

The Senate

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Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade  
References Committee

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United Nations Sustainable Development  
Goals (SDG)

February 2019

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# Recommendations

## Recommendation 1

**7.12** The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, publish a national Sustainable Development Goals implementation plan that includes national priorities and regular reports of Australia's performance against the goals.

## Recommendation 2

**7.16** The committee recommends that the Australian Government provide an indicator-based assessment to parliament at least every two years that tracks Australia's performance against the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Recommendation 3

**7.19** The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, establish an approach to preparing future voluntary national review/s that ensures data on Australia's performance against the goals is included.

## Recommendation 4

**7.22** The committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a national Sustainable Development Goals secretariat to provide ongoing support to the interdepartmental committee, develop a national implementation plan and provide effective coordination of Australia's actions to implement and report on the SDG agenda. The location of the secretariat should be determined by government to ensure the best use of resources.

## Recommendation 5

**7.25** The committee recommends that Australian Government agencies integrate the Sustainable Development Goals across all internal and external websites, strategies and policies as they are updated.

## Recommendation 6

**7.27** The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee and Department of Finance, develop a framework to ensure that agencies include the Sustainable Development Goals in their annual reporting by 2020–21.

## Recommendation 7

**7.30** The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, regularly share resources on international best practice across government to improve Australia's performance against the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Recommendation 8

**7.34** The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, undertakes a literature review relating to the

**Sustainable Development Goals and updates the links to the information resources on the Australian website at least annually. Where gaps are identified, the committee recommends that the interdepartmental committee partners with stakeholders to develop and disseminate Australian information resources.**

#### **Recommendation 9**

**7.37 The committee recommends that the interdepartmental committee develop a Sustainable Development Goals communication strategy for the Australian Government after assessing the merits of a national awareness campaign compared to targeted communication campaigns for specific stakeholder groups.**

#### **Recommendation 10**

**7.40 The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with state and territory governments to add the Sustainable Development Goals to Council of Australian Governments council agendas for regular discussion.**

#### **Recommendation 11**

**7.42 The committee recommends that the Australian Government seek, through the Council of Australian Governments process, to assess opportunities to include data from state, territory and local government levels on its reporting platform on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators.**

#### **Recommendation 12**

**7.44 The committee recommends that the Australian Government provide information resources alongside the national implementation plan to support state, territory and local governments to create their own plans supporting the implementation of the SDGs in their jurisdictions.**

#### **Recommendation 13**

**7.48 The committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a representative, multi-sectoral reference group to advise the interdepartmental committee on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals until 2030.**

#### **Recommendation 14**

**7.50 The committee recommends that the Australian Government continue to support civil society engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals, including by supporting events, summits and the development and dissemination of information resources.**

#### **Recommendation 15**

**7.54 The committee recommends that the Australian Government partners with private and tertiary sector stakeholders to develop and disseminate Australian guidance on reporting against the Sustainable Development Goals in order to ensure consistent and transparent reporting and minimise the reporting burden for businesses.**

### **Recommendation 16**

**7.56** The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, identify opportunities to assist small and medium enterprises to build capacity to access sustainable procurement and reporting systems.

### **Recommendation 17**

**7.58** The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, assesses opportunities to encourage sustainable public procurement, impact investment and business practices that support the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Recommendation 18**

**7.61** The committee recommends that the Australian Government continue to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals throughout the international development program and prioritise the commitment to leave no one behind.



# Chapter 1

## Overview of the inquiry and the UN SDGs

### Referral

1.1 On 4 December 2017 the Senate referred the following matter to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee for inquiry and report by 29 November 2018:

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), with particular reference to:

- a. the understanding and awareness of the SDG across the Australian Government and in the wider Australian community;
- b. the potential costs, benefits and opportunities for Australia in the domestic implementation of the SDG;
- c. what governance structures and accountability measures are required at the national, state and local levels of government to ensure an integrated approach to implementing the SDG that is both meaningful and achieves real outcomes;
- d. how can performance against the SDG be monitored and communicated in a way that engages government, businesses and the public, and allows effective review of Australia's performance by civil society;
- e. what SDG are currently being addressed by Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) program;
- f. which of the SDG is Australia best suited to achieving through our ODA program, and should Australia's ODA be consolidated to focus on achieving core SDG;
- g. how countries in the Indo-Pacific are responding to implementing the SDG, and which of the SDG have been prioritised by countries receiving Australia's ODA, and how these priorities could be incorporated into Australia's ODA program; and
- h. examples of best practice in how other countries are implementing the SDG from which Australia could learn.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 On 26 November 2018 the Senate agreed to extend the reporting date to the last sitting day in February 2019.<sup>2</sup>

### Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 Details of the inquiry were placed on the committee's website at: [http://www.aph.gov.au/senate\\_fadt](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_fadt). The committee also contacted a number of relevant individuals and organisations to notify them of the inquiry and invite

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1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 76—4 December 2017, pp. 2428–2429.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 130—26 November 2018, p. 4228.

submissions by 29 March 2018. The committee continued to receive submissions after the closing date. Submissions received are listed at Appendix 1, and tabled documents, additional information and answers to questions on notice at Appendix 2.

1.4 The committee held five public hearings in 2018: on 24 August, 26 November and 7 December in Canberra; on 29 October in Melbourne; and on 2 November in Sydney. A list of witnesses who gave evidence is available at Appendix 3. Submissions and the Hansard transcripts of evidence may be accessed through the committee website.

### **Acknowledgement**

1.5 The committee thanks the organisations and individuals who participated in the public hearings as well as those who made written submissions. The committee would like to extend its particular thanks to the students and teachers from Forrest Primary School pictured below for their joint submission and attendance at the committee's hearing in Canberra on 26 November 2018.



Source: Mr Joe Italiano, House of Representatives.

### **Structure of the Report**

1.6 This chapter provides a brief overview of the SDGs. Chapter 2 outlines the potential benefits, opportunities and costs of implementing the SDGs for Australia (Term of Reference (ToR) b). Chapter 3 summarises suggestions from the evidence for improving the national governance of the SDGs, and monitoring and reporting progress against the goals (ToR c and d). Chapter 4 describes proposals for partnerships on the SDGs between the Australian Government and the international, state, territory and local levels of government (ToR c and d).

1.7 Chapter 5 includes ideas for partnering with civil society and the private sector to support their engagement with the SDGs, and illustrates the level of awareness of the SDGs in Australia (ToR d and a). Chapter 6 notes examples of how the SDGs are being implemented across the Indo-Pacific, and outlines proposals from the evidence for how to support this through official development assistance (ToR e to g). Chapter 7 details the committee's recommendations. Examples of international best practice are dispersed throughout the report (ToR h).

## **Sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals**

1.8 A widely accepted definition of 'sustainable development' is 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations (UN) has recognised three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.<sup>4</sup>

1.9 The international community has undertaken a series of conferences on these issues over past decades, including the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) and the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (the Rio+20 Summit).<sup>5</sup> It was agreed at the Rio+20 Summit to establish the SDGs.<sup>6</sup> The SDGs were developed to progress the global momentum on sustainable development policy and to replace and build on the eight anti-poverty UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which ceased in 2015.<sup>7</sup>

## **Establishment of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda**

1.10 The international community undertook the 'largest consultation programme in UN history' to develop the SDGs.<sup>8</sup> This involved many actors, including a UN System Task Team, a High-level Panel established by the UN Secretary-General, and an Open Working Group with a mandate from the Rio+20.<sup>9</sup> In addition, 'extensive public consultations about the post-2015 development agenda' were undertaken by the UN, including through the 'My World' survey.<sup>10</sup> The SDGs and associated targets are:

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- 3 Adopted from the Brundtland Report in the 1987 United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141, Attachment 1*, p. 3.
  - 4 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Resolution 70/1*. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015.
  - 5 Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The age of sustainable development*, Columbia University Press, 2015, pp. 7, 481; UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 4.
  - 6 Jon Lunn, Emma Downing and Lorna Booth, *The Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda*, House of Commons Library, briefing paper no. 7291, September 2015, p. 7.
  - 7 For more information on the MDGs see: UN, *Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2015* <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml> (accessed 15 August 2018).
  - 8 CSIRO, *Submission 85*, p. 5.
  - 9 Lunn et al, *The SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda*, p. 3.
  - 10 Lunn et al, *The SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda*, p. 6; UN, 'My World', <http://vote.myworld2015.org/> (accessed 24 April 2018).

...the result of over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world, which paid particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable.<sup>11</sup>

1.11 The Australian Government and civil society contributed to the development of the SDGs. Australia's first Voluntary National Review notes that Australia:

...strongly supported the establishment of new standalone goals for economic growth (SDG8), peace and good governance (SDG16) and oceans (SDG14), as well as keeping gender equality as a central contributor through its own goal (SDG5).<sup>12</sup>

1.12 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) was 'actively engaged in more than two years of consultations and negotiations to shape the 2030 Agenda and to ensure that the issues the 2030 Agenda covers align with Australia's national interests and the challenges faced in our region'.<sup>13</sup>

1.13 On 25 September 2015 all 193 UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).<sup>14</sup> The 2030 Agenda comprises the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (Addis Agenda). DFAT explained:

The seventeen SDGs provide a roadmap for addressing global development challenges to 2030 and beyond ('the what'), and the Addis Agenda provides a global framework for financing sustainable development that aligns financing flows and priorities with the SDGs ('the how')...<sup>15</sup>

### ***International review process***

1.14 The UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development is the central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. A core feature of the HLPF is the presentation of voluntary national reviews (VNRs) by member states on their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.<sup>16</sup>

1.15 The HLPF also includes an annual international thematic review of progress. The 2018 topic was 'transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies', and in 2019 the topic will be 'empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'. The Secretary-General also prepares an annual progress report on the SDGs based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level.<sup>17</sup> In 2019, the quadrennial *Global Sustainable Development Report* will also be presented, which is drafted by

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11 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 3.

12 Australian Government, *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 7.

13 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

14 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

15 *Submission 60*, p. 3.

16 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 34.

17 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, pp. 33–34.

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independent experts and intended to provide evidence to inform the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>18</sup>

1.16 While the MDGs were focused on developing countries, the 2030 Agenda is 'accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities'.<sup>19</sup> DFAT reiterated that 'each country's approach to implementing the SDGs is shaped by its own national context and priorities'.<sup>20</sup> The SDGs officially came into force on 1 January 2016. They are listed on the following two pages.

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18 HLPF 2019, <http://sdg.iisd.org/events/high-level-political-forum-on-sustainable-development-hlpf-2019/> (accessed 27 September 2018).

19 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 3.

20 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Source: UN Department of Public Information, *Sustainable Development Goals: Guidelines for the use of the SDG logo, including the colour wheel, and 17 icons*, December 2017, p. 48

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## Sustainable Development Goals

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts\*<sup>21</sup>
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

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21 \* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

### *Supporting targets and indicators*

1.17 The SDGs are accompanied by 169 targets. Some targets are relatively specific, such as reducing the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030 (target 3.1). Other targets are more general, for example:

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate (target 5.4).

### *Indicators*

1.18 The 2030 Agenda established that the SDG goals and targets will be followed up and reviewed using a set of global indicators.<sup>22</sup> A global indicator framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators and agreed in 2017.<sup>23</sup> The indicator framework includes 232 individual indicators.<sup>24</sup> These are more detailed than the targets, for example, target 3.1 is supported by the following indicators:

- 3.1.1 maternal mortality ratio; and
- 3.1.2 proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel.

1.19 Target 5.4 is supported by indicator 5.4.1 (proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location).

1.20 The indicators have been grouped into three tiers. As of 31 December 2018, Tier I included the 101 indicators that have an internationally established methodology and are supported by relevant data that is regularly produced by countries. The 84 Tier II indicators have an internationally established methodology, but data are not regularly produced by countries. The 41 Tier III indicators are not yet supported by internationally established methodology or standards.<sup>25</sup>

1.21 The indicator framework is 'a voluntary and country-led instrument' that is 'complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels, which will be

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22 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 32.

23 UN, *Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Resolution 71/313*, p. 2.

24 The indicator framework lists 244 indicators, however, nine of these are repeated under two or three targets, so there are 232 unique indicators. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, (UN DESA) *SDG Indicators*, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/> (accessed 28 November 2018).

25 Six indicators have components split across multiple tier classifications. UN DESA, Tier Classification for Global SDG Indicators, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/tier-classification/> (accessed 7 January 2018); Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*, DFAT, 2018, p. 7.

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developed by Member States'.<sup>26</sup> The global indicators are to be refined annually and reviewed comprehensively by the UN Statistical Commission in 2020 and 2025.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Principles underpinning the 2030 Agenda and SDGs***

1.22 The preamble to the 2030 Agenda includes what are referred to as the '5Ps', the five interlinked and integrated areas for action:

- **People**  
We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.
- **Planet**  
We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.
- **Prosperity**  
We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.
- **Peace**  
We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.
- **Partnership**  
We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focussed in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the participation of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.<sup>28</sup>

1.23 Another key aspect of the 2030 Agenda set out in the preamble is the pledge 'that no one will be left behind'.<sup>29</sup> The 2030 Agenda also reaffirms a range of existing international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.<sup>30</sup>

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26 UN, *Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 2.

