

# Chapter 5

## Encouraging implementation of the SDGs beyond government

5.1 The committee heard that the 2030 Agenda 'is not something that can be achieved just by the federal government or bureaucracy; it is something that needs different levels of government—national, state and local—business and academia'.<sup>1</sup> This chapter summarises suggestions from submissions for how the Australian Government can enhance collaboration with the private sector and civil society on the SDGs. It also includes information on the level of understanding of the 2030 Agenda in Australia, and proposals for increasing awareness.

### Partnering with the private sector

5.2 Goal 17 (partnership for the goals) encourages governments to engage with non-government sectors to implement the SDGs.<sup>2</sup> The committee heard that:

Business is a source of finance, a driver of innovation and technological development and a key engine of economic growth and employment. Business therefore has a critical role working with Government towards the successful implementation of the SDGs.<sup>3</sup>

5.3 Ms Sally McCutchan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Impact Investing Australia said that 'if Australia wishes to be an effective contributor to the delivery of the SDGs both in our own country and in the region we must unlock more private capital towards this objective'.<sup>4</sup> Mr Simon O'Connor, CEO, Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA) identified 'a significant appetite' from a growing segment of the finance industry to align 'capital with a sustainable economy and delivering on the SDGs' as they recognise 'these goals will underpin a stronger and more prosperous economy and hence long-term future investment returns for these long-term investors'.<sup>5</sup>

5.4 Some Australian Government agencies have partnered with private sector organisations to promote business engagement with the SDGs. For example, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has supported the Shared Value Project, which 'promotes shared value approaches to business in the region'.<sup>6</sup> DFAT has also supported the Business and Sustainable Development Commission and

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1 Professor John Thwaites, Chair, Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI), *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 8.

2 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 8.

3 Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia (BCSDA) (formerly Sustainable Business Australia), *Submission 48*, [p. 2].

4 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 34.

5 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 35.

6 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 7.

Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA) to engage businesses on the SDGs.<sup>7</sup> Such initiatives were supported by Ms Kylie Porter, Executive Director of GCNA and Mr Andrew Petersen, CEO of the Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia (BCSDA).<sup>8</sup>

5.5 Some other nations are partnering with the private sector to finance the SDGs, such as Denmark, which was expected to launch a public-private partnership SDGs fund.<sup>9</sup> The Danish Government also signed a memorandum of understanding with the World Economic Forum 'to pursue a partnership aimed at improving the state of the world through public-private cooperation'.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Support sustainable business and investment approaches***

5.6 The committee received mixed evidence on the extent to which private sector organisations have embedded the SDGs into their businesses, and a range of suggestions for how to support more businesses to do so. GCNA asserted that businesses are 'increasingly communicating their actions in working towards the SDGs and are bringing their supply chains and stakeholders with them on the journey'.<sup>11</sup> Ms Porter explained that:

...quite a few companies who are members of the Global Compact whose turnover would be somewhere around the \$1 million to \$5 million...are actively engaging in the SDGs because they see the economic benefit to their bottom line of doing so.<sup>12</sup>

5.7 Professor Rod Glover, Deputy Director of the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI), suggested that multinational companies are 'getting there first because they're more sensitised to a lot of those reputational risks but also because of innovation opportunities that [are] attached to their global operations'.<sup>13</sup>

5.8 Others also noted 'the beginning of a shift by responsible investors—super funds and fund managers in particular—to start assessing their portfolios against the SDGs'.<sup>14</sup> Mr O'Connor told the committee:

Already we're seeing a lot of progress from the finance community in delivering upon the SDGs. We've seen SDG investment funds coming to market, SDG bonds being issued, superannuation funds measuring their SDG impacts, and SDG impact investment funds. We have seen through

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7 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 7.

8 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, pp. 24, 29.

9 International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), *Submission 98*, p. 8.

10 BCSDA, *Submission 48*, [p. 5].

11 *Submission 130*, [p. 5].

12 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 26.

13 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 15.

14 RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 8]. See also BCSDA, *Submission 48*, [p. 4]; Impact Investing Australia, *Submission 88*, p. 1; Shared Value Project, *Submission 49*, p. 3.

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some of our research that in the impact investment market SDGs already are the most commonly adopted impact measurement framework.<sup>15</sup>

5.9 However, Professor of Accounting Carol Adams noted that while there are 'major companies that acknowledge that long-term business success is dependent on the achievement of the SDGs', there are still 'a substantial number of pension funds and companies that have not acknowledged such risks'.<sup>16</sup> RIAA also noted that there are still challenges in maximising the contribution of the business and finance community to the SDGs.<sup>17</sup> GCNA warned that if businesses 'take action without a lead from government, the actions may not be aligned to national priorities'.<sup>18</sup>

5.10 Therefore, many submissions called for the Australian Government to support the private sector to adopt the SDGs.<sup>19</sup> One submission pointed out that some in the private sector are waiting for stronger direction from governments before adopting the SDGs framework.<sup>20</sup> Ms Andrea Spencer-Cooke, Partner at One Stone Advisors, agreed that government 'leadership is needed to catalyse business action and investment'.<sup>21</sup> The committee received many suggestions for how to support approaches to sustainable development including 'shared value' and responsible/impact investing.

5.11 The shared value concept has been defined 'as policies and practices that enhance the competitiveness of companies while improving social and environmental conditions in the regions where they operate'.<sup>22</sup> To 'qualify as shared value, there must be an identifiable economic benefit to the company as well as measurable impact on a social or environmental issue'.<sup>23</sup> Responsible, ethical or sustainable investing is 'a holistic approach to investing, where social, environmental, corporate governance and ethical issues are considered alongside financial performance when making an investment'.<sup>24</sup> In Australia, 131 signatories have signed the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), 'making it the PRI's fourth largest market globally'.<sup>25</sup> Domestically, 'responsible investments have more than quadrupled over the past three years to \$622 billion, with nearly half

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15 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 35.

16 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 1.

17 *Submission 131*, [p. 10].

18 *Submission 130*, [p. 5].

19 See, for example, PwC, *Submission 30*, [p. 1].

20 Mr Jason Sprott, *Submission 106*, [p. 2].

21 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 1.

22 Shared Value Project, *Submission 49*, p. 1.

23 Shared Value Project, *Submission 49*, p. 1.

24 RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 5].

25 Principles for Responsible Investment, *Submission 26*, [p. 1].

(44%) of Australia's investments now being invested through some form of responsible investment strategy'.<sup>26</sup>

5.12 Impact investing is a sub-set of responsible/ethical investing, which requires investments 'deliver measurable social and environmental outcomes alongside financial returns'.<sup>27</sup> Professor Adams explained that the SDGs have been 'changing the language away from 'responsible investment' and making sure you don't have a 'negative impact' to having a 'positive contribution''.<sup>28</sup> Ms McCutchan added:

Impact investments target positive societal outcomes alongside financial returns and are seen globally as a means of expanding the capital available for tackling the SDG funding gap, estimated at \$5 trillion to \$7 trillion annually. Internationally, impact investments have already been used to finance initiatives including aged care, health, social housing, education, financial inclusion and international development.<sup>29</sup>

5.13 She explained that impact investments are typically viewed as falling into three different categories:

The first are investments in organisations, in the same way as you make an investment on the ASX or in a venture capital fund or a smaller organisation. The second way is what many in government would be familiar with, which is the social impact bonds. That is a 'pay for success' model where investors typically invest in a program up-front and then the government will pay on the basis of a successful outcome, over a three- to five-year period for most of them, or possibly longer. The third area is what we would call the social infrastructure space. That might be an investment in an education facility, a school or something that enables transport to communities, sport or sanitation and so on.<sup>30</sup>

5.14 A recent report found that the dataset of investable impact investment product grew from \$1.2 billion at 30 June 2015 to \$5.8 billion at 31 December 2017.<sup>31</sup> This was largely driven by the increase in green bonds, and environmental investments (96%) which far outweighed social investments (4%) on a dollar-weighted basis.<sup>32</sup> An example of a social bond is the New South Wales bond around out-of-home foster care, described by Ms McCutchan as 'hugely successful...in terms of the outcomes that have been delivered and successful in terms of the

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26 RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 5].

27 RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 5].

28 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 5.

29 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 34.

30 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 36.

31 RIAA, *Benchmarking Impact: Australian Impact Investment Activity and Performance Report 2018*, 2018, p. 6. This report features data for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 December 2017 from 24 organisations overseeing 51 retail and wholesale impact investment products in Australia.

32 RIAA, *Benchmarking Impact*, 2018, p. 6.

returns', though she acknowledged that others do appear to have a different view.<sup>33</sup> New South Wales has also developed a Social and Affordable Housing Fund of over \$1 billion.<sup>34</sup> Another example of social impact investment is the Big River Impact Foundation, which:

...aims to foster economic sustainability and financial independence for Indigenous Australians by creating social impact investment strategies designed to deliver far-reaching economic and social benefits. The Big River Impact Foundation also aims to transition Indigenous Australians out of welfare dependency towards economic participation.<sup>35</sup>

*Financial incentives for sustainable business and investment approaches*

5.15 Impact Investing Australia cautioned that 'without constructive engagement from across government, including appropriate catalytic action to mobilise the market at scale, progress from here will be slower and less impactful and may not meet its potential'.<sup>36</sup> Professor Adams argued that 'intervention is needed to counter the short-term focus of markets if businesses are to reap long term benefits and contribute to Australia's commitment to the SDG'.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, some submissions suggested that the Australian Government should provide financial incentives to support sustainable business and investment approaches.

5.16 The Shared Value Project highlighted that while more than 70 percent of its members actively supported the SDGs through their strategy and programs:

...opportunities for SDG implementation often have high transaction costs for the private sector. The role of government in decreasing these costs, opening up new markets, and strengthening the enabling environment surfaced on several occasions. Providing appropriate tax incentives could support and accelerate investment in the right places. Another example is examining the allocation of infrastructure funding to increase the amount allocated to disaster preparedness activities that could lead to significant savings during recovery operations.<sup>38</sup>

5.17 GCNA called for the Australian Government's 'consideration of innovative ways to incentivise responsible, sustainable businesses (e.g. through preferential treatment in public procurement, export credit assistance, or tax incentives for

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33 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, pp. 37–38.

