

# Inquiry into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

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## Introduction

For more than a century, The University of Queensland (UQ) has maintained a global reputation for delivering knowledge leadership for a better world. UQ has won more Australian Awards for University Teaching than any other university. This commitment to quality teaching empowers our 52,000 current students, studying across UQ's three campuses, to create positive change for society.

Our research has global impact, delivered by an interdisciplinary research community of more than 1500 researchers at our six faculties, eight research institutes and more than 100 research centres. The most prestigious and widely recognised rankings of world universities also consistently place UQ among the world's top universities.

The **Centre for Policy Futures** positions the University as a key source of ideas and insights on the policy priorities that matter to Australia and the Asia-Pacific region through robust, rigorous and timely research, and sustained policy engagement.

The **Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining** focuses on the social, cultural, economic and political challenges that occur when change is brought about by mineral resource extraction. It contributes to industry change through independent research, teaching and multi-stakeholder dialogue processes.

The **Global Change Institute** works to address the impacts of climate change and population growth through collaborative research across themes such as clean energy, food systems and healthy oceans.

The **Queensland Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disability** supports people with intellectual disability through research, teaching and clinical activities, as well the provision of resources.

The **School of Business** brings together over 130 subject experts to offer degree programs and executive education. It is ranked as one of the top business schools globally.

The **School of Education** seeks out, shares and shapes national and international educational development policies and practices. Its award-winning educators and researchers are focused on ensuring that the School's graduates are sought-after in the marketplace.

The **School of Public Health** improves the health of populations in a changing and inequitable world. The School is ranked #1 in Australasia for Public Health (2018 US News Best Global Universities rankings).

The **School of Social Science** is one of the leading social science schools in Australia with a focus on anthropology, archaeology, criminology and sociology.

This submission represents the opinions of the contributing authors listed in this document. It does not necessarily represent an official position of The University of Queensland.

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## Summary and recommendations

Australia is a wealthy country with the resources and governance structures to take a strong leadership role in the implementation and monitoring of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) both domestically and in the Indo-Pacific region.

The implementation of the SDGs is not purely the responsibility of elected leaders and policymakers. The interconnected, collaborative nature of the SDGs means a great number of Australians must be involved in their implementation. Further, all Australians have a responsibility to hold the Federal Government to account – ensuring that appropriate milestones are in place, and that non-government organisations and listed companies alike work towards measurable targets to ensure the nation meets the 2030 deadline.

The interdisciplinary nature of the SDGs provides both opportunities and challenges for the Federal Government. They are part of a transformational agenda, and a greater national effort on integration and systems thinking is required if we are to fully address the SDGs.

The authors commend the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade for acknowledging both the domestic and international implications of the SDGs. We take pleasure in providing this submission and hope the recommendations outlined in the coming pages help the Federal Government to meet its obligations both to Australians and those in neighbouring countries.

Recommendations outlined in this document are:

1. The Federal Government must fully engage the Australian community in the development, implementation and measurement of the domestic SDG milestones. Those groups whose needs are particularly represented in the SDG agenda should be prioritised. This will enable the Australian community, industry actors and other tiers of government to work towards the Goals, while ensuring the Australian people hold the Federal Government to account.
2. It is necessary to reinforce to the Australian people that there are significant long-term economic, social and environmental benefits associated with the implementation of the SDGs. A full cost-benefit analysis for each SDG should be developed and made publicly available by the Federal Government.
3. The Federal Government has the opportunity to leverage existing governance arrangements (eg state and local budgets, and the Business Partnership Platform) to ensure broad uptake of the SDGs. Further the Federal Government should consider existing mechanisms as avenues to address the SDGs as utilisation of such mechanisms will ensure the SDGs are given appropriate attention, without leading to significant additional costs and resource burdens for state and local governments.
4. First and foremost, Australians must be integrated into the implementation of the SDGs, and ICT should be utilised to ensure whole-of-country monitoring and reporting. The Federal Government should engage academic institutions to develop and deliver 'quality of life' metrics so all Australians can receive an accurate picture of progress towards the SDGs. Further, schools and universities should be encouraged to communicate the indicators through their education programs and the Australian curriculum.