27 International Women's Development Agency, *Submission 98*, p. 10.

28 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 2.

29 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 1.

30 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, pp. 7–8.

## Addis Ababa Action Agenda

1.24 The Addis Agenda is the 'financing framework for sustainable development'.<sup>31</sup>  
It:

...supports, complements and helps to contextualize the 2030 Agenda's means of implementation targets. It relates to domestic public resources, domestic and international private business and finance, international development cooperation, international trade as an engine for development, debt and debt sustainability, addressing systemic issues and science, technology, innovation and capacity-building, and data, monitoring and follow-up.<sup>32</sup>

1.25 DFAT summarised the key action areas in the Addis Agenda as follows:

### *Domestic public resources*

- Mobilise domestic resources including remittance flows and tax
- Improve transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of tax systems
- Scale up international tax cooperation

### *Domestic and international private business and finance*

- Build dynamic private sectors
- Promote financial inclusion
- Reduce costs of remittances

### *International development cooperation*

- Find new ways to attract both public and private sources of financing for development
- Modernise forms of cooperation
- Promote foreign direct investment

### *International trade as an engine for development*

- Ensure trade expansion benefits developing countries
- Strengthen regional economic integration and interconnectivity
- Utilising Aid-for-trade

### *Debt and debt sustainability*

- Strengthen macroeconomic and public resource management
- Coordinate policies to foster debt financing, debt relief, debt restructuring and debt management

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31 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 16.

32 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 28.

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*Address systemic issues*

- Strengthen international coordination and policy coherence to enhance global financial and macroeconomic stability

*Science, technology, innovation and capacity-building*

- Investing in multi-stakeholder partnerships
- Invest in infrastructure and public services.<sup>33</sup>

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33 DFAT, *Financing the Sustainable Development Goals*, <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/2030-agenda/Pages/financing-the-sustainable-development-goals.aspx> (accessed 24 April 2018); UN, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)*—*Resolution 69/313*, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2015.



# Chapter 2

## Benefits, opportunities and costs for Australia

2.1 Australia adopted the 2030 Agenda in 2015 along with the other UN member states.<sup>1</sup> This chapter first summarises the evidence received about how the SDGs align with Australian values and then presents the evidence on the potential benefits of fully implementing the SDGs in Australia, including ensuring no one would be 'left behind' or miss out on social, environmental and economic developments. The committee heard that other possible benefits include greater scope for domestic policy planning, coherence, accountability and cross-sector collaboration. Submissions also identified that domestic implementation could enhance Australia's international reputation, and create a range of business opportunities. Some suggested that the possible costs may include the financial costs of implementation, risks to unsustainable businesses, increased reporting requirements and concerns regarding Australia's sovereignty.

### Alignment with Australian values

2.2 The Australian Government and civil society contributed to the development of the SDGs, including supporting the inclusion of gender equality as a separate goal.<sup>2</sup> Submissions agreed that the SDGs are aligned with Australian values and overlap with activities that are already being undertaken domestically. For example, the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) suggested that the 'core message of the SDGs aligns with established values of the Australian community' including cooperation, a fair go, being a good neighbour and gender equality.<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) stated that Australia's commitment to achieving the SDGs:

...is a demonstration of our true national values. Only the branding name of the SDGs is new for Australia. All 17 SDGs, and many of their 169 targets, relate to issues on which Australian governments and organisations are already working.<sup>4</sup>

2.3 In a 2018 speech, Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, then Minister for International Development and the Pacific, reiterated that 'because the SDGs are so consistent with our national values, many of the priorities we are pursuing form part and parcel of the Australian Government's agenda both here and abroad'.<sup>5</sup> Mr Chris Tinning, First Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), said that 'the SDGs are not new in terms of the substance: we have done health,

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1 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), *Submission 60*, p. 3.

2 Australian Government, *Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2018, p. 7.

3 *Submission 98*, p. 4. See also Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 45.

4 *Submission 47*, pp. 4–5.

5 'Keynote Address: 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit', *Speech*, Melbourne, 13 March 2018.

education and agriculture for a long time'.<sup>6</sup> These views were repeated in Australia's first voluntary national review (VNR), which highlighted:

The SDGs reflect things that Australians value highly and seek to protect, like a clean and safe environment, access to opportunity and services, human rights, strong and accessible institutions, inclusive economies, diverse and supportive communities and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage. Our support for political, economic, social and religious freedoms is underpinned by our commitment to promote liberal democracy, the rule of law and the rules-based international order.<sup>7</sup>

2.4 It further stated that the SDGs:

...are consistent with Australian Government priorities and long-standing efforts across a range of sectors such as health, education, agriculture, water, the environment, the economy, and gender equality. Likewise, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda's emphasis on issues like domestic resource mobilisation, trade as an engine for growth, and the importance of investment in infrastructure and public services are in line with Australia's approach to driving growth and prosperity at home and abroad.<sup>8</sup>

2.5 Some non-government submissions also noted examples of alignment, such as Oxfam Australia, which stated:

There are a number of areas where Australia's domestic policies and international aid program[s] are already delivering great impact against the SDG, such as in promoting gender equality (including reducing violence against woman and girls); disability inclusion; disaster preparedness and resilience; leadership (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women), governance and accountability; water and sanitation; and responding to humanitarian crises.<sup>9</sup>

2.6 Some submissions also identified linkages between the 2030 Agenda and issues of importance for Indigenous peoples.<sup>10</sup> The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples identified several examples of Indigenous peoples contributing to the SDGs internationally and in Australia, including the Kimberley Land Council, which is described as an exciting example of first peoples' environmental protection.<sup>11</sup>

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

7 *Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2018, p. 6, [original emphasis removed].

8 *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 6, [original emphasis removed].

9 *Submission 18*, p. 4.

10 National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 20 December 2018), [p. 2]; Aunty Ruby Sims and Ms Donnell Davis, *Submission 153*.

11 National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 20 December 2018), [p. 2].

## Potential benefits

### *No one left behind*

2.7 A key aspect of the 2030 Agenda is the pledge 'that no one will be left behind'.<sup>12</sup> Many submissions agreed that a benefit of implementing the SDGs in Australia would be an improvement in the understanding, inclusion and responses to people and groups identified as disadvantaged in our community. For example, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) stated:

The SDGs provide a significant opportunity for government, business and civil society to align their efforts to achieve better human rights outcomes for all Australians. This includes by focusing on measures to address existing inequalities in Australia—be they on the basis of gender, race, indigenous status, geographical location or other status.<sup>13</sup>

2.8 The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) warned 'progress on the SDGs is not uniform across Australian society, and without corrective action we will fail on the SDGs' core principle of leaving no one behind'.<sup>14</sup> It argued:

To achieve the SDGs' vision of ending poverty and injustice for all, we need to accelerate efforts to reach those who are hardest to reach – such as people with disabilities or indigenous populations, for example – and those with intersecting forms of disadvantage.<sup>15</sup>

### *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*

2.9 Australia's first VNR stated that though 'there is no SDG specific to indigenous peoples, all 17 SDGs are significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'.<sup>16</sup> The City of Melbourne identified that 'Indigenous peoples globally are most affected by lack of progress on the SDGs'.<sup>17</sup> The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth Australia/Pacific suggested that implementing the SDGs relating to good health and well-being, quality education, reducing inequalities and peace, justice and strong institutions could be of particular importance for young Indigenous Australians.<sup>18</sup>

### *People with disability*

2.10 Some submissions highlighted that people with disability can also benefit from the implementation of the SDGs. For example, Children and Young People with Disability Australia and Disabled People's Organisations Australia noted:

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

13 *Submission 138*, p. 7.

14 *Submission 135*, p. 7.

15 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 11.

16 Australian Government, *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 7.

17 City of Melbourne, *Submission 68*, p. 3.

18 *Submission 141*, pp. 4–7.

People with disability are explicitly referred to in the targets of seven of the SDGs and all 17 goals are of relevance. For the majority of the SDGs, people with disability are disproportionately affected by the disadvantage that the goals aim to eliminate including poverty, poor health outcomes and less access to education.<sup>19</sup>

#### 2.11 CBM Australia stated:

Although Australia's political leadership has shifted over the past decade, its political commitment to disability-inclusive development has been unwavering....This legacy should continue to spur action in solidarity with people with disabilities over the life of the SDGs.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Young people*

2.12 A number of submissions also emphasised that implementing the SDGs could have particular benefits for young people. SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific identified how implementation of the SDGs can benefit young people by addressing issues including:

- poverty, hunger and employment (Goals 1, 2, 8)
- access to quality education (Goal 4)
- gender and social inequalities (Goals 5 and 10)
- energy affordability and economic growth (Goals 7 and 8).<sup>21</sup>

2.13 Mr Clinton Moore, former Local Pathways Fellow and current Vice-President, Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH) Australia, explained that the domestic implementation of the SDGs can empower 'young people to develop a greater sense of ownership and change within their communities and across the country'.<sup>22</sup> This aligns with the 2030 Agenda, which described children and young people as 'critical agents of change' who 'will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world'.<sup>23</sup>

#### ***Overarching benefits***

2.14 The 2030 Agenda sets out a vision of sustainable development that includes an end to 'poverty, hunger, disease and want'; 'universal respect for human rights and human dignity'; and 'sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all'.<sup>24</sup> Forrest Primary School student Miles Maguire reflected:

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19 *Submission 136*, p. 1.

20 *Submission 93*, p. 9.

21 *Submission 141*, pp. 4–7.

22 *Submission 78*, p. 4.

23 UN, *Transforming our world*, p. 12.

24 *Transforming our world*, pp. 3–4.

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The SDGs are hope. They are a shining beacon for a world with more equality, less poverty and a healthier environment. The SDGs have made us realise we are not helpless.<sup>25</sup>

2.15 The majority of submissions agreed that implementing the SDGs in Australia would bring broad benefits. World Vision Australia stated it will make Australia 'more prosperous, fair and sustainable'.<sup>26</sup> UNAA elaborated:

Realising the SDGs by developing and implementing policies and programs to tackle inequality, injustice, climate change and boosting resilience to natural disasters contributes to Australia's economic prosperity, stability, accountability and sustainability...In addition to providing sustainable solutions for the future, the SDGs also address climactic threats...<sup>27</sup>

2.16 The Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society agreed:

Benefits around participating in a global response to the SDGs in mitigating and avoiding dangerous levels of climate change to reduce Australia's vulnerability to higher possible increases in extreme weather in the future would be of extreme benefit to Australia.<sup>28</sup>

2.17 Sustainability consultants One Stone Advisors also argued that implementing the SDGs would have direct benefits for Australians 'in the form of costs avoided, wellbeing and prosperity', and suggested:

Investing in the goals is investing in prosperity, wellbeing, and sustainability for all Australians—it is about putting the long-term common good above short-term gains and vocal interest groups in return for social cohesion (e.g. reduced inequalities), intergenerational equity, future economic growth, and better management of issues (e.g. in line with UN Sendai agreement [for Disaster Risk Reduction]) that can undermine these.<sup>29</sup>

2.18 Some submissions estimated how achieving particular goals and targets could benefit Australia more specifically, such as target 3.6 in relation to road safety:

Achieving the SDG target in Australia by 2020 would have saved more than 600 lives a year, reduce more than 20,000 personal injuries that include brain injury, quadriplegia and limb fractures and save an estimated \$15 billion annually in financial and economic costs to the health, social welfare, corporate and insurance sectors on top of the personal impact to families and friends.<sup>30</sup>

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25 *Submission 163*, p. 8. See also *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 2.

26 *Submission 25*, p. 10.

27 *Submission 47*, p. 4.

28 *Submission 80*, [p. 1].

29 *Submission 90*, pp. 3–4.

30 Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission 160*, p. 3.

### ***Long term national planning***

2.19 A number of submissions highlighted how Australia can improve decision-making by adopting the SDGs as a framework for long-term planning. For example, Mr Cameron Allen, Professor Graciela Metternicht and Associate Professor Thomas Wiedmann argued that 'there is very little long-term planning for the implementation of sustainable development in Australia', and Australia:

...lacks a national vision or long-term strategy document, as is the case in many other countries. Limited effort has been made to stimulate a cross-sectoral, national dialogue on where Australia is heading, and where we want to be as a country by 2030 or 2050...Regular coverage and analysis of Australia's progress is dominated by discourse on a small set of economic indicators such as growth in gross domestic product and unemployment and inflation figures, and the daily movement of financial markets, rather than the quality of life, wellbeing and living standards of Australians.<sup>31</sup>

2.20 They suggested that the SDGs could address some of these issues and 'present a considerable opportunity for advancing Australia's agenda for sustainable growth at the domestic level'.<sup>32</sup> Mr Allen added that the SDGs are:

...really about focusing resources where they're most needed to address the real priorities that are there for Australia—they could be economic, environmental or social. It's really a framework about allocating resources more effectively in areas that are a greater priority for the country, or the world, rather than becoming a burden.<sup>33</sup>

2.21 The Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI) similarly suggested that the SDGs:

...provide a process for decision-making that explicitly references economic, social, environmental and governance factors. This can help improve the decision making process by broadening the scope of issues that decision makers reference and expanding the range of options that they consider. They can also assist policy makers to focus on longer-term issues that go beyond short term political and business cycles.<sup>34</sup>

2.22 Professor John Thwaites, Chair of MSDI, told the committee that the SDGs:

...are a great opportunity for government, business and Australia to set some midterm goals and to have a common vision that we can work towards across the country and across the political divide, because both parties have committed to this.<sup>35</sup>

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31 *Submission 17*, p. 3.

