other University of Melbourne colleagues, in the UN's annual climate conferences, or COPs, taking part in panel

- discussions, leading negotiations, and convening meetings with high-level policymakers and other institutions.
- Advising the Asian Development Bank on funding and priorities in the areas of health, finance and policy, with the Sustainable Finance Hub delivering sustainable finance training to their staff across the Asia-Pacific region.
- Co-convened quarterly Advanced Climate Reporters Community of Practice roundtables in partnership with the United Nations Global Compact Network Australia, led by the Head of Sustainability at Coles Group. The roundtables increase links with industry leaders and share knowledge on issues of industry interest such as mandatory climate risk reporting and climate liability.
- A day-long workshop where the Climate CATCH Lab met with Vic Health and Sustainability Victoria, which led to a Memorandum of Understanding to support collaborations on mutually aligned projects.

COP Universities Alliance



In 2024, MCF was instrumental in establishing the COP Universities Alliance, in anticipation of a COP31 hosted in Australia in 2026. The COP Universities Alliance, chaired by Professor Jacqueline Peel, aims to support policymakers in advancing Australia's role in international climate cooperation by providing expert advice and the evidence base for evaluating options and proposing ambitious climate policy.

Including over 20 Australian, New Zealand and Pacific institutions, the Alliance further aims to assist in developing capacity and networks through its partnership program, proposing and exploring alternative COP formats to improve their effectiveness, inclusivity and sustainability, and providing a forum for authentic dialogues on complex issues that generate options for policy innovation.

The Alliance was formally launched at a series of events during Climate Action Week in Sydney (10–14 March 2025). It is working collaboratively with stakeholders across different sectors, including the federal government, business and civil society, on ways to strengthen Australia's and the region's participation and leadership in the international climate negotiations process.

Engagement and profile-building

In order to build its audience and engage with a broad range of stakeholders, including University of Melbourne staff and students, researchers, government bodies and the corporate community, MCF has produced a suite of content and events in 2024.



MCF also collaborates with researchers across the University to produce novel media content that engages non-traditional audiences.

Climate Kids



Climate Kids is produced to answer the questions that children, aged 6 to 15, have about our changing climate and its effects.

Creator and host, Dr Lily O'Neill, consults with University of Melbourne experts to get the most accurate and up-to-date information, then translates it for these young people who will inherit the climate future.

Understanding the potential for climate anxiety among young people, the information is presented in a fun and engaging manner, with bespoke illustrations and animations by Dr Philippa Garrard and Ms Greta Robenstone. Episodes always end by empowering our Climate Kids with a note on action that they can take themselves. Launched in 2024, Climate Kids has produced 5 episodes in its first season with over 71.1K total views.

Climate Talks



The Climate Talks podcast tracks and analyses the journey to the annual United Nations Climate Change Conferences – or COPs – each year.

Produced in partnership with Melbourne Centre for Cities and with support from the Melbourne Law School, the podcast features different guests each episode to unpack national and global climate policy trends and how they will influence negotiations and outcomes.

In 2024, Climate Talks has released 9 podcast episodes with 1,993 total listens.

'MCF plays a crucial role in building the capacity of policy makers, industry and civil society leaders in Australia and across the Asia-Pacific region at a time when people are looking for the skills and evidence they need to act in a timely and informed way.'

Amanda Cahill
CEO, The Next Economy

Pathway – Empowering climate leaders

MCF is deeply invested in empowering the next generation of climate leaders by building their knowledge and capabilities. We run capacity-building programs with practitioners in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region to provide them with the tools to address and mitigate climate impacts in their communities.

In keeping with the Advancing Melbourne 2030 strategy, students are at the heart of everything we do, and MCF is passionate about nurturing their knowledge and leadership skills through providing interdisciplinary research skills and a space for cross-disciplinary collaboration among early career researchers.

MCF Academy



The MCF Academy (MCFA) is an interdisciplinary network of over 50 Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Researchers, co-located in the MCF space in Melbourne Connect. MCFA brings together early career researchers from various schools and faculties across the University of Melbourne, united by a common goal: to understand the implications of climate change and energy futures from interdisciplinary perspectives, including STEM, humanities, health, education, and social sciences. Members contribute to a broad range of expertise within MCF on climate change and societal transitions.

MCFA offers significant added value to graduate researchers through social and professional networks, training workshops, workspaces, and public seminars. A key offering of MCFA membership is the fortnightly team meeting, which is run by members of the Academy on a rotating schedule and includes a paper presentation designed to foster interdisciplinary knowledge by leveraging the broad range of disciplines represented within the Academy. Additional activities include workshops on research methods and employment options, the opportunity to run brown-bag sessions to gain feedback on research ideas, monthly social activities and annual retreats.

