

AUSTRALIAN SDGs SUMMIT

On the Road to Implementation

Outcomes Report

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Sydney



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The inaugural Australian SDGs Summit was co-hosted by a coalition of peak bodies in Australia and we invite you to connect with us to stay up to date on Australian action to advance the SDGs.

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Executive summary

The new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which came into effect on 1 January 2016, are a landmark agreement by all countries on a blueprint for a better future.

The inaugural Australian SDGs Summit was Australia's first high-level multi-stakeholder forum to advance national implementation of the SDGs. The Summit, convened on 7 September 2016 in Sydney, brought together 150 leaders and decision-makers from government, business, civil society and academia to explore what the SDGs mean for Australia, showcase existing commitments and implementation efforts, and identify what actions need to be taken collaboratively and by different sectors to achieve the goals.

Key discussion points

The SDGs provide a fundamentally new approach for addressing the social, environmental and governance challenges facing Australia and the world. The SDGs framework provides a new way of articulating what a prosperous future looks like which is positive, comprehensive, tangible, measurable and relevant to Australia both domestically and internationally. As such it provides opportunities for new conversations, partnerships and actions to help realise such a future.

We need to build on the growing momentum for action on the SDGs across all sectors. There is already broad support and significant momentum for the SDGs from across all sectors in Australia, with a number of companies and other organisations already demonstrating the agenda's practical uses and benefits. This momentum was further demonstrated by the four sectoral statements of support for the SDGs launched at the Summit.

A way forward

Important starting points for taking implementation of the SDGs forward in Australia include:

- Using the SDGs to build a vision for Australia's future and a plan to get us there.
- Mapping how Australia is already performing against the SDGs – particularly to identify areas where we are not doing well.
- Mapping existing activities from across sectors which are contributing to the SDGs, on which to build.
- Developing the economic and strategic case to quantify a range of strategic, social, environmental and economic benefits in working towards and achieving the SDGs.
- Developing tools, case studies and other resources to assist Australian organisations in engaging with and contributing to the SDGs.

Collaboration and partnerships are critical to addressing the complexity of the SDGs.

Although partnerships can be challenging to build and maintain, they provide a range of opportunities. To help forge strong partnerships, the SDGs should be used as a common starting point for discussion.

Communication and awareness raising is key to ensuring meaningful impact towards the SDGs.

It is important that a wide range of actors are engaged in addressing them – including government at all levels, business, civil society, academia and the broader public. Currently the SDGs are neither well known nor well understood in Australia, so raising broad awareness of them is important. To engage these actors, a positive vision of the SDGs should be articulated and an emotional connection built through stories showing what the agenda means for people's own lives.



If Australia is to achieve the SDGs by 2030 certain goals must be prioritised. It is possible for Australia to achieve all the goals, but action on certain goals will need to be prioritised first and responsibilities distributed across government and sectors. This will require national coordination and leadership to set priorities and ensure no goal is forgotten. Businesses and other organisations should prioritise SDGs based on where they can have the most impact, but also seek to push beyond the status quo.

To progress SDG implementation in Australia, it is important to coordinate across sectors and at a national level. Coordination on aspects of SDG implementation, such as vision, priorities, communication approach, information sharing, measurements and reporting, will enhance take up and accountability, and help avoid duplication. It would make sense for coordination to be government-led (e.g. from within PM&C or COAG) and involving peak bodies and networks to assist with coordinating across sectors and regions.

Appropriate frameworks for monitoring and reporting Australia’s progress on the SDGs are an essential component of implementation. Such frameworks provide an impetus for action (‘what gets reported gets done’), ensure accountability, provide feedback on implementation success, create a coherent story on wide-ranging actions, and provide an opportunity for ongoing public engagement. Such reporting should provide an accessible and coherent narrative of progress and actions across different goals and different sectors and have appropriate levels of disaggregation. Although there are challenges to national SDGs monitoring and reporting, including the breadth of the agenda and the lack of data in some goal areas, there are ways to start addressing them. Roles and responsibilities for data collection and coordination within the Australian Government should be identified and frameworks for the participation of other sectors in reporting should be identified or developed. Efforts should build on existing reporting schemes or models (such as the National Sustainability Council Report 2013).

Each sector’s role in achieving the SDGs should be highlighted. While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership of the agenda, working alongside and in collaboration with all other sectors. The Australian Government has a central role to play in implementation and coordination of, and reporting on, the agenda, which is relevant to every portfolio and department at federal, state and local levels of government. However other sectors also have critical roles to play. Private sector action will be key to the success of each SDG – including through responsible business operations, new business models, investment, innovation and technology, and collaboration. Civil society plays a vital role in reducing poverty and injustice through their delivery of services, empowerment of citizens and in holding government and other development actors to account, and can show leadership by embedding the SDGs in their work. Universities and the academic sector have a role to play through their teaching, research and organisational leadership roles. Young people, who are often excluded from the discussions, bring unique skills that are essential to addressing the challenges of the agenda.

Next steps

The Summit generated significant energy and momentum, and identified immediate opportunities and priorities for continuing to build on this to drive action on the SDGs. These included identifying roles and responsibilities of all sectors; future national summits; working groups to delve into the details of national implementation; ongoing communication activities; mapping current activities contributing to the SDGs; and development of tools and resources.



Introduction

The new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which came into effect on 1 January 2016, are a landmark agreement by all countries on a blueprint for a better future. The SDGs will guide efforts towards ending extreme poverty, promoting prosperity and well-being, protecting the environment, addressing climate change, and encouraging good governance, peace and security for all by 2030.

Australia, like all countries, is expected to take ownership of the SDGs and report on progress in achieving them, and the SDGs present a significant opportunity for Australia to come together around a shared agenda to create a sustainable future as well as play a leadership role in our region and around the world. The SDGs also offer opportunities for those able to innovate solutions to the social, environmental and governance challenges reflected in the agenda.