32 *Submission 17*, p. 3.

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

34 *Submission 121*, [p. 3].

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

### *Domestic policy coherence*

2.23 Many submissions shared the view that adopting the SDGs as a planning tool would be useful for ensuring policy consistency not only over time but also between different policy domains.<sup>36</sup> For example, SDSN Australia/Pacific described the SDGs as a framework for 'helping us understand and address the interlinkages between the social, environmental and economic dimensions of the challenges facing us'.<sup>37</sup> CSIRO agreed that a major purpose of the SDGs is 'to obtain better policy coherence among the achievement of the many diverse aspects of global sustainability and human wellbeing'.<sup>38</sup> It outlined how the SDGs are interconnected, stating:

Interactions among the SDGs are likely to be non-linear but may be positive (i.e. synergies) or negative (i.e. trade-offs) (e.g. Schmidt et al. 2017). How to assess and manage these cumulative impacts, within and between industry sectors, remains a major gap, both technically and also from a governance perspective. In essence, understanding synergies holds out the prospect of accelerating delivery and achieving global outcomes at a significantly lower cost through thoughtful coordination of otherwise fragmented action, and identifying trade-offs potentially enables conflicts among goals to be managed before they become institutionalised.<sup>39</sup>

2.24 ACFID noted that:

Governance mechanisms for the SDGs should be carefully designed to enable greater policy coherence across different departments and levels of government. Given the interconnected nature of the 17 goals, lack of progress in one area has the potential to undermine the whole. Implementing the 2030 Agenda will entail breaking down traditional silos for more cross-sectoral decision-making solutions. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda can be a catalyst for a renewed effort to promote policy coherence. The SDGs provide a common framework against which to test policies from different areas of government, to ensure efforts made in one area are not undermined by another.<sup>40</sup>

2.25 It identified examples of current policy inconsistency, asserting that:

...the Australian Government's new defence export strategy demonstrates the potential for disconnect between policies from different areas of government. The strategy starkly contradicts the Foreign Minister's and

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36 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, pp. 3–4.

37 *Submission 55*, p. 3. See also Ms Alice Ridge, Acting Director of Policy and Advocacy, ACFID, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 52.

38 *Submission 85*, p. 5.

39 *Submission 85*, p. 14. See also International Council for Science, *A Guide to SDG Interactions: from Science to Implementation*, D.J. Griggs, M. Nilsson, A. Stevance, D. McCollum (eds), International Council for Science, Paris, 2017.

40 *Submission 135*, p. 7. See also Centre for Policy Development (CPD), *Submission 129*, [pp. 2, 7]; Mr Lachlan Hunter, National Executive Director of UNAA, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 6.

Defence Minister's declarations of support for the Women, Peace and Security agenda, which urge international actors to consider the gendered differences inherent in conflict when developing peacebuilding solutions.<sup>41</sup>

2.26 Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand raised the issue of policy coherence across trade agreements and anti-poverty efforts, suggesting that:

Australia should approach and negotiate all regional trade agreements in line with the SDGs framework to achieve policy coherence, and enable proposed agreements to achieve maximum benefit and minimum harm for developing country producers.<sup>42</sup>

2.27 The recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) review of Australian aid found a lack of convergence between the 2030 Agenda and Australia's development objectives and 'a range of policy positions related to finance, environment and security'.<sup>43</sup> The review identified examples of policy coherence issues, including the high cost of sending remittances, 'tax breaks to the coal industry', coal exports, and the commitment to increase weapons exports.<sup>44</sup>

2.28 Some submissions, such as the City of Sydney, also suggested that the SDGs can improve consistency between the policies of federal, state, territory and local governments.<sup>45</sup> It identified 'an extraordinary opportunity arising from the framework provided by the SDG to ensure policy alignment across all levels of government, particularly when it includes the adoption of ambitious but yet achievable targets'.<sup>46</sup>

2.29 Some submissions identified international examples, for example:

Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands have successfully established institutional mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for development. In Sweden, the government produces a regular report on policy coherence which is scrutinised by a civil society platform. The experience suggests that regular government reporting, combined with strong civil society accountability mechanisms are crucial for effective policy coherence.<sup>47</sup>

### ***Accountability***

2.30 The committee heard that the SDGs 'provide a powerful tool for assessing Australia's progress across a comprehensive range of objectives and benchmarks that are important for a modern, sustainable society'.<sup>48</sup> Despite the many goals, targets and indicators associated with the SDGs, the Department of the Environment and Energy

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41 *Submission 135*, pp. 7–8

42 *Submission 63*, [p. 3].

43 OECD, *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Australia 2018*, p. 30.

44 OECD, *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Australia 2018*, p. 31.

45 *Submission 54*, p. 5.

46 *Submission 54*, p. 6.

47 Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand, *Submission 63*, [p. 2].

48 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 3.

(DoEE) noted that the 2030 Agenda provides 'a much simpler framework to track and benchmark national performance against core sustainable development issues' compared to some previous sustainability frameworks.<sup>49</sup>

2.31 Other submissions agreed that the SDGs and associated targets and indicators provide a framework for 'focussing action by providing a transparent and accountable way to track progress and identify and highlight areas [where] we are not performing well'.<sup>50</sup> The City of Sydney reiterated that 'the setting of ambitious yet attainable targets is crucial to achieving outcomes', and noted that '[c]omparative performance assessment also becomes possible between cities and countries when an internationally agreed framework is in place', such as the SDGs.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Cross-sectoral approach to sustainable development***

2.32 According to Monash University, numerous studies have suggested that 'Australia performs very poorly on measures of collaboration between the business, community, academia and government sectors'.<sup>52</sup> The committee heard that the SDGs were developed through 'a very consultative process, including business' and 'have incredible buy-in around the world'.<sup>53</sup>

2.33 Many submissions shared the view that implementing the SDGs domestically would have the benefit of mobilising different sectors to contribute to sustainable development consistently and collaboratively. The University of Sydney noted:

The SDGs provide a unique opportunity to take an interdisciplinary, cross-sector approach to solving big complex challenges, such as poverty eradication, gender inequality, food and nutrition insecurity, disease outbreaks, natural resources management and environmental degradation.<sup>54</sup>

2.34 SDSN Australia/Pacific described the SDGs as:

...a huge opportunity to mobilise new attention, partnerships and actions to address these often intractable issues...the SDGs provide a common vision that is supported by all world governments and also resonates with and inspires people across different countries and sectors.<sup>55</sup>

2.35 Australia's first VNR observed that the SDGs 'present a new lens through which organisations can approach their strategic planning, projects, programs and a

49 *Submission 115*, p. 5.

50 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 3. See also MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 3].

51 *Submission 54*, p. 6.

52 *Submission 120*, p. 3. They referred to the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science Australia, *Australia 2030: Prosperity through Innovation*, 2018.

53 Ms Andrea Spencer-Cooke, Partner at One Stone Advisors, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 1.

54 *Submission 52*, p. 4.

55 *Submission 55*, pp. 2–3. See also Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA), *Submission 131*, [p. 1]; Monash Sustainable Development Institute, *Submission 121*, [p. 4].

recognisable global platform to guide collaboration with others'.<sup>56</sup> The Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA) similarly stated that the SDGs:

...provide a simple, yet comprehensive framework to communicate significant global issues that must be addressed, and they provide a catalyst for society and business to start to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with their implementation.<sup>57</sup>

2.36 Mr Moore, former Local Pathways Fellow and current Vice-President of EAROPH Australia, also highlighted the value of the SDGs in 'developing a common language, framework, and understanding of sustainable development across tiers of government, civil society, business, and the broader community'.<sup>58</sup>

### ***International relations and reputational benefits***

2.37 The internationally-agreed SDGs will be 'a global reference point from here till 2030'.<sup>59</sup> Professor Rod Glover noted that Australia's performance against the SDGs is going to be the subject of international conversations throughout this period.<sup>60</sup> The committee heard implementing the SDGs in Australia could improve its relationships with other nations. For example, UnitingCare Australia argued that in honouring its commitment to the SDGs, Australia 'strengthens its credentials as an international citizen, and models behaviour that produces global benefits—respect for an international, rules-based system'.<sup>61</sup> One Stone Advisors similarly noted '[b]eing an SDG leader and role model has positive geopolitical knock-on effects for stability and cooperation in the Pacific region'.<sup>62</sup>

2.38 The Institute for Human Security and Social Change at La Trobe University suggested that another benefit of domestic implementation is that it encourages regional consistency and consideration of how Australia's 'domestic policies impact on the ability of other countries to achieve the SDGs, and vice-versa'.<sup>63</sup> For example:

...how issues of immigration, refugee and indigenous rights, trade treaties and climate change are treated domestically effect in important ways the soft power, legitimacy and influence Australia takes into its international relations and its voice in fora such as ASEAN and the United Nations.<sup>64</sup>

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56 *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 14.

57 *Submission 130*, [p. 4].

58 *Submission 78*, p. 4.

59 Professor Rod Glover, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 15.

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

61 *Submission 94*, p. 1.

62 *Submission 90*, p. 1.

63 *Submission 77*, p. 2.

64 *Submission 77*, p. 2.

2.39 Strategic Sustainability Consultants cautioned that not adhering to the SDGs 'may damage our reputation internationally and strain our relationships with both our neighbours and our allies'.<sup>65</sup> UNAA argued:

If Australia wishes to remain prosperous, advance the rules-based international order and maintain its soft power as a good international citizen, we will need to demonstrate a more serious commitment to the SDGs than at present.<sup>66</sup>

2.40 It warned:

...Australia's commitment and leadership will not be taken seriously if it cannot demonstrate its international commitments domestically. In recent years Australia has been criticised for its failure to adhere domestically to some international norms, and Australia's decline since 2015 in meeting the SDGs brings into question its commitment to achievement domestically.<sup>67</sup>

2.41 Geoscience Australia also indicated that engagement with the SDGs as a shared global approach can ensure that Australia's data collection and reporting methods remain technically in-step with international approaches and best practice.<sup>68</sup>

2.42 This section has outlined evidence received on the possible benefits of the SDGs, including sustainable development, policy coherence and reputational benefits. The committee also received a substantial amount of evidence on the possible benefits of the SDGs to business, summarised in the following section.

### **Potential business opportunities**

2.43 Australia's first VNR stated that achieving the SDGs 'is in Australia's interests: it will contribute to lasting regional and global prosperity, productivity and stability'.<sup>69</sup> Many submissions identified economic benefits and possible business opportunities related to the SDGs, such as the Australian Council of Superannuation Investors, which considered that:

The implementation of the SDGs represents an opportunity to create long-term value by encouraging sustainable economic growth, and provides Australian investors with a framework for assessing investment risk and opportunity.<sup>70</sup>

2.44 The 2015 SDG Compass is an international, 'step-by-step guide for businesses to align their strategies with the SDGs and measure and manage their impacts'.<sup>71</sup> The

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65 *Submission 50*, p. 2.

66 *Submission 47*, p. 4.

67 *Submission 47*, p. 4.

68 *Submission 74*, [p. 10].

69 *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 6.

70 *Submission 92*, [p. 1].

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

following sections list possible benefits to businesses as identified in the SDG Compass report and submissions to this inquiry.

### ***Identifying future business opportunities***

2.45 The SDG Compass report stated:

The SDGs aim to redirect global public and private investment flows towards the challenges they represent. In doing so they define growing markets for companies that can deliver innovative solutions and transformative change.<sup>72</sup>

2.46 A number of submissions also argued that the SDGs open up new market opportunities, domestic and international collaboration and trade.<sup>73</sup> Professor Glover suggested that the SDGs promote a different way of thinking and encourage entities to take a broader view 'that is helping businesses and organisations in their strategy planning'.<sup>74</sup> He noted that the 'longer term perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals enables businesses and organisations to see possibilities that might not be there from a shorter term lens'.<sup>75</sup>

2.47 The Centre for Policy Development (CPD) described potential opportunities related to the SDGs:

The massive investment gaps that need to be filled to deliver the SDGs are well known, and the funds being mobilised in this effort—while well short of what is needed to achieve the goals—are already creating significant momentum and opportunities...The SDGs have a vital role to play in this context, for example by helping to provide market clarity on sustainability standards and by underpinning specific innovations like SDG-linked bonds.<sup>76</sup>

2.48 Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA) described the SDGs as a 'compass pointing to new market opportunities worth trillions of dollars'.<sup>77</sup> Many submissions cited the Business and Sustainable Development Commission report's estimation that achieving the SDGs opens up \$12 trillion of opportunity from food, cities, energy and health sectors.<sup>78</sup> That report further noted:

The total economic prize from implementing the Global Goals could be 2–3 times bigger, assuming that the benefits are captured across the whole

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72 Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the UN Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), *SDG Compass: The guide for business action on the SDGs*, 2015, p. 4. See also BCSDA, *Submission 48*, [p. 4].