5. The Federal Government should commit that all ODA funding is tied to the SDGs. Only projects that are specifically linked to one or more of the SDGs should be funded through the aid program, thus ensuring greater transparency and optimal uses of financial and human resources.
6. As a member of the OECD Development Activities Committee, Australia should be using its influence to help countries determine which Goals they will prioritise. The Federal Government should seek feedback from countries involved with the ODA program on the goals that those countries would like to prioritise.
7. Australia can further demonstrate national leadership by assisting countries in the development, implementation and monitoring of their SDG implementation plans.
8. Australia should consider best practice SDG implementation in other countries to date and adopt aspects of these approaches.

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## UQ response to the Terms of Reference

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

Since the announcement of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, there has been increasing understanding and awareness across the Federal Government of the importance of meeting the SDGs. This is evidenced through an increased focus on the Goals, particularly through the Interdepartmental Committee.

However, this increased understanding has not been mirrored in the broader Australian community (industry, civil society, and state and local government). There continues to be limited public awareness of the SDGs, as evidenced by the limited media coverage and public interest in the Goals.

In developing the SDGs, the United Nations Member States have collectively agreed that all countries – everywhere – have a responsibility to not only assist low-income countries to meet the goals, but to ensure they meet the goals domestically.<sup>i</sup> Despite Australia's place as a wealthy nation, there is significant domestic action required to achieve the SDGs and it is imperative there is broad understanding within the Australian community of the 2030 Agenda, and its "bold and transformative" nature. This understanding is particularly important among segments of the Australian population "whose needs are reflected in the Agenda include[ing] children, youth, persons with disabilities (of whom more than 80 per cent live in poverty), people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants".<sup>ii</sup>

First and foremost, the more that the Australian community is engaged with the SDGs and the relevant milestones, the more the community can support the Federal Government in its efforts to meet the plan, as well as hold the Federal Government (and other relevant actors) to account. The SDGs have considerable implications for Indigenous Australians. As First Nations peoples of Australia, Indigenous peoples continue to face significant health, education, social and economic disadvantage. In engaging the Australian community, it is critical that provisions are made for Indigenous peoples to be consulted and worked with in partnership towards goals affecting their futures.

Further, for Australia to fulfil its obligations, it must engage people from across the community including those in civil society organisations and the private sector (refer to SDG #16 and SDG #17). There is already an emerging number of groups working towards the SDG agenda; adequate engagement will ensure these groups are aware of their role in meeting the SDGs, thereby building momentum across the community.

In addition to enhancing engagement with the wider Australian community, the Federal Government must enhance collaboration with state and local governments to provide mechanisms for responses and actions towards SDG achievement.

**Recommendation:**

The Federal Government must fully engage the Australian community in the development, implementation and measurement of the domestic SDG milestones. Those groups whose needs are particularly represented in the SDG agenda should be prioritised.

This will enable the Australian community, industry actors and other tiers of government to work towards the Goals, while ensuring the Australian people hold the Federal Government to account.

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

In determining the resource implications of delivering the SDGs in Australia, the Federal Government must be mindful of the enormous but strategic cost benefits of meeting these international commitments. It is vital long-term benefits including improved community health and well-being, increased economic productivity, enhanced natural and built environments, better technology and information systems, and more accurate population data are all communicated to the Australian people, as they offset the resources required to meet the SDGs.<sup>iii</sup>

