



Submission to the Senate inquiry into United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

29 March 2018

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Introduction

In September 2015, the United Nations and 193 Member States, including Australia, endorsed the Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the aim of eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring equality and prosperity for all.

The 2030 Agenda is both a domestic and international agenda. It is well aligned with Australia's interests - especially in promoting regional stability, security and economic prosperity.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has been contributing to the 2030 Agenda since 2015 having provided input to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators released in 2016.

In March 2017, at the UN Statistical Commission meeting, the Australian Statistician made the following statement:

"Australia would like to thank the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on SDGs for the work they have progressed over the past year to refine the indicator set.

Australia supports adoption of the resolution for the indicator framework, as it stands, at this Commission meeting. We were willing to adopt the framework at last year's Commission meeting.

Australia supports a robust and pragmatic approach to the indicator framework and their measurement, recognising that every country here has challenges in measurement and reporting.

In this context, perfection is the enemy of the good.

So, we support adoption of the framework, and the further work of the IAEG on SDGs to continue refining the indicator set. Australia recognises the important capacity building activity required over coming years and will continue to play our part within our region."

Australian Government coordination on implementation of the 2030 Agenda is led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), and the ABS provides a supporting role.

ABS role in development of and reporting on SDG Indicators

The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency, providing trusted official statistics on a wide range of economic, social, population and environmental matters of importance to Australia. The ABS has an important leadership role coordinating statistical activities and collaborating with official bodies in the collection, compilation, analysis and distribution of statistics.

The ABS has been contributing to the 2030 Agenda since 2015, supporting the whole-of-government response to development and reporting on the SDGs.

The indicators for the 17 SDGs were developed in 2015 and finalised in 2016, and the ABS made a considerable investment, and played a key role, in this process. Leading the Australian response, the ABS worked with DFAT and engaged with academic and business interests to understand the issues around the SDGs and reporting arrangements. The ABS provided expertise and advice on the indicator concepts and specifications, and sent senior ABS staff to meetings overseas to report to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on the outcomes.

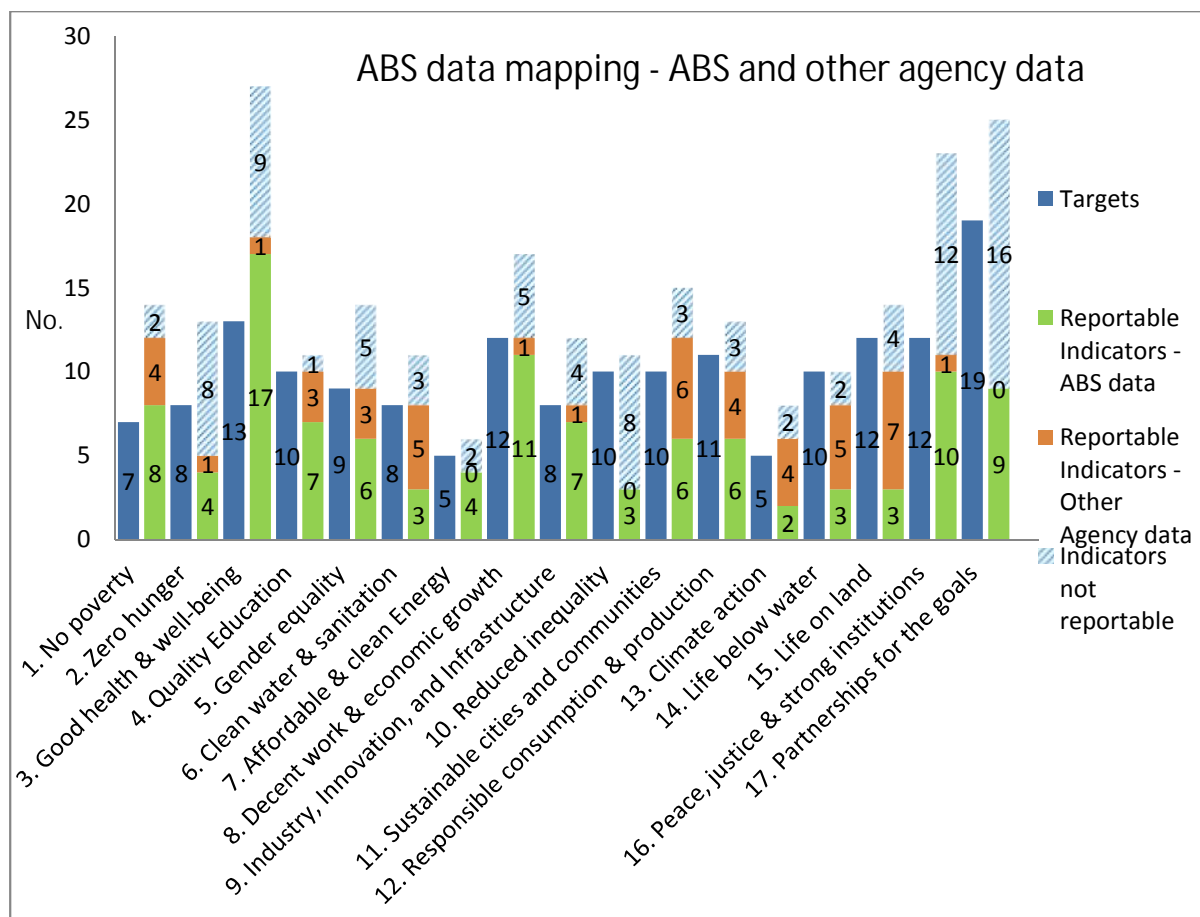
Lead agencies have been appointed for each of the 17 Goals, with responsibility for implementation, consultation and reporting of activities relating to each Goal. There are also a number of other Government Agencies assigned to supporting the lead agency. The ABS is not a lead agency for any of the SDGs but is officially a support agency for:

- SDG 1 – No Poverty,
- SDG 8 – Decent work and Economic Growth, and
- SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals.

It is however expected that the ABS may provide advice and support for lead agencies across all SDGs if required. This would include identifying appropriate data sources, clarifying methodological aspects and metadata.

The ABS undertook a data mapping exercise for the SDGs, exploring both ABS and other Government held data sources to determine the best data source to support each indicator and SDG. This has given structure and foundation to the work each lead agency will undertake to report on the indicators. Results of the data mapping exercise showed that just under two thirds of indicators have readily available data sources to support reporting on them.

The following graph shows for each SDG the number of targets associated with it, and the number of indicators that are currently able to be reported on (whether through ABS data, or through other agency data sources) and the number of indicators currently unable to be reported on. See also Appendix A.



The ABS has worked with whole of government partners to examine various options for bringing together government data on the SDGs. DFAT and the Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) are leading on this work and the ABS will continue to engage with them to progress this work.

ABS involvement with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development

In lead up to Australia's first Voluntary National Review (VNR), ABS has been heavily involved in collating relevant statistics, both from ABS and other Commonwealth Government Agencies, which may respond to the SDG Indicators and contribute to the VNR. This information has been shared collaboratively with the various inter agency committees and groups coordinating the VNR drafting process.

The VNR provides an opportunity to highlight Australia's achievements, priorities and challenges – both domestically and internationally – in advancing the 2030 Agenda. Australia's VNR will contain input from a Whole of Government perspective, and also include information from Business, Non-Government Organisations and Academia, to give a broader and more complete picture of Australia's work towards the 2030 Agenda.

The ABS is represented at the committees established to progress the work on SDGs, including the inter-departmental committee (IDC) at the Deputy Secretary level and the

whole-of-government First Assistant Secretary -level working group. The ABS is also a member of the team of executive level staff across government supporting the development of the VNR, and the national reporting platform.

ABS continues to engage with national and international fora with interests in SDGs, is supporting a number of countries in our region with SDG activities, and provides representation on the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics.

The ABS website hosts a page on 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development which outlines the ABS's involvement in the 2030 Agenda and the VNR process.

[ABS statistical capability development program](#)

The ABS receives funding from DFAT to support regional statistical capability development and institutional strengthening under Australia's aid program. The ABS currently supports five long-term partnerships to provide technical assistance and statistical leadership support to National Statistics Offices in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Pacific region. Through these partnership programs, the ABS supports statistical development across economic, social, environmental and governance statistics. This is in recognition that relevant, quality and timely statistics support a strong evidence base for national decision-making and policy, as well as international and regional reporting obligations such as the SDGs.

ABS is a member of the UNESCAP Regional Group on Population and Social Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and has been involved in consultations to develop a regional work plan that includes strategies to increase user engagement and inform data disaggregation, to strengthen data disaggregation in SDG indicator frameworks, and to enhance partnerships between countries and international agencies.

Appendix A

Table 1: Sustainable Development Goals: Targets and Indicators

Sustainable Development Goal	Targets	Reportable Indicators		Not Reportable	Total indicators
		Using ABS data	Using Other Agency data		
1. No poverty	7	8	4	2	14
2. Zero hunger	8	4	1	8	13
3. Good health & well-being	13	17	1	9	27
4. Quality Education	10	7	3	1	11
5. Gender equality	9	6	3	5	14
6. Clean water & sanitation	8	3	5	3	11
7. Affordable & clean Energy	5	4	0	2	6
8. Decent work & economic growth	12	11	1	5	17
9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	8	7	1	4	12
10. Reduced inequality	10	3	0	8	11
11. Sustainable cities and communities	10	6	6	3	15
12. Responsible consumption & production	11	6	4	3	13
13. Climate action	5	2	4	2	8
14. Life below water	10	3	5	2	10
15. Life on land	12	3	7	4	14
16. Peace, justice & strong institutions	12	10	1	12	23
17. Partnerships for the goals	19	9	0	16	25
Total	169	109	46	89	244