



**Australian Senate Inquiry  
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee**

**Submission to Inquiry into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)  
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Clinton Moore  
Local Pathways Fellow 2017  
Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth Initiative

**About the author**

Clinton Moore's diverse work and life experiences are interdisciplinary and international, crossing boundaries of urban sustainability, sustainable development, safety, and resilience. His insight and ability to elevate urban thinking has been sought after by organisations across Australia and Asia. He is currently a Social Planner in local government in Melbourne, has worked as a Consultant with UN-Habitat in the Philippines, and ICLEI in Taiwan. He has authored reports on urban sustainability, safety, and ecomobility across Asia. He holds a Master of International Development from RMIT University, writing his thesis on the thinking and governance of urban resilience.

In 2017, Clinton was selected as an inaugural SDSN Youth Local Pathways Fellow for Melbourne. Over the last twelve months, Clinton has completed a rigorous research, training, engagement, and solutions-focused program that has seen him speak with high school students, young people, national local government advisory bodies, and city mayors worldwide about the SDGs.

He was a delegate and team leader at the Young Professionals Forum of the Asia-Pacific Cities Summit 2017 in Daejeon, Korea. In 2018, Clinton was a member of the SDSN Youth and Australian Delegations to the World Urban Forum 9 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he presented on the SDGs to children and youth about his experience localising the SDGs in Australia with the Local Pathways Fellowship.

## **Acknowledgement**

I am delighted to present this submission to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee of the Department of the Senate for consideration. I applaud the Australian Senate and the Committee for initiating a critical and public inquiry on the SDGs in the Australian context.

This inquiry is an important step in mobilising Australia's minds, movements, and momentum towards realising the SDGs.

Thank you to the Australian Senate and the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission to this timely and most crucial inquiry. I welcome any requests for further input.

Clinton Moore  
Melbourne, Australia

## **The Importance of Youth Engagement and Action in Achieving the SDGs**

In April 2017, I was selected as an inaugural SDSN Youth Local Pathways Fellow for Melbourne, one of 60 young people aged 18-30 from 52 cities around the world. As Local Pathways Fellows, we have embarked upon a rigorous research, training, engagement, and networking program on the SDGs.

The program culminated in participation in the SDSN Youth Delegation to World Urban Forum 9 (WUF9) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At WUF9, Fellows presented their journeys and local initiatives for the SDGs. WUF9 was an incredible and transformative experience for us, and for thousands of young people in attendance.

Young people have largely been under-represented in high level SDGs discussions and events in Australia. I congratulate the organisers of the New Urban Agenda Conference in Melbourne in May 2017 for holding a pre-conference Youth Workshop, and ensuring that young people presented at the Conference. I also commend the organisers of the Australian SDGs Summit in March 2018 for ensuring youth presenters.

The Australian Government and the Australian Parliament must embrace young people in discussions or action on the SDGs. We need not be invited or treated as mere beacons or custodians of the future. That we may be, but we are also active agents of change now.

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are transformative. Their power is not only in saving ourselves and enhancing present and future life conditions, but in transforming our perspectives on sustainable development. It is important to put education systems and programs in place that not only teach the SDGs and their connections, but relate them to the everyday and future conditions that young people will face.

I have been privileged to be nourished by the thoughts and minds of hundreds of young people around Australia and the world over the past 12 months. I have tried to understand their hopes, dreams, and aspirations, and faithfully represent them in a range of contexts. I strongly believe that young people in Australia can benefit from greater engagement with the SDGs, and that the Australian Government and the Australian Parliament can play a strong and positive role in investing in youth perspectives, education, and action on the SDGs.

## **Response to Selected Terms of Reference**

### **a. the understanding and awareness of the SDGs across the Australian Government and in the wider Australian community**

Over the last twelve months, I have delivered presentations or spoken about the SDGs to a range of audiences in diverse organisational and professional contexts in Australia. I have also been involved in and initiated engagement activities about the SDGs. Sample highlights of engagements over the last twelve months include:

- Participating in the New Urban Agenda Conference pre-conference Youth Workshop, and presenting on youth workshop findings to the New Urban Agenda Conference in Melbourne (May 2017).
- Participating as SDG expert judge and resource person at a student conference at Melbourne Girls Grammar, in which students presented on solutions to local sustainability, safety, and social issues (November 2017).
- Presentations to the National Local Government Drug and Alcohol Advisory Committee (NLGDAAC) and the Pan-Pacific Safe Communities Network on illicit drugs, alcohol, and the SDGs (June 2017 and March 2018).