34 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 38.

35 Big River Impact Foundation, 'Why Impact Investing', Big River Impact Foundation website, <http://bigriverfoundation.com.au/about/impact-investing/> (accessed 20 December 2018). See also the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 20 December 2018), [p. 2].

36 *Submission 88*, p. 2.

37 *Submission 1*, p. 3.

38 *Submission 49*, pp. 3–4.

companies providing SDGs impact) and [exploration of] ways to build the Australian 'brand' as sustainable'.<sup>39</sup>

5.18 A few submissions supported the establishment of a new SDG-related investment fund. For example, World Vision Australia proposed a \$100 million Sustainable Development Impact Fund to incentivise private sector investment, focusing on the most disadvantaged groups to ensure no one is left behind.<sup>40</sup> Ms McCutchan, Impact Investing Australia, argued that:

Governments have a role in building the market to encourage growth, participating in the market to leverage more private capital in priority areas and in acting as a market steward to set standards and remove barriers for participation. Targeting policy in prudent investment can catalyse activity, reduce risks for new entrants, build track records and enhance investor confidence. This level of involvement is important for a well-functioning, efficient and mature market. With increasing focus from the corporate sector and institutional investors, Australia has an opportunity to broaden the policy toolbox and access additional resources for greater impact, including opening up further domestic and international collaboration and Australian trade in the region.<sup>41</sup>

5.19 She and a few others suggested the Australian Government support:

...a one-off contribution of \$150m toward establishment of a \$300m predominantly wholesale institution, Impact Capital Australia (ICA), as a partnership between the Australian Government, the private sector and the community sector. This game-changing policy builds on successful models overseas being taken up in countries across the globe. It is required to drive the impact investing market to a state of development where it can meaningfully contribute toward the SDGs in and from Australia.<sup>42</sup>

5.20 She explained the process would entail raising contributions from financial institutions and the government and investing in funds across the different SDGs.<sup>43</sup> Ms McCutchan proposed that ICA:

...would be designed to target 10 different issue areas, but broadly those issue areas are aligned with the SDGs. That's why we're trying to get something like that into the market, a go-to place for people looking to do this kind of investment to get capital to start some of the funds and to get some of the private finance flowing into these critical areas.<sup>44</sup>

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39 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 6].

40 World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 3.

41 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 34.

42 Impact Investing Australia, *Submission 88*, p. 2. See also Ms McCutchan, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, pp. 34, 39; RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 11].

43 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 41.

44 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 39.

5.21 She clarified that while some investment could be for international development, most of it would be focused on domestic SDG-related issues.<sup>45</sup>

5.22 DFAT has 'made some great first steps in supporting the development of impact investing, including the Emerging Markets Impact Investment Fund, EMIF, and the Scaling Frontier Innovation Program'.<sup>46</sup> The committee also heard international examples of investment initiatives. For example, Ms Spencer-Cooke referred the committee to the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative.<sup>47</sup> Ms Kylie Lloyd, Managing Director of Zoic Environmental Pty Ltd, said:

Sweden has an innovation agency, Vinnova, which promotes sustainable growth by financing needs motivated research and developing efficient innovative systems. It runs programs to boost innovation capacity...ALMI [Företagspartner AB] is another agency within the Swedish government that, at every phase of enterprise, offers advice, loans and risk capital to small- and medium-sized businesses with profitability and growth potential. So, there are a number of different agencies within other countries that are using finance as seed for innovation in this space.<sup>48</sup>

*Procurement and promoting opportunities for small and medium enterprises*

5.23 Some small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have been supporting the SDGs. Ms Porter identified the Winya furniture business, which in 2018:

...was the first Australian company to win a Global Compact SDGs Pioneer award, because their business model is based on empowering Indigenous persons, just because of the nature of their business and the way that they do things. They're doing things such as buying product off mine sites to then recycle in the manufacture of their furniture. They're a small business—I believe their turnover is around the \$5 million mark—but they don't see the SDGs as a burden; they flip it and see it as an opportunity.<sup>49</sup>

5.24 However, evidence to the inquiry generally highlighted the 'need for strong information and awareness building around the SDGs and what relevance they have to SMEs'.<sup>50</sup> Ms Lloyd, Zoic Environmental, told the committee:

As a judge for New South Wales Business Chamber awards, we found small SMEs are implementing sustainability, but the focus is on environmental sustainability, with limited understanding of SDGs.<sup>51</sup>

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45 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 41.

46 Ms McCutchan, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 34.

47 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 3.

48 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 3.

49 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 27.

50 Queensland Tourism Industry Council, *Submission 76*, p. 8.

51 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 2.

5.25 The Queensland Tourism Industry Council surveyed its members and found twenty percent 'do not believe that the SDGs are important in guiding the future operations of their business'.<sup>52</sup> A respondent stated:

We are a small business grappling with government regulation and costs. Exorbitant energy costs and local council rates and licensing costs. Your bureaucratic SDGs are of no relevance to this small business.<sup>53</sup>

5.26 Ms Spencer-Cooke identified government procurement as a platform for ensuring the SDGs are integrated into business practices in Australia, noting that sustainable public procurement is referred to in Goal 12 and is also 'a means to drive progress on other SDGs' such as Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth) and 10 (reduced inequalities).<sup>54</sup> She said:

Government spent, I think, \$47 billion on federal procurement spend in 2016-17. If the procurement is aligned with the purposes of the goals that is a really easy win for government to send a strong market message that will galvanise change in business and in markets.<sup>55</sup>

5.27 An independent international report on the SDGs elaborated:

The strategic use of *public procurement* can also help ensure that the purchase by governments and state-owned enterprises of goods, services and works are aligned with the principles of sustainable development...Several directives and frameworks have been developed to support the transition towards more efficient and sustainable procurement processes in government.<sup>56</sup>

5.28 The report emphasised that, in addition to 'green growth, public procurement can help implement other secondary policy objectives such as supporting SMEs and technological innovation'.<sup>57</sup> Some witnesses described how the Australian Government should seek to ensure SMEs do not miss out on the potential business opportunities offered by the SDGs. Ms Spencer-Cooke called for sustainability requirements to be steadily phased 'into bids and tenders in a way that fosters efficiency improvements, innovation, open communication and greater collaboration between producers and suppliers'.<sup>58</sup> She identified a range of international examples, including Germany's federal Competence Centre for Sustainable Procurement, as

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52 *Submission 76*, p. 8.

53 *Submission 76*, p. 8.

54 Answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 20 November 2018), p. 2.

55 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 2.

56 Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G., *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2018*, Bertelsmann Stiftung and SDSN, New York, 2018, p. 7.

57 *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2018*, p. 7.

58 Answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 20 November 2018), p. 2.

well as Australian initiatives such as the Indigenous Procurement Policy.<sup>59</sup> Mr Petersen also provided domestic examples, noting:

Already, most subnational/state governments in this country have been building capacity programs for small and medium business in the area of the environment, whether it's for environmental licensing requirements or just building capacity around doing better operationally in relation to energy, water and waste use. In New South Wales, for example, we have the Office of Environment and Heritage, which has a very comprehensive program called Sustainability Advantage. Sustainability Advantage was one of the first programmatic responses in Australia to the SDGs, by bringing in the framework and helping small and medium-sized businesses—whether they were car-detailing operations, drycleaners or newsagents—to understand practically what they could do in response to the SDGs.<sup>60</sup>

5.29 Ms Lloyd indicated that '[a] lot of industry finds it hard to understand and participate in policy development and reporting on this'.<sup>61</sup> She suggested:

It comes down to various different procurement processes and platforms. Here's an example: as an SME, I'm required to participate in a procurement platform, and I have to pay \$500 or \$1,000 for various different platforms and fill in a number of questionnaires and be preregistered. If there is a common platform on with common questions aligned to the SDGs, which the industries share, this would be a great place for seed funding. How do we build the capacity of the SMEs to be able to answer that? Questionnaires that are focused on higher level language that an SME doesn't understand—the stress that it takes to try and fill in those is just phenomenal. I agree completely that the focus should be on helping and capacity-building for SMEs.<sup>62</sup>

5.30 Ms Spencer-Cooke suggested that the existing 'ad hoc' efforts to support sustainable public procurement 'could benefit from stronger, more integrated and strategic support at [the] federal level'.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Integrate the SDGs into reporting and regulatory frameworks***

5.31 In addition to providing financial support for sustainable business and investment and capacity building for SMEs, the committee heard suggestions for how to embed the SDGs into corporate reporting. The Addis Agenda included a commitment to 'promote corporate sustainability, including reporting on environmental, social and governance impacts, to help to ensure transparency and accountability'.<sup>64</sup> However, rates of reporting against the SDGs are low in Australian

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59 Answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 20 November 2018), pp. 3–4.

60 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, pp. 25–26.

61 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, pp. 4–5.

62 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 7.