- Case study: SDG #2  
Australians enjoy one of the safest and most secure food systems in the world, and yet around 60 per cent of Australians are either overweight or obese<sup>iv</sup>, creating a huge burden on the nation's health system and lost productivity. Malnutrition includes both under and over consumption of poor quality food and addressing Australia's obesity epidemic will require critical analysis of our current food system and multi-sectoral interventions across agriculture, food, health, business and consumer behaviour. The benefits of progress on SDG #2 are spread across several SDGs, indeed progress on many SDGs is dependent on progress on SDG2.<sup>v</sup>
- Case study: SDG #14  
Consisting of more than 3800 individual reefs, the Great Barrier Reef has suffered from unprecedented coral bleaching events over recent years, the effects of which are exacerbated by widespread outbreaks of coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish. The Federal Government's Reef Restoration and Adaptation Program brings together a diverse range of marine scientists, engineers, ecologists and social scientists who will actively intervene to improve the Reef's resilience. Projects such as this will ensure state-of-the-art solutions to current problems are employed to protect the reef now and into the future.
- Case study: SDG #17  
Australia's highly variable climate has seen Australian communities and industries endure the challenges and hardships associated with water scarcity and drought, most recently the Millennium Drought. The significant, far-reaching water reforms of the last two decades, including the National Water Initiative and the introduction of water trading, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, and the Water Futures Fund, went a long way to highlighting the importance of strong policies and institutions (SDG #17) in achieving sustainable, efficient water resources planning and management. Such governance reforms are relevant not only to SDG #6, but also in efforts to secure available water resources for agricultural production (SDG #2), energy generation (SDG #7), and strong terrestrial ecosystems (SDG #15).

In itself, innovation to meet the SDGs provides an opportunity for the Federal Government to explore knowledge generation. These opportunities should be tracked and reported on across the next 12 years, providing a framework through which to measure the long-term benefits of meeting the SDGs.

- For example, Australian government agencies involved in implementing development projects domestically and internationally should consider a long-term 'development lab' partnership with universities to effectively monitor the impact of programs. Data generation, similar to USAID's Aid-



DATA program, implemented by the College of William and Mary in the United States, is a suitable model in this regard<sup>M</sup>.

- For example, in Sweden all ministries have produced action plans that provide a basis for government communications and they have to report on their implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The reports show that all of the sustainable development goals are reflected in the activities of the ministries.

Further, the Federal Government should consider how existing policy frameworks and infrastructure are meeting SDG targets, and develop ways to better align these metrics.

- For example, the Closing the Gap metrics could be aligned to the SDG metrics, which enables that SDG to be addressed in a more robust way. In line with the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, there is scope for self-determination to be more fully incorporated into the Close the Gap approach, which currently relies on statistical comparisons to non-Indigenous Australians in comparing educational and health outcomes. Ensuring there are mechanisms in place for diverse Indigenous peoples to inform the Close the Gap metrics may assist in delivering on Close the Gap and SDG goals for Indigenous peoples.

#### Recommendation:

It is necessary to reinforce to the Australian people that there are significant long-term benefits associated with the implementation of SDGs. A full cost-benefit analysis for each SDG should be developed and made publicly available by the Federal Government.

**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**

There is currently no apparent mechanism being utilised for the meaningful exchange of information relating to the SDGs between the various levels of government. That being said, there are a number of existing mechanisms that the Federal Government should leverage to ensure the SDGs are supported by state and local governments around the country. For example:

- SDG implementation and metrics should be added to the COAG agenda with targets and milestones recorded in a [COAG Performance Dashboard](#)
- Requirements for environmental impact statements should be updated to better align with SDG requirements
- Urban and regional development plans should be updated to include transport links
- Individual ministries should be required to develop, and report against, SDG implementation plans.

The integration of community reference groups into governance structures would provide an additional mechanism to support the implementation of the SDG Agenda. Such groups would ensure the SDG priorities, planning and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation was undertaken in a transparent manner. This approach would closely align to the disability rights mantra 'nothing about us without us', which is highly relevant in this setting.

Further, by applying SDG metrics to state and local government budgets, there is an opportunity to direct funding to regions that are working to address the SDGs. Such an approach would give the Federal Government broad oversight and leveraging capability, enabling it to bring in a range of stakeholders to address the SDGs where specific needs were identified. In acknowledging the inequity in the capacity of various local governments to develop such a report, the Federal Government should be mindful to ensure engagement from rural and regional centres.

While we recognise the aims of the Business Partnership Platform, it appears to lack substance at this time. The Federal Government needs to look broadly at the role Australia's private sector can take in ensuring Australia meets its targets. In some remote communities – for example, mining communities – the private sector can have significant financial power and therefore responsibility in helping those communities address the SDGs.

In line with developments relating to Carbon Disclosure Standards (which have legislative foundations in some countries), the Federal Government could require all ASX listed companies to include their progress towards the SDGs as an annual reporting requirement.