Our organisations are leading advocates for the SDGs in our own sectors - business, social inclusion, international development and academia. Since the SDGs were launched in September 2015, we have already seen significant engagement with the agenda from within the sectors we represent. However, as the SDGs are ambitious and 'business as usual' will not be enough to achieve them, success will require action and collaboration across all sectors: federal, state and local government, business, civil society and academia.

To this end, we came together to co-host the inaugural Australian SDGs Summit, Australia's first high-level multi-stakeholder forum to advance national implementation of the SDGs. The Summit, convened on 7 September 2016 in Sydney, brought together 150 leaders and decision-makers from across all sectors (Annexure 1) to build a common understanding of the opportunities of the SDGs and how they could be put into practice in Australia.

We designed the Summit agenda (Annexure 2) to facilitate the sharing of experiences and learnings between different sectors, explore what the SDGs mean for Australia, showcase existing

commitments and implementation efforts, and identify what actions need to be taken collaboratively and by different sectors to achieve the goals.

We were privileged to have both the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, and the Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation, The Hon Angus Taylor MP, open the Summit and set the scene for the relevance of the SDGs both domestically and abroad. We also heard from a wide range of organisations and thought leaders about their perspectives and experiences with SDG implementation. We also heard from all participants through carefully designed breakout group activities on themes relating to SDG implementation.

This report synthesises and summarises the key points and main recommendations from the presentations and discussions at the Summit and additional feedback provided by participants afterwards. We believe this will provide a strong direction to help Australia take the necessary next steps to achieve the SDGs.

Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)

Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)

Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA)

UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Australia/Pacific



Setting the scene

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted a plan for achieving a better future for all, laying out a path over the next 15 years to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect the planet.

At the heart of this agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (elaborated by 169 targets, as well as global indicators) that address the most important economic, social, environmental and governance challenges of our time. The SDGs are a landmark agreement, defining global sustainable development priorities and aspirations for 2030 and seeking to mobilise global efforts around a common set of goals and targets. They follow from (and expand on) the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which expired in 2015.

The SDGs apply to all countries at all stages of development, including Australia. While non-binding, the SDGs have unprecedented buy-in as a result of extensive and inclusive global consultations and negotiations involving governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and the broader community.

Further, twenty-two countries have already voluntarily reported on the SDGs in September 2016, at the first UN High-Level Political Forum since the agenda came into effect.

While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership of the agenda, working alongside and in collaboration with all other sectors including business, civil society and academia. Governments are also required to report progress in achieving the SDGs at the UN High-Level Political Forum, at least twice during the agenda's 15 years.

Recognising that achieving the agenda will cost trillions of dollars, mobilisation beyond the public sector will also be critical from a financing perspective. Since the SDGs launched, significant global momentum has been building in all sectors.

The Australian Government played an active role in the SDG negotiations, and **Senator the Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific**, noted the alignment between the SDGs and Australia's international development priorities, including on SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) for which Australia was a strong advocate during negotiations. Australia is also providing assistance to our Pacific neighbours in measuring and reporting progress on the SDGs.

The Hon. Angus Taylor MP, Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation, highlighted that the SDGs also have a clear alignment with Australia's domestic priorities, such as the Smart Cities Plan recently launched by the Australian Government. The challenges addressed by the Plan are covered by several of the SDGs, and in particular SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities). The Plan also have an important component to measure and track the performance of our cities.

At the Summit, **Ewen McDonald, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)** confirmed that the Government had established an Inter-Departmental Committee, co-chaired by DFAT and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to lead an ongoing process to ensure whole-of-government coordination on the agenda. The Australian Bureau of Statistics is also playing an active role, given the need for Australia to gather data and report progress on the SDGs.

The SDGs: A blueprint for Australia's future

Summit participants strongly agreed that the SDGs are relevant to Australia both at home and abroad and present a significant opportunity for the Australian community to come together around a shared agenda to create a sustainable future and play a leadership role in our region and around the world.

Participants identified a range of reasons why the SDGs provide a fundamentally new way with which to address the existing social, environmental and governance challenges. These included that they provide:

- A positive vision of a more sustainable, inclusive and just future which is equally as relevant and inspiring for Australians as it is for those in less advanced economies.
- A comprehensive, tangible and measurable definition or 'meta-narrative' of what prosperity means, which integrates social, economic, environmental dimensions and can be the basis for more rigorous dialogue.
- A framework to better understand and address the complex interlinkages between the social, environmental and governance challenges facing us.
- A shared agenda and a common language through which we can break down barriers and build cross-sector collaboration and partnerships to achieve new and better things.
- A new way of articulating why it is important for Australia to address both domestic and international priorities, and why these are not (and cannot) be mutually exclusive.
- A transparent and accountable way to track Australia's progress, identify and address areas where Australia is not performing well and compare our progress internationally.

How Australian stakeholders are already embracing the SDGs

There is already broad support for and significant momentum behind the SDGs from across all sectors in Australia, with a number of companies and other organisations already embracing the SDGs as a critical agenda and demonstrating their practical uses and value.

This was highlighted by four sectoral statements of support for the SDGs, signed by some 80 significant Australian organisations and peak bodies, launched at the Summit:

[CEO Statement of Support for the SDGs, led by the Global Compact Network Australia](#)

[University Commitment to the SDGs, led by SDSN Australia/Pacific](#)

[Civil Society Statement of Commitment to the SDGs, presented by ACFID and ACOSS](#)

[Australian Youth Pledge for the SDGs, led by SDSN Youth](#)

Specific case studies were also shared at the Summit, including:

Brambles

Brambles, a supply-chain logistics company operating in more than 60 countries, has aligned its sustainability strategy with the SDGs. Brambles operates a circular business model, specialising in the share and reuse of logistics equipment, including more than 550 million pallets, crates and containers. The company has a particular focus on procuring sustainable forestry materials (SDG 15) and maximising resource utility using the principles of the circular economy (SDG 12) rather than single use packaging products. By linking their sustainability strategy to global priorities Brambles joins a common platform for collaboration with their key stakeholders on critical sustainability issues such as deforestation, climate change, future resource constraints and the resilience of food supply chains. One of the company's drivers in aligning with the SDGs is their importance to all stakeholders including employees, customers and investors. (www.brambles.com/sustainability)