63 Answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 20 November 2018), pp. 4–6.

64 UN, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)—Resolution 69/313*, p. 7.

businesses, and there are concerns that reporting remains somewhat superficial. For example, a review of reporting among the ASX 20 found 'meaningful disclosure on measurement and transparent reporting of any contribution made to the SDGs is not yet common practice among the companies assessed'.<sup>65</sup> Ms Lloyd said in a review of the 'sustainability reports of a number of Australian companies...only six percent acknowledged SDGs in their targets, with no details'.<sup>66</sup> For the 2016 reporting period, 19 ASX200 companies (9.5%) referred to the SDGs in their reports and 17 of these reported at a 'Detailed' or 'Leading' level'.<sup>67</sup>

5.32 Professor M. Azizul Islam noted that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had limited impact on the practices of major global companies, which used them 'to signpost sustainability without doing much'.<sup>68</sup> Submissions identified the current risk of 'SDG-washing', which entails emphasising an organisation's positive contribution to some SDGs, while minimising negative impacts.<sup>69</sup> Professor Adams cautioned: '[w]e're starting to see SDG symbols in corporate reports, but I'm not convinced it's really getting into strategy considerations at board level'.<sup>70</sup> Discussion at the 2018 Summit revealed that 'there is opportunity for businesses to be more transparent in disclosing where they may be having a negative impact and the innovative solutions that they are developing to manage these impacts'.<sup>71</sup>

5.33 While acknowledging the risk of 'SDG-washing', other witnesses had a more positive outlook. Ms Porter, GCNA, acknowledged:

...absolutely there was a trend of looking at the SDGs and retrospectively applying those SDGs to programs or activities that businesses were doing. But more and more—and this is not just at the top end of town, which does experience investor pressure; it's also all the way through to the SMEs and the non-listed companies—they are embedding this into their business strategy and they're looking at it from a 'Where are some core business opportunities for us that not only propel our existing business but can also help us to contribute to the SDGs?'<sup>72</sup>

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65 Renzo Mori Junior, Ross Wyatt and Amanda Nuttall, *ASX 20 Disclosures on the Sustainable Development Goals*, Think Impact, Research Report, November 2017, p. 8. See Australian Council of Superannuation Investors Limited (ACSI), *Corporate Sustainability Reporting in Australia: An analysis of ASX200 disclosure*, 2017, p. 24.

66 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 2.

67 ACSI, *Corporate Sustainability Reporting in Australia: An analysis of ASX200 disclosure featuring climate-related risk*, July 2017, p. 6.

68 *Submission 118*, pp. 2–3.

69 Professor Islam, *Submission 118*, p. 2; RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 10], Professor Thwaites, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, pp. 12–13.

70 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 5.

71 ACFID, ACOSS, GCNA, SDSN Australia, NZ and Pacific, UNAA, *Australian SDGs Summit 2018: Unlocking the Opportunities of the SDGs: Outcomes Report*, November 2018, 11.

72 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 29. See also GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 4].

5.34 Mr O'Connor, RIAA, told the committee:

We are very cognisant of greenwashing or impact-washing. As a result we have a number of mechanisms and programs in place to verify the credibility and the true-to-label elements of investment products making claims around this. We run a certification program for investment products that aims to ensure and audits and verifies that products are true to label and delivering on their promise....There are clearly market opportunities that will otherwise be exploited.<sup>73</sup>

5.35 Mr Petersen suggested that the market 'would weed that particular element out' without the need for government intervention and reassured the committee that 'investment will not move towards those products, companies and business models that aren't able to verify or prove to the market the credibility of the particular outcome'.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, others made suggestions for how to encourage businesses to measure and report their effects on the SDGs transparently, as outlined below.

*Embedding the SDGs into disclosure and reporting requirements*

5.36 The Centre for Policy Development (CPD) proposed that financial regulators 'raise awareness about the relevance of the SDGs to good governance, risk management and disclosure, building on recent public leadership on the relevance and materiality of climate-related risks and opportunities'.<sup>75</sup> This could be supported by including information on sustainability-related risks in the ASX Corporate Governance Council Principles and Recommendations and Australian Securities and Investments Commission guidance to company directors.<sup>76</sup>

5.37 Professor Adams further argued that corporate governance principles should prompt boards to consider the recommendations of the SDGs and the Task Force on Climate-Related Disclosures (TCFD).<sup>77</sup> She urged the Australian Government to press bodies such as the ASX and Australian Accounting Standards Board to do more to update reporting and governance principles, codes and standards.<sup>78</sup> Cbus also suggested that 'broader adoption of the SDGs by asset owners could be facilitated by clarification of fiduciary duty', and called for the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority to make it clear that environmental, social and governance issues are material to risk and return analysis, and should be considered in investment decision making.<sup>79</sup>

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73 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 42.

74 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, pp. 28–29.

75 *Submission 129*, [p. 2].

76 CPD, *Submission 129*, [p. 2].

77 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 1.

78 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, pp. 1, 6.

79 *Submission 139*, p. 2. See also Recommendation 1 of Principles for Responsible Investing, *Fiduciary Duty in the 21st Century – Australia Roadmap*, 2016.

5.38 Sustainability issues are also being considered in the context of corporate frameworks internationally. Mr O'Connor identified 'an emerging consensus globally and certainly some updates to law globally, such as the UK pensions law, whereby trustees must consider environmental and social factors as part of their fiduciary duties'.<sup>80</sup> Professor Adams said:

In the UK, ministers have effectively written to companies and pension funds and have quite a significant impact around sustainability issues, in particular writing to top pension funds and large companies, asking them questions like...what are they doing about climate change risk? Are they following, or do they plan to follow, the recommendations of the TCFD? And have they considered broader sustainable development risks?<sup>81</sup>

5.39 Submissions expressed different views about whether businesses should be obligated to report against the SDGs, or simply be supported to do so. For example, industry superannuation fund HESTA suggested corporate entities could be required to report how their business strategy, operations and activities are aligned with the SDGs.<sup>82</sup> A number of submissions agreed the Australian Government could require all ASX listed companies to report their progress against the SDGs.<sup>83</sup> Professor Islam proposed that Australia 'introduce a mandatory, community-driven, independent audit requirement for businesses'.<sup>84</sup> He suggested civil organisations, development partners and accountants should collaborate on these audits.<sup>85</sup>

5.40 In contrast, Mr Cameron Allen, UNSW Faculty of Science noted that it is 'not a regulatory requirement or a legal obligation for Australia to implement the SDGs, and I don't imagine that it would be for business either'.<sup>86</sup> Social licence to operate firm Futureye argued 'in the long-term consistent and robust regulation may drive sustainable innovation in reluctant companies, in the current context a voluntary rather than prescriptive governance framework which encourages knowledge sharing and learning is more appropriate'.<sup>87</sup> Strategic Sustainability Consultants agreed that while government should encourage and support SMEs to engage with the SDGs, they should not be forced to report against the SDGs.<sup>88</sup>

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80 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 39. See also Mr Petersen, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 28.

81 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 1. The TCFD, comprised of 32 members, seeks to develop recommendations for voluntary climate-related financial disclosures.

82 *Submission 147*, [p. 3].

83 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 5; Strategic Sustainability Consultants (SSC), *Submission 50*, p. 3; Ms Jacklin Molla and Ms Sarah Griffin, *Submission 72*, p. 14; University of Queensland researchers coordinated by Dr Nina Hall and Professor Karen Hussey, *Submission 76*, p. 10.

84 *Submission 118*, p. 4.

85 *Submission 118*, p. 4.

86 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 10.

87 *Submission 83*, p. 3.

88 *Submission 50*, p. 19. See also Mr Jason Sprott, *Submission 106*, [p. 3].

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*Guidance on reporting*

5.41 Mr Petersen said that 'investor markets are asking for more and more information in key markets, of which Australia is one, about: 'What is the institutional or jurisdictional response to climate change, or water or waste management or societal health?''<sup>89</sup> However, there is not a common framework for companies to assess and report their contributions to the SDGs.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, 'individual companies need to build their own response to those particular requests'.<sup>91</sup> Professor John Thwaites, Chair of MSDI, and several others called for the Australian Government to collaborate with business on the development of consistent standards for SDGs reporting.<sup>92</sup> Some suggested that this could entail the development of an online measurement tool, or implementation guides for specific industry sectors.<sup>93</sup> Creating a reliable reporting framework could enable comparisons between businesses and inspire a 'race to the top', rather than each organisation acting in isolation.<sup>94</sup> Mr Petersen suggested that 'one of the key opportunities for government is to act as an incubator to make sure that standardisation and nationalisation of any reporting framework is done at least cost'.<sup>95</sup>

5.42 PRI, RIAA, and others in the finance sector are developing a sustainable finance road map to 'ensure that the heavy weight of capital can be directed towards the achievement of the SDG'.<sup>96</sup> This initiative has significant support in Australia, including from over 40 financial organisations. It 'follows very closely a lot of policy work going on internationally right now in the EU, the UK, China, Canada, Indonesia, New Zealand and beyond'.<sup>97</sup> Mr O'Connor, RIAA, argued that the Australian Government should also support international initiatives to create global SDGs measurement and reporting standards.<sup>98</sup>

5.43 Existing corporate sustainability frameworks are being harmonised with the SDGs, UN Global Compact, Global Reporting Index (GRI), PRI and the Global Real-estate ESG Benchmark.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, the GRI has partnered with the Global

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89 Mr Petersen, BCSDA, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 26.

90 PwC, *Submission 30*, [p. 4].

91 Mr Petersen, BCSDA, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 26.

92 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 8. See also AGL, *Submission 56*, p. 16; HESTA, *Submission 147*, [p. 3].

93 City West Water, *Submission 156*, [p. 2]; Mr Sprott, *Submission 106*, [p. 3].

94 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 7].

95 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 26.

96 Mr O'Connor, RIAA, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 35.

97 Mr O'Connor, RIAA, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 35.

98 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 35. See also RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 10]; World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 12.

99 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 5]; Principles for Responsible Investment, *Submission 26*, [p. 1].