**Recommendation:**

The Federal Government has the opportunity to leverage existing governance arrangements (eg state and local budgets, and the Business Partnership Platform) to ensure broad uptake of the SDGs.

Further the Federal Government should consider existing mechanisms as avenues to address the SDGs as utilisation of such mechanisms will ensure the SDGs are given appropriate attention, without leading to significant additional costs and resource burdens for state and local governments.

d. How performance against the SDG can 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

In mid-2018, Australia will deliver its Voluntary National Report (VNR) to the UN on progress towards achieving the 17 SDGs. The consultation undertaken by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to engage with relevant sectors (including research, civil society and business) is commended, in addition to a wide call from specific departments for submissions of relevant material for consideration in the VNR.

While the VNR should be made publicly available, the reporting of progress on the SDGs must be stitched into the main fabric of Australian society. In the same way that the GDP is reported, Australia should aim to produce a report on its SDG metrics that is available quarterly. Developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) should be embraced in three key ways:

- Data collected for monitoring and reporting requirements within and between government departments should be communicated and shared using systems that are coherent, consistent and 'clean' to allow for easy compilation and analysis at the whole-of-government level
- The Federal Government should establish a central knowledge platform whereby all actors in society (who must pre-register) can upload their progress against SDG implementation, which can then serve as a central portal for whole-of-country reporting
- All monitoring and communication should be displayed in ways that are understandable, interesting and digestible, using the latest tools available.

Rather than focusing on communicating a report, it is vital that Australians are integrated into the implementation of the SDGs, as outlined above.

**Recommendation:**

First and foremost, Australians must be integrated into the implementation of the SDGs, and ICT should be utilised to ensure whole-of-country monitoring and reporting.

The Federal Government should engage academic institutions to develop and deliver 'quality of life' metrics so all Australians can receive an accurate picture of progress towards the SDGs. Further, schools and universities should be encouraged to communicate the indicators through their education programs and the Australian curriculum.

### e. What SDGs are currently being addressed by Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) program

Due to the indivisibility and interconnectedness of the SDG metrics framework, it is difficult to determine those goals, targets or indicators that are already specifically being addressed. For example, in the small island developing states (SIDS), gender is linked to nutrition, which in turn is linked to maternal health, etc. Further, the reporting load in SIDS is demanding, given the limited capacity and health information systems. Pacific Islands have already reached a consensus to prioritise their own 'Healthy Islands' framework over SDG demands, though major multi-laterals are pressuring inclusion of their priorities.

That being said, there are many opportunities to enhance the ODA program, which would allow further synergies and integration to be explored. As a wealthy nation, Australia is in a position to commit to the United Nation's ODA target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income; additional funding should be committed if the Federal Government wants genuine impact and influence regarding the SDGs. Regardless of the level of funding, it is important that the aid money available is closely linked to the SDGs.

Aid is often seen as an expense that must be justified; however aid is, in itself, an opportunity. Internationally, it strengthens the stability, security and economic prosperity of countries in our region. Domestically, it provides multifold benefits including knowledge transfer and research opportunities. The knowledge generated by researchers in these projects does not remain in the partner countries – rather, in many cases, the learning, methods and results have been extensively utilised in projects within Australia. The transferability of research in and on emerging economies, and rural and regional Australia is often informally recognised. The Federal Government could enhance community benefit by creating formal research funding programs that leverage SDG research in emerging economies for application in rural and regional Australia.

The Federal Government should commit that all ODA funding is tied to the SDGs. Ensuring that only those projects that are specifically linked to the SDGs are funded through the aid program would lead to greater transparency and maximum 'value' for funding. In addressing the SDGs through the ODA program there is an opportunity for Australia to provide leadership in integrated research and development that addresses multiple SDGs to achieve synergies and multiply potential benefits. This approach requires systems thinking and interdisciplinarity in research, and policy coherence and governance across multiple sectors and scales.

