



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHARTER 2026–2030

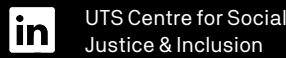
UTS and its communities co-create knowledge, reimagine education, and develop innovative, lasting solutions that empower people and drive positive change.

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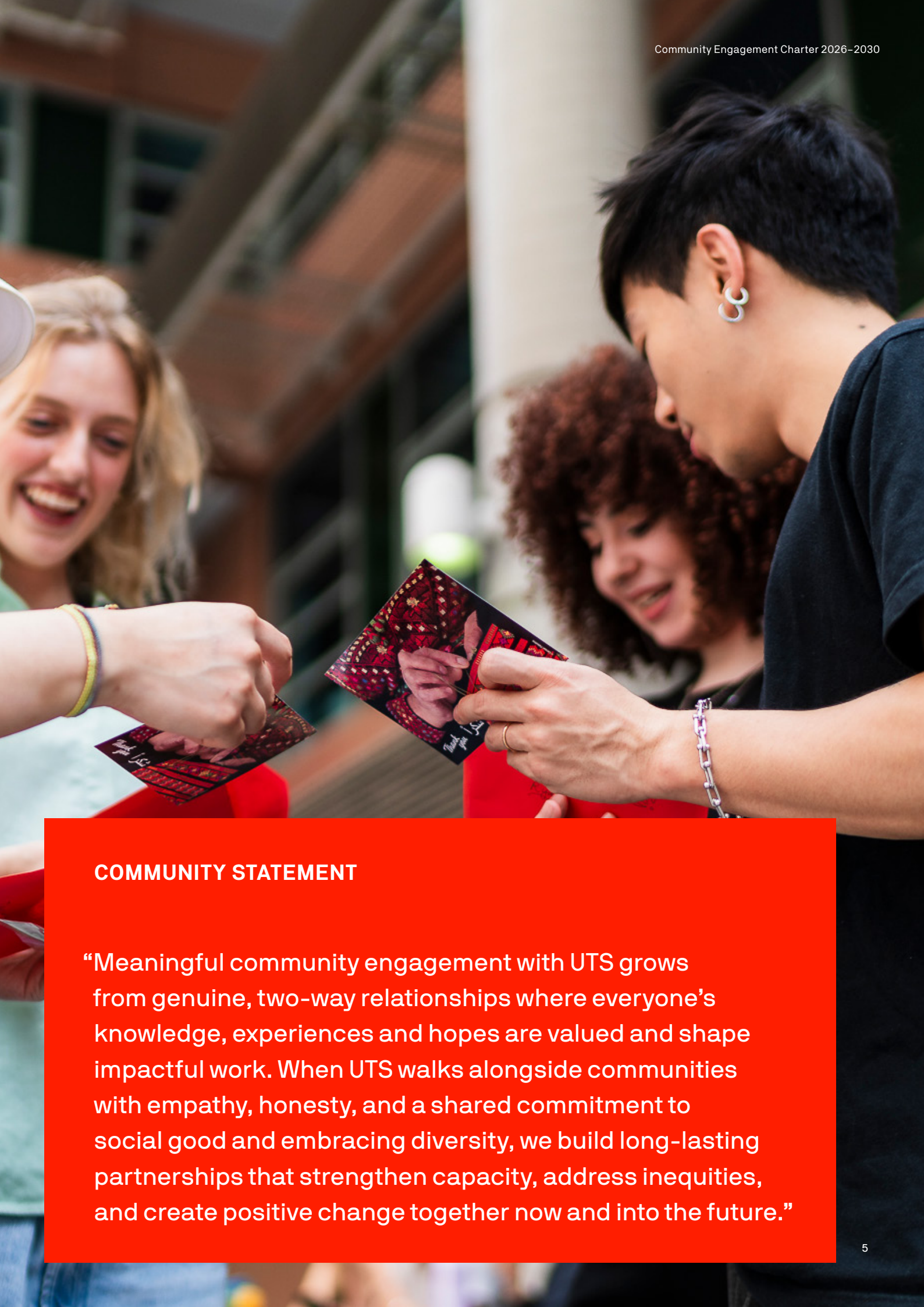
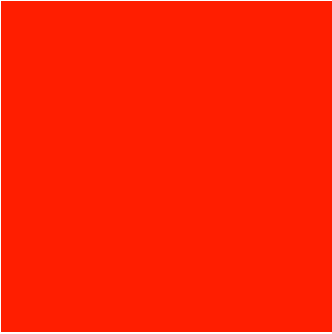
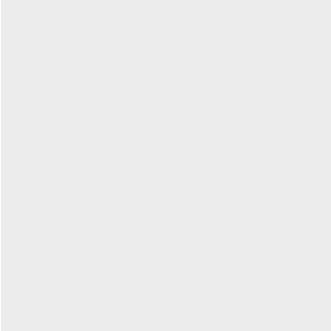