Telstra

Telstra, a leading telecommunications and technology company, assessed the 17 SDGs and 169 targets against its value chain and considered impact, level of influence, relevance to strategy and vision, and ability to use ICT to drive impact. This process identified four priority SDGs for the company (SDGs 5, 8, 9 and 13), which is now looking at applicable indicators to track progress. (telstra.com/sustainability/report)

Caritas

Caritas, a Catholic agency for international aid and development, is developing materials and resources for primary and secondary schools to educate students about the SDGs. (www.caritas.org.au/learn/sdg)

Questacon

Questacon, Australia's national science and technology centre, is building awareness of the SDGs with students and teachers including through an SDG mural and an initiative which is empowering students to create solutions and develop regional sustainable development plans. (www.questacon.edu.au/business/media-centre/news-and-media/have-you-seen-our-new-street-art)

Mulloon Institute

The Mulloon Institute, a research, education and advocacy organisation focused on regenerative methods of land management, is participating in a global project to identify sustainable, profitable and productive agriculture pathways towards meeting the SDGs. (themullooninstitute.org/partner-sponsor)

WA SDGs Network

The WA SDGs Network, a collaboration between civil society, universities, local government and other partners, has convened capacity building workshops and events on the SDGs and their relevance to WA, and is developing joint work on indicators and reporting. (ap-unsdsn.org/event-17-sustainable-development-goals-for-one-world)

Crackerjack Education

Crackerjack Education, a social enterprise focused on sharing Indigenous people's ancient knowledge and history, has developed the CultuReCode™ model - an ecological theory to balance the shared value tensions that exist between the social codes of customary and progressive shared value societies - which can contribute to, and has been mapped against, the SDGs. (www.culturecodesv.com)

Having explored the existing SDG commitments and actions across sectors, the Summit turned to the critical questions of how to scale up, expand and build on this early activity.

Taking SDG implementation forward in Australia

While there is already significant engagement with the SDGs from across sectors, 'business as usual' will not be enough to achieve the agenda's aspirations. Much of the Summit – through panel discussion and breakout group activities – was spent identifying how implementation can be taken forward in Australia. While a wide range of topics were discussed, several consistent themes emerged across the day, which are summarised below.

Mapping a way forward with the SDGs

Creating a vision for Australia's future

Australia can build on the SDGs to create a vision of where we want to be in 2030 and use it to elaborate a development agenda for getting us there. Such a vision is important in helping set the tone for why the SDGs are relevant to Australia.

- The vision should put people at the centre, while identifying the role of each sector.
- The vision should reflect a community agenda focused on what is important to Australians. Broad buy-in will be important, as will hearing from those in the community who are more vulnerable and not always included.
- Developing and implementing such a vision will require political will and courage.

Mapping how Australia is already performing against the SDGs and identifying gaps

A high priority is to do a gap analysis to identify how Australia is currently performing against the SDGs, and particularly areas where we are not doing well. This will allow us to know where to start focussing national implementation efforts and give us a baseline from which to measure progress.

- The [SDG Index](#) prepared by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung is a good start, but needs to be refined and reframed for the Australian context. Australia is currently 20th in the Index, and an aspiration was expressed that we should aim to be in the top 10.

- The former National Sustainability Council's [Sustainable Australia Report 2013](#) is a few years old but still a useful reference. It could be a model for an updated SDGs gap analysis.
- The analysis should look at disaggregated data as certain significant SDG issues may not be apparent when averages are applied (e.g. poverty, health issues, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage).
- Some areas for improvement already identified for Australia include poverty, inequality, gender equality, sustainable cities, environment and climate change.

Mapping current activities contributing to the SDGs

There is already a lot of Australian activity contributing to the SDGs, although not necessarily being acknowledged as such, and future action should build on this. As a first step it is important to map who is doing what in order to:

- Recognise and showcase good work;
- Help connect people to the SDGs agenda by showing them how it is relevant to them;
- Ensure that we build on what is already being done;
- Help find alignments between existing priorities/strategies and the goals;
- Help identify who could contribute to implementation; and
- Help identify who could contribute data to measuring progress.

Making the economic and strategic case

While a number of companies and other organisations are taking the lead and recognising the economic and strategic benefits of engaging with the SDG agenda, making and quantifying a clear case will support a scaling up of action towards the agenda.

The case for the SDGs will need to address:

- What prosperity looks like and rethinking of a broader notion of Australia's 'success,' incorporating economic, social and environmental aspects;
- How value and contribution can be quantified;
- A national cost-benefit analysis, looking at:
 - financial and other costs of inaction and not meeting the SDGs, and
 - who will benefit from acting on the SDGs;
- Organisation- and sector-specific cost-benefit analyses, incorporating value chain impacts.

Sharing practice

A national knowledge sharing and learning platform would help organisations and businesses get started and advance in their implementation of the SDGs, and avoid wasting time and resources reinventing the wheel.

- The platform could share tools, guidance and best practice case studies on building the business case, carrying out organisational mapping, and SDG implementation.
- Information could be targeted to specific sectors or audiences, but there is much that sectors could learn from each other.
- Such knowledge exchange could also happen through regular summits or other fora.

Encouraging leadership

Leadership from all sectors will be key to achieving the SDGs. The Summit highlighted examples of how all sectors are taking practical action to advance the agenda. The statements of support for the SDGs – from business, civil society and academia respectively – demonstrated significant willingness to lead action on sustainable development. Such leadership will be critical to maintaining momentum around the SDGs until 2030, and should be encouraged.

Short-term v long-term

The SDG agenda's 15 year timeframe, and the multi-dimensional and inter-temporal aspects of the SDGs, make strategic action challenging. However, the agenda is a marathon not a sprint, and the sooner actions are started and coordinated the better the impact will be.