Compact to develop a common framework for business to report on the SDGs.<sup>100</sup> Global resources already include the SDG Compass, 'a step-by-step guide for businesses to align their strategies with the SDGs and measure and manage their impacts'.<sup>101</sup> Mr Petersen gave an overview of global efforts:

Bloomberg Philanthropies has recently provided several million dollars to SASB, which is the US equivalent of the Accounting Standards Board, and to the GRI to develop a harmonised reporting framework. That is incredibly exciting, because it will have massive jurisdictional coverage, largely because the GRI is ostensibly EU and Asia-Pacific in terms of its reporting coverage, whereas obviously SASB is more US. Then, of course, you have the work of the United Nations through the Global Compact and those higher-level principles that have general application...<sup>102</sup>

5.44 Ms McCutchan also told the committee about the recently-established Impact Management Project Network, which is seeking to develop a set of standards which will form the basis of an accreditation system.<sup>103</sup> In addition to calls for a harmonised SDGs reporting framework, the CPD suggested that the Australian Government should develop a sustainable finance strategy and establish a sustainable finance taskforce.<sup>104</sup> Mr Sam Hurley, a CPD Policy Director, stated:

...leading financial centres around the world are starting to roll out really comprehensive road maps and strategies around green finance and sustainable finance. The UK has a green finance initiative; the EU has an action plan on financing sustainable growth; Canada has appointed an expert panel on sustainable finance; and there's been a huge amount of activity on these types of issues in China and elsewhere.<sup>105</sup>

### **Partnering with civil society**

5.45 The 2030 Agenda called for governments to 'work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, subregional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others'.<sup>106</sup> The Global Compact—Cities Programme suggested that to be truly effective, governance structures, accountability measures and reporting systems

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100 Ms Porter, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, pp. 23, 28. See also GRI, PRI, UN Global Compact, *In Focus: Addressing Investor Needs in Business Reporting on the SDGs*, 2018, p. 11.

101 BCSDA, *Submission 48*, [p. 2].

102 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 27.

103 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 37.

104 *Submission 129*, [pp. 8–9].

105 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 2.

106 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Resolution 70/1*, p. 11.

'need to extend beyond government policies and the systems of public bureaucracy to engage civil society and the community and the private sector'.<sup>107</sup>

### *Support for civil society organisations*

5.46 The Australian Government has partnered with some civil society organisations on the SDGs. For instance, DFAT provided funding for the Australian SDGs website, and \$20,000 for Monash University as the contracting party for the 2018 SDGs Summit.<sup>108</sup> CSIRO also supported the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and Collaboration for Impact to develop the SDGs Toolkit to assist users to 'explore and test systems change and collaborative responses as a way of working differently to achieve the SDGs'.<sup>109</sup>

5.47 Submissions suggested that this approach to partnerships should be expanded.<sup>110</sup> The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) pointed out that community sector organisations 'must be sufficiently resourced in order to effectively engage with the SDGs'.<sup>111</sup> ACFID agreed, and proposed the creation of 'small grants schemes through each of the Government departments on the IDC [interdepartmental committee] to enable their stakeholders to access funding for communicating the SDGs'.<sup>112</sup> Mr Marc Purcell, ACFID CEO, reasoned:

You could be doing a lot with small grants at a departmental level to foster communication back out into the community. It doesn't have to be a lot of money. We just need to run a small grants program to get out and communicate around what we want in our community that is aligned in the SDGs—how we want better outcomes for our community—and let the best grants run it each year and get local politicians to come and speak at it.<sup>113</sup>

5.48 Proposals included funding for organisations across a range of different sectors, as outlined below.<sup>114</sup>

### *Regional and state-based organisations*

5.49 Some submissions called for support for non-government organisations working at the state and local community level. The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) advocated 'seed funding to encourage public libraries, schools, sporting bodies, tertiary institutions, and civil society groups to promote awareness-

107 Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Submission 103*, [p. 3].

108 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 7; DFAT, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 January 2019), [p. 2].

109 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 12.

110 AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 6. See also Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Submission 103*, [p. 3].

111 *Submission 140*, p. 2.

112 *Submission 135*, p. 15.

113 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 48.

114 See, for example, the Western Australian Council of Social Service, *Submission 145*, [p. 2].

raising and implement specific SDGs locally'.<sup>115</sup> Healthy Cities Illawarra (HCI) and the University of Wollongong (UOW) noted '[i]n a country where 96% of businesses are small to medium enterprises, local regional approaches are going to be essential and support for these approaches needs to be given'.<sup>116</sup> Regional and state-based multi-sectoral networks such as HCI and UoW and the WA SDGs Network were identified as requiring funding to support their local coordination efforts.<sup>117</sup>

#### *Universities and young people*

5.50 The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Australia/Pacific noted the Australian university sector has already been taking action 'beyond business as usual' to support the SDGs.<sup>118</sup> However, it claimed that greater and more targeted support is required to enable universities to further participate in 'awareness raising, providing the evidence base for policies and responses, innovating solutions to specific challenges, and managing data and measuring progress'.<sup>119</sup>

5.51 SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific also noted that many young people 'are already contributing to the 2030 Agenda through their actions and undertakings in educational programs, charity initiatives, research and enterprise'.<sup>120</sup> They highlighted examples including Pujiman, a youth-run Indigenous cultural heritage preservation project.<sup>121</sup> This 'aims to address SDG 11 through engaging young people and championing Indigenous Australians' ancient blueprint for environmental sustainability'.<sup>122</sup> However, a 'lack of resources, under-representation in governance systems, and exclusion from negotiations and decision-making processes have hindered the ability of young people to contribute to the agenda to their full potential'.<sup>123</sup> Denmark supports youth participation in deciding future development, and recommended youth-focused strategies to implement the SDGs.<sup>124</sup>

#### *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*

5.52 Evidence suggested that ensuring no one is left behind will require '[g]reater effort to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people'.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, the

115 *Submission 47*, p. 6.

116 *Submission 134*, p. 2.

117 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55, Attachment 1, Australian SDGs Summit: On the Road to Implementation*, 2016, p. 14; Western Australian SDG Network, *Submission 114*, p. 3; HCI, answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 15 November 2018), [p. 1].

118 *Submission 55*, p. 2.

119 *Submission 55*, p. 2.

120 *Submission 141*, pp. 1–2.

121 *Submission 141, Attachment 1*, p. 8.

122 *Submission 141, Attachment 1*, p. 8.

123 *Submission 141*, p. 2.

124 *Submission 141*, p. 6.

125 Mary Ward International Australia, *Submission 12*, [p. 3].

committee heard 'it is critical that provisions are made for Indigenous peoples to be consulted and worked with in partnership towards goals affecting their futures'.<sup>126</sup> Some submissions stressed that SDGs mechanisms must 'include resources to support the active participation and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in the process'.<sup>127</sup>

### *People with disability*

5.53 Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) and Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) Australia emphasised that 'it is critical that there is an active partnership with people with disability in the implementation of the SDGs'.<sup>128</sup> However, the committee heard concerns from disability advocates that they had not been adequately consulted prior to Australia's first Voluntary National Review (VNR), and that the SDGs had not been properly communicated to the disability sector. Ms Therese Sands, Co-CEO, People With Disability Australia, stated:

We absolutely support their domestic implementation, but how they're linked to key policy and reform areas and policy development areas for people with disability and how that is conveyed to the community of people with disability more broadly. To date, we don't believe that's occurred, and we think that's detrimental to the domestic implementation of those goals and, therefore, to sustainable and meaningful outcomes for people with disability in general.<sup>129</sup>

5.54 Ms Sands called for a review of domestic processes and how representative groups are engaged on the SDGs.<sup>130</sup> She identified the need for more clarity about the Australian Government's plan for stakeholder engagement, noting 'we need some mechanism whereby all the relevant departments are able to at the very least nominate somebody you go to for that kind of implementation, and then some more formal engagement mechanism with the relevant peak bodies'.<sup>131</sup> Ms Sands noted that New Zealand's formal consultation mechanism makes it easier for organisations to raise and address issues.<sup>132</sup>

### *Consultation through a multi-sectoral reference group*

5.55 Many submissions argued that the implementation of the SDGs:

...must be informed by active consultation with...formal opportunities for marginalised and vulnerable groups to participate in decision-making,

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126 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Submission 37*, p. 6.

127 ACOSS, *Submission 140*, p. 2.

128 CYDA and DPO Australia, *Submission 136*, pp. 1–2.

129 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, pp. 19–20. See also Ms Stephanie Gotlib, CEO, CYDA, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 19.

130 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 21.

131 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 23.

132 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 24.

including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people with disabilities, women, the elderly and young people.<sup>133</sup>

5.56 As outlined in chapter 3, most submissions were positive about the consultation process for the preparation of Australia's first VNR, and a witness reflected that it 'engaged a lot of different stakeholders'.<sup>134</sup> A recent UN report highlighted the importance of ensuring engagement mechanisms 'are sustained over time and go beyond one-time, ad hoc consultation meetings'.<sup>135</sup> Professor Thwaites observed that there was 'very good consultation with business, universities and civil society' during the preparation for the VNR, and stated: 'We want that to be maintained and we want a process embedded to do that'.<sup>136</sup>

5.57 Many submissions supported the establishment of a multi-sector reference group comprising representatives from academia, civil society and the private sector.<sup>137</sup> Submissions suggested this group would consult with and provide advice to the IDC and government on the national implementation of the SDGs. The committee heard that the group could consider both domestic and international issues, the challenge of leaving no one behind, and gender, peace and security.<sup>138</sup> SDSN Australia/Pacific suggested the group could establish a formal consultation process and 'enhance transparency, collaboration and communication'.<sup>139</sup> Many submissions used remarkably consistent language when proposing the multi-sector reference group, while some others used different terms to support the same principle of multi-stakeholder consultation.<sup>140</sup> A few submissions called for a national coordination body to be established outside government.<sup>141</sup>

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133 Fred Hollows Foundation, *Submission 36*, pp. 1–2. See also CBM Australia *Submission 93*, p. 1.

134 Mr Cameron Allen, UNSW Faculty of Science, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 12.

135 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Supplementary submission 37.1*, UN, *Working together: Integration, institutions and the Sustainable Development Goals*, World Public Sector Report 2018, UN, New York, 2018, p. xii.

136 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 8.

137 See, for example, World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 19; University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, p. 3; SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 4; Plan International, *Submission 67*, p. 2; Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Submission 103*, [p. 3]; ACFID, *Submission 135*, pp. 8–9; AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 6; Equality Rights Alliance, *Submission 149*, p. 5.

138 See, for example, IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 5 (The IWDA submission also noted its previous proposal for a Women's Rights and Gender Equality Advisory Group (p. 5)); ACFID, *Submission 135*, pp. 8–9; Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security, *Submission 59*, p. 3.