In addition to the above activities, the Local Pathways Fellowship has afforded me an authority to speak with qualification about the SDGs in a range of personal, professional, academic, and government contexts. I have engaged in possibly thousands of interactions about the SDGs – at home, in the workplace, and in the community.

With the exception of informed sustainability professionals, of whom one would expect a strong understanding of the SDGs, the understanding and awareness of the SDGs across the community is uniformly poor. It is not uncommon to encounter community members or even professionals that have never heard of the SDGs, or misunderstand their scope and purpose.

An obstacle of awareness has been the misunderstanding of ‘sustainable’ and ‘sustainability’. Many I have spoken with have associated the SDGs with largely environmental or ecological concerns. They are not aware of the broad SDGs agenda. ‘Sustainable’ or ‘sustainability’ is often narrowly accepted or interpreted. This presents an opportunity to educate and reframe understandings of the SDGs, and must be addressed.

However, there have been occasions talking about the SDGs that have particularly inspired me. In conversations with some high school students, I have been pleasantly surprised by their knowledge and enthusiasm for the SDGs. I am genuinely excited at the prospect of getting the SDGs further into schools across Australia.

The Australian Government has a key role to play in leadership and communication of the SDGs. However, the Australian Government must improve its commitment to the SDGs and the related New Urban Agenda. I point to the Australian Government’s decision not to send a representative or delegation to the world’s largest cities conference, the recent World Urban Forum 9 in Kuala Lumpur, organised by UN-Habitat and the Malaysian Government.

This decision was disappointing, concerning, and peculiar given Australia’s high rate of urbanisation and the importance of engaging with the Asia-Pacific region. Australia was well

represented, however, by 60 civil society, local, and state government representatives amongst the 25,000 delegates in attendance from more than 160 countries.

I urge the Australian Government to send a strong delegation to World Urban Forum 10 in Abu Dhabi in 2020, and reaffirm its commitment to the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda through active engagement at international events and forums. The Australian Government can improve its demonstration to the community that it is committed to the SDGs, and indeed must improve its efforts to communicate the SDGs to the community.

#### **b. the potential costs, benefits and opportunities for Australia in the domestic implementation of the SDGs**

According to the [SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2017](#), Australia's SDG Global Rank has dropped to 26 of 157 countries. Australia is ranked as performing particularly poorly on some indicators within five SDGs, including:

- improved food security and nutrition (SDG 2)
- sustainable energy production and consumption (SDG 7)
- responsible consumption and production, including waste generation (SDG 12)
- action on climate change (SDG 13)
- protecting the health of its oceans and fisheries (SDG 14).

It is concerning that Australia continues to drop its SDG Global Rank, and yet there is little political expediency or comment on this trend. Whilst there are many SDGs on which Australia is performing relatively well, this good performance may come under threat with complacency, and a failure to plan adequately for future growth and challenges. For example, Australia's cities are growing fast, and failure to plan adequately for this urban growth will threaten Australia's performance in SDG11. Urban planning, design, financing, and investment will require strong cooperation and a willingness to challenge the imagination and reality of Australian cities.

The Australian Government will require significant financial investment, cooperation with civil society, and state and local governments to achieve the SDGs. I urge the Australian Government to commit significant financial resources against priority areas, and to commit to a national SDGs plan of action. Whilst this Inquiry is a very welcome development, the inertia of the Australian Government on the SDGs to date signifies a lack of commitment to the global sustainable development agenda.

The costs of not acting upon the SDGs will far outweigh the costs of acting now. If sustainable development challenges are left to fester unaddressed, Australia's social fabric, environment, and economy will suffer. The benefits and opportunities in the domestic implementation of the SDGs are many, including:

- developing a common language, framework, and understanding of sustainable development across tiers of government, civil society, business, and the broader community.
- empowering young people to develop a greater sense of ownership and change within their communities and across the country.
- increased business resilience and competitiveness.
- an opportunity to demonstrate Australia as a best practice performer, further its positive reputation, and stimulate investment both domestically and overseas.