Prioritisation

The SDGs agenda is very broad, with 17 goals and 169 targets. It is possible for Australia to achieve all of the SDGs by 2030. To make this task manageable, action on certain goals will need to be prioritised and roles and responsibilities across government areas and other sectors determined, which will require national coordination and leadership. While prioritisation will be necessary, it is important to ensure that none of the goals gets ignored and that the interlinkages between the goals are understood and incorporated into implementation activities.

At the national level, there are different approaches to prioritisation, such as:

- starting with the areas where Australia performs worst in;
- address the SDGs that have high social and economic return on investment (e.g. health, poverty, addressing inequalities); or
- invest first in areas where funding is falling short.

Companies and other organisations will also need to prioritise. The prioritisation process should explore areas where they have actual and potential negative impacts, as well as areas where they can have most positive impact.¹ Organisations should also be cognisant of any SDGs at risk of being ignored and explore how they can also contribute to those through their own activities and/or through collaborations with others.

¹ The [SDG Compass](#) provides a guide for business action on the SDGs including mapping and prioritising. The guide may also be useful for other sectors.



Collaboration and partnerships

Given the complexity and intractability of the issues represented in the SDGs, it will be critical to build collaboration and partnerships at all levels to leverage the skills, expertise and resources of different sectors and organisations.²

Challenges to partnering were acknowledged, including an historical lack of trust between some sectors, and the need for constructive rather than adversarial engagement was emphasised. Organisations were also urged to resist stereotypes about other sectors. Putting people at the core of discussions can create a shared focus.

A number of avenues for collaboration, including local networks, were discussed. As organisations map their activities and impacts against the SDGs, the SDGs can provide a framework to identify other organisations with common priorities and areas of focus, providing an opportunity to build clusters of actors with common interests and the potential for creating shared value. There is an opportunity to continue to bring people together to collaborate more regularly, and to broker partnerships where there are aligned interests. Building capacity across sectors to effectively partner will also be of value.

Funding

The SDGs will require trillions of dollars each year to implement globally and key questions remain as to how to mobilise sufficient resources.³ It is agreed that financing will need to come from both the private and public sectors, including through non-traditional collaborations. A range of financing ideas were discussed at the Summit including creating drivers for private sector contributions.

Communication and awareness raising

Engaging all sectors

In order to have meaningful impact towards meeting the SDGs, it is important that a wide

range of actors are brought along on the journey. Measuring and reporting progress on the SDGs will be an important element of this. However, there is a much greater story to be told to engage a wider audience:

- **Government:** Engagement and action from all levels of government will be critical to Australia's success in achieving the SDGs. Communication from other sectors, including demonstrations of other sectors' commitment and willingness to contribute to the SDGs and opportunities to explore public-private partnerships for the SDGs, could support broader government engagement and action.
- **Private sector:** While a number of leading companies are actively engaging with the SDGs, there is an opportunity to scale this up within the broader business community. Communicating the business case for engagement and opportunities for impact through core business and other activities will help drive this.
- **Civil society:** Civil society organisations' core activities are focused on SDG-related issues. There will be impact in encouraging them to specifically use the SDG framework in shaping their work and building cross-sector partnerships, as well as incorporating the SDGs into their communications.
- **Academia:** Academic institutions can contribute much to the achievement of the SDGs, e.g. through incorporating the SDGs into curriculum and focusing research efforts on SDG-related challenges. Raising awareness of the SDGs, and the opportunities the framework offers for building collaborative projects with other sectors.
- **Public:** Raising public awareness about the SDGs will further build the case for other sectors to implement the agenda. Public awareness and buy-in still needs to be created in Australia.

² The challenges and opportunities of partnering for sustainable development are explored in a GCNA issues paper available [here](#).

³ The [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#), agreed by UN Member States at the Third International Conference on Financing for Sustainable Development in 2015, seeks to provide a new global framework for financing the SDGs by aligning financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities.



Developing key messages

Politically-neutral key messages with clarity and consistency on language and means of measurement will be important for communicating the role, impact and importance of the SDGs. An effective message is needed to narrate and frame the SDGs to engage all of society on the story. Developing this messaging should focus on:

- A vision for Australia and how the SDGs can help develop, communicate and achieve that vision.
- An emphasis on emotional connection to the SDGs, for example through:
 - their universal relevance and ownership – ‘Global Goals’ has somewhat successfully branded the goals as ‘global’ rather than only relevant to developing countries. This approach could be utilised in further creating an emotional connection to the SDGs;
 - the human story of what the SDGs mean for Australians and demonstration of how the SDGs affect them at a personal level. ‘Leaving no one behind’ can be drawn upon to build emotional connections and what the SDGs mean to peoples’ lives.
- Keeping messaging simple. The sheer number of targets and indicators mean the SDG agenda is complex, and so messaging must be simple, clear and concise.
- Targeted messaging for different audiences, to ensure the relevance for all sectors is clear.
- Consistency, despite the need for simple and targeted messaging, which could benefit from a nationally coordinated approach.

Strategies, channels and tactics

The Summit discussed a range of ways to communicate about the SDGs, including:

- An online Australian SDGs hub housing resources, case studies, engagement opportunities etc.;
- A well-branded SDG beginners pack or FAQs;

- Development of case studies from different sectors;
- Identification of SDG champions or ambassadors from across all sectors to lead public conversations;
- Conferences, workshops and other events;
- Advertising and social media campaigns;
- Engagement with government emphasising the importance of mainstreaming the SDG narrative, with government policies branded as response to a particular SDGs;
- Awards, acknowledgements, financial procurement or other incentives; and
- Engagement with peak or membership bodies, to encourage outreach to their members on the SDGs.

Monitoring and reporting

The opportunity

The need for appropriate frameworks for monitoring and reporting Australia’s progress on the SDGs was raised a number of times by the Summit participants. Such frameworks provide an impetus for action (‘what gets reported gets done’), ensure accountability from those with responsibility for or commitment to implementing the SDGs, provide feedback on implementation success and areas that need further attention, allow comparison of progress across countries, provide a way to create a coherent story on actions taking place across a wide range of areas and sectors, and provide an opportunity for ongoing engagement with the broader public on the SDGs.