In addition to this, the Academy provides graduate researchers with valuable mentoring, assistance with publications, research output and academic development. Academy members have high visibility in University of Melbourne engagement and community relations, some examples of which include the Climate Talks podcast and various thought leadership pieces published on University outlets and beyond.



Australia Awards Fellowship programs



15 fellows



100+ expert presenters, mentors and facilitators



A\$500K funding

In 2024, MCF has coordinated its second round of an Australia Awards fellowship program, funded by DFAT, in partnership with the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC), aimed at improving climate outcomes in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Fellowship program brought 15 fellows from across the Asia-Pacific region to Melbourne for a six-week capacity-building program. Participants were drawn from countries' ministries of health, climate change, energy, emergency management, finance, and infrastructure.



While in Australia, the fellows each developed a policy or practice output based on local needs and priorities with the support of a University of Melbourne mentor, for implementation upon return home. Three months after the Melbourne program concluded, the cohort reconvened for a workshop led by PCCC in Samoa to report on their implementation achievements, and to troubleshoot any challenges they have faced. The cohorts have developed an ongoing 'Community of Practice' which provides a peer-to-peer network of support and policy making innovation.

'The fellowship has been a transformative experience, equipping me with invaluable skills and insights. Through it, I have gained confidence in applying public health strategies in a more practical context-specific manner, integrating climate considerations into disease prevention, health promotion and disaster preparedness and response efforts.'

Victoria Ieremia-Faasili
MCF Australia Awards Fellow & Pacific climate health leader

Contributing to a sustainable Melbourne

MCF is committed to ensuring a safe, healthy and climate-positive place for our students, staff and communities here in Melbourne and abroad.

We have ongoing links with the City of Melbourne to advise and collaborate on climate mitigation and adaptation measures, partnering with them in 2024 to present a climate leadership discussion as part of Melbourne Connect Innovation Week.



We work with equally driven and ambitious institutions to compare and contribute advice on creating sustainable research, teaching programs and campuses, such as Cambridge Zero, who visited MCF in Melbourne in 2024 for a series of roundtables and workshops.

MCF regularly consults with the Sustainability Strategy team (Professor Peel is a member of the Sustainability Advisory Group and Associate Professor Ben Neville is Assistant Dean Sustainability in the Faculty of Business & Economics), and was instrumental in devising the new emissions reductions targets and Discovery targets in the Sustainability Plan 2030, demonstrating the University's commitment to walking the talk on climate action. Under these targets, the University will achieve carbon neutrality by 2025 and achieve climate positive status, removing more greenhouse gas emissions than are generated, by 2030. MCF was gratified to see the ambition of these targets reflected in the QS Sustainability Rankings, in which the University of Melbourne placed ninth in the world in 2024.

Following adoption of the Sustainability Plan, MCF has:

- developed decision guidelines for the University of Melbourne to buy high-integrity carbon offsets
- advised on the new Responsible Investment Guide
- is a peer reviewer for the Australian University sector's climate scenario analysis.

MCF continues to provide support to the University's Sustainability Strategy team on a range of other implementation activities, including procurement and air travel emissions. MCF will also play a critical, supportive role in the review of the Sustainability Plan 2030 as part of its scheduled 2026 'refresh'.

Governance and management

Governance and management bodies

MCF's governance and management has evolved over the past four years to meet growing needs. The current MCF governance and management structure is summarised in Figure 2 below.