Acknowledgement of Country

UTS acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

Project acknowledgement

We would like to recognise our community partners who work alongside us and contribute considerable expertise, ideas and passion. Without your support, our work would not be possible. Thank you for generously sharing your time and stories.



COMMUNITY STATEMENT

“Meaningful community engagement with UTS grows from genuine, two-way relationships where everyone’s knowledge, experiences and hopes are valued and shape impactful work. When UTS walks alongside communities with empathy, honesty, and a shared commitment to social good and embracing diversity, we build long-lasting partnerships that strengthen capacity, address inequities, and create positive change together now and into the future.”



Engaging together

UTS and its communities purposefully collaborate to forge lasting social impact.

As a public-purpose institution, the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) is defined by academic excellence as well as a deep commitment to social justice, equity and innovation. These values guide who we are and how we engage with the world.

The Community Engagement Charter is a co-designed guide, developed in partnership with community, that sets out the principles and practical commitments for meaningful collaboration with communities. It serves as an aspirational roadmap for growth, and a shared way to focus and strengthen our collective efforts to deliver meaningful impact.

Importantly the Charter is aligned with UTS’s core strategic commitments, including the *UTS 2030* strategy, which affirms UTS’s responsibility to work alongside communities; the *UTS Indigenous Education and Research Strategy*, which centres Indigenous self-determination and transformative impact; and the UTS Social Impact Framework, which guides the university’s contribution to positive social change.

Universities create the greatest impact when they work alongside communities to achieve shared outcomes. At UTS, placing community engagement at the centre of our work leads to co-designed teaching, learning and research that deliver real-world benefits including stronger partnerships, improved outcomes for communities,

and lasting social change. This approach is grounded in trust and reciprocity, and recognises lived experience as essential knowledge. It also reflects our commitment to respecting and upholding First Nations knowledge systems, sovereignty and leadership.

Guided by our values and commitment to working alongside communities, over 2026–2030 UTS will:

Contribute at least 150,000 hours of volunteer effort that responds to community-identified priorities.

This target reflects UTS’s shared ambition to deepen community engagement over time, prioritising quality, reciprocity, and impact alongside scale.



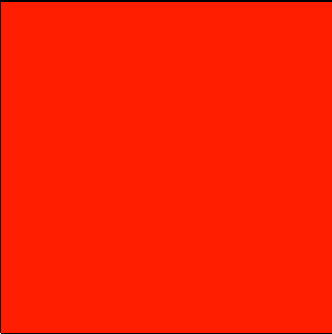
A shared definition of engagement

Community

By communities, we refer to groups of people that are connected through their experience of social concerns. The term is intentionally loosely defined as we are mindful that the boundaries of relationships transform across time. Community partners may include community organisations, not-for-profits, social enterprises, and community members. UTS’s focus is on First Nations communities, our local precinct, and underrepresented communities.

