

## **Connecting the global with the local: the Western Australian SDG Network**

The SDG agenda calls for all countries, communities and stakeholders to work in collaborative partnership to achieve a better world for all. Since its formation in February 2016 the WA SDG Network has been engaging civil society to grow the WA community's understanding of the SDGs, to highlight the benefits of integrated planning across sectors, and to build new partnerships and action on the SDGs across business, community, and government.

The informal network was formed following a December 2015 interactive workshop on the SDGs and how they connect to WA hosted by Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute and attended by over 70 people from diverse sectors and organisations. The workshop was an attempt to encourage innovative engagement (through playback theatre) and bottom up advocacy for the goals in the absence of public awareness or high level advocacy for the goals. A summary and video of the workshop is available at <http://ap-unsdsn.org/event-17-sustainable-development-goals-for-one-world/>. The Network meets approximately every two months and brings together a broad cross-section of members including Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute, The One World Centre, Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS), Volunteering WA, Conservation Council of WA, WA Local Government Association, Oxfam, Murdoch University Centre for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainability, Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council, City of Fremantle, UWA Centre for Social Impact, Reconciliation WA, and the Justice, Ecology & Development Office of the Archdiocese of Perth.

The aim of the Network is to localise and build civil society understanding, ownership, and action for the global development goals in WA, and to find meaningful ways to measure a baseline and framework for progress toward the goals through collaborations that nurture the collective interests of WA communities and individuals.

Work of Network members includes:

- State conferences of WACOSS, Volunteering WA and the Conservation Council of WA with emphasis on the SDGs,
- Social Impact week SDG fora over successive years,
- Input and participation at both national high level summits on the SDGs in 2016 and 2018 and
- Incorporation of the SDGs into the Regional Environment Strategy 2016-2020 of the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council as well as
- The pursuit of an Australia Research Council Linkage Grant and
- Application for a WA Lotteries grant to connect with the innovative work of the WA SDG Network.

Volunteering WA is also taking the lead (in collaboration with Volunteering Australia and the State and Territory Peak volunteer organisations) in the preparation in 2018 of a Volunteering SDG guide similar to the SDSN Australia Pacific Universities guide to the SDGs-which Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute contributed to. As part of preparation of the Volunteering SDG guide there is engagement with and input sought from hundreds of volunteering involving organisations in WA and across Australia so it includes case studies of their work toward the goals.

The One World Centre is doing community and schools workshops on the Sustainable Development Goals and has incorporated the SDGs into its 3 year strategic plan. It aims to build the knowledge, skills and capabilities that enable active citizenship for sustainable development through professional learning and education support across sectors. The Centre previously received longstanding AusAID funding to do its global education up until 2014 when it was defunded nationally as part of the Australian aid budget cuts. Since 2015, the One World Centre has adopted the education target incorporated into the SDGs through SDG 4 Quality Education (4.7), as focus for its activities in both the formal education and community sectors. The One World Centre's most recent initiative was assisting the Asia Education Foundation with a Forum at Murdoch University on the SDGs with 90 highly engaged secondary school students.

Academic members of the network from Murdoch University have been involved with embedding SDG related content into academic programs, for example in a core MBA unit "Business, Society and Environment". Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute has provided coordination for the Network and is an active member of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Australia Pacific and created the Doctorate of Sustainable Development and a Masters unit specifically on the Sustainable Development Goals. It also has worked with the Government of Bangladesh's Governance Innovation Unit to help implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Academic network members have also contributed peer reviewed papers on the SDGs, one entitled Volunteerism: A crosscutting and relational method to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in a book on Sustainability Methods (Devereux, Stocker, & Holmes, 2017) and another on Volunteering and the UN sustainable development goals: Finding common ground between national and international volunteering agendas? (Devereux, Paull, Hawkes, & Georgeou, 2017).

The WA SDG Network is doing further work in 2018 to engage more deeply with communities and to document the ways that groups are working together on the SDGs. This includes a preliminary mapping of the work of the network and its members against the goals and a follow up public engagement workshop like the successful 2015 workshop. Members of the Network have attended both the 2016 and 2018 Australian Summits on the SDGs to ensure that the innovatively coordinated WA activities are connected with national efforts. The WA SDG Network also provided input on its work to the Australian Voluntary National Review currently being prepared for presentation to the High Level Political Forum in New York in July 2018.

Related to the Australian Senate Inquiry Terms of Reference the WA SDG Network seeks to:

1. Improve understanding and awareness and action on the SDGs in the wider community and through this encourage a more enabling environment for the implementation of the goals facilitated by the Australian government at all levels national, state/territory and local.
2. Make Network members and the general community more aware of the benefits, opportunities and barriers to implementation of the SDGs and particularly the benefits of encouraging cross sectoral approaches that enhance synergies and minimise tradeoffs between sectors. This includes strengthening the understanding of universal SDGs that can encourage synergies and avoid tradeoffs between Australia's domestic and international policies - for example in relation to climate action.

3. Encourage civil society engagement with the SDGs so that they can be recognised as important actors in governance structures and accountability mechanisms. Such citizen engagement will improve the chance of real and meaningful outcomes that have ownership at all levels of the community. This will be central for effective understanding of Australia's performance by civil society and will be best achieved by their active inclusion and engagement in structures and processes that are well known by the community. This way achievements by governments and citizens will also encourage leverage for recognition of constructive engagement and support at local, national and international levels.

The WA SDG Network is specifically seeking to: 1. leverage support so that it can strengthen awareness, understanding and ownership for action on the SDGs in WA; 2. localise the SDGs in terms of consulting widely to prioritise state wide measured or measurable benchmarks for SDG goals, targets and indicators; and 3. develop baseline and periodic reporting on these as tools for good practice. At present the network has the organisational buy in to achieve these goals but lacks the individual and collective resources to take its actions to the next level.

4. Share best practice experience of SDG implementation from Australia and overseas for example from civil society initiatives like the Data shift project to encourage citizen generated data (<http://civicus.org/thedatashift/>) or the 2015 UK BOND Bringing the goals home-Implementing the SDGs in the UK report and government implementation examples from Germany Finland and Columbia or critiques like the 2017 report of the UK House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee on Sustainable Development Goals in the UK which provided a salutary lesson for Australia. The report said the Goals were currently seen as something for the UK to help other countries do, rather than drawing on other countries' experiences in implementing the goals at home. It suggested as a result the UK was not maximising the opportunities and benefits presented by the Goals which it said the Business & Sustainable Development Commission estimated as an economic prize to business from implementing the Goals worth up to US\$12 trillion by 2030.

Members of the network would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Senate Committee if it comes to Perth or provide clarification on their work as it connects to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by Australia.

WA SDG Network:

- Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute
- The One World Centre
- Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS),
- Volunteering WA,
- Conservation Council of WA,
- WA Local Government Association,
- Oxfam,
- Murdoch University Centre for Responsible Citizenship and Sustainability,
- Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council,
- City of Fremantle,
- UWA Centre for Social Impact,
- Reconciliation WA, and

- The Justice, Ecology & Development Office of the Archdiocese of Perth

Devereux, P., Paull, M., Hawkes, M., & Georgeou, N. (2017). Volunteering and the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Finding common ground between national and international volunteering agendas? *Third Sector Review*, 23(1).

Devereux, P., Stocker, L., & Holmes, K. (2017). Volunteerism: A crosscutting and relational method to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In D. Marinova & J. Hartz-Karp (Eds.), *Methods for Sustainability* (pp. 242-258): Edward Elgar.