All countries (through their governments) are required to report progress in achieving the SDGs at least twice during the agenda’s 15 years, as well as provide data on a common set of global SDG indicators.⁴ However it is generally acknowledged that these global indicators often don’t necessarily reflect the issues and priorities of individual countries.

⁴ The official list of global indicators can be found on the website of the [UN Statistical Division](https://data.un.org/en/home).

As such, the Summit participants felt that the SDGs present an opportunity – and a challenge – for Australia to strengthen its monitoring and reporting on social, economic and environmental progress. There is also an opportunity for other sectors to play a role in supporting government reporting as well as reporting their own contributions to the goals.

Elements of reporting in Australia

Some of the important elements that Summit participants wanted to see in national reporting frameworks are that they:

- Reflect community priorities.
- Tell stories that resonate with people, not just provide data.
- Have appropriate levels of disaggregation to ensure that no-one is left behind. Averages can be misleading, as they risk masking certain groups or locations and make people in real disadvantage invisible. Specifically, there must be a renewed effort to improve data collection and reporting in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other disadvantaged groups.
- Provide a coherent narrative of actions happening across different areas and different sectors.
- Be done in a way which is accessible to the broader community.
- The creation of an Australian ‘SDG index’, which would present an aggregated measure of progress across all the goals based on indicators that better reflect Australian relevance and priorities, could be useful.

Addressing challenges

It is well-recognised that national monitoring and reporting on the SDGs is challenging, with some of the issues being raised at the Summit including:

- The breadth and complexity of the issues covered by the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets make data collection and reporting difficult.

- The lack of data currently being collected or reported on in relation to key goals, including baseline data.
- The highly fragmented and incomplete way that SDGs-related issues are currently being measured.
- The lack of agreement on definitions in relation to some key goals (e.g. poverty); and more broadly, the lack of clarity and consistency in language and measurement.
- The lack of guidance on what voluntary organisational reporting the SDGs should look like, and how to ensure differentiation between organisations taking genuine action to implement the SDGs and those that are ‘SDG-washing’.

Summit participants identified some opportunities and important first steps to addressing these challenges:

- There is a need for clarity about where ultimate responsibility for Australia’s SDG reporting sits within the Government, including responsibility for compiling the data across the 17 goals into one reporting framework (e.g. does this sit with a central government agency such as the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, or the ABS, or with an independent commission similar to the former National Sustainability Council?). Protocols on coordination and the roles of different departments would also be helpful. One suggestion was to identify a lead agency for each goal whose role it is to oversee and coordinate monitoring and reporting against that goal, working with other departments and the ABS.
- Monitoring and reporting against the SDGs must be adequately resourced to ensure coordination does occur and progress can be measured and promoted over the long term (i.e. 15 years).

- Monitoring and reporting should be incorporated into or build on already existing reporting requirements where relevant and possible (at both the national and organisational levels). We should seek to build on existing reporting models which work well (e.g. National Sustainability Council Report 2013).⁵
- Recognising that data across all indicators is not currently available, it may be useful to identify and prioritise a smaller subset of key indicators that specifically reflect Australia's needs and priorities as the starting points of the reporting framework.
- There is a role for other sectors in monitoring and reporting Australia's SDG implementation. Opportunities include strengthening the links between community organisations and researchers, supporting businesses to publicly report their contributions to the agenda, and engaging citizens in the reporting process. Civil society and others may want to take up a shadow reporting role as per UN human rights processes. Governments should explore the possibility of an SDG-aligned open data platform which includes all of the government's SDG data and enables citizen-collected data.
- A common framework should be developed to enable civil society, government, INGOs, NGOs, companies and other actors to monitor and report their SDG implementation, e.g. a voluntary reporting framework. Frameworks and resources should be developed to support voluntary organisational reporting.
- An annual conference or other event focused on SDG monitoring and reporting would provide opportunities for sharing and exchange of data.

Coordination

Coordination nationally, within and across sectors, will be important for Australian SDG implementation success, and enhance take up and accountability while preventing duplication of efforts.

Aspects of SDG implementation where coordination is particularly important include:

- Formulating a shared vision of how the SDGs apply to Australia that reflects a broad-based community agenda;
- Identifying national priorities and developing a framework for prioritising areas of focus;
- Creating a common narrative and communications plan to engage and mobilise partners and the public;
- Sharing good practice examples and experiences of how the SDGs are being used within and across sectors to accelerate learning;
- Developing a national integrated implementation framework or plan that will articulate the roles and contributions of different levels government, civil society, business, academia and other actors to implementing the SDGs and monitoring their progress;
- Supporting national implementation through enabling policies, research and analysis, and funding; and
- Keeping track of all implementation efforts, and measuring and reporting Australia's progress, ensuring no one and no goal is left behind.

⁵ The [Global Partnership on Global Development Data](#) provides a useful tool box for monitoring and reporting.



There is need for further discussion on national coordination, including roles and responsibilities. Summit participants noted the benefits of government-led coordination, but involving peak bodies and networks to assist with coordination within sectors or regions.

- Within government, central coordination could be undertaken by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, or this could potentially be a role for COAG. Then, each department would need clear responsibilities and accountability for specific areas of the SDG agenda.
- A representative cross-sector body could coordinate and bring together inputs from various sectors.
- Peak bodies could play a role in coordinating activities within their sector, including the development of sectoral frameworks or standards.
- State-based multi-sectoral networks, such as the WA SDGs Network, could help facilitate local coordination and collaboration.

International and local action

The Summit affirmed the commitment of all sectors to progressing SDG implementation globally and locally. Participants rejected a binary approach to local versus global development.

Attendees specifically rejected the idea that we cannot afford to be both good global citizens and provide a strong social safety net at home, with international aid and domestic social service sectors united in the view that we can and must do both.

International development

The development challenges facing the world are complex and interrelated, and sustainable development principles must sit at the heart of Australia's aid program to maximise impact.

The SDGs create an environment of and framework for collaboration, and the Summit explored a number of partnership opportunities:

- Partnerships between domestically- and internationally-focused civil society

organisations, which highlight the local benefits of international development outcomes.