Community engagement

Community engagement is a collaborative and reciprocal process through which UTS works alongside communities for shared, mutual benefit. It values diverse voices and lived experience and includes communities in all aspects of decision-making. It builds capacity and generates knowledge to create measurable, lasting impact that responds to community needs. Community engagement fulfils UTS’s public purpose by building meaningful partnerships that inspire positive social change; advance scholarship, research, and creativity; enrich teaching and learning; and prepares graduates for the world.



Principles of community engagement

The following principles have been co-designed by UTS and our diverse communities to guide meaningful, respectful and impactful engagement that results in positive outcomes. They provide a shared foundation for how we work together, ensuring that community voices shape the goals, processes and outcomes that lead to positive change.



Respect and recognition

Recognise and celebrate the diverse knowledge, lived experiences, identities and contributions that communities bring, while ensuring they are fairly compensated.



Openness and communication

Engage in open, thoughtful communication, using clear and accessible language that meets people where they are.



Learning and accountability

Foster continual reflection, learning and growth together, basing engagement on evidence and shared experience.



Inclusivity and accessibility

Cultivate equitable, accessible, and culturally safe spaces that address power imbalances and enable meaningful participation for all.



Reciprocity and collaboration

Create trusted, transparent partnerships grounded in reciprocity and care. Openly share knowledge and uphold shared decision-making, data sovereignty and collective ownership.

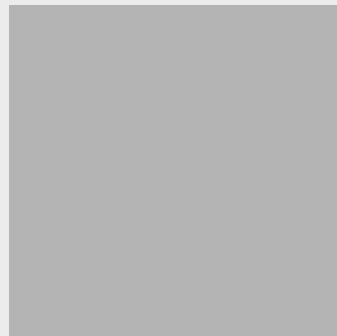


UTS's commitments

1. UTS will build and sustain respectful, equitable and enduring community partnerships grounded in mutual trust, shared purpose and recognition of lived experience as vital knowledge.

Actions:

- Meaningfully integrate lived experience into teaching, research and practice, recognising it as a valid and essential form of expertise, and appropriately remunerating and recognising community contributions.
- Provide practical supports (such as interpreters, childcare, accessible venues, and assistive technologies) and allocate sufficient time and resources to ensure equitable, inclusive and culturally safe participation.
- Build trusting relationships from the outset by working with communities to co-design goals, define success, and agree on how data is collected, used, stored and shared, supporting ethical practice and enduring partnerships grounded in community priorities.
- Share findings and outputs with communities through accessible formats to ensure transparency and accountability.
- Support staff and partners to integrate evaluation and reflective practice into the design and delivery of community engagement initiatives.



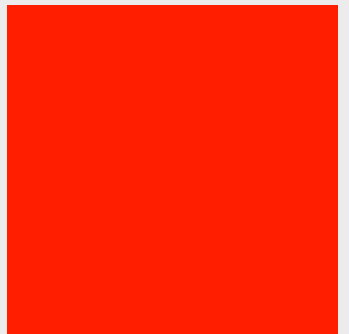
UTS and our communities shaped the following commitments together, guided by a desire to build a healthy, sustainable and socially just society. They reflect what matters to us and guide how we focus our efforts, ensuring our systems and practices support meaningful, collaborative engagement and positive outcomes.

Progress against these commitments will be monitored through evaluation, reflective practice and reporting aligned to UTS governance processes.

2. UTS will equip staff, students and community partners with the skills, knowledge, tools and ethical foundations needed to make community engagement a defining strength of UTS.

Actions:

- Establish a centralised communication hub that provides clear, accessible information for staff and community partners to engage with UTS, including collaboration opportunities, examples of engagement, access to university resources, and a directory of experts.
- Establish a community of practice through which staff and community share insights, build relationships and strengthen collaborative culture across UTS.
- Offer community engagement training and development both internally and externally, covering key topics such as approaches to effective engagement, evaluating community engagement, cultural safety and trauma-informed practice.
- Develop and share open-access tools and frameworks to guide ongoing practice.
- Deliver low-cost or pro-bono services that offer technical, professional and research-based support to community organisations.