139 *Submission 55*, p. 4.

140 See, for example, Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 5; AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 6; PwC, *Submission 30*, [pp. 5–6].

141 See, for example, MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 5]; City of Melbourne, *Submission 68*, p. 2; Monash University, *Submission 120*, p. 3.

5.58 Other countries engage non-government stakeholders on the SDGs through a range of mechanisms, including 'dedicated discussions, advocacy and consultation activities'.<sup>142</sup> Some include stakeholders on government-led national consultation entities or technical committees, such as France, Indonesia, Samoa and Switzerland.<sup>143</sup> A UN report stated:

UN Member States have placed high hopes on multi stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) for the realization of the 2030 Agenda. Several countries have put forward multi-stakeholder partnerships or created frameworks for those in relation with the SDGs. For example, the Netherlands has a broad coalition of over 75 different stakeholders referred to as the 'Global Goals Charter NL'. Participants ranging from companies, to banks, to civil society organizations, have signed the charter and are contributing to the implementation of the SDGs.<sup>144</sup>

5.59 Finnish development organisations described the cooperation between government and civil society as 'exemplary' and recommended that Finland's 'participatory working methods should be continued and disseminated as a good practice'.<sup>145</sup> Finland's stakeholder engagement mechanisms include:

- National Commission on Sustainable Development—a Prime Minister-led partnership forum combining political leadership with civil society participation. Tasked with reviewing the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda and enhancing the implementation of the Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development.
- Development Policy Committee—a parliamentary body including political parties, NGOs and trade unions. Tasked with monitoring and assessing Finland's international development commitments.<sup>146</sup>

5.60 The German Federal Government is advised by a 'functionally independent' Sustainable Development Council on matters relating to sustainability the enhancement of the National Sustainable Development Strategy.<sup>147</sup> Indonesia's Presidential Regulation signed in 2017:

...establishes governance mechanisms for the SDGs that focuses on stakeholder engagement and mainstreaming the SDGs into sectoral development plans and budgets. While implementation is devolved to

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142 UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, *Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 9.

143 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 9.

144 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Supplementary submission 37.1*, UN, *Working together*, 2018, p. xiii.

145 UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, *Progressing national SDGs implementation: Experiences and recommendations from 2016*, Bond, November 2016, pp. 39–40.

146 *Progressing national SDGs implementation*, Bond, November 2016, p. 29.

147 *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, 2016, (tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, ACFID, on 24 August 2018), p. 5.

provincial governments, regular monitoring and evaluation reporting occurs at both the ministerial and sub-national level. Indonesia's decentralised approach involves the participation of a wide range of stakeholders in SDG discussions so that the 2030 Agenda can be adapted to national and sub-national contexts. Activities include running awareness-raising programs on the largest national broadcasters; and holding dialogues between civil society networks and the private sector to effectively translate a commitment to inclusive SDG governance into a policy framework.<sup>148</sup>

5.61 Mr Chris Tinning, First Assistant Secretary, DFAT, agreed when asked whether it was a decision of government to not include a formal consultative network arrangement for the SDGs, and explained:

Obviously we have entered into specific agreements with some of those peak bodies—for instance, GCNA is running the website for us. Most of those peak bodies have been partners in organising those summits. Of course we have an ongoing partnership with ACFID as a key partner for the aid program. In terms of a formal mechanism around SDG collaboration, we haven't established that.<sup>149</sup>

### ***Independent data collection and reporting***

5.62 The 2030 Agenda included a commitment that follow-up and review processes at all levels 'will be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders'.<sup>150</sup> The Addis Agenda also noted that national systems 'should be supplemented with data and analysis from civil society, academia and the private sector'.<sup>151</sup> The independent international SDSN/Bertelsmann SDG Index most recently ranked Australia at 37 in the world.<sup>152</sup> The SDG Index aggregates available data on all SDGs 'to provide countries with a quick assessment of how they are performing relative to their peers'.<sup>153</sup>

5.63 Many submissions identified the *Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report* by the National Sustainable Development Council (the Council) as the leading domestic example of independent monitoring and reporting.<sup>154</sup> The Council includes experts from the business, civil society and academic sectors, and builds on the work of the National Sustainability Council, which produced the *Sustainable*

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148 CSIRO, *Submission 85*, p. 19.

149 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 55.

150 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, pp. 31–32.

151 UN, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)—Resolution 69/313*, p. 35.

152 *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2018*, Bertelsmann Stiftung and SDSN, New York, 2018.

153 SDG Index & Dashboards, *Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://sdgindex.org/faq/> (accessed 24 January 2019).

154 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 5; UNAA, *Submission 47*, pp. 7–8; SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 4; WWF-Australia, *Submission 79*, p. 6; ACSI, *Submission 92*, [p. 2]; MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 6]; ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 9.

*Australia Report 2013*.<sup>155</sup> The *Transforming Australia* report includes data on Australia's progress against 144 selected indicators, and according to cross-cutting themes.<sup>156</sup> This work was 'supported by industry super funds and philanthropy, both of which, specifically, adopted a longer term perspective and a broader perspective than many other organisations would'.<sup>157</sup>

5.64 The *Transforming Australia* report found approximately 'one-third of the indicators were determined to be on track, more than one-third needed improvement or a breakthrough, and one-quarter are off-track or deteriorating'.<sup>158</sup> In particular, Australia was found to be 'progressing well on goals relating to health and wellbeing (goal 3) and quality education (goal 4), while progress is lagging behind on goals relating to reduced inequalities (goal 10) and climate action (goal 13)'.<sup>159</sup>

5.65 Some submissions suggested that the Australian Government provide funding to, or formally partner with, the Council.<sup>160</sup> However, many others argued that there needs to be some independent monitoring to promote trust, community engagement, and 'provide independent insights into Australia's progress'.<sup>161</sup> Professor Thwaites, involved in the Council, stated that there are some advantages in the independence of the group, noting 'a group of independent experts... can step back in a way that a public servant can't always do'.<sup>162</sup> Professor Glover, also involved with the Council, identified the case for 'a centre of gravity here outside of government that's possibly in the academic or research sector, so that you're getting independent, credible, trusted, respected expertise that's going to look beyond the political cycles or the cycles of any one government'.<sup>163</sup> He explained to the committee that the Council:

...worked really closely with DFAT and a number of the departments in coming to assessments. We've had frank conversations where government officials have said, 'That data's not right,' and we've changed it. The relationship is closer than I think it might appear at face value, but we've always valued what we could get from an independent, expert and one-step-removed perspective...<sup>164</sup>

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155 MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 6]; City of Sydney, *Submission 54*, pp. 10–11.

156 <https://www.sdgtransformingaustralia.com/> (accessed 12 December 2018); MSDI, *Supplementary submission 121.1*.

157 Professor Glover, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 9.

158 MSDI, *Supplementary submission 121.1*, [p. 1].

159 MSDI, *Supplementary submission 121.1*, [p. 3].

160 See, for example, Cbus, *Submission 139*, p. 2.

161 MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 5]. See also ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 9; SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

162 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 16.

163 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 11.

164 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 16.

5.66 When asked about the Council, Mr Tinning, DFAT, also drew a distinction between government and independent data, noting that 'they have a role in providing a non-government perspective on issues, whereas we have a role in providing government verified data'. He added that '[w]e see the efforts as complementary, but we don't expect to combine them'.<sup>165</sup>

### **Level of awareness and understanding**

5.67 SDSN Australia/Pacific emphasised that 'achieving the SDGs will require the support and involvement of all actors within the Australian Government, across all sectors, and in the wider Australian community'.<sup>166</sup> However, while awareness of the SDGs is uneven across different sectors, it is generally low, with one witness observing that the goals are 'invisible in Australia'.<sup>167</sup> SDSN Australia/Pacific reasoned that increasing 'the awareness of all actors about what the SDGs are and how they can contribute to SDG achievement is therefore crucially important for mobilising widespread action'.<sup>168</sup> The next sections outline the levels of awareness across sectors.

#### ***Governments***

5.68 The committee heard that '[t]here is currently very little public awareness and debate about the SDGs in the media or in Australian parliaments'.<sup>169</sup> Professor Glover argued 'that awareness outside of government is greater than it is inside'.<sup>170</sup> A representative of ACOSS told the committee:

We've observed fairly low levels of SDG literacy across the bureaucracy—outside of DFAT and obviously at some of the higher, more senior levels where there's direct responsibility. But it certainly hasn't permeated throughout the broader bureaucracy in terms of responsibility.<sup>171</sup>

5.69 The Australian Government's perceived lack of promotion of the SDGs has been raised as a significant issue by participants at conferences and SDGs summits.<sup>172</sup> However, the delegation of goals to particular agencies 'has delivered pockets of engagement, understanding, awareness and positive action across the

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165 Mr Tinning, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, pp. 12–13.

166 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 2.

167 Professor Caroline Homer, Co-Program Director, Maternal and Child Health, Burnet Institute, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 32.

168 *Submission 55*, p. 2.

169 University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, p. 4.

170 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 9.

171 Ms Jacqueline Phillips, Director of Policy and Advocacy, ACOSS, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 36.