- Case study: Nauru  
Australia's approach to meeting the SDGs in its ambit of development assistance within the Indo-Pacific (and particularly in small island developing states) should consider ways of better harnessing extractive industries towards development targets. Diversification of the economy through effective usage of initial revenues from mineral extraction and the creation of long-term development funds from 'windfall profits' should be a key strategy in this regard. There are also important ways of using ecological restoration of degraded lands from extractive processes to develop agroforestry economies. Such an approach has been suggested by University of Queensland researchers in collaboration with other international scholars in their discussions of Nauru's sustainable development strategy in which Australia has a major strategic investment. Smart branding and enterprise can assist with developing markets where cost might otherwise seem to render products of small states uncompetitive. For example, the waste-rock pinnacles (remnants of phosphate mining) on the island which are preventing agroforestry have been studied for commercial markets as suitable for a variety of construction uses, and for higher value kitchen and bathroom counters. Secondary phosphate ore

could also be accessed in this way. Clearing and selling these rock and ore remnants with appropriate social marketing of the product (consumers are often willing to pay a price premium when informed of positive development impacts) could in turn facilitate financing of land restoration and more sustainable agroforestry of confectionary fruit products like mangoes<sup>vii</sup>. The economy of the island could thereby diversify in more sustainable ways, while also restoring the land which is currently unusable.

- Case Study: SDG #2 in the Pacific Island nations  
While Australia's strong ODA focus on SDG #2 remains appropriate, the emphasis is shifting from a focus on food production to a more nuanced focus on food systems. As economies are exposed to globalisation and trade liberalisation there is a shift from traditional food production and diets to a greater reliance on imported foods and more 'westernised' diets, the so-called 'nutrition transition'. This transition is characterised by greater consumption of highly processed, low-nutrition foods and is partly responsible for the extreme levels of overweight and obese people in many Pacific Island nations. Addressing this public health issue will require multi-sectoral interventions including climate change, food trade policy, consumer behaviour, and promotion of traditional food production, preparation and diets.

#### Recommendation:

The Federal Government should commit that all ODA funding is tied to the SDGs. Only projects that are specifically linked to one or more of the SDGs should be funded through the aid program leading to greater transparency and ensuring funding is maximised.

**f. Which of the SDGs is Australia best suited to achieving through our ODA program, and should Australia's ODA be consolidated to focus on achieving core SDG**

The hallmark of the SDG framework is its interconnectivity, making it difficult to determine which of the Goals should be prioritised (meeting some goals will inadvertently impact others). The concept of prioritising SDGs is antithetical to the conceptualisation of the Goals – though it is inevitable selective investment will occur.

As a potential leader in meeting the SDGs and the largest aid donor in the Pacific, Australia should not tell low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) those SDGs that should be prioritised. Rather, it is for these countries to collaboratively inform the Federal Government of the particular SDGs that they need assistance in achieving (and why). Australia has technical expertise across the broad scope of the SDG framework and we are in a position to support LMICs as required. This will ensure country and context specific engagement, whereby funding is targeted to national and subnational priorities.

That being said, Australia should leverage its membership on the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to ensure we are able to provide assistance in our preferred areas. One preferred area would be the ocean economy initiatives of small island developing states (Mauritius provides a useful example in this regard). In addition, research that is manifest in SDG #12 based on efforts such as CSIRO's Wealth from Waste research cluster could also be an area of Australian expertise as an innovative resource economy. And, SDG #16 and #17 are areas where Australia could provide strong support and represent opportunities for Australia to underpin the SDG process in LMICs.

- Case study: SDG #14  
UQ's Capturing Coral Reef and Related Ecosystem Services (CCRES) project, funded by The World Bank and Global Environment Facility and piloted in Indonesia and Philippines, delivers targeted technical solutions to key challenges facing the management of coral reefs and the livelihoods of people that depend upon them. CCRES employs a strategic approach to intervene at critical points in the coastal and fisheries management process. An integrated set of solutions focussed tools has been created to help communities and their coastal ecosystems move towards a more desirable trajectory. Specific tools are designed to achieve solutions by stimulating and diversifying livelihoods; enhancing the governance of resource management; providing marine spatial planning tools that explicitly help communities rebuild fisheries and maintain the shoreline protection provided by coral reefs; and implementing effective behaviour change (in this case concerning garbage and ocean plastics). The tools developed within CCRES can be used individually to benefit communities and their coastal ecosystems. When employed in combination the CCRES tools can be highly effective in building strategic solutions to ecosystem problems. The CCRES project has been designed to integrate problem identification and solutions through a set of tools that effectively articulate with each other. This is achieved by combining the key perspectives of ecology, marine science, socio-economics, innovation, social-psychology and participatory governance.
- Case study: SDG #2  
Australia is internationally recognised as a global leader in several sectors with direct relevance to the SDGs including agricultural and environmental research (including water use and management), public health and governance. While there is a natural tendency to play to ones' strengths, it would not be in the spirit and ethos of the overall SDG movement to pick and choose individual SDGs. Rather, it is the interconnected nature of the SDGs that is the salient issue and the Federal

