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Travel in transition:

Exploring ANU travel practices in an era of
emissions reduction

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ANU Travel Lab <https://sustainability.anu.edu.au/ANU-travel-lab>

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Executive Summary

Reducing travel emissions is essential for addressing climate change, particularly as emissions are expected to rise with increasing demand for air travel. As part of wider decarbonisation efforts, the Australian National University is **exploring strategies for reducing the emissions generated through travel**. This report concludes a three-part research project focused on lower-emission travel at ANU. Through this research we engaged with ANU staff and students to understand the **meanings, purposes, and challenges of business travel**. By highlighting **past, present and anticipated ways of travelling**, this report aims to lay the groundwork for future efforts to guide the University's business travel in more sustainable ways.

Framed using an established research framework, our findings centre on three key areas: **physical infrastructures and technologies** (Section 4.1), **perceived norms** around travel (Section 4.2), and the **travel practices** people already engage in (Section 4.3).

In terms of infrastructures and technologies, we found an **underutilisation of the ANU travel booking system** and **varying familiarity with information communication technologies (ICTs)** hinder effective travel planning. In the context of a **lack of practical alternatives to air travel** for some of the work undertaken at ANU, improved ICT training and support is essential for facilitating less carbon-intensive ways of collaborating.

Regarding travel norms, **the normalisation of hybrid work offers further opportunities** for learning how to support remote collaboration. At the same time, **the role of travel in career progression**, as well as **the role of funding in incentivising travel**, both require further attention, particularly to **ensure equitable outcomes for more vulnerable staff**.

The current travel practices of ANU staff and students demonstrate how people are already pursuing lower-carbon ways of travelling. These include through **remote conferencing, travelling by means other than plane**, and by **'bunching' events** together to reduce their total number of trips. The complexities of widening a current, informal ban in some Schools on flying to the nearby city of Sydney are also considered in order to explore how lower-carbon travel practices might work in future.

Additionally, the need to **act and advocate at different scales** – from individual ANU staff and students to the societal level – is vital for reimagining a lower-carbon way of working and travelling (Section 5.1). Adequately **accounting for the time costs associated with travel and its alternatives**, and the uneven nature of these time burdens for different kinds of people, is also vital (Section 5.2). Across all these findings, a need to proactively consider equity was also found to be crucial.

On the basis of these findings, we make **eleven recommendations** (Section 6) aimed to guide ANU towards less carbon-intensive ways of travelling and working.