- A multi-sector alliance that co-creates a campaign to engage government on the value of international development and its importance in achieving SDGs, domestically and internationally.
- DFAT's ability to bring the development and private sectors together, notably done so far through the Business Partnerships Platform.
- Collaboration between the private and development sectors to understand and promote mutual benefits SDG implementation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander development

The Summit confirmed that the SDGs provide a new opportunity to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community development in partnership with communities, recognising their cultural, social, environmental and economic development expertise.

It is vital that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a key leadership role around the SDGs as well as in governance and implementation. As noted above, we must do better at measuring progress in a way which provides an accurate picture of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are tracking against the SDGs.

Interlinkages

A strength of the SDG agenda is that it forces a consideration of 'the whole'. While prioritisation will be necessary to advance action, a holistic approach to the agenda must still be maintained.

There are significant interlinkages between the 17 SDGs, which must be understood and incorporated into implementation activities. Not doing so risks undertaking activities that advance one goal, but which have unintended consequences for another goal.

Additional work analysing the interlinkages between the SDGs and identifying synergies is needed. This will support an understanding and consideration of trade-offs (and perceived trade-offs) in SDG implementation decisions.



The roles of different sectors

The SDGs have unprecedented buy-in from across sectors as a result of extensive and inclusive global consultations and negotiations, and all sectors have a role to play in achieving the SDGs. Summit participants from across sectors are keen to contribute to, and work together towards, the agenda.

Government

While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments are expected to take ownership of the agenda. The Australian Government has a central role to play in the implementation and coordination of the agenda, and in providing national data on the global SDG indicators and reporting on progress in implementation. In addition to these roles Summit participants noted the benefits of government leadership and national coordination of the domestic implementation agenda.

Participants noted that coordination within Government will be critical. The complexity and breadth of the SDG agenda means that it is relevant to every portfolio and department within the Australian Government. There is need for clarity around roles and responsibilities of each area, as well as a central coordinating area to bring it all together, such as the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, or could potentially be a role for COAG. As such participants were pleased to hear at the Summit that the Australian Government has established an Inter-Departmental Committee, co-chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, to lead an ongoing process to ensure whole-of-government coordination on the agenda.

Summit participants also suggested many ways through which the Australian Government could facilitate effective implementation by all the sectors by providing central coordination and guidance. As mentioned in earlier sections these included, among other things, identifying national gaps and priorities, developing an integrated national implementation framework that articulates the roles and contributions of the

different sectors, and monitoring and reporting on Australia's progress on the SDGs.

Summit participants are looking forward to hearing further from the Australian Government on implementation and reporting plans, noting a desire for more public government engagement with the agenda.

Participants also noted the important role of state and local governments in the SDGs and the close alignment between the SDGs and the responsibilities of sub-national governments. It is critical that national coordination involve these levels and government and have clear roles and responsibilities for them.

Business

Private sector action will be key to the success of each SDG – including through responsible business operations, new business models, investment, innovation and technology, and collaboration. Summit participants were clear on the important role business has in the SDG agenda, although business alone cannot deliver the SDGs. Rather, business has a significant opportunity to listen to and partner with civil society and other stakeholders to find solutions. The importance of responsible business practices and 'Global Compact compatible' actions were also emphasised – that is, finding solutions to the SDGs must still be based on respect for human rights, environmental responsibility and ethical business practices.

The case is also strong for business to get involved and take action on the goals which are strategically relevant from both a risk and opportunity standpoint. The SDGs cover a wide spectrum of sustainable development topics relevant to businesses, whether operating solely in Australia or with global footprints. As such, the SDGs can help to connect business strategies with national and global priorities. Understanding and engaging with the SDG agenda can help companies to capitalise on a range of benefits.⁶

- Identifying future business opportunities.
- Enhancing the value of corporate sustainability.

⁶ Drawn from the [SDG Compass](#).

- Strengthening stakeholder relations and employee engagement, noting the need for business to re-build its social contract.
- Keeping pace with policy developments.
- Stabilising societies and markets.
- Using a common language and shared purpose.

Summit participants were positive about the degree to which leading Australian businesses have already embraced the SDGs. Additional levers were discussed to drive engagement more widely into the business community including to SMEs.

Civil society

Civil society organisations play a vital role in reducing poverty and injustice through their delivery of services, empowerment of citizens and in holding government and other development actors to account.

- A strong and effective civil society is a development outcome in its own right. This must include the capacity to speak out about the SDGs and call governments to account for their action or lack thereof.
- Civil society should recognise that all of government needs to be held to account to deliver on the SDGs, including politicians, Commonwealth Departments, state and local governments.
- Data and analysis are essential foundations from which to collaborate and engage with government. Links between the not-for-profit sector and the academic sector are critical in equipping civil society with the capacity to bring together data and analysis.

Civil society organisations also have a role to play in showing leadership on the SDGs by embedding the goals across relevant policies, programs and service delivery work, and supporting partners and others to do the same, as well as setting targets to monitor and report on their progress.

Civil society can also play a key role in contributing to any baseline SDG mapping activities, and in supporting public engagement with the agenda.

The SDGs also offer new opportunities to civil society. They provide a common language and shared purpose through which to engage, address complex challenges, effect transformative change, align priorities and build partnerships with other sectors, including the private sector.

Academia

Universities and the academic sector have a critical role to play in achieving the SDGs through teaching, research and organisational leadership.

- Through teaching and knowledge outreach they will equip both the current and next generation of leaders, innovators and decision makers with the knowledge and skills to needed to address the SDG challenges.
- Through their in-depth knowledge and expertise in every area of the SDGs – as well as capabilities such as research, monitoring, analysis, technology, data – they are well placed to identify what is needed to address the SDGs and contribute to the development of practical solutions.
- Through their organisational leadership, they can set an example to other sectors by supporting the goals in their own operations, governance and community leadership.