172 The Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH) Australia, *Submission 14*, p. 1.

Australian Government'.<sup>173</sup> The first VNR process also 'provided a substantial boost to the visibility and role of the SDG across Australian Government departments'.<sup>174</sup>

5.70 Awareness across state and territory governments was also perceived to be uneven and generally low, though the committee did not receive a great deal of evidence relating to the states and territories.<sup>175</sup> The committee heard that most local governments had a low level of awareness, apart from a few exceptions such as the Cities of Melbourne, Sydney and Newcastle, and the Wollongong region.<sup>176</sup>

### ***Private sector***

5.71 In 2016 GCNA launched the *CEO Statement of Support for the SDGs*, along with more than 30 business leaders.<sup>177</sup> MSDI stated that, while there is little awareness 'in small and medium sized businesses', there is reasonable understanding in major Australian businesses.<sup>178</sup> Awareness also varies by the level of seniority.<sup>179</sup> Professor Adams nevertheless suggested that senior leaders in public and private sector organisations 'have insufficient knowledge with regard to the implementation of change towards sustainable development including the benefits of doing so'.<sup>180</sup> However, she identified 'significant private sector interest in fruitful approaches to the SDGs from companies, pension funds, asset managers, business and industry associations, large consultancies, global not-for-profit and intergovernmental organizations and accounting professional bodies and standards setters'.<sup>181</sup>

5.72 Other submissions also pointed to particular sectors with higher levels of awareness, including investors and asset owners, large ASX listed companies, co-operatives and mutual enterprises, and shared value businesses.<sup>182</sup> While about 57 percent of respondents to a Queensland Tourism Industry Council survey demonstrated some level of awareness of the goals, 90 percent of members of the Shared Value Project were not only aware of the SDGs but agreed they 'are very relevant to their line of business, organisational strategy and the values of their

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173 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 3].

174 MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 1].

175 City of Melbourne, *Submission 68*, p. 2.

176 EAROPH Australia, answer to a question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 December 2018), [p. 4].

177 GCNA, *GCNA launches CEO Statement of Support for the SDGs*, 7 September 2016.

178 *Submission 121*, [p. 2].

179 RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 6]. See also Australian Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility, *Re-imagining sustainable value: the Sustainable Development Goals gather pace—Annual Review of the State of CSR in Australia and New Zealand 2017*.

180 *Submission 1*, p. 1.

181 *Submission 1*, p. 2.

182 See, for example, ACSI, *Submission 92*, [p. 1]; Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals, *Submission 151*, p. 6; Cbus, *Submission 139*, p. 2; Shared Value Project, *Submission 49*, p. 2.

stakeholders'.<sup>183</sup> However, Mr O'Connor, RIAA, noted that Australian views were 'a little further behind' the international leaders, which 'underscored the need for more education and awareness raising'.<sup>184</sup>

5.73 The mining and extractive industries have demonstrated awareness of the SDGs, and companies have been seeking to integrate the goals into their practices and business operations. One example highlighted to the committee was an extractives sector and UN SDGs roundtable hosted by Cardno, in partnership with the Columbia Centre on Sustainable Investment and the UN SDSN in April 2018.<sup>185</sup> Ms Danielle Alford, Regional Manager, Asia, Cardno explained that one of the issues discussed at the roundtable was how to ensure that 'this is not corporate engagement or sustainability as a department off to the side; it's actually part of the core business and part of the business strategy'.<sup>186</sup> The committee also received a report on mining and the SDGs, which includes case studies on how Australia's minerals industry is contributing to towards five of the goals.<sup>187</sup>

### *Civil society*

5.74 Many Australian civil society organisations have been actively embracing the 2030 Agenda and integrating the SDGs into their planning and public reporting frameworks.<sup>188</sup> They have also cooperated with the private sector to deliver SDG-related events and workshops, such as the 2016 Sydney and 2018 SDGs Melbourne Summits.<sup>189</sup> The 2018 Summit 'brought together close to 300 participants, representing almost 200 organisations'.<sup>190</sup> A multi-stakeholder SDGs conference was also held in November 2016 (SDGA16).<sup>191</sup> Australian organisations also demonstrated a high level of understanding by signing the 2016 *Civil Society*

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183 Queensland Tourism Industry Council, *Submission 76*, p. 7; Shared Value Project, *Submission 49*, p. 2

184 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 35.

185 Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), *Sustainability in Action: Australian Mining and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*, October 2018, p. 11.

186 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 46.

187 MCA, *Sustainability in Action*, October 2018.

188 See for example, ACOSS, *Submission 140*, p. 2; Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, *Submission 116*, [p. 1]; Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), *Submission 9*, p. 2.

189 Both summits were co-hosted by ACFID, ACOSS, GCNA, SDSN Australia/Pacific, and the 2018 summit was also co-hosted by UNAA.

190 *Australian SDGs Summit 2018: Outcomes Report*, November 2018, p. 2.

191 BCSDA, *Submission 48*, [pp. 3–4]. This was convened by BCSDA, ACFID, ACOSS, ACTU, the Banksia Foundation, CDP, Green Building Council of Australia, Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia, National Farmers Federation, NSW Council for Social Service, Oxfam, SDSN, the University of Sydney Business School, and WWF-Australia.

*Statement of Commitment to the SDGs*.<sup>192</sup> Submissions suggested that there are particularly high levels of awareness within the international development sector.<sup>193</sup>

### **University sector**

5.75 Submissions provided examples that illustrated good awareness of the SDGs in the university sector. By mid-2018, eleven university leaders had signed the Australian *University Commitment to the SDGs*.<sup>194</sup> Individual universities and particular research communities have also engaged with the SDGs through their research programs.<sup>195</sup> For example, the UN has appointed the University of Western Sydney as an 'Academic Impact' Hub for Goal 10. For the next three years, it will be responsible for promoting scholarship and best practices for the goal.<sup>196</sup> The Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, mapped its contribution across the 17 goals and found that its ten research areas contributed knowledge and evidence to support each of the SDGs.<sup>197</sup> Other initiatives include the Principles for Responsible Management Education, a UN Global Compact-backed initiative aiming to realise the SDGs through responsible management education.<sup>198</sup>

5.76 Universities have begun incorporating the SDGs into coursework, education for professionals, and co-curricular activities, such as leadership programs and entrepreneurship challenges.<sup>199</sup> As an example, Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute created the Doctorate of Sustainable Development and a Masters unit specifically on the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>200</sup> However:

...across the academic sector, knowledge and understanding of the SDGs are still developing. University researchers and teaching programs are not adopting them en masse just yet, but it's starting to happen. We see great advantage for us to be closely involved and engaged with them.<sup>201</sup>

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192 Presented by the ACFID and ACOSS.

193 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 2; Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Submission 103*, [p. 2]; Vision 2020 Australia, *Submission 19*, p. 7.

194 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *University Commitment to the SDGs*, <http://ap-unsdsn.org/regional-initiatives/universities-sdgs/university-commitment/> (accessed 11 January 2019).

195 The Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN), *Submission 58*, p. 2.

196 Delia Paul, 'UN Establishes 17 Academic Impact Hubs for SDGs', *SDG Knowledge Hub*, International Institute for Sustainable Development, 27 November 2018.

197 Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney, *Submission 102*, p. 5.

198 Dr Belinda Gibbons, University of Wollongong, answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 hearing (received 22 November 2018), [p. 1].

199 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 2.

200 Western Australian SDG Network, *Submission 114*, p. 2.

201 Professor Jago Dodson, Global Advisor, UN Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 56.

5.77 As well as increasing understanding through research and education, universities have participated as key partners in most of the big SDGs events that have taken place in Australia.<sup>202</sup> Universities have also demonstrated commitment to the SDGs through their organisational practices. For example, Monash University has committed to the SDGs in its Environment, Social and Governance Statement.<sup>203</sup>

### ***Young people and school students***

5.78 Evidence on the level of awareness of SDGs among young people was mixed. A 2016 survey of people already engaged in the sustainable development space found 29 percent of the young people knew of the SDGs.<sup>204</sup> The *Australian Youth Pledge for the SDGs* was launched in 2016 by SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific following the National Youth Summit on the SDGs. This involved more than 100 young leaders from over 60 student associations and youth organisations.<sup>205</sup> Mr Clinton Moore, former Local Pathways Fellow and current Vice-President of EAROPH Australia, described being pleasantly surprised by the knowledge and enthusiasm of high school students for the SDGs.<sup>206</sup>

5.79 Mr Dan Heap, classroom teacher at Forrest Primary School, said:

There is a bit of social media hype around the SDGs, and through that we've found possibly a handful of schools around Australia that are using the goals as a framework to inspire learning and action.<sup>207</sup>

5.80 However, fellow teacher Ms Sarah Bauer-McPhee noted 'there's certainly awareness of it but perhaps an uncertainty about how to use it in the classroom'.<sup>208</sup>

### ***General community***

5.81 Of the Australian sample of a global survey PwC conducted in 2015, 53 percent of respondents were 'not aware of the SDGs at all'.<sup>209</sup> Submissions were almost unanimous in their assessment that awareness remains low overall compared to other countries.<sup>210</sup> The committee received only a small number of submissions

202 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 2.

203 MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 2].

204 SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141*, p. 2.

205 SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *National Youth Summit on the SDGs*, 24 May 2017, <http://ap-unsdsn.org/national-youth-summit-on-the-sdgs/> (accessed 11 January 2019).

206 Inaugural SDSN Youth Local Pathways Fellow for Melbourne, *Submission 78*, p. 3.

207 *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 4.

208 *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 4.

209 PwC, *Submission 30*, [p. 3].

210 See, for example, Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 47; UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 2; CSIRO, *Submission 85*, p. 5; One Stone Advisors, *Submission 90*, p. 2; MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 2]; AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 5; GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 3].

from individuals who are engaged with the SDGs.<sup>211</sup> Ms Carolyn Davis, classroom teacher at Forrest Primary School, observed that:

...awareness and understanding of the SDGs in the wider community is lacking. Our school community of parents and families is well educated and informed, and many work in the public sector, yet less than 20 percent had any prior knowledge of the SDGs.<sup>212</sup>

5.82 Mr Tinning, DFAT, agreed that '[t]here is no doubt that awareness of the SDGs in Australia is low... relative to most countries'.<sup>213</sup> One witness also noted the risk of people who are aware of the SDGs misunderstanding their scope and believing that they are restricted to environmental sustainability.<sup>214</sup> They may also believe the goals to be 'primarily applicable to developing nations and not relevant domestically'.<sup>215</sup>

### **Initiatives for increasing awareness and understanding**

5.83 SDGs events organised by non-government organisations have 'helped to raise the profile and increase awareness across government, business and civil society'.<sup>216</sup> Therefore, some submissions suggested that while awareness remains generally low, 'a more active approach to explicitly addressing the SDGs is gaining momentum in Australia'.<sup>217</sup> Submissions generally agreed that the Australian Government should take the lead in increasing awareness of the SDGs, and made a range of proposals for education programs, public awareness campaigns and other initiatives.<sup>218</sup> These could build better understanding of the SDGs, enhance government accountability, identify opportunities for action at the community level and 'build greater buy-in to achievement of the SDGs beyond government'.<sup>219</sup>

#### ***Education programs***

5.84 A number of submissions called for the SDGs to be integrated into formal school, tertiary and continuing professional development programs.<sup>220</sup> Educating and

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211 For example, agronomist and NSW Young Sustainability Ambassador Miss Jessica Madsen writes a sustainability and agriculturally-theme blog (*Submission 105*, [p. 1]). Dr Jayne Meyer Tucker wrote about each of the SDGs on the Consequences Blog during 2017 (*Submission 29*).