- positive human, social, environmental, and economic outcomes of implementing the SDGs.

With only 12 years remaining until 2030, the Australian Government needs to show leadership on the SDGs and a plan for our future in this framework. In doing so, confidence, faith, and work will flourish within civil society, local and state governments, business and the broader Australian community.

**c. what governance structures and accountability measures are required at the national, state and local levels of government to ensure an integrated approach to implementing the SDG that is both meaningful and achieves real outcomes**

Achieving the SDGs will require a profound and targeted review of coordination, collaboration, and resources across local, state, and federal government departments. The Australian Government may consider funding or supporting SDG coordination efforts at both state and local levels. Ensuring accountability requires access to good data. Therefore, the Australian Government may also consider funding or supporting a nationwide data collection mechanism that is also able to display data at local government or suburb level. A national 'SDGs census' and related data should be transparent and available.

The following principles may form an integrated approach to implementing the SDGs in Australia:

- **Plan** – development of a national plan and vision to achieve the SDGs.
- **Coordination** – development and implementation of a strong coordination model within the Australian Government, and with state and local governments.
- **Cooperative** – a spirit of cooperation between the Australian Government, civil society, and a strong education, engagement, and implementation focus on young people.
- **Perception** – the ability to anticipate and perceive emerging issues and trends in sustainable development that may impact upon achievement of the SDGs, and the need for a strong and ongoing SDGs research and evidence base.
- **Accountability** – upholding accountability to the 2030 Agenda that was signed in September 2015, accountability to the Australian community, and data collection mechanisms and visualisation systems that will allow Australians to track progress on the SDGs.

**d. how can performance against the SDGs be monitored and communicated in a way that engages government, businesses and the public, and allows effective review of Australia's performance by civil society**

The Voluntary National Review in July 2018 will be an important milestone in tracking Australia's SDGs implementation progress. This presents a good opportunity to communicate and promote the SDGs in Australia, and Australia's progress to the world.

SDGs-focused social media accounts and content, administered by the Australian Government, can engage and communicate performance against the SDGs, and indeed anything else relevant to the SDGs in Australia. SDGs-focused social media accounts would enable interactivity and immediate review by informed partners and the public.

Development of an online clearinghouse of SDGs resources, experts, and data in Australia, and development of an appropriate data mapping mechanism or system, will allow for transparency and real-time review of Australia's progress.

In communicating the SDGs, the SDGs can tie in with a whole range of public messaging and campaigns. Underlining popular campaigns or culture with SDGs messaging should not be underestimated. Many initiatives and projects from federal, state, and local governments are already addressing aspects of the SDGs. Further public education of the SDGs will allow civil society and the public to identify aspects of the SDGs not being delivered upon, and improve levels of accountability.

#### **h. examples of best practice in how other countries are implementing the SDGs from which Australia could learn**

Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), a global initiative of the United Nations to mobilise global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development, has produced a number of helpful resources about the SDGs:

##### [Getting Started with the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

"This guide is a first and preliminary guide on how to "get started" with implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to help stakeholders, including governments at all levels (national, regional, and local), to understand the SDG Agenda, to start an inclusive dialogue on SDG implementation, and to prepare SDG-based national development strategies (or align existing plans and strategies with the goals)."

##### [US Cities Sustainable Development Goals Index](#)

"The US Cities SDG Index presents a picture of sustainable urban development in the United States. This report provides the following:

- a consolidated database of indicators to monitor sustainable development in the US
- a snapshot of where US cities stand on SDG implementation to help identify priorities for early action in each city
- a list of data gaps that are hindering cities' and the federal government's ability to effectively monitor sustainable development at the local level."

Few countries have current national sustainable development strategies that are explicitly framed by the SDGs. This is an opportunity for Australia to have global leadership. Some countries, however, have explicitly considered or framed the SDGs in their national strategies and national reports, including:

- **Denmark** – [The World 2030 – Denmark's Strategy for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Action](#)
- **Germany** – [German Sustainable Development Strategy](#)
- **Japan** – [The SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles](#)
- **Nigeria** – [Nigeria's Road to SDGs: Country Transition Strategy](#)
- **Zambia** – [Seventh National Development Plan \(7NDP\)](#)