Government could position itself as a leader in integrated and systemic approaches to the SDGs. For example, progress on SDG2 will enhance progress in many, if not all, of the SDGs.<sup>viii</sup>

**Recommendation:**

As a member of the OECD Development Activities Committee, Australia should be using its influence to help countries determine which Goals they will prioritise. The Federal Government should seek feedback from countries involved with the ODA program on the goals that those countries would like to prioritise.



**g. How countries in the Indo-Pacific are responding to implementing the SDGs, and which of the SDGs have been prioritised by countries receiving Australia's ODA, and how these priorities could be incorporated into Australia's ODA program**

Many countries are still in the preliminary stages of developing their plans to address the SDGs and are focused on the evidence base, data and information systems to report on the goals, rather than on how they will address the SDGs themselves. Australia is in a position to assist in the development of implementation plans and can help ensure countries meet their national and sub national interests.

- Case study: Vanuatu  
In Vanuatu 'The People's Plan: National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2030' sets out the responses and actions to address the SDGs.<sup>ix</sup> This is an aspirational plan providing high-level guidance for the detailed monitoring and implementation that needs to follow. Australian ODA has a valuable opportunity to support our near neighbours to implement their national plans. A challenge for Australian aid will be to ensure our ODA does not harm or interfere with national SDG plans. Similar plans exist for Indonesia and the Solomon Islands.
- Case study: Fiji  
The Fijian Government has sought to integrate the SDGs into its parallel national plan, the 'Green Growth Framework of Fiji: Restoring the Balance in Development That Is Sustainable for Our Future'.

**Recommendation:**

Australia can further demonstrate national leadership by assisting countries in the development, implementation and monitoring of their plans.

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## h. Examples of best practice in how other countries are implementing the SDG from which Australia could learn.

While it is too early to make this assessment, there are a number of countries that are making solid progress towards the SDGs.

- **Case study: Canada**  
In 2017 Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau affirmed to the UN General Assembly that implementing the SDGs “at home” was just as meaningful and important as supporting their implementation abroad.<sup>x</sup> An assessment has already been conducted on Canada’s domestic status on the SDGs at baseline by the Brookings Institution<sup>xi</sup>, and in July 2017 the country provided an outline to the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on the many ways the nation’s domestic priorities are already being aligned with the SDG agenda, including the Canadian Government’s recognition that in implementing the 2030 Agenda “we need to reach out to all levels of government, Indigenous Peoples, and other key stakeholders”.<sup>xii</sup>

Given the demographic, historical and geographic similarities between Australia and Canada as Commonwealth countries – and the goodwill that exists between our two nations – the Federal Government could learn much from Canada’s strong commitment to implementing the SDG agenda domestically.

- **Case study: Belgium**  
In July 2017, the Belgian Federal Planning Bureau submitted the First Belgian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the UN High Level Political Forum.<sup>xiii</sup> The commitment to sustainable development is inscribed in the 2006 National Constitution and this report coincides with the eighth report to the Federal Government on sustainable development – the most recent report completely aligned with the SDGs, and their targets and indicators.<sup>xiv</sup> The Voluntary Review acknowledges the complexity of a federal system with four regional governments with distinct languages and cultural histories, and the need for extensive consultation and engagement of civil society.