212 *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 1.

213 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 17.

214 Mr Clinton Moore, Vice-President of EAROPH Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 13.

215 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 4]; UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 2.

216 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 2.

217 Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety and the Centre for Spatial Data Infrastructures and Land Administration, University of Melbourne *Submission 75*, [p. 1]; Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Submission 103*, [p. 2].

218 See, for example, UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 2; RIAA, *Submission 131*, [pp. 11–12].

219 AHRC, *Submission 138*, pp. 6, 10.

220 See, for example, SSC, *Submission 50*, pp. 4–5; One Stone Advisors, *Submission 90*, p. 1.

engaging young people on the SDGs can contribute to the implementation of the SDGs, and better equip them for their futures.<sup>221</sup> Mr Moore suggested that it is 'important to put education systems and programs in place that not only teach the SDGs and their connections, but relate them to the everyday and future conditions that young people will face'.<sup>222</sup> UNAA also contended that '[p]romoting the SDGs in in primary and secondary schools will be critical to prepare and empower young Australians to navigate an increasingly complex and uncertain world'.<sup>223</sup>

5.85 The Australian Curriculum included the MDGs as part of the geography curriculum, and sustainable development is included as a cross-curriculum priority for study.<sup>224</sup> Many submissions agreed that the Australian Curriculum should be updated to include the SDGs.<sup>225</sup> This aligns with SDG 4.7 (that by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development).<sup>226</sup> Forrest Primary School teachers:

...found it relatively difficult to find Australia's progress. There are lots of resources out there for kids. They are not linked to the Australian curriculum and they are also not from Australian websites. But what we were able to use was very good and it was a nice starting platform. It would be nice to have a few more local examples to share with our kids as well.<sup>227</sup>

5.86 They recounted:

...spending hours after school when these students went home just selecting resources, and particularly refining them to be accessible. For example, the report that was released by DFAT was just far too complex...they really struggled to have a look at that report without a lot of extra support from us, and that took a lot of time.<sup>228</sup>

5.87 The teachers explained that '[i]t is crucial that educators have access to high quality resources to support their teaching'.<sup>229</sup> Mr Heap argued:

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221 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 47; UNICEF, *Submission 87*, p. 16.

222 *Submission 78*, p. 2.

223 *Submission 47*, p. 5.

224 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 46. See also the Australian Curriculum, 'Sustainability' <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/sustainability/> (accessed 6 July 2018).

225 See, for example, World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, pp. 17–18; Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 46; SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 5; MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 2]; SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141*, pp. 2–3; Ms Molla and Ms Griffin, *Submission 72*, pp. 15–16; SSC, *Submission 50*, pp. 4–5.

226 MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 2].

227 Ms Bauer-McPhee, *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 3.

228 Mr Heap, *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 4.

229 *Submission 163*, p. 4.

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Our future leaders are at primary schools all over Australia, and we need to put the SDGs front and centre on our agenda and on the curriculum. They need to be written into the Australian curriculum not as additional content but as an interwoven framework that teachers can use to inspire change.<sup>230</sup>

5.88 Mr Graham Williamson claimed that this could entail the 'politicisation' and 'globalisation' of education without a 'democratic foundation' or informed parents.<sup>231</sup> Other submissions noted some countries have incorporated the SDGs into school and university programs, such as Estonia, Finland and the Republic of Korea.<sup>232</sup>

5.89 Submissions also mentioned Australian examples of school programs on the SDGs. For instance, Forrest Primary School students in their final year carried out extended collaborative projects on the SDGs.<sup>233</sup> They undertook activities such as cleaning rubbish from a local river, and making and selling cloth bags to contribute funds for the WWF Marine Pollution Foundation.<sup>234</sup> Other examples included the Kreative Koalas program, which has inspired students of Bulli High School to engage with the SDGs and conservation in their local community, supported by Landcare.<sup>235</sup> Further, an SDGs postcard activity resource kit and education resource created by Oxfam Australia and UNICEF Australia was taken up by 263 schools and education providers in the space of one term.<sup>236</sup> Some submissions identified international programs, including The World's Largest Lesson, and the SDSN Youth Local Pathways Fellowship, Global Schools Program, and the online SDG zone.<sup>237</sup>

#### *Professional and community education*

5.90 A few submissions also suggested the SDGs should be incorporated into professional development and training for public servants and policymakers.<sup>238</sup> Several other countries are willing to build the capacities and knowledge of public servants through training programs, such as Brazil, Indonesia and Italy.<sup>239</sup>

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230 *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 2. See also Forrest Primary School, *Submission 163*, p. 2; Ava-Rose, *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 7; Ava, *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 5.

231 *Submission 3*, [p. 2].

232 Australian Academy of Science and Future Earth Australia, *Submission 108*, p. 9; UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 9.

233 *Submission 163*, p. 3.

234 *Submission 163*, p. 3.

235 Miss Jessica Madsen, *Submission 105*.

236 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 46; Oxfam, answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 16 November 2018), [p. 2].

237 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 47; UNICEF, *Submission 87*, p. 16; SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141*, pp. 1, 3; Monash University, *Submission 120*, p. 1, [original emphasis removed].

238 One Stone Advisors, *Submission 90*, p. 1; Ms Molla and Ms Griffin, *Submission 72*, p. 15.

239 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 8.

Community education on the SDGs could also be offered through libraries and community centres.<sup>240</sup> Volunteering Australia stressed:

...that supporting resources, tools and promotional material should be produced to assist organisations to promote and implement the SDGs at a grassroots level. Education and training material, webinars and online resources should also be developed to assist with the domestic implementation of the SDGs.<sup>241</sup>

### ***Public awareness campaign***

5.91 There 'has been limited emphasis on domestic awareness raising, engagement on the SDGs at a grassroots level, and promotions'.<sup>242</sup> Many submissions called for the Australian Government to support and fund a national campaign to increase awareness of the 2030 Agenda and action on the SDGs.<sup>243</sup> Oxfam Australia highlighted the example of New Zealand, where awareness of the SDGs increased by five points since 2016 to 28 percent after a sustained awareness-raising campaign.<sup>244</sup>

### ***Approach to messaging***

5.92 Submissions included suggestions for how to communicate about the SDGs, noting that 'it can be difficult to distil clear messages and communicate them in a meaningful and readily consumable way'.<sup>245</sup> Australians are more likely to engage with the SDGs if they are 'localised' and communicated in a way that connects with 'established values of the Australian community' including gender equality, cooperation, and being a good neighbour, and be informed by human security narratives.<sup>246</sup> ACFID acknowledged that while 'there is no narrative that will appeal to everyone, Australia has mainstream values—such as a fair go and being a good neighbour—that can resonate with a wide cross-section of the population'.<sup>247</sup>

5.93 World Vision Australia agreed the SDGs should be 'simplified for public communication', and noted one way would be 'to synthesise them into five categories known as the 'Five P's of Sustainable Development'—people, prosperity, peace, partnership and planet'.<sup>248</sup> Similarly, Volunteering Australia suggested 'awareness

240 Ms Molla and Ms Griffin, *Submission 72*, p. 15; ALIA, *Submission 9*, pp. 2–3.

241 *Submission 127*, p. 4.

242 Volunteering Australia, *Submission 127*, p. 3.

243 See, for example, the University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, p. 3; Volunteering Australia, *Submission 127*, p. 4; ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 16; AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 10; National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, *Submission 154*, p. 4.

244 *Submission 18*, p. 47.

245 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 6.

246 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 15; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 4; Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 45.

247 *Submission 135*, p. 15.

248 *Submission 25*, pp. 16–17.

activities centre on the overarching premise of 'leave no one behind'.<sup>249</sup> A campaign could also identify the interrelations between the goals.<sup>250</sup>

5.94 GCNA suggested a 'focus on the positive contribution that working towards the goals will bring to business and society, providing opportunities for Australians and for Australian companies with connections abroad'.<sup>251</sup> ACFID proposed:

Focussing on what the world would look like if the SDGs were achieved...the Department of Agriculture could support farmers' groups to communicate the SDGs via the importance of ensuring Australia's food and water security; the Office for Women could fund women's organisations to highlight the links between the SDGs and ending violence against women.<sup>252</sup>

5.95 Some submissions agreed that a campaign should use multiple communication channels and include targeted and 'audience-specific' messaging.<sup>253</sup> Max, a student at Forrest Primary School, described his experience:

When trying to raise awareness about the SDGs we learnt that we needed to use different communications methods depending on the age of the person in question. My group (looking at SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth) used a game to entice the younger ones in.<sup>254</sup>

5.96 Particular groups may require targeted communications, including state and territory education departments, small business organisations and women's groups.<sup>255</sup>

#### *Communication channels*

5.97 Some submissions specified particular platforms that could be used to disseminate information on the SDGs. For example, Mr Moore, former Local Pathways Fellow and current Vice-President of EAROPH Australia, suggested that the Australian Government administer 'SDGs-focused social media accounts and content' to 'enable interactivity and immediate review by informed partners and the public'.<sup>256</sup> Awareness-raising actions can also include 'hosting events including artistic events, appointing prominent SDG ambassadors, conducting SDG training with government officials and journalists, and producing and distributing SDGs

249 *Submission 19*, p. 7. See also AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 10.