Addressing the SDGs will require the research sector to put more focus on a partnership approach to research – within and among universities and with other sectors. Achieving this will require addressing barriers in the current system, such as a narrow definition of academic impact, issues around intellectual property, and the highly competitive funding environment.

Youth

Young people are critical to SDG implementation, both because the SDGs are their future and because they bring unique skills that are critical to addressing the challenges of the agenda.

- Half the world's population is under 30, and everyone must be on board to achieve the SDGs.
- Young people are creative, energetic, idealistic and optimistic about the future. They are global citizens and want to make global, challenging and meaningful contributions. These are unique and essential qualities for tackling the challenges of the SDGs, and can complement the knowledge and expertise of older people.
- Many young Australians are doing great work, but they are often shut out of mainstream discussions. We cannot afford to keep doing this. We need to engage with young people and give them opportunities to be heard and participate.
- The importance of embedding sustainable development and SDGs in education and supporting programs that help students to become global citizens was emphasised several times.

Next steps

All sectors have a significant role to play if the SDGs are to be achieved, and identifying roles, responsibilities and ownership for those actions is key to Australia's successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Participants highlighted the Summit's unparalleled multi-stakeholder engagement as the most valuable aspect of the event; in short, getting the right people in the room. By bringing key actors into one conversation, the Summit provided a strong foundation to identify actions and collaborations to drive Australian SDG implementation.

The Summit generated significant energy and momentum, and identified suggestions for continuing to build on this to drive action on the SDGs. Moving forward, organisations are looking for opportunities to connect actors, issues, projects, partnership opportunities and initiatives in the context of the SDG framework.

Specific next steps discussed included:

- **Future Summits.** Participants were enthusiastic about the organisers convening further national Summits, as the key Australian forum to bring stakeholders together to review SDG progress and inspire further collaboration and action. Some suggested that a future Summit could be held in more natural setting away from major metropolitan areas, to allow participants more opportunity for reflection.
- **Getting into the details.** It will be important, though, to provide ways of delving into the complexity and catalysing action. Working groups focused on specific issues were one suggestion for doing this. There is also an opportunity for developing clear cross-sector action plans for addressing specific SDG issues.
- **Ongoing communication.** Communication about activities and successes will be critical to maintaining momentum and building coalitions around SDG issue areas.
- **Mapping performance against the SDGs.** Participants noted the need to map how well

Australia is currently performing against the SDGs in order to establish a baseline and identify priority areas of action.

- **Mapping current activities.** Participants noted that mapping all current Australian SDG activities across all sectors could be a helpful place to start, and would assist in identifying key implementation gaps for prioritisation.
- **Identifying key questions.** Participants highlighted an opportunity to more clearly identify key questions, to support the academic sector to be more collaborative and responsive to issues.
- **Development of tools and resources.** To assist stakeholders in individual efforts to implement the SDGs, it was suggested that a range of resources relevant for the Australian context be developed and shared, including:
 - **Publications** on key sustainable development issues;
 - **Case studies** to highlight existing efforts to meet the SDGs;
 - **Visual materials** to raise awareness of the SDGs e.g. videos, infographics;
 - **Methodologies to measure contributions** to the SDGs;
 - **Toolkits** that provide practical assistance for organisations looking at the SDGs e.g.
 - **Mapping** impacts against the SDGs (for business, the SDG Compass outlines how companies can advance the SDGs);
 - **Measuring** contributions;
 - **Reporting** frameworks.

The Summit made the opportunities of implementing the SDGs clear. To take the agenda forward, the Summit organisers – ACFID, ACOSS, GCNA and SDSN Australia/Pacific – are planning specific next steps, which will be communicated to stakeholders as they are finalised.



Annexure 1: Participating organisations

ActionAid Australia	Delegation of the European Union to Australia
ADRA Australia	Deloitte
Allens	Department of Education and Training
ANU	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria
Australia Post	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Australian Academy of Science	Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania
Australian Bureau of Statistics	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
Australian Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility	Department of Social Services
Australian Council for International Development	Department of the Environment and Energy
Australian Council of Social Service	Early Childhood Australia
Australian Human Rights Commission	Equality Rights Alliance
Australian National Development Index (ANDI) Limited	Equity Economics
BHP Billiton	EY
Brambles Limited	Fortescue Metals Group
Business for Development	Fred Hollows Foundation
CARE Australia	Glencore Coal
Caritas Australia	Global Compact Network Australia
Central Coast Council	Global Ideas
Chifley Research Centre	Green Building Council of Australia
ChildFund Australia	Habitat for Humanity Australia
City of Sydney	Ikea Australia
Coles	Institute for Economics & Peace
Commonwealth Bank of Australia	International SOS
Crackerjack Education	Investa
CSIRO	Konica Minolta
Curtin University	KPMG
Dairy Australia	La Trobe University



Live & Learn International	Sustainable Business Australia
Lowy Institute for International Policy	Tasmanian Council of Social Service
McConnell Dowell Constructors	TEAR Australia
Meat & Livestock Australia	Telstra
Melbourne Water	The Mulloon Institute
Monash University	The Shannon Company
Myer	The Treasury
National Congress of Australia's First Peoples	Think Impact
National Foundation for Australian Women	Transurban
Nestle	UGL
NSW Office of Environment and Heritage	UN Global Compact Cities Programme
Oaktree Foundation	UN Information Centre
Oil Search	UNICEF
Oxfam Australia	Unilever
Plan International Australia	University of Auckland
Qantas	University of Melbourne
Questacon	University of Queensland
Reichstein Foundation	University of Sydney
Research for Development Impact Network	University of Technology, Sydney
RESULTS International Australia	University of New South Wales
Rio Tinto	WA Council of Social Service
RMIT University	Water Services Association of Australia
SA Council of Social Service	Westpac
Save the Children Australia	Woolworths Limited
SDSN Australia/Pacific	World Vision Australia
SDSN Youth	WWF Australia
Solaris Paper	Yarra Valley Water
Sustainability Victoria	