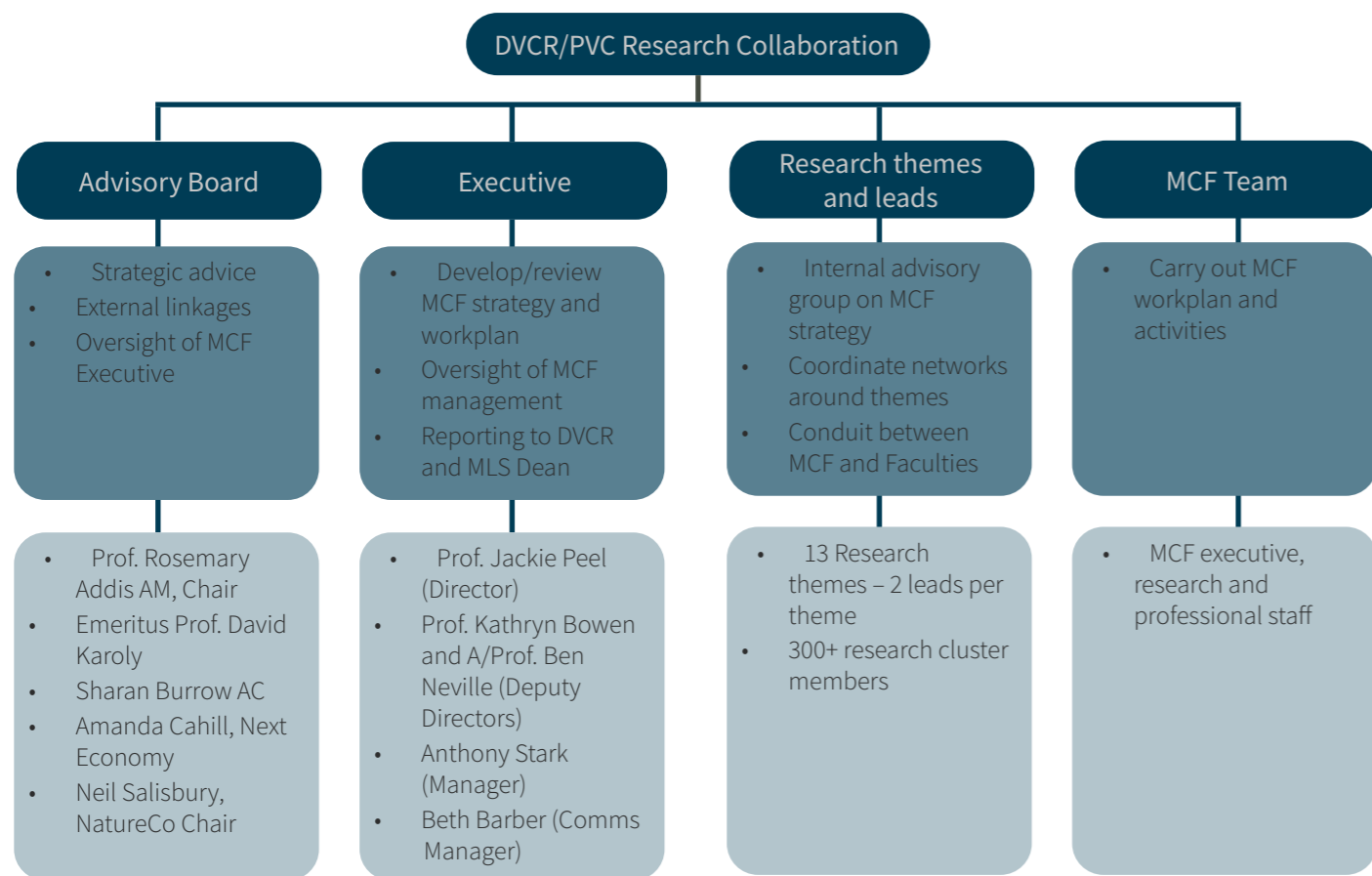


Figure 2: Overview of MCF governance and management

Reporting to DVCR and PVC Research Collaboration

As a strategic initiative under the Advancing Melbourne 2030 strategy, Melbourne Climate Futures has regularly reported on its activities to University Executive and University Council.

The DVCR and PVC Research Collaboration provide regular oversight of MCF activities and delivery against its strategic objectives, as MCF's funding is presently sourced from the DVCR portfolio. The MCF Executive team provides monthly progress reports to the DVCR and PVC Research Collaboration, along with the Dean of MLS (as MCF's host faculty), and also meets with the PVC Research Collaboration to discuss this reporting on a monthly basis.

Advisory Board

The MCF Advisory Board was established in 2023. Its functions are to:

- Provide advice on the development of research projects
- Share insights into the business, political and competitive environments that may impact MCF
- Promote the interests of MCF externally, including making introductions to potential partners
- Identify potential financial support for MCF in the private and public sectors
- Provide other strategic advice on matters raised by the Director.

The MCF Advisory Board meets on a quarterly basis.

Rosemary Addis AM - Chair
Globally recognised director and strategist at the forefront of innovation and investment for impact in the climate and sustainability field.

Sharan Burrow AC
Global advocate for human rights, climate action and Just Transition and former General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation

Amanda Cahill
CEO of The Next Economy with over two decades' experience working across Australia, Asia and the Pacific to create positive change on issues as diverse as economic development, public health, gender equality and climate adaptation

David Karoly
Emeritus Professor and Councillor, Climate Council, Australia and former Leader of the Earth Systems and Climate Change Hub in the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program, based in CSIRO

Neil Salisbury
Entrepreneur and sustainability leader with over 25 years of international experience in climate and energy technologies, environmental markets, sustainable finance and broader ESG issues.