Only approximately half of the required SDG indicators were available in Belgian data sources at the time of collection: following analysis, 34 indicators were considered appropriate to map progress, two per goal. Initial progress has been mapped across all 17 goals with clear strengths in poverty, health, and sustainable consumption and production. The synergies for performance across the goals was identified, as was the need to look across the goals when evaluating issues such as internal equality – examples around gender equality included attention to education and employment but also transportation. Three areas have been highlighted for attention in progress against the SDGs: poverty and social exclusion; energy and climate; transportation.

- **Case study: Germany**  
Through the global 2030 Agenda, the European Union and its member states have committed to sustainable development with its clear resolve to ‘leave no one behind’. Europe is nevertheless still struggling to embrace these goals: civil society and business associations, as well as political parties, have not yet fully aligned their agendas with the SDGs. The German Council for Foreign Affairs and partners have identified common challenges in communicating SDGs to different target groups,

including the public, influencers, policymakers and constituencies. In late March 2018 they convened a joint session to focus on means, strategies and tools for communicating the SDGs to different audiences in Europe. Germany's leadership of the G20, its anticipated leadership of the European Union, and the confirmation of a Coalition Government led by Chancellor Angela Merkel have been strategic in consolidating its leadership on these issues. The joint session addressed a series of questions, on which planning for the SDGs will be based, including:

- Which narratives promote and protect sustainable development in the EU?
  - How can we reach constituencies that are unfamiliar with the SDGs and not engaged?
  - What instruments exist to ensure that sustainability and the SDGs are part of the broader debate in the prelude to the European Parliament's elections in 2019?
- Case study: Sri Lanka  
Similar to Australia's new Interdepartmental Committee, the Sri Lankan Government mapped the interlinkages between existing agencies and their portfolios, to identify and build an inter-agency collaboration rather than a linear approach. That has avoided the delay and expense of establishing new institutions for commitments related to the implementation of the SDGs.

#### Recommendation:

Australia should consider best practice SDG implementation in other countries to date and adopt aspects of these approaches.

## Contributing authors

This submission is the result of a collaboration between The University of Queensland's researchers. Contributing authors included:

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## End notes

<sup>i</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1.

<sup>ii</sup> Paragraph 23. *Ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> Brolan CE, Gouda H, AbouZahr C, Lopez AD (2017) Beyond health: five global policy metaphors for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics. *The Lancet* 389(10074): 1084-1085.

<sup>iv</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017. A picture of overweight and obesity in Australia 2017. Cat. no.PHE 216. Canberra: AIHW.

<sup>v</sup> Development Initiatives, 2017. Global Nutrition Report 2017: Nourishing the SDGs. Bristol, UK: Development Initiatives.

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/hesn/fact-sheets/college-william-and-mary-aiddata-center-development-policy>

<sup>vii</sup> Noted in the following article on The Conversation: Download full report from this web link: [https://www.academia.edu/34052742/Mining\\_and\\_Socio-ecological\\_Resilience\\_in\\_Mineral-Rich\\_Small\\_States\\_An\\_Integrative\\_Approach\\_to\\_Phosphate\\_Mining\\_on\\_Nauru](https://www.academia.edu/34052742/Mining_and_Socio-ecological_Resilience_in_Mineral-Rich_Small_States_An_Integrative_Approach_to_Phosphate_Mining_on_Nauru)

<sup>viii</sup> Development Initiatives, 2017. Global Nutrition Report 2017: Nourishing the SDGs. Bristol, UK: Development Initiatives.

<sup>ix</sup> Department of Strategic Policy, Planning and Aid Coordination 2016. Vanuatu 2030 The People's Plan: National Sustainable Development Plan 2016 to 2030. Republic of Vanuatu, Port Vila, November 2016.

<sup>x</sup> McArthur J & Rasmussen K (4 Oct 2017), Even Canada needs breakthroughs to reach UN global goals. Available at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2017/10/04/even-canada-needs-breakthroughs-to-reach-un-global-goals/>

<sup>xi</sup> McArthur J & Rasmussen K (Oct 2017), What and who gets left behind? Assessing Canada's domestic status on the Sustainable Development Goals. Global Economy & Development at Brookings. Working Paper 108. Available at [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/working-paper\\_assessing-canadas-domestic-status-on-the-sdgs1.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/working-paper_assessing-canadas-domestic-status-on-the-sdgs1.pdf)

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