Annexure 2: Summit agenda

9.00am–10.30am	<p>Session 1: The SDGs: A blueprint for Australia’s future</p> <p>This session will provide a high-level overview on what the SDGs mean for Australia and why Australian implementation of the SDGs is important from the perspective of the federal government, knowledge institutions, development agencies, business and the social sector.</p> <p>Welcome from the Chairs John Thwaites, Chair, Monash Sustainability Institute and Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Australia/Pacific Sam Mostyn, President, Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)</p> <p>Welcome to Country Uncle Charles (Chicka) Madden, Gadigal Elder</p> <p>Address by Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific</p> <p>Address by The Hon Angus Taylor MP, Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation</p> <p>Panel: Sectoral perspectives on Australian implementation of the SDGs John Thwaites, Chair, SDSN Australia/Pacific (chair of panel) Sam Mostyn, President, ACFID Catherine Hunter, Chair, Global Compact Network Australia and Head of Corporate Citizenship, KPMG Christopher Woodthorpe, Director, UN Information Centre, Canberra Cassandra Goldie, CEO, Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) Sam Loni, Global Coordinator, SDSN Youth</p>
10.30am–11.00am	<p>Morning Tea</p>
11.00am–12.30pm	<p>Session 2: Australian SDG implementation efforts: How stakeholders are embracing the agenda</p> <p>This session will examine progress on implementation of the SDGs across a range of sectors, through case studies of actual implementation.</p> <p>Chair: Alice Cope, Executive Manager, Global Compact Network Australia</p> <p>Setting the scene – The 2030 Agenda, internationally and in Australia Ewen McDonald, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</p> <p>Panel 1 Lachlan Feggans, Senior Manager, Sustainability Asia-Pacific, Brambles Kate Baker, Senior Sustainability Advisor, Telstra Paul Jelfs, General Manager, Population and Social Statistics Division, Australian Bureau of Statistics The Hon. Gary Nairn AO, Chair, The Mulloon Institute</p> <p>Panel 2 Paul O’Callaghan, CEO, Caritas Australia Geoff Scott, CEO, National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples Irina Cattalini, CEO, WA Council of Social Service and WA SDGs Network & Peter Devereux (Research Fellow, Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute) Prof. Graham Durant, Director, Questacon</p>



12.30pm–1.30pm

Lunch

1.30pm–3.00pm

Session 3: Taking SDG implementation forward in Australia

In this session participants will work in groups to unpack priority gaps/issues with implementing the SDGs in Australia and to develop general and specific actions to address them. Each table will be allocated to one of six themes.

Chair: Sam Mostyn

Themes for breakout group discussions

1. How can we make the economic and strategic case for the SDGs?

Opportunities: What are the economic or strategic opportunities for using the SDGs in your organisation or sector? Do they allow you to do things in a new or better way?

Challenges: What are the internal and external barriers to implementing these opportunities in your organisation or sector? These can relate to resistance or criticisms; enabling actions that need to be undertaken by others first; or something about the format/content of the SDGs and targets that make them difficult to use.

2. How can we break silos and catalyse and facilitate new forms of partnership and communities of practice – across sectors, departments and disciplines – to deliver on the SDGs?

Opportunities: In what ways can collaboration across sectors, departments or disciplines strengthen how your organisation or sector is able to contribute to implementation of the SDGs? What would not happen without collaboration?

Challenges: What silos would need to be bridged for your organisation or sector to be able to implement the SDGs – within your organisation or sector, or across sectors? What are the challenges in bridging those silos?

3. How can we raise the SDGs' profile across the various sectors and the Australian public?

Opportunities: What are the benefits to your organisation or sector of raising awareness of the SDGs – within your organisation, your sector, or in other sectors (or the broader community)? What are the key things about the SDGs that these people need to?

Challenges: What are the challenges of explaining the SDGs and their opportunities to people in your organisation, sector or more broadly?

4. How can we develop a coordinated national approach to the SDGs?

Opportunities: How would a coordinated national approach within your sector and across all sectors help your organisation or sector contribute to implementing the SDGs in Australia? What would happen if there was no coordination?

Challenges: What are the elements for national coordination on the SDGs in your sector? Across all sectors? What are the barriers to implementing these?

5. How do we prioritise SDGs or targets while ensuring nothing important is ignored and interlinkages between the goals are addressed?

Opportunities: What methods can organisations adopt to prioritise their actions, identify interlinkages and achieve multiple SDGs? How can the SDGs help your sector and Australia focus on the most important sustainable development challenges?

Challenges: How do we prevent a 'cherry picking' approach that prioritises the easy things that are already being done while ignoring the hard to achieve but relevant SDGs? How can organisations avoid being overwhelmed by such a large agenda?

6. How can we capture and report how Australia is doing across all sectors in implementing and achieving the SDGs?

Opportunities: What would be the benefits of reporting on the SDGs for organisations, sectors or nationally? Could the SDGs be incorporated into existing reporting frameworks that you participate in already? How could your sector contribute to national reporting on the SDGs?

Challenges: How well do the SDGs align with reporting your organisation is already doing (including voluntary or mandatory reporting)? Would reporting on the SDGs require considerable additional resources or data? Who could develop reporting guidance for your sector? Who would be responsible for reporting against SDGs again at the organisational, sector and national level?

Report back

Commentators:

Bill Shannon, Founder and Senior Partner, The Shannon Company
Siobhan Toohill, Group Head of Sustainability and Community, Westpac

3.00pm –3.15pm

Afternoon Tea

3.15pm–4.30pm

Session 4: Key messages and next steps

This session will reflect upon the key take-out messages from the previous session and the day more generally, and highlight priority actions for moving forward with the SDGs in Australia.

Chair: John Thwaites

Panel

Chris Cannan, Assistant Secretary, Global Development Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Megan Christensen, General Manager Stakeholder Engagement & Social Responsibility, Oil Search

Steve Hatfield-Dodds, Chief Research Leader, Integration Science and Public Policy, CSIRO

Marc Purcell, CEO, ACFID

Monica Barone, CEO, City of Sydney

Vox pop

Closing remarks and next steps

Sam Mostyn, Alice Cope and John Thwaites