3. UTS will celebrate and embed engagement across our systems and culture to acknowledge its essential role in our success and strengthen the lasting impact of our community partnerships.

Actions:

- Integrate community engagement into academic promotions and staff workplans where relevant, ensuring that meaningful community engagement is formally recognised as a valued component of academic and professional roles.
 - Recognise and celebrate excellence in community engagement through showcases, storytelling, awards, events and grants that elevate community voices and support innovative partnerships.
 - Improve access to social justice leave by simplifying processes, embedding discussion of leave in work planning conversations, providing clear guidance on meaningful engagement opportunities, and ensuring that any leave taken directly responds to priorities identified by community groups.
 - Brief external partners working with UTS and community on UTS’s Community Engagement Charter from the outset of a project so that expectations, transparency and shared outcomes are maintained throughout the collaboration.
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4. UTS will commit to using its voice and influence in partnership with communities to amplify shared advocacy for a more just, inclusive and sustainable society.

Actions:

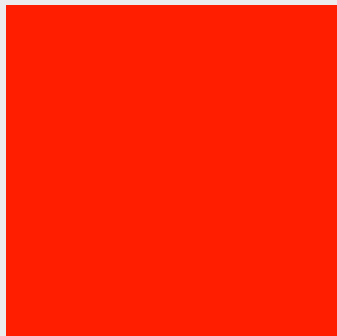
- Centre community voices, experiences and leadership on issues that impact them.
 - Contribute to policy dialogue and reform alongside community using research and practice-based knowledge.
 - Elevate diverse perspectives and contribute to public debate on issues of justice, inclusion and sustainability by leveraging UTS platforms.
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5. UTS will actively engage students in community engagement through teaching, learning and research to develop their skills, social responsibility, and capacity to create positive impact.

Actions:

- Implement best-practice frameworks for community-engaged learning in community, ensuring mutual benefit, respectful practice, and meaningful outcomes.
 - Create opportunities for all students to participate in engagement activities through curricular and co-curricular programs, internships, volunteering, and research, ensuring inclusive access and meaningful participation that builds employability skills, leadership and real-world experience.
 - Support and prepare students to engage meaningfully with communities by providing training, resources and reflective learning opportunities that build the knowledge, skills and mindset needed for responsible and effective civic engagement.
 - Foster student-led initiatives that address community priorities and deliver mutual benefit for community partners without creating additional burden.
 - Explore philanthropic partnerships to expand student opportunities to collaborate with, and learn from, communities.
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Co-designing the Community Engagement Charter

This Charter was developed in genuine partnership with our communities to reflect the values that guide how UTS works alongside others. Through listening, co-design, and shared reflection, 72 community organisations, 94 UTS staff and 21 students shaped a Charter grounded in mutual respect, reciprocity and care.

Contributors engaged across multiple stages of development, from early conversations that surfaced shared priorities, to co-design workshops, surveys and feedback sessions that refined and strengthened the final document. This collaborative process ensured the Charter reflects lived experience, diverse perspectives, and the practical realities of working together in meaningful and ethical ways.

The Charter also responds to a growing national and international expectation that universities actively contribute to social, civic and community life. In Australia, the Universities Accord emphasises the role of universities in advancing equity, strengthening community partnerships, and delivering public value beyond campus boundaries. Globally, there is increasing recognition that higher education institutions must embed engagement as a core function of teaching, research and service. This Charter positions UTS to meet and lead within this evolving landscape by articulating a clear, institution-wide commitment to purposeful, community-engaged practice.



Carnegie Classification

UTS is proud to be one of only two Australian universities to receive the prestigious Carnegie Classification. The Carnegie Community Engagement Classification recognises universities that demonstrate a sustained and institutionalised commitment to meaningful partnerships and collaboration with communities through teaching, research and service.

This recognition affirms our commitment to partnerships that serve the public good. We know there is more to do. This Charter is both a statement of intent and a roadmap for the future, guiding us to deepen relationships, strengthen our impact, and ensure our teaching, research and partnerships serve communities with integrity, respect and care.