250 Volunteering Australia, *Submission 127*, p. 4; Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ), *Submission 43*, p. 2.

251 *Submission 130*, [pp. 7, 4]. See also, CA ANZ, *Submission 43*, p. 2.

252 *Submission 135*, p. 15.

253 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 2; International Association for Public Participation Australasia, *Submission 44*, p. 4.

254 Forrest Primary School, *Supplementary submission 163.1*, p. 1.

255 Mary Ward International Australia, *Submission 12*, [p. 3].

256 Mr Moore, *Submission 78*, p. 5.

material in multiple languages'.<sup>257</sup> Two Forrest Primary School students suggested that putting the SDGs onto coins might raise the profile of the SDGs.<sup>258</sup>

5.98 Strategic Sustainability Consultants asserted that the SDGs:

...need to be displayed on billboards and public transport. They need to be flown on flags in city centres. They need to be advertised on TV and radio and in print. Most of all, the SDGs need to be advertised to young people through social media...The media and arts industries both have a particular role to play in the communication of these goals including through the communication of news, documentaries and other forms of storytelling.<sup>259</sup>

5.99 Mrs Sandra McCarthy, President of HCI, recalled:

In Phnom Penh airport, as soon as we arrived, there was a huge banner, 'Welcome to Phnom Penh', and their national government was committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals...there is a role for the federal government, even with simple things such as a banner, to promote them more and create that awareness.<sup>260</sup>

5.100 Communication strategies used overseas include Korea's nationwide campaigns for the implementation of the SDGs; Belgium's SDGs website; a weekly radio program in India; and a train that toured Belarus to promote the 2030 Agenda.<sup>261</sup> German ministries 'take care to highlight any links to the Sustainable Development Strategy' within 'the framework of their own communication'.<sup>262</sup>

### *Champions*

5.101 A number of submissions were critical of the Australian Government's perceived lack of high-profile leadership on the SDGs. UNAA, for example, was 'unable to identify influential SDG 'champions' and 'leaders' within the Australian Government—at either Cabinet, Parliamentary or Public Service levels' apart from DFAT.<sup>263</sup> A few government ministers have referred to the SDGs publicly, and the

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257 Public Health Association of Australia, *Submission 99*, p. 8.

258 *Supplementary submission 163.2*, p. 2; Claudette, *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 7.

259 *Submission 50*, pp. 3, 11.

260 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 21.

261 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 9; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 4. See, for an overview of some other campaigns, Malaka Gharib, 'The U.N. Wants You To Take A Selfie, Spin Around, Listen To A Llama', *Goats and Soda*, National Public Radio, 20 September 2015.

262 *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, 2016, (tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, ACFID, on 24 August 2018), p. 15.

263 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 2.

then Prime Minister provided a foreword to Australia's first VNR.<sup>264</sup> Officials from the Office for Women, PM&C, also 'make sure that the Minister for Women or the Ambassador for Women and Girls draws attention to the SDG agenda wherever possible' in an international context.<sup>265</sup> However, it does not appear that ministers across all portfolios focus on the SDGs to the same extent.

5.102 When asked for suggestions about how to promote the SDGs, primary school student Miles Maguire proposed talking about them during parliamentary sessions.<sup>266</sup> Several other submissions shared this view, noting that awareness could be improved if 'domestic policy announcements on, for example health care, education, environment, employment, gender equality and housing affordability, refer to Australia's international requirements under the SDGs'.<sup>267</sup> Others called for 'clear statements from political parties and political candidates on their tangible and meaningful policy commitments towards the achievement of the SDGs' at election times.<sup>268</sup>

5.103 A few submissions advocated the establishment of SDGs awards, such as One Stone Advisors, which called for the Australian Government to 'work with industry and civil society groups to introduce awards—the carrot—for best performers or even consider naming and shaming—the stick—those organisations whose core business activities blatantly undermine national efforts to achieve the goals'.<sup>269</sup> The Banksia Sustainability Awards and the UNAA (Queensland) SDG UNSung Heroes Awards have been aligned with the SDGs.<sup>270</sup>

### ***Existing Australian Government initiatives***

5.104 Some submissions suggested the Australian Government should support events to provide a platform for knowledge-sharing on the SDGs.<sup>271</sup> There is a range

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264 Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific, 'Keynote Address: 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian SDG Summit', 13 March 2018; The Hon Julie Bishop MP, Foreign Minister, 'Speech at Banksia Ignite Launching Australia's first report on the implementation of SDGs', 15 June 2018. Both provided VNR forewords. *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, pp. 2–3.

265 Ms Rachel Livingston, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office for Women, PM&C, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 25.

266 *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 4. See also Forrest Primary School, *Submission 163*, p. 8.

267 AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 9. See also Fred Hollows Foundation, *Submission 36*, p. 5; SSC, *Submission 50*, p. 3.

268 SSC, *Submission 50*, p. 9. See also Mr Williamson, *Submission 3*, [p. 6].

269 *Submission 90*, p. 4. See also SSC, *Submission 50*, p. 10; Ms Molla and Ms Griffin, *Submission 72*, p. 15; SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55, Attachment 1*, p. 11.

270 Banksia Foundation, 'What we do' <http://banksiafdn.com/about/> (accessed 6 July 2018); South East Queensland special network joint submission, *Submission 53*, [p. 3].

271 See, for example, World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 3; Good Shepherd Microfinance, on behalf of the Financial Inclusion Action Plan program, *Submission 39*, p. 8.

of examples of government agencies supporting and participating in fora, summits and conferences.<sup>272</sup> For instance, DFAT contributed funding for the 2018 SDGs Summit, hosted an Education Policy Forum, co-chaired a consultation on youth and the SDGs, held two philanthropic roundtables, and participated in the 2016 summit and conference.<sup>273</sup> The Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) also co-hosted an SDGs forum in 2017, and has presented to stakeholders at various meetings.<sup>274</sup> Questacon has engaged on the SDGs through events and panel sessions; projected an image of the SDGs onto the Questacon building; engaged graffiti artists Ian Dudley and Anna Trundle to create an SDGs mural at the Questacon Centre, and produced SDGs shirts.<sup>275</sup>

#### *Australian SDGs website and other digital channels*

5.105 A few submissions acknowledged that case studies and stories are crucial for understanding Australia's progress against the SDGs.<sup>276</sup> Case studies 'complement data collection and reporting activities by providing further context about process, challenges, achievements and lessons learnt'.<sup>277</sup> Submissions pointed to international examples of SDGs websites that allow the sharing of stories, including in the Netherlands.<sup>278</sup>

5.106 The Australian SDGs website was launched in June 2018.<sup>279</sup> GCNA led the development of the website, and funding was provided by the Australian Government. It shares case studies of domestic SDGs implementation, and seeks to inspire action and encourage collaboration. It also provides links to Australian and international resources, guides for businesses, and resources for civil society organisations, universities, schools and individuals. The website also provides links to goal-specific resources. It 'is meant as a 'living' resource, to be updated and improved over time'.<sup>280</sup> At the hearing on 24 August 2018, Mr Tinning, DFAT, noted that 95 organisations had uploaded 120 case studies since the launch.<sup>281</sup>

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272 For example, Department of Health, *Submission 143*, p. 9; Department of Education and Training (DET), *Submission 144*, p. 3.

273 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 6–7.

274 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 4.

275 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, *Submission 124*, pp. 1–2.

276 Dr Alec Thornton and Mr Israel Dela Cruz, *Submission 40*, [p. 2]; Monash University, *Submission 120*, p. 4, [original emphasis removed].

277 Minerals Council of Australia, *Submission 152*, [p. 5].

278 Dr Thornton and Mr Dela Cruz, *Submission 40*, [p. 5]; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 4.

279 GCNA and DFAT, <https://sdgs.org.au/> (accessed 2 July 2018).

280 GCNA, *Australian SDGs Hub for Business*, <http://www.unglobalcompact.org.au/issues/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs> (accessed 14 January 2019).

281 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 10.

5.107 A few Australian Government agencies have also provided information on the SDGs on their websites, including DFAT and DoEE.<sup>282</sup> Some have also used social media channels to communicate about the SDGs.<sup>283</sup> For example, DFAT social media accounts are 'increasingly integrating SDG and 2030 Agenda hashtags into posts and sharing SDG related posts from other Departments and business and civil society partners'.<sup>284</sup>

5.108 In May 2018, 12 departments and agencies were represented in a roundtable discussion of an SDGs narrative.<sup>285</sup> At the hearing in August 2018, Mr Tinning, DFAT, explained the government is working with several businesses and peak bodies to encourage 'them to use their own networks to get the message [about SDGs] out'.<sup>286</sup> He advised that the Shannon Company had been engaged to develop a common narrative on the SDGs to be shared with peak bodies.<sup>287</sup> As a result, a series of pamphlets on the SDGs are expected to be available on the DFAT website from early 2019.<sup>288</sup>

5.109 While the IDC supervised the development of the communication products, an official from PM&C clarified that there is not a government-wide national communication strategy. He indicated that it is 'up to each individual agency to determine how they want to communicate SDGs to their particular stakeholders'.<sup>289</sup> When asked about other plans for raising awareness, Mr Tinning stated:

There is no other alternative than just looking for opportunities to engage. The IDC is an obvious opportunity to raise awareness across government departments. This inquiry is another opportunity, and consistent questioning at Senate estimates about the degree to which SDGs are appearing in annual reports is another one.<sup>290</sup>

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282 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 5–6; DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 4.

283 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 4; DET, *Submission 144*, p. 3.

284 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 6.

285 PM&C, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 January 2019), [p. 5].

286 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, pp. 54–55.

287 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, pp. 54–55. See also *Australian SDGs Summit 2018: Outcomes Report*, p. 7.

288 Dr Cate Rogers, Assistant Secretary, Development Policy and Education Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, pp. 19–20.

289 Mr Jason McDonald, Chief Adviser, Domestic Policy Group, PM&C, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 20.

290 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 17.