73 See, for example, UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 5; Impact Investing Australia, *Submission 88*, p. 1.

74 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, pp. 9–10.

75 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 10.

76 *Submission 129*, [p. 8].

77 *Submission 131*, [p. 1].

78 Business and Sustainable Development Commission, *Better Business, Better World*, January 2017, p. 12. See, for example, GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 5]; CSIRO, *Submission 85*, p. 12.

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economy and accompanied by much higher labour and resource productivity.<sup>79</sup>

2.49 Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand reasoned that 'contributing towards the SDGs represents real opportunities for business develop[ment] solutions and if only some of that \$12 trillion of market opportunities is in Australia, this is still significant'.<sup>80</sup> RIAA also cited the report, and highlighted that 'these market opportunities, if realised, also promise significant job creation'.<sup>81</sup> Referring to the same report, CSIRO stated:

...the SDGs are, and will continue to be, the principal driver and framework for development and international investment (in the order of US\$4 trillion per year) by government, industry and non-government organisations over their 15-year implementation time frame.<sup>82</sup>

2.50 Mr Andrew Petersen, Chief Executive Officer of the Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia (BCSDA), explained that the goals 'have the potential to unleash innovation, economic growth and development at an unprecedented scale', including generating up to 380 million jobs by 2030.<sup>83</sup> PwC also noted '[g]rowth opportunities which are significant in products and services that address the SDG challenges'.<sup>84</sup>

### *Enhancing the value of sustainable business practices*

2.51 Another benefit identified in the SDG Compass report is that:

Whilst the business case for corporate sustainability is already well established, the SDGs may for example strengthen the economic incentives for companies to use resources more efficiently, or to switch to more sustainable alternatives, as externalities become increasingly internalised.<sup>85</sup>

2.52 RIAA similarly predicted:

A significant proportion of currently external costs such as environmental damage or social upheaval might at some point in the future be forced into companies' accounts. The SDGs provide a clear risk framework for both companies and investors.<sup>86</sup>

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79 *Better Business, Better World*, January 2017, p. 13.

80 *Submission 43*, p. 3.

81 *Submission 131*, [p. 5].

82 *Submission 85*, p. 12.

83 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 24.

84 *Submission 30*, [p. 5], [original emphasis removed].

85 *SDG Compass: The guide for business action on the SDGs*, 2015, p. 4.

86 *Submission 131*, [p. 7]. See also UN Principles for Responsible Investment and pwc, *The SDG Investment Case*, Finance UNEP Initiative and UN Global Compact, October 2017, p. 7.

2.53 RIAA suggested that '[r]esponsible investment is increasingly being considered part of investors' fiduciary duty to their beneficiaries and clients'.<sup>87</sup> CPD agreed that businesses are increasingly expected to manage sustainability-related risks, citing the example of recent legal opinions concluding that company directors who fail to consider climate-related risks and opportunities could be exposed to personal liability for breach of duty.<sup>88</sup> CPD indicated this could extend 'to other sustainability-related risks and opportunities, to the extent that they have foreseeable, material impacts on a company's interests'.<sup>89</sup> It stated:

...the SDGs can assist by providing organisations with a framework for improving sustainability-related risk assessment, target setting and disclosure. This can help them meet public, investor and regulator expectations for more sophisticated sustainability risk management and governance. Increasingly, these risks are seen as core business issues rather than separate environmental, social or governance concerns.<sup>90</sup>

2.54 The CPD detailed that 'the SDGs are beginning to inform best-practice approaches to understanding climate-related risks and their connections to other sustainability issues—particularly in the area of scenario analysis'.<sup>91</sup> It noted that aspects of the SDGs are being incorporated into climate-related scenarios used by private sector actors and regulators, such as the Sustainable Development Scenario published by the International Energy Agency.<sup>92</sup>

#### ***Strengthening stakeholder relations and keeping the pace with policy developments***

2.55 A third benefit identified in the SDG Compass report is that businesses 'that align their priorities with the SDGs can strengthen engagement of customers, employees and other stakeholders'.<sup>93</sup> RIAA stated that '[c]onsumers are becoming more active in demanding their money be invested ethically and responsibly'.<sup>94</sup> It also identified that 'a chorus [is emerging] within big business for companies to embrace a social purpose that extends beyond financial profits'.<sup>95</sup> For example, several submissions highlighted that the Chairman of investment management firm BlackRock wrote to 1000 CEOs stating:

Society is demanding that companies, both public and private, serve a social purpose. To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver

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87 *Submission 131*, [p. 5].

88 *Submission 129*, [p. 3].

89 *Submission 129*, [p. 3].

90 CPD, *Submission 129*, [p. 2], [original emphasis removed].

91 *Submission 129*, [p. 4], [original emphasis removed].

92 CPD, *Submission 129*, [p. 4]. See also International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2017*, <https://www.iea.org/weo2017/#section-5> (accessed 22 May 2018).

93 *SDG Compass: The guide for business action on the SDGs*, 2015, p. 4.

94 *Submission 131*, [p. 5].

95 RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 6].

financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society. Companies must benefit all of their stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, and the communities in which they operate.<sup>96</sup>

2.56 BCSDA, the national peak body for support and advocacy for sustainable business activities, outlined how this results in reputational benefits and risks for businesses:

Companies that align themselves with the SDGs and are able to communicate clearly around how their business helps individual governments to achieve their goals, are likely to be able to consolidate a strong licence to operate and to differentiate themselves from competitors. Likewise, those that do not will be exposed to growing legal and reputational risks.<sup>97</sup>

2.57 CPD noted that 'the SDGs provide a ready-made framework for scanning for and responding to wider sustainability-related risks—including risks to social license'.<sup>98</sup> It suggested that the SDGs:

...can help inform organisations about where they are vulnerable to misalignment, and where they might be well placed—or even uniquely placed—to make a positive contribution. In this way they can help businesses develop, and communicate, a strategy for shoring up their social license and demonstrating their social value.<sup>99</sup>

2.58 Professor of Accounting Carol Adams agreed that businesses that 'set out to contribute to the SDGs through their mission and strategy stand to gain a competitive advantage in developing products, services and processes fit for future challenges'.<sup>100</sup> PwC also noted that the SDGs could facilitate businesses maintaining 'positive licence to operate by setting strategy that is in alignment with government priorities'.<sup>101</sup>

### ***Stabilizing societies and markets***

2.59 The SDG Compass report cautioned that:

Business cannot succeed in societies that fail. Investing in the achievement of the SDGs supports pillars of business success, including the existence of rules-based markets, transparent financial systems, and non-corrupt and well-governed institutions.<sup>102</sup>

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96 See, for example, RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 6]; GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 5]; Dr Jayne Meyer Tucker, *Submission 29, Attachment 1*, [p. 2].

97 Formerly known as Sustainable Business Australia, *Submission 48*, [p. 4]. See also GRI, UN Global Compact, WBCSD, *SDG Compass*, 2015, p. 4.

98 *Submission 129*, [p. 5], [original emphasis removed].

99 *Submission 129*, [p. 5].

100 *Submission 1*, p. 2.

101 *Submission 30*, [p. 5], [original emphasis removed].

102 GRI, UN Global Compact, WBCSD, *SDG Compass*, 2015, p. 4.

2.60 BCSDA also emphasised businesses' reliance on stable societies and markets:

...investing in the achievement of the SDGs supports stable societies and markets – the pillars upon which business success is built. As noted by Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, 'It is not possible to have a strong, functioning business in a world of increasing inequality, poverty and climate change'. Business has an inherent self-interest in the realization of the goals and stands to unlock trillions of dollars through new markets if they are achieved.<sup>103</sup>

*Using a common language and shared purpose*

2.61 The SDG Compass report described the SDGs as:

...a common framework of action and language that will help companies communicate more consistently and effectively with stakeholders about their impact and performance. The goals will help bring together synergistic partners to address the world's most urgent social challenges.<sup>104</sup>

2.62 The Shared Value Project concurred that:

The SDG provide the mechanism to focus and coordinate their shared value activities towards a set of common and collective goals. A unified reference point for strategy, implementation and communications ensures a meaningful impact, while providing the backdrop against which our Members can demonstrate leadership.<sup>105</sup>

2.63 Superannuation funds highlighted the communication benefits of the SDGs, such as the industry fund HESTA, which viewed the SDGs as 'a universal language and framework for engagement with different stakeholders about how we impact the environment and society through our investments and operations'.<sup>106</sup> It suggested the SDGs will enable it to:

(i) improve how we communicate and report to our members, as well as understanding and prioritising the issues they care about

(ii) help us to better measure and track the impacts, both positive and negative, that we have on society and help position our strategy according to our values

(iii) foster greater collaboration with peers and partners by aligning our priorities and values.<sup>107</sup>

2.64 Construction and Building Unions Superannuation (Cbus) similarly stated that the SDGs 'can help inform our long-term investment strategy, support investment

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103 *Submission 48*, [p. 4].

104 GRI, UN Global Compact, WBCSD, *SDG Compass*, 2015, p. 4.

105 *Submission 49*, p. 2.

106 *Submission 147*, [p. 2].

107 *Submission 147*, [p. 2].

returns and enable us to articulate the impact our investments will have on the broader economy, environment and the society in which our members work and retire'.<sup>108</sup>

### **Potential costs**

2.65 BCSDA noted that 'there has been no published national study of the potential costs, benefits and opportunities for Australia [o]n the domestic implementation of the SDGs'.<sup>109</sup> The inquiry did not receive many submissions considering the potential costs of implementing the SDGs for Australia. The following statement reflects the attitude towards the issue of costs expressed in many submissions:

The costs of not acting upon the SDGs will far outweigh the costs of acting now. If sustainable development challenges are left to fester unaddressed, Australia's social fabric, environment, and economy will suffer.<sup>110</sup>

2.66 The following sections summarise the possible costs of SDGs investment, risks to unsustainable businesses, additional reporting requirements, and possible impact on Australia's sovereignty of the SDGs.

### **Investment costs**

2.67 Mr Sam Hurley, Policy Director at the CPD, told the committee:

...even with the best will and commitment in the world from government and even with really effective interventions from government to target progress there will still be a very large gap in funding that we need to close to meet the SDG[s] globally, which means by implication that the money is an important contribution that we can make by leveraging investment from the private sector.<sup>111</sup>

2.68 Submissions including RIAA and Cbus noted that the UN Commission on Trade and Development has estimated that achieving the SDGs will require US\$5–7 trillion in investment each year from 2015–2030.<sup>112</sup> However, RIAA pointed out:

While this figure sounds significant, trillions of dollars are turned over in financial markets every day, reinforcing the potential and significant role that more responsible and strategic allocation of capital can play in ending poverty, combatting climate change and promoting sustainable economic growth.<sup>113</sup>

2.69 The international Business and Sustainable Development Commission stated in its 2017 report that:

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108 *Submission 139*, p. 1.

109 *Submission 48*, [p. 5].

110 Mr Moore, *Submission 78*, p. 4.

111 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 6.

112 RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 5]; Cbus, *Submission 139*, p. 3. See UN Commission on Trade and Development, *World Investment Report 2014: Investing in the SDGs: An action Plan*, overview, New York and Geneva, 2014, pp. x–xi.

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

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) values the total additional investment needed to achieve the Global Goals in all countries at US\$2.4 trillion a year, around 11 percent of annual global savings, with the lion's share—around US\$1.6 trillion—needed for infrastructure.<sup>114</sup>

2.70 The World Economic Forum similarly estimated \$4 trillion per annum of investment is needed, however, existing investment stands at \$1.4 trillion, therefore there is a gap of \$2.5 trillion.<sup>115</sup> GCNA stated that the funding gap 'will require innovative financial solutions, which can be business-led but will require regulatory backing and incentives in some areas'.<sup>116</sup>

2.71 Some submissions, such as AGL, identified investments that will be required to achieve the SDGs, stating:

...progress on many of the SDGs will require substantial investment in infrastructure in a range of sectors, including energy, transport, agriculture and water. Moreover, other SDGs that are focused more on social change will still require careful coordination with the private sector to ensure substantial progress.<sup>117</sup>

### ***Business costs***

2.72 Most evidence about costs to the inquiry focused on the overall costs of implementing the SDGs across the community. The committee also received some evidence indicating that there may be some localised costs for businesses.

### ***Implementing the SDGs***

2.73 The Shared Value Project stated that while its membership largely supported the SDGs, the 'main internal barriers to engagement were found to be lack of dedicated financial resourcing which brings into question the incentives and support required'.<sup>118</sup> Some other submissions echoed this, such as the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, which stated:

The most prevalent challenges for businesses looking to support the SDGs is the cost of implementation, making changes to their daily operating practices and the resources required to train staff. [Survey respondents] consider that implementing new technology to become more

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114 Business and Sustainable Development Commission, *Better Business, Better World*, January 2017, p. 68; G Schmidt-Traub, *Investment Needs to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals: Understanding the Billions and Trillions*, UN SDSN Working Paper Version 2, November 2015, p. 112.

115 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 5].

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

117 *Submission 56*, p. 11.

118 *Submission 49*, p. 3.

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environmentally responsible is too great of a burden for many of the SMEs in the industry.<sup>119</sup>

2.74 Volunteering Tasmania also identified the following implementation measures requiring expenditure:

Development of tools and resources to assist with the application of SDGs at the domestic level; [e]ducation and training on how to utilise the above-mentioned resources; and [a]wareness and promotion of the importance of the SDGs.<sup>120</sup>

2.75 Several witnesses explained to the committee that the SDGs should be understood as an opportunity for businesses, rather than a cost. For example, when asked about potential costs to businesses from implementing the SDGs, Mr Cameron Cross, Chief Executive Officer of uBegin said:

The way in which the question is framed seems to have a preface to it that the undertaking is something that we have to do and therefore it's some kind of burden. Where we're coming from is that it's actually an innovation and economic goldmine. If we look at it from that perspective, then the investment that would be going into business innovation would start to go into business innovations that are solving social and environmental challenges, which are social enterprises, and they're creating cost reductions by the very nature of the problems that they're solving.<sup>121</sup>

2.76 Ms Andrea Spencer-Cooke, Partner, One Stone Advisors, agreed:

It's the perception that sustainability is all about cost and not about benefit. It's been around for 30 years. We are starting to see actual studies that can demonstrate that those companies that invest in sustainability do better in the medium to long term. Part of the challenge is about time frames. We have a financial system and the share market that is extremely short-term focused. Sustainability is not short-term focused. It's about investing now for future prosperity. There is an innate challenge there, I agree...That said, with the sustainability leaders in the corporate sector that I work with, they are all saving money through sustainability. Sustainability is efficiency.<sup>122</sup>

2.77 Ms Kylie Porter, Executive Director, GCNA, said:

...when businesses are implementing activities with regard to the SDGs and, more broadly, responsible business practices, these provide genuine long-term savings for companies. They are operating in an environment where their risks are reduced, because they are operating responsible business models and, therefore, long term they can pass a lot of those cost reductions onto their consumers, if they are a consumer based business. We don't see the SDGs as bureaucratic or having red tape associated with them.

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119 *Submission 76*, p. 8.

120 *Submission 112*, p. 1.

121 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 6.

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

If anything, they probably alleviate a lot of that because they set a precedent for how to operate responsibly.<sup>123</sup>

### *Risks for unsustainable businesses*

2.78 The Business and Sustainable Development Commission noted '[m]oving business to a sustainable growth model will be disruptive, with big risks as well as opportunities at stake'.<sup>124</sup> Submissions also raised some concerns about the risks of transformational change, such as AustralianSuper, which stated:

Certain companies and sectors may not be well-placed to succeed in an economy focused on sustainable development. For example, carbon intensive and water intensive companies or sectors need to examine the reputational and transition risks associated with their long-term business models and adapt accordingly...These expectations represent both value-creation opportunities for industry leaders and risks for industry laggards, particularly given the likelihood that companies will be benchmarked against the SDG.<sup>125</sup>

2.79 Mr Phil Jones, science teacher, also identified some of the broader risks and benefits of change:

Phasing out of fossil fuel use and the adoption of renewable energy will cost the investment required for it. As a major fossil fuel exporter, this could come at a sizable cost. Restoring open cut coal mines will be an added cost. Some level of reduction in employment opportunities would also be lost. If mishandled the provision of unemployment benefits would be another cost. However, it is the long term cost that should be taken into consideration, keeping in mind the fact that the SDGs are meant to deal with our global ecological crisis.<sup>126</sup>

### *Reporting requirements*

2.80 A few submissions suggested that implementing the SDGs could impose additional reporting requirements on private and public sector organisations—unless reporting is aligned with existing processes.<sup>127</sup> The City of Melbourne stated:

Unless the SDGs are integrated or streamlined with existing reporting frameworks (e.g. the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework) there is a risk of added costs to Councils with regard to increased resourcing to meet additional reporting requirements. It will be important that the Australian Government consult with State and Local

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123 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 25.

124 Business and Sustainable Development Commission, *Better Business, Better World*, January 2017, p. 12.

125 *Submission 24*, p. 3.

126 *Submission 117*, p. 9.

127 See, for example, Volunteering Tasmania, *Submission 112*, [p. 2].

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Government before developing a reporting framework to ensure there is no net increase in reporting burden.<sup>128</sup>

2.81 Mr Petersen, BCSDA, pointed out that government has the opportunity, 'as part of an international agenda on this, to say that any obligation in terms of reporting or engagement with the SDGs must, wherever possible, be at least cost'.<sup>129</sup>

2.82 Ms Kylie Lloyd, Managing Director of Zoic Environmental Pty Ltd said:

We're finding that it is an area where business is a little bit nervous. They're responding to shareholder requirements or shareholder questions to leadership from procurement requirements for various government tenders. It becomes about how you frame and integrate SDGs within systems that are already in place in every business. There are quality systems, there are environmental systems and there are health and safety systems. The standard system to run a business has key components of governance. It is making sure that we add and align these in a smart way and...to a mapped, focused way of the SDGs.<sup>130</sup>

2.83 Mr Allen, UNSW Faculty of Science, added:

Based on the discussions I've had—and I myself run a very small business—I see the SDGs as much more of an opportunity than a cost on business. If you look at larger businesses that have to do reporting on sustainability, corporate governance, OH&S—a range of different reports—the SDGs can provide a means for streamlining their systems into a single system, or a unified framework, to reduce the reporting burden. I think that should be the case across the board...I think the risk is that the SDGs are seen as an add-on. They're added on to the end of another questionnaire or another system that companies already have to do—so they're an additional obligation. I think there's probably a risk there but, if we use the SDGs as a framework to align existing systems rather than as a duplication of existing systems, I don't think there would be an additional burden.<sup>131</sup>

2.84 Ms Porter of GCNA reassured the committee that GCNA has:

...already sought business input to develop guidance on reporting against these SDGs, and that's in partnership with the GRI [Global Reporting Initiative]. To put that in perspective, in 2017 92 percent of the world's largest businesses reported on sustainability measures aligned with the Global Compact's 10 principles around human rights, anticorruption and environment. Of these, 74 percent already used GRI. So the strength in developing guidance for reporting that incorporates the GRI principles actually won't increase the reporting burden or the red tape or regulation burden on companies.<sup>132</sup>

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128 *Submission 68*, p. 4.

129 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 25.

130 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 6.

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

132 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 25.

2.85 CSIRO supported the streamlining of SDGs reporting requirements with existing requirements, and called for the development of indices that can be used for a range of purposes 'so that the SDG reporting measures do not become an unnecessary burden in addition to other national, regional and global reporting needs'.<sup>133</sup>

2.86 The Australian Government is seeking to streamline national-level reporting to minimise duplication of reporting efforts through the creation of the reporting platform on the SDG indicators and the use of other datasets.<sup>134</sup> For example:

The Sendai Framework reporting provides information on 11 SDG Indicators. Rather than duplicating existing data collection efforts, the Australian Government will engage with the Australian Sendai Framework focal point, Emergency Management Australia within the Department of Home Affairs, to share data and ensure that it is nationally consistent.<sup>135</sup>

### ***Possible impact on Australian sovereignty***

2.87 A small number of submissions from individuals raised concerns that the SDGs and 2030 Agenda have not been considered through domestic democratic processes, and claimed their implementation may come at a cost to Australia's sovereignty.<sup>136</sup> For example, Mr Graham Williamson argued that the Australian 'people have been denied the right to vote on such a massive far reaching initiative that fundamentally depends upon democratic participation'.<sup>137</sup> His submission asked: 'Should imported international agreements prevail against democratic Australian laws?'<sup>138</sup> Ms Michelle Tesoriero also expressed concerns at the absence of a 'national address to the nation' informing Australians of the commitment to the SDGs in 2015', and asked '[w]ho is watching the UN as it takes its seat as the boss of the world?'<sup>139</sup>

2.88 However, the 2030 Agenda declaration stated:

We reaffirm that every State has, and shall freely exercise, full permanent sovereignty over all its wealth, natural resources and economic activity...We reiterate that each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development and that the role of national policies and development strategies cannot be overemphasized. We will respect each country's policy space and leadership to implement policies for

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133 *Submission 85*, p. 15.

134 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*, DFAT, 2018, p. 14. See also Australian Government, 'Methodology', SDG Reporting Platform, <https://www.sdgdata.gov.au/about/methodology> (accessed 10 August 2018).

135 *Tracking Australia's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*, DFAT, 2018, pp. 15–16.

136 See, for example, Ms Maree Miller, *Submission 22*.

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

138 *Submission 3*, [p. 6].

139 *Submission 27*, [p. 1].

poverty eradication and sustainable development, while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments.<sup>140</sup>

2.89 This chapter has summarised the potential benefits and costs to Australia of implementing the SDGs domestically. The following chapters outline suggestions for how to implement the SDGs and improve Australia's performance against the goals.

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140 UN, *Transforming our world*, pp. 6, 28.



## Chapter 3

### National governance structures and progress reporting

3.1 This chapter summarises suggestions from the evidence on improving the national governance of the SDGs, and tracking Australia's performance against the goals. Proposals included 'localising' the SDGs for the Australian context through the development of an implementation plan with national targets and a regular reporting mechanism. Other suggestions included establishing a new coordination team, and increasing the integration of the SDGs within Australian Government agencies.

#### Current approach to national coordination

3.2 Submissions generally agreed that the Australian Government should coordinate the national implementation of the SDGs and adopt a whole of government approach involving cooperation between relevant agencies and sectors.<sup>1</sup> This was largely preferred because it would address the 'very significant and important interdependencies, inter-relations and connections between the 17 goals'.<sup>2</sup> The Australian Academy of Science and Future Earth Australia (FEA) cautioned:

...a siloed approach to the goals can easily result in responses and strategies to advance a particular goal resulting in deleterious effects on others. Conversely a holistic view of the SDGs has the potential to enable synergies and trade-offs across both the goals themselves and the various sectors and stakeholders involved.<sup>3</sup>

3.3 The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) asserted that Australia is adopting a whole of government approach to the SDGs consistent with 'many countries, including China, Japan, Mexico, Finland, Norway, Timor Leste, Fiji and Tuvalu'.<sup>4</sup> Mr Chris Tinning, First Assistant Secretary, DFAT explained the Australian Government's decision to 'mainstream' the SDGs:

...across government and to keep with the longstanding budgetary and policy process that we have, and to build on those when it came to collaboration with stakeholders and making decisions about priorities across government. We've obviously got the cabinet as the peak body for doing that, and relevant ministers. The decision was...to mainstream the SDG agenda into what we already have rather than create something new.<sup>5</sup>

3.4 The following sections describe the details of the current approach.

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1 See, for example, Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 8; United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA), *Submission 47*, p. 5; International Women's Development Agency (IWDA), *Submission 98*, p. 4; Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), *Submission 138*, p. 9.

2 Australian Academy of Science and FEA, *Submission 108*, p. 3.

3 *Submission 108*, p. 3.

4 *Submission 60*, p. 4.

5 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 53.

### *Interdepartmental committee*

3.5 DFAT and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) co-chair a Deputy Secretary-level interdepartmental committee (IDC) on the SDGs, established prior to the release of Australia's first Voluntary National Review (VNR). Mr Jason McDonald, then Acting Chief Adviser of the Domestic Policy Group, PM&C, emphasised that 'an IDC process would not have that level of representation unless it was a very serious issue that the government was interested in making sure was well coordinated'.<sup>6</sup> He contended that the 'IDC process itself is a very powerful tool and will continue the seeding of the SDGs throughout government'.<sup>7</sup>

3.6 Other groups that supported the development of the VNR included a First Assistant Secretary (FAS) working group chaired by DFAT; a VNR Task Team of executive level staff across government; an internal DFAT reference group; and working groups on communications and data.<sup>8</sup> While it appears that some of these groups were disbanded following the presentation of the VNR in July 2018, the committee was assured that the IDC would operate indefinitely, and would meet at least twice in the 12 months following the hearing on 24 August 2018.<sup>9</sup> Mr McDonald indicated that the IDC can happen on an as-needed basis like the FAS group.<sup>10</sup> In 2017 it was indicated that there were no plans to formally release minutes from the IDC or other working groups.<sup>11</sup> The IDC allows agencies to share best practice:

...which started to happen at the last meeting as well, particularly with Defence and some of their ideas...That's the kind of model that we have going forward. It will be sharing information, updating information and having best practice in terms of accountability.<sup>12</sup>

3.7 The IDC has also had discussions with representatives from business and non-profit stakeholders, and this practice is expected to continue.<sup>13</sup>

3.8 An international analogue to the IDC may be the central coordinating body for the German Sustainable Development Strategy, the State Secretaries' Committee,

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6 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 11.

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

8 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 5; Dr Rachel Bacon, First Assistant Secretary, Policy Analysis and Implementation Division, Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE), *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 30.

9 Mr Chris Tinning, First Assistant Secretary, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 14; Mr Jason McDonald, Acting Chief Adviser of the Domestic Policy Group, PM&C, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 15; Mr McDonald, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, pp. 18–19.

10 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 16.

11 DoEE, answer to question on notice, 23 October 2017, Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee.

12 Mr McDonald, PM&C, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 16.

13 Mr McDonald, PM&C, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 11.

chaired by the Head of the Federal Chancellery and supported by a working group.<sup>14</sup> This body is the contact point for government stakeholders and updates the German National Sustainable Development Strategy.<sup>15</sup> Unlike Germany, Australia does not have a national strategy or plan for sustainable development.

3.9 Some submissions called for clearer communication regarding the IDC. The University of Sydney questioned its effectiveness, noting it 'has had very little visibility'.<sup>16</sup> Mr Lachlan Hunter, National Executive Director of the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) identified the absence of an 'obvious reporting mechanism or known contact list for the SDGs across government agencies'.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Responsibility for specific goals***

3.10 Responsibility for each goal was allocated to an Australian Government agency, as shown in the table from DFAT's submission below.

**Table 1—Government agencies for domestic reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Voluntary National Review**

<i>These reporting responsibilities reflect domestic reporting. As identified in this submission, DFAT's overseas activities contribute to all SDGs.</i>		
<b><i>Goal</i></b>		<b><i>Lead/Supporting agencies</i></b>
1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere	<b>Social Services;</b> PM&C; ABS; Home Affairs (EMA)
2	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	<b>Agriculture and Water Resources;</b> Health
3	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	<b>Health</b>
4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	<b>Education and Training</b>
5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	<b>PM&amp;C;</b> DSS
6	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	<b>Agriculture and Water Resources;</b> Environment and Energy
7	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	<b>Environment and Energy;</b> Industry, Innovation and Science
8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	<b>Treasury;</b> Jobs and Small Business; ABS

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

15 *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, p. 14.

16 *Submission 52*, p. 5.

17 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 2.

<i>Goal</i>		<i>Lead/Supporting agencies</i>
9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation	<b>Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities;</b> Industry, Innovation and Science; Communications and the Arts
10	Reduce inequality within and among countries	<b>Treasury;</b> Social Services; Home Affairs
11	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	<b>Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities;</b> Communications and the Arts; Home Affairs (EMA)
12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	<b>Environment and Energy;</b> Agriculture and Water Resources; Finance
13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	<b>Environment and Energy;</b> Home Affairs (EMA)
14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	<b>Environment and Energy;</b> Agriculture and Water Resources; Home Affairs (Maritime Border Command); Infrastructure Regional Development and Cities (Australian Maritime Safety Authority)
15	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	<b>Environment and Energy;</b> Agriculture and Water Resources
16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	<b>AGD;</b> Defence
17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development	<b>DFAT;</b> Treasury; ABS

Source: DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 17–18.

3.11 Some agencies have mapped their responsibilities in more detail, such as the Attorney-General's Department, which provided a table showing which agencies shared responsibilities for the targets supporting Goal 16.<sup>18</sup> Agencies are also responsible for contributing data to the Australian Government's online reporting platform on the SDG indicators, launched in July 2018. Mr Tinning, DFAT, explained:

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18 Attorney-General's Department, *Sustainable Development Goals: Commonwealth Agency lead on Goal 16 Targets* (tabled 24 August 2018).

Each department is responsible for making sure that the latest available data is on the SDG website, and we're going to have that as a standing agenda item on the IDC agenda to remind people that that's their obligation.<sup>19</sup>

3.12 More detail is provided on the reporting platform later in the chapter. Very few submitters opposed the approach illustrated above, but those who did raised concerns that it risks replicating existing silos between agencies and failing to identify and address potential synergies and trade-offs between the goals.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Leadership of the 2030 Agenda***

3.13 DFAT submitted that it and PM&C have been 'leading a process to ensure whole-of-government coordination on how to best give effect to the 2030 Agenda, domestically and internationally' including the drafting of the first VNR.<sup>21</sup> PM&C stated elsewhere that it 'is not leading on domestic implementation, rather, responsibility for the SDGs has been decentralised to promote agency ownership'.<sup>22</sup> In December 2018, Mr McDonald, PM&C explained that no one Australian Government agency holds authority over SDGs implementation by other agencies.<sup>23</sup> When asked if anyone has reviewed the inclusion of the SDGs in agency annual reports, he reiterated that it 'would be up to each individual agency'.<sup>24</sup>

3.14 Annual reports are the key reporting tool of all government agencies, and in recent years, a number have referred to the SDGs. Some variety has been evident in the approach and extent of the information provided. For example, the recent PM&C annual report included an appendix on the SDGs.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, the SDGs were mentioned in different sections of the 2017–18 annual reports of the Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) and DFAT. Many agencies that referred to the SDGs in their annual reports noted their contributions to the VNR process and other events or stakeholder consultation processes. Agencies tended not to include data on how they were making positive or negative contributions to the SDGs. At least one 'lead' agency did not refer to the SDGs in its most recent annual report at all.<sup>26</sup>

3.15 Mr McDonald described the approach at interdepartmental meetings:

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19 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 14.

20 See, for example, Volunteering Australia, *Submission 127*, p. 5; Fred Hollows Foundation, *Submission 36*, p. 4; Australian Academy of Science and FEA, *Submission 108*, pp. 6–7.

21 *Submission 60*, p. 5.

22 PM&C, answer to question on notice, 22 May 2018, Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee Budget Estimates.

23 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, pp. 16–18.

24 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 16.

25 *Annual Report 2017–18*, October 2018, pp. 262–263.

26 Department of Social Services, Answer to question taken on notice, 24 August 2018 (received 9 October 2018); Department of the Treasury, Answer to question taken on notice, 24 August 2018 (received 6 September 2018).

We go around the table, and everyone provides an update on where they're up to. Because the government's point of view is that the SDGs are consistent with current government policy, to the extent that they have to deliver government policy they're also delivering the SDGs. So there's that kind of accountability, which is the primary accountability.<sup>27</sup>

3.16 He added that discussion at the executive level 2 group was a bit more intensive around setting consistent standards for data, but noted that 'beyond that different agencies will have different levels and standards that they are keen to meet'.<sup>28</sup>

3.17 Evidence indicated that the Australian Government's approach to the SDGs is not well understood and that this, in part, may be because the overarching leadership responsibilities are unclear. When responding to a question from the committee about PM&C's domestic coordination through the agencies, Mr Hunter, UNAA asserted that 'there is a big gap in what is on paper and what is actually happening'.<sup>29</sup> He argued that the activities of the IDC are unclear to some agencies.<sup>30</sup> Ms Lavanya Kala, Policy Manager, Volunteering Australia reflected: 'I haven't really seen PM&C to have been the lead on this'.<sup>31</sup> A teacher at Forrest Primary School explained that it had been harder to find information on what is happening in Australia than internationally.<sup>32</sup>

3.18 The perceived lack of clarity may reinforce the misconception that the SDGs relate exclusively to developing countries; thereby limiting opportunities for domestic action.<sup>33</sup> Professor John Thwaites, Chair of the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI), said that while 'DFAT have played a really good leadership role' and there is 'a lot of commitment from within DFAT to see the goals implemented in Australia...they have limited ability to achieve that'.<sup>34</sup> The Centre for Policy Development (CPD) argued that 'the most powerful contribution Australia can make to advancing the goals is genuinely rising to the challenge of sustainable development at home'.<sup>35</sup> Dr Cassandra Goldie, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) commented:

One of the strengths of the SDGs is a strong focus on both the international and domestic arenas, and we would like to see the Australian government

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27 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 16.

28 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 19.

29 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 7.

30 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 7.

31 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 8.

32 Mr Dan Heap, *Committee Hansard*, 26 November 2018, p. 5.

33 See, for example, Mr Cameron Allen, Professor Graciela Metternicht and Associate Professor Thomas Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 2; Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia (BCSDA), *Submission 48*, [p. 4]; Project Respect, *Submission 133*, [p. 3].

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

35 *Submission 129*, [p. 7]. See also Strategic Sustainability Consultants, *Submission 50*, p. 2.

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equally pay attention to its obligations and frameworks for action at the domestic level.<sup>36</sup>

3.19 Many submissions contended that PM&C should have a clearer leadership and coordination role to promote the domestic implementation of the SDGs.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Voluntary National Review***

3.20 DFAT led the preparation of Australia's first VNR.<sup>38</sup> The VNR was released in June 2018, and presented the following month to the UN High Level Political Forum on sustainable development, the central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>39</sup> DFAT's expenses relating to the VNR totalled \$402,746.35.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Consultation***

3.21 DFAT and PM&C wrote to state and territory governments to provide information on the VNR process and seek input.<sup>41</sup> Agencies also undertook stakeholder outreach, calling for case studies, chiefly through websites, and more than 300 case studies were received, reflecting genuine interest in the national review.<sup>42</sup> There was evidence to the committee about limited time for public consultation, as well as the need for particular strategies to work with disability sectors and First Nations.<sup>43</sup> Again, the awareness of the process, and resulting engagement, was varied, although the pre-VNR roundtable discussions were welcomed as 'very, very useful, highly engaged and extremely positive'.<sup>44</sup>

3.22 The 'formal civil society response at the high-level forum acknowledged that Australia's report was prepared in an inclusive manner and noted our commitment to data and transparency as a central theme of reporting against the 2030 agenda'.<sup>45</sup> Australia also 'received very positive feedback' relating to Wiradjuri artist Jordana

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36 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 30.

37 See, for example, Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, *Submission 116*, [p. 1]; CPD, *Submission 129*, [p. 7]; Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 10; Public Health Association of Australia, *Submission 99*, p. 4; The University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, p. 3.

38 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 8, 17–18.

39 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 34; Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018; DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

40 DFAT, answer to question on notice, 24 August 2018 (received 19 October 2018).

41 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 20.

42 *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, p. 14; DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 8.

43 Ms Kala, Policy Manager, Volunteering Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 6; Dr Goldie *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 32; Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) and Disabled People's Organisations Australia (DPO Australia), *Submission 136*, p. 3.

44 Dr Goldie, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 32.

45 Mr Tinning, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 10.

Angus's artwork, and because Mr Duane Fraser, an Indigenous youth leader and Wulgurukaba and Bidjara man, spoke very well as part of the Australian delegation.<sup>46</sup>

### *Content*

3.23 The VNR 'takes a narrative approach, addressing each of the SDGs'.<sup>47</sup> It describes Australian initiatives at the domestic, regional and global levels. The VNR primarily includes examples from the national level, as well as some from state, territory and local levels of government. It also includes contributions from civil society, the private sector, academia, communities and individuals.<sup>48</sup> The VNR was accompanied by a data chapter that 'covers Australia's approach to data and how we will report against the SDG Indicators', and lists 'existing national policy frameworks that are relevant to the achievement of the SDGs'.<sup>49</sup> A media article noted that:

Most of the national policies outlined in the report were developed for other reasons, and some have been around for years or decades. Examples are the National Disability Strategy, which dates back to pre-2010, or the National Drought Policy, which began in 1992. In other words, at the national level, the report emphasises what we have already been doing—not new initiatives explicitly related to the goals.<sup>50</sup>

3.24 A witness from ACOSS argued that the narrative approach highlights:

...specific program initiatives that might go some way to ameliorating disadvantage for a very specific subgroup but not pointing to any kinds of structural reforms that might deal with, certainly, the poverty and inequality issues which are at the heart of the headline goals.<sup>51</sup>

3.25 Ms Andrea Spencer-Cooke, Partner at One Stone Advisors, said that the VNR 'missed an opportunity to set out national priorities and bold targets for Australia'.<sup>52</sup> Professor Graciela Metternicht, UNSW Faculty of Science, noted that the VNR 'lacks detail on what the next steps are for the government' and contains 'little or no assessment of indicators of baseline data and there is no reference to target setting'.<sup>53</sup> A baseline 'is the initial measurement of information collected prior to the start of a programme' that 'serves as a point of reference to evaluate progress'.<sup>54</sup> She concluded

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46 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, pp. 56–57.

47 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 6.

48 *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, p. 14.

49 *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, p. 6.

50 Shirin Malekpour, 'Australia must embrace transformation for a sustainable future', *The Conversation*, 19 June 2018.

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

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

53 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 9.

54 UNDP, *Guidelines to support country reporting on the SDGs*, 2017, p. 30.

that as Australia 'didn't have an assessment of the country's baseline at 2015...it will be a bit difficult to show how we trend and how we progress from now up to 2030'.<sup>55</sup>

3.26 Despite these concerns, a witness commented that the VNR process 'has done a huge amount to raise awareness more generally and engagement, and the real challenge now is to harness that enthusiasm'.<sup>56</sup> Australia has committed to present at least two VNRs prior to 2030.<sup>57</sup> As noted earlier, Australia's first VNR was presented in June 2018. Ten countries are expected to present their second VNRs in 2019.<sup>58</sup> The committee did not receive information on when Australia will present its next VNR, and whether it will present more than two. Ms Spencer-Cooke suggested the government consider presenting an interim VNR in five years.<sup>59</sup>

3.27 Submitters and participants in the 2018 Australian SDGs Summit expressed varying views on the mechanisms needed to implement the SDGs in Australia, 'ranging from the need only for integration of the agenda into existing frameworks and policies, and not creating new entities or structures, and the need for new and dedicated central coordination structures'.<sup>60</sup> So far, this chapter has outlined the Australian Government's current approach to implementation. The following sections summarise additional suggestions from submissions, including the creation of a national implementation plan, national coordination body and greater integration of the SDGs within Australian Government departments and agencies.

### **National implementation plan**

3.28 Mr Tinning, DFAT, responded to calls for a national implementation plan:

There is no national plan on the SDGs across government, and I think that is where the difference of view is. The SDGs are a very broad agenda. They cover health, education, agriculture et cetera. The government's approach is for the relevant department to take forward that agenda within their space. So there is no single plan...<sup>61</sup>

3.29 Many submissions raised concerns that Australia's progress against the SDGs is constrained by the lack of a plan. Dr Goldie described it as a 'major gap', and GNCA cautioned that without a national plan 'this delegated/decentralised model of

55 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 11.

56 Dr Tahl Kestin, Network Manager, SDSN Australia, New Zealand and Pacific, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 15.

57 Mr McDonald, Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, *Committee Hansard*, 20 October 2016, p. 90.

58 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: 2019 Edition*, October 2018, (tabled by Ms Andrea Spencer-Cook on 2 November 2018), pp. 9–10.

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

60 ACFID, ACOSS, Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA), SDSN Australia, NZ and Pacific, UNAA, *Australian SDGs Summit 2018: Unlocking the Opportunities of the SDGs: Outcomes Report*, November 2018, p. 11.

61 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 16.

accountability may result in missed opportunities of scale and partnership and may make addressing the interrelated nature of the SDGs more challenging'.<sup>62</sup> The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) stressed that '[c]oncrete plans for implementation are key to translating policy commitments into action and ensuring the Government will have progress to report'.<sup>63</sup>

3.30 The committee heard strong, consistent calls from the majority of non-government submitters for the development of a national implementation plan, including national priorities and targets, specific financial commitments, regular progress reviews and public reporting.<sup>64</sup> Other submissions advocated similar ideas using different terminology.<sup>65</sup> Submissions supporting some form of national plan came from international development, civil society, academic and business sectors.<sup>66</sup> Many agreed that a plan should set out which government agencies are responsible for progress on each goal, to 'enable consistency and coherence between Departments and policy priorities, as well as accountability for action'.<sup>67</sup> CSIRO contended that it 'would be a major step forward for Australia to clearly identify roles and actions within a cohesive framework that guides investment, monitors progress and provides the necessary information for reporting'.<sup>68</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) suggested that a national framework should detail government mechanisms to coordinate action and identify commitments and timelines.<sup>69</sup>

3.31 One Stone Advisors suggested a plan should be able to be 'localised and adapted by state governments and local authorities'.<sup>70</sup> Others proposed a plan could raise awareness of the SDGs across business, civil society and academia and guide their implementation efforts.<sup>71</sup> For example, the investment community lacks an:

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62 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, pp. 30, 32; GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 3].

63 *Submission 98*, pp. 4–5.

64 See, for example, Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 8; UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 5; University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, p. 3; SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 3; MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 5]; GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 6]; RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 10]; ACOSS, *Submission 140*, p. 2.

65 See, for example, Vision 2020 Australia, *Submission 19*, p. 4; Fred Hollows Foundation, *Submission 36*, p. 2; The Smith Family, *Submission 45*, p. 6; The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), *Submission 133*, p. 3; Australian Academy of Science and FEA, *Submission 108*, p. 10; Forrest Primary School, *Submission 163*, p. 4.

66 See, for example, ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 6; ACOSS, *Submission 140*, p. 2; MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 5]; Australian Council of Superannuation Investors (ACSI), *Submission 92*, [p. 2]; PwC, *Submission 30*, [p. 3].

67 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 3.

68 *Submission 85*, p. 19.

69 *Submission 138*, pp. 11–12.

70 *Submission 90*, p. 1.

71 See, for example, SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 3; Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA), RIAA, *Submission 131*, [p. 10].

...overarching framework that says: this is where we need to get to, these are some of the gaps in some of the SDG, and, as a nation, how do we work collaboratively to ensure capital is aligned with business and government to hit the targets we're aiming for? Without that overarching blueprint and plan, we're all shooting a little bit blind here.<sup>72</sup>

3.32 While almost all non-government submitters concurred on the need for a plan, there were some points of difference between proposals. For instance, some suggested that a plan should cover implementation in both Australia and overseas through the aid program.<sup>73</sup> A few suggested that a plan should include a strategy for communicating about the SDGs.<sup>74</sup> AHRC proposed that a national framework should be supported by a series of 'rolling four-year action plans for engagement and implementation', similar to those on ending family violence against women and children, and closing the gap.<sup>75</sup>

### *International examples*

3.33 While countries vary in their approach to the SDGs, a range of countries have already aligned their national strategies with the SDGs.<sup>76</sup> The 2030 Agenda encouraged member states to develop 'ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of this Agenda' that 'build on existing planning instruments'.<sup>77</sup> A review of the VNRs presented in 2017 directed countries to:

Fully integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into national plans and strategies based on an evaluation of existing policies, approaches and progress to identify gaps, adapt policies and target areas where further progress is needed. The fact that existing policies already align to the SDGs is not sufficient.<sup>78</sup>

3.34 A different review of the literature and VNRs presented in 2017 found approximately one third of countries had developed an SDGs road map or plan, including Belgium, Japan and Malaysia.<sup>79</sup> Nations that have been performing well

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72 Mr Simon O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, RIAA, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 40. See also Ms Kylie Porter, Executive Director of GCNA, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 24.

73 See, for example, SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 3; Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, pp. 50–51; World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 10.

74 See, for example, GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 6]; AHRC, *Submission 138*, pp. 11–12.

75 *Submission 138*, pp. 6, 11.

76 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. viii; Dr Nina Hall and Professor Karen 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. ix.

77 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 33.

78 Canadian Council for International Co-operation, *Progressing national SDGs implementation*, March 2018, p. ii.

79 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 9.

against the SDGs such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France and Norway 'typically have a national plan for the SDGs, clear reporting mechanisms and the work is led by government from within the office of the head of government or state'.<sup>80</sup> Germany has aligned its existing national development strategy with the SDGs, which includes both domestic and international measures.<sup>81</sup> It also includes 'goals with time frames for their attainment, indicators for continuous monitoring, rules for management and definitions for institutional configuration'.<sup>82</sup> Germany identified national indicators to monitor progress against SDGs, and an indicator report will be published every two years.<sup>83</sup> Less frequent progress reports 'are prepared with public dialogue conferences, comprising representatives of all sectors in society'.<sup>84</sup> The strategy is to be updated every four years.<sup>85</sup> Several submissions suggested that Australia should learn from Germany's approach.<sup>86</sup>

3.35 Other countries have developed action plans dedicated partly or wholly to the SDGs.<sup>87</sup> Denmark, for instance, developed an action plan centred on the 5 Ps: prosperity, people, planet, peace and partnerships.<sup>88</sup> These are supported by 37 national targets, and parliament will receive an annual progress report.<sup>89</sup> The Danish Ministry of Finance has been made responsible for coordinating the implementation of the SDGs to ensure they are integrated into domestic policy.<sup>90</sup> In Bangladesh, SDG targets have been assimilated into an Annual Performance Agreement, a 'results-based performance management system, across the whole spectrum of the public sector, assessing individual and ministries/agencies performance'.<sup>91</sup> Chapter 6 includes information on some of Australia's developing country partners that have incorporated the SDGs into their national planning, including Papua New Guinea.<sup>92</sup>

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80 Mr Hunter, UNAA, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 2.

81 *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, 2016, (tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, ACFID, on 24 August 2018). See, for other examples: UN, *Compendium*, 2018, pp. 3–4.

82 *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, p. 3.

83 IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 5.

84 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 8].

85 *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, p. 14; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 4.

86 See, for example, Plan International, *Submission 67*, p. 4; World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 9; Mr Purcell, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 28.

87 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 3.

88 AASW, *Submission 133*, p. 6; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 5; Danish Government, *Denmark's Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Report for the Voluntary National Review*, 2017, p. 44.

89 AASW, *Submission 133*, p. 6; UN, *Compendium*, 2018, pp. 10–11.

90 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 8].

91 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 8].

92 Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH) Australia, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 December 2018), [p. 2].

3.36 DFAT has reached out to countries that have developed new national plans or are integrating the 2030 Agenda into pre-existing plans, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Denmark, Fiji, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Samoa, Switzerland and Tuvalu.<sup>93</sup> When asked if it had considered the formulation of a strategy for sustainable development as part of Australia's SDGs work, DFAT responded: 'No. The Government's approach is to integrate the 2030 Agenda across all relevant policies, strategies and programs'.<sup>94</sup>

### *National priorities and targets*

3.37 In addition to the global SDG targets, countries can identify national targets:

...guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. Each Government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies.<sup>95</sup>

3.38 The process of national target and indicator setting has been described as 'localising' the SDGs, and it is useful because some global indicators are 'unsuitable for Australia, as they are concerned with issues the Australian populace currently do not face'.<sup>96</sup> It is also important because, as Mr Cameron Allen, UNSW Faculty of Science emphasised:

...unless countries effectively adopt measurable, clear, realistic, time-bound targets the agenda is not really going to be implemented...I think this is a real gap—we've done various things on the SDGs to date, but we haven't really even looked at targets.<sup>97</sup>

3.39 Many submissions that supported a national plan agreed that it should clearly identify priorities and targets for Australia.<sup>98</sup> The expert literature also supports the development of 'a long-term national vision with an agreed set of priority 2030 targets and indicators of particular relevance for Australia'.<sup>99</sup> Mr Allen explained:

In my work with the UN, when we talk to countries about the SDGs, we're not telling them to adopt 169 targets and 232 indicators. That's just an impossible task for any country. We're telling them to prioritise, to try to

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93 DFAT, answer to question on notice, 26 October 2017, Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee.

94 DFAT, answer to question on notice, 26 October 2017, Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee.

95 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, p. 13.

96 Vision 2020 Australia, *Submission 19*, p. 4.

97 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 9.

98 City of Sydney, *Submission 54*, p. 8; MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 4]; Zoic, *Submission 119*, p. 6; AustralianSuper, *Submission 24*, p. 4; Shared Value Project, *Submission 49*, p. 4.

99 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, pp. 4–5.

pick a selection of targets across all 17 goals, but the targets that are of highest priority for your country, or most relevant for your country.<sup>100</sup>

3.40 Submissions emphasised that the target-setting process should not equate to 'cherry picking' particular goals, as this could 'risk weakening the integrated framework of the Goals'.<sup>101</sup> Instead, CSIRO argued a plan should address the SDGs 'collectively rather than individually, including the consideration of interactions between SDGs and the need for integrated approaches'.<sup>102</sup> UNAA also promoted 'government approaching the goals as integrated, interlinked goals'.<sup>103</sup> The localisation process must also ensure 'that the capacity to make global comparisons is not lost'.<sup>104</sup>

3.41 As noted above, the Australian Government has launched an online reporting platform on the SDGs. This includes data that addresses some of the global indicators (or an approximation of them). However:

While every effort is being made to include datasets where possible and appropriate, the Platform will not report against all 232 SDG Indicators. Not all SDG Indicators are relevant or applicable for the Australian context and in these cases it would not be a proper or efficient use of resources to establish datasets that track them.<sup>105</sup>

3.42 The reporting platform 'will be updated as more datasets are confirmed and/or as the work program on the SDG Indicators progresses'.<sup>106</sup> Yet it appears that government has not undertaken the kind of consultative target setting advocated in submissions. More detail is provided on the reporting platform later in the chapter.

3.43 There are a variety of approaches to developing national targets, such as identifying the areas where Australia performs worst in; addressing the SDGs that have high social and economic return on investment; or investing in areas where funding is falling short.<sup>107</sup> Some other approaches are outlined below.

### *Consultation*

3.44 Submissions generally agreed that government should consult broadly to develop the national implementation plan, priorities and targets.<sup>108</sup> MSDI stated that the greatest 'benefit will come if there is a degree of common ownership in these

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

101 CARE Australia, *Submission 123*, [p. 1], [original emphasis removed].

102 *Submission 85*, p. 6.

103 Ms Patricia Garcia, National SDGs Manager for UNAA, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, pp. 4–5.

104 Australian Academy of Science and FEA, *Submission 108*, p. 7.

105 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SD*, DFAT, 2018, p. 1.

106 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SD*, DFAT, 2018, p. 1.

107 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55, Attachment 1, Australian SDGs Summit: On the Road to Implementation*, 2016, p. 9.

108 See, for example, Transparency International Australia, *Submission 132*, p. 4.

targets across levels of government and from different sectors'.<sup>109</sup> IWDA further suggested that the plan should include 'concrete strategies to support the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in design, delivery and reporting on services and programs'.<sup>110</sup>

3.45 A review of the literature and VNRs presented in 2017 found less than half of the countries had undertaken a process to prioritise and adapt SDG targets and indicators to national circumstances.<sup>111</sup> Some countries 'made their selections based on a mapping of existing available data and priorities through a government-led process', however another review stated that best practice entailed selecting national targets and indicators through inclusive consultation.<sup>112</sup> The German Government held five public conferences, published a discussion draft, and consulted with more than 40 associations to incorporate the SDGs into its national strategy.<sup>113</sup>

#### *Alignment with existing priorities*

3.46 Submissions also identified the opportunity to align national SDG targets with existing Australian priorities.<sup>114</sup> The 2030 Agenda appears to encourage harmonisation, and notes that follow-up and review processes will:

...build on existing platforms and processes, where these exist, avoid duplication and respond to national circumstances, capacities, needs and priorities. They will evolve over time, taking into account emerging issues and the development of new methodologies, and will minimize the reporting burden on national administrations.<sup>115</sup>

3.47 For example, CSIRO called for the development of local indicators to be aligned with existing reporting requirements, such as the State of the Environment report.<sup>116</sup> The Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN) agreed indicators should be aligned with existing schemes and 'reporting mechanisms harmonised for consistent delivery'.<sup>117</sup>

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109 *Submission 121*, [p. 4]. See also the University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, p. 6; ACOSS, *Submission 140*, p. 2.

110 *Submission 98*, pp. 4–5.

111 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 9.

112 *Progressing national SDGs implementation*, March 2018, p. iv. See also UNDP, *Guidelines to support country reporting on the SDGs*, 2017, p. 28.

113 *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, 2016, (tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, ACFID, on 24 August 2018), p. 3. See also the example of Mexico, UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 10.

114 See, for example, uBegin, *Submission 89*, [p. 2].

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

116 *Submission 85*, p. 15.

117 *Submission 58*, p. 6.

### *Interaction mapping*

3.48 Another approach to setting priorities involves mapping the interactions between SDGs. There may be 'trade-offs within the SDGs, for example between food security and environmental sustainability'.<sup>118</sup> CSIRO commented that national indicators 'should allow for assessment of the main synergies and trade-offs among the SDG's to identify actions that leverage those assessments and maximise outcomes'.<sup>119</sup> It highlighted the benefits of this approach, showing that:

... identifying both positive and negative interactions, could help us achieve global outcomes at a significantly lower cost through thoughtful coordination of otherwise fragmented action. Likewise, identifying trade-offs ahead of time could enable conflicts among objectives to be managed before they become institutionalised.<sup>120</sup>

### *Financial commitments*

3.49 ACOSS reasoned that funding is required to support any SDGs 'governance and monitoring mechanisms, including resources for research and data collection where there are data gaps, and for participation of key stakeholders'.<sup>121</sup> However, the Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia (BCSDA) noted that it was not 'aware of any additional resources that have been allocated for investigation or follow up'.<sup>122</sup> Poverty experts asserted that, as the Australian Government has not made any funding available specifically for the SDGs, 'the transformative approach that many argue is necessary to achieve the SDGs is entirely absent'.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, many submissions calling for a national implementation plan argued that it should include funding commitments. For example, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) stated:

A national plan should give a mandate to political and bureaucratic mechanisms to coordinate and drive SDG action, and include shorter-term targets as stepping stones to enable consistent progress towards the 2030 deadline, supported by specific financial commitments.<sup>124</sup>

3.50 A UN compendium on institutional arrangements noted that '[e]ven if the SDGs are effectively transformed into strategies and plans, these plans are unlikely to be successfully implemented if budgets are not aligned'.<sup>125</sup> A UN report observed that:

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118 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 4.

119 *Submission 85*, p. 16.

120 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 15.

121 ACOSS, *Submission 140*, p. 2. See also Ms Glenys Jones, *Submission 104*, p. 7.

122 BCSDA (formerly Sustainable Business Australia), *Submission 48*, [p. 4].

123 Academics Stand Against Poverty Oceania, *Australia, Poverty and the Sustainable Development Goals*, University of Wollongong, School of Humanities and Social Inquiry, 2018, p. 9.

124 *Submission 135*, p. 6. See also Global Citizen, *Submission 22*, p. 7.

125 UN, *Compendium*, p. 12.

Budgets can be used to track support to specific targets, identify opportunities for adjustment and constitute an incentive for alignment and integration of programs with the SDGs. The cases of Mexico and Norway show how the budgetary process can be utilized to advance cross-sectoral integration and the 2030 Agenda.<sup>126</sup>

3.51 Norway 'has developed a plan for national follow-up to the SDGs which is linked to their budget process'.<sup>127</sup> Coordinating ministries report against the goals for which they are responsible in budget proposals, which are then incorporated into the national budget white paper.<sup>128</sup>

### ***Reporting mechanisms***

3.52 When asked about plans for communicating Australia's performance against the SDGs in addition to the reporting platform, Mr Tinning, DFAT, stated 'I don't think there's any expectation of, for instance, annual reporting against the SDGs beyond the voluntary national reviews, which will really bring it all together'.<sup>129</sup> However, the committee heard a range of proposals for additional reporting mechanisms.

3.53 UN member states committed to 'regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the subnational, national, regional and global levels'.<sup>130</sup> Reporting frameworks are essential for implementation as they 'provide an impetus for action ('what gets reported gets done'), ensure accountability, provide feedback on implementation success, create a coherent story on wide-ranging actions, and provide an opportunity for ongoing public engagement'.<sup>131</sup> Some submissions explicitly suggested that targets and measurements be included in a national implementation plan to 'pave the way to meeting the 2030 deadline', while others proposed reporting in addition to a plan.<sup>132</sup>

### ***Frequency and alignment with existing reporting processes***

3.54 Submitters were generally supportive of the Australian Government's existing reporting initiatives, but indicated these did not sufficiently address the need for regular analysis and reporting of Australia's progress.<sup>133</sup> As noted above, Australia has only committed to delivering one more VNR, though the committee received evidence supporting 'regular monitoring and reporting (e.g. every 3 years)'.<sup>134</sup> The 2030 Agenda

126 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Supplementary submission 37.1*, UN, *Working together*, p. ix.

127 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 9.

128 IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 8. See also Norway's Voluntary National Review, 2016, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/norway> (accessed 30 January 2019).

129 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 53.

130 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, pp. 31–33.

131 SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 4; ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 9.

132 ACOSS, *Submission 140*, p. 2. See also Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, pp. 50–51.

133 MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 5].

134 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, pp. 4–5; MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 5].

does not define 'regular', but UN guidelines state that the experience with the Millennium Development Goals 'underscores that more frequent reviews supported the concerted national engagement needed to achieve goals and targets'.<sup>135</sup>

3.55 Submitters generally proposed annual or biennial reports, such as SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, which supported annual reviews 'to identify previously-unseen issues' and 'implement corrective measures to drive constant improvement'.<sup>136</sup> Professor Thwaites called for parliament to play 'a key role in overseeing the regular performance of the goals' and advocated an annual progress report to parliament.<sup>137</sup> The UN compendium noted that engaging parliaments can 'ensure that accountability to people is enshrined in the implementation of the SDGs'.<sup>138</sup> Parliaments can use their legislative, budgetary, and oversight and monitoring functions to help ensure that policies are integrated and supportive of the SDGs, and several have instituted SDGs review processes.<sup>139</sup> As noted above, the Danish Parliament expects to receive annual progress reports, and 'established a cross-party network bringing together members from standing committees relevant to the 2030 Agenda'.<sup>140</sup> However, international evidence indicated that '[g]aps remain in engaging parliaments, and in ensuring that the SDGs are not seen as the exclusive domain of the executive branch'.<sup>141</sup>

3.56 Several submissions suggested reporting against the SDGs should be aligned with the five-yearly Intergenerational Reporting process, because of the shared focus on intergenerational equity.<sup>142</sup> BCSDA proposed government and non-government expert stakeholders undertake an audit as part of the Intergenerational Report process.<sup>143</sup> To avoid the over-reporting burden, others supported streamlining SDGs and five-yearly State of the Environment reporting.<sup>144</sup>

#### *Indicator-based assessments and analysis*

3.57 As noted above, Australia's VNR is a collation of case studies, rather than an assessment of performance against the indicators. The reporting platform provides

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135 UNDP, *Guidelines to support country reporting on the SDGs*, 2017, p. 16.

136 *Submission 141*, p. 5. Submissions calling for annual or biennial reporting included Monash University, *Submission 120*, p. 4, [original emphasis removed]; SDSN Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 4.

137 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, pp. 8–9. See also Dr Jarrett Blaustein, Dr Kate Fitz-Gibbon and Professor Rob White, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

138 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 7.

139 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Supplementary submission 37.1*, UN, *Working together*, pp. x, 26–27.

140 AASW, *Submission 133*, p. 6; UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 7.

141 *Supplementary submission 37.1*, UN, *Working together*, p. 27.

142 University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, pp. 3, 5; Doctors for the Environment Australia, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

143 *Submission 48*, [p. 5].

144 CSIRO, *Submission 85*, p. 15; Australian Dairy Industry Council, *Submission 148*, [p. 4].

national data against SDG indicators, but does not interpret what this represents about Australia's progress, as detailed later in this chapter.<sup>145</sup> Professor Metternicht said:

The data portal is also a great initiative and provides a useful centralised database where one can access official data on the SDGs. However, there is no assessment of Australia's progress of performance on indicators. Providing access to that is, of course, useful in itself, but providing an assessment of Australia's progress integrating the meaning of values reported for indicators would be a great, real value-add.<sup>146</sup>

3.58 Several submissions suggested that data on Australia's performance against SDG indicators should be collected and analysed regularly to enable progress to be tracked over time.<sup>147</sup> Macquarie Sustainability argued that if Australia:

...is not performing well against one of the Goals, this must be stated clearly, with the possible reasons why, and what is being done to address the shortfall. The more honest, transparent and available the information, the more civil society will embrace it and work to rectify gaps.<sup>148</sup>

3.59 Professor Rod Glover, Deputy Director, MSDI, pointed to the Productivity Commissions' five-yearly productivity reviews, noting that you can achieve 'more when you start to think in terms of not only data but what the interpretation of that data is for some sort of strategic insight about where we're going well, where we're not going well and what the forces that are shaping them are'.<sup>149</sup>

#### *Future initiatives*

3.60 A few submissions suggested that reports could also detail initiatives and plans supporting the SDGs.<sup>150</sup> Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher, President of AHRC, recommended that the VNR 'take a more analytical approach, linking policies and programs to indicators, and identifying implementation gaps and what actions the government will prioritise in the future'.<sup>151</sup> UN guidelines suggested that '[r]eports should not just describe trends in indicators; they should analyse underlying causes behind the trends, and offer policy suggestions to overcome obstacles and deal with emerging challenges'.<sup>152</sup> Subsequent VNRs could include:

...analysis of initiatives rolled out since the last VNR; how challenges in implementation, including persistent challenges, were overcome; a more in-

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

146 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 9.

147 CSIRO, *Submission 85*, p. 6; Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 6.

148 *Submission 34*, [p. 4].

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

150 World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 2; Mr Ryan Kennealy, *Submission 69*, p. 3.

151 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, pp. 32–33.

152 UNDP, *Guidelines to support country reporting on the SDGs*, 2017, pp. 18–19.

depth coverage of good practices adopted or followed by the country and lessons learned; and an analysis of new or emerging issues.<sup>153</sup>

### ***Data collection and disaggregation***

3.61 Submissions agreed that the 'importance of data collection, reporting and monitoring in a transparent manner cannot be overstated'.<sup>154</sup> The following sections summarise suggestions regarding disaggregating data and the reporting platform.

#### *Disaggregated data*

3.62 A key principle underpinning the SDGs is the commitment to 'leave no one behind'. To support this commitment, follow-up and review processes should be:

...based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.<sup>155</sup>

3.63 They should also be 'people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind'.<sup>156</sup> The collection of Australian data needs to be improved, as 'disaggregated data needed to address all vulnerable groups...are sparse'.<sup>157</sup> Submissions identified some specific gaps, such as the need for time-use data and an agreed national definition of poverty.<sup>158</sup>

3.64 Australia's first VNR noted that the disaggregation of data sets is an 'ongoing challenge', and DFAT stated that 'Australia is working to continuously improve data collection'.<sup>159</sup> IWDA acknowledged the government's efforts to address global gender data gaps, and advocated additional support for the UN Women's Making Every Woman and Girl Count program.<sup>160</sup> Some submissions also commended the government's 'leadership and investment' in the development of the Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM), and called for support to 'ensure it is widely used'.<sup>161</sup> The IDM is a new, gender-sensitive and multidimensional measure of poverty. The current

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153 *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews*, (tabled by Ms Andrea Spencer-Cook on 2 November 2018), pp. 52–3.

154 City of Sydney, *Submission 54*, p. 10.

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

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

157 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 11. See also Dr Caroline Lambert, Director of Research, Policy and Advocacy, IWDA, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 27.

158 Equality Rights Alliance, *Submission 149*, p. 13; P Davidson, P Saunders, B Bradbury and M Wong, *Poverty in Australia*, 2018, ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report No. 2, Sydney, (tabled by Dr Cassandra Goldie on 2 November 2018), p. 6.

159 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 114; DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 14.

160 *Submission 98*, p. 4.

161 IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 11; ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 11.

IDM Program is a partnership between the Australian National University, IWDA and the Australian Government through DFAT.<sup>162</sup>

3.65 The VNR described Australia's support for the multi-stakeholder Washington Group on Disability Statistics, which has developed tools to assist data disaggregation by disability status.<sup>163</sup> Increasing the data sets disaggregated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status will also be a focus for the Australian Government.<sup>164</sup>

3.66 The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is supporting agencies 'in finding data sources and