A fifth Board member during 2023 and 2024, Ms Karrina Nolan, is a descendant of the Yorta Yorta people and an experienced organiser and manager of complex programs and initiatives in Aboriginal communities, including Original Power and the First Nations Clean Energy Network. Ms Nolan is departing the Board in 2025 due to her extensive other commitments and the Board will consider recruitment of a replacement member.

Executive

The MCF Executive consists of the Director and the two Deputy Directors of the initiative, supported by the MCF Manager, Mr Anthony Stark, and the Communications Manager, Ms Beth Barber. The MCF Executive has primary responsibility for developing and reviewing the MCF Strategy and annual workplans and reporting on progress to the DVCR/PVC Research Collaboration and MCF host faculty, MLS. It also oversees implementation of strategic plan objectives through the work of the MCF team and broader UoM climate research 'ecosystem' (see Figure 1 [p.7]).

Research themes and leads

A key strategic objective of MCF has been to create a University-wide platform for leveraging the breadth and depth of Melbourne's climate research capability, convening power and partnerships for meaningful impact on the global challenge of climate change.

In order to activate this platform, MCF established a series of Research Themes led by paired senior and junior academics within different Faculties. The now 13 Research Themes convene interdisciplinary networks of researchers around their theme area and provide a conduit between Faculty climate researchers and the central MCF initiative.

Research Theme leads meet quarterly with the MCF team to provide updates on their activities, to discuss proposals for projects or events and to input advice on avenues for facilitating engagement with Faculty researchers and MCF. The members of different themes and the MCF team, along with other members of the University with interests in climate research, also collectively take part in the Climate Futures Research Cluster which meets bi-monthly, in person and online, to familiarise attendees with the breadth of climate research going on across the University and to discuss climate issues of the day of broad interest to the membership.

MCF Team

The MCF Team of academic and professional staff constitutes the 'engine' for carrying out the MCF workplan and activities. It also supports research capacity building, administration, communications and events for the wider University climate research ecosystem.

Academic Team



Jacqueline Peel
Director



Kathryn Bowen
Deputy Director, Knowledge Translation and Policy Impact



Ben Neville
Deputy Director, Strategic Partnerships and Community Impact



Janine Felton
Enterprise Fellow



Lily O'Neill
Senior Research Fellow



Belle Workman
Senior Research Fellow



Rebekkah Markey-Towler
Research Fellow



Simon Batterbury
MCF Academy Convenor

Professional Team



Anthony Stark
MCF Manager



Beth Barber
Communications Manager



Joanne Burns
Administrator and Project Support Officer



Philippa Garrard
Administrator supporting special programs



Millie Do
Events Officer

Financial performance

In 2021, MCF was allocated a five-year funding envelope (2021–2025) of A\$7.5 million. From 2021 to 2024, we have employed a conservative and responsible financial management strategy while building the profile of the group with internal and external stakeholders, funding crucial climate start-up initiatives and delivering world-class research.

In addition to the University-allocated budget provided by DVCR, MCF has been proactive in seeking and securing A\$24.2 million of external funding for both MCF and interdisciplinary University research, amplifying our overall impact and reputation.

MCF has used the available resources to focus on developing strategic interdisciplinary pillars, such as finance, health, policy and partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. The activities and initiatives that serve these pillars, such as the Sustainable Finance Hub, the Indo-Pacific Climate (INPACC) Hub, and the Climate CATCH Lab, were designed to easily scale up as our resources increase, thereby building long-term capabilities and impact for the University of Melbourne.

MCF has demonstrated effective financial management in balancing resource allocation and impact over the last four years. We project that the final five-year budget position at the end of 2025 will be a small, A\$65,000 overrun; this deviates less than one per cent from the allocated budget.

INCOME					
	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total 2021–2024
External funding	0	378,000	1,245,200	22,581,437	24,204,637

EXPENSES					
	2021	2022	2023	2024	Total 2021–2024
Salaries					
Academic staff	609,628	839,695	1,024,254	1,018,331	3,491,908
Professional staff	108,027	349,252	402,415	499,664	1,274,358
Expert services	53,832	90,609	88,431	64,258	382,130
Subtotal	771,487	1,279,556	1,515,100	1,582,254	5,148,397
Research-enabling expenditure					
CRX	400,000	288,939	0	139,047	827,986
Travel & partnership development	5,446	77,727	44,634	34,634	162,440
Other	6,448	31,816	35,816	47,256	121,336
TOTAL	1,183,381	1,678,038	1,595,550	1,803,190	6,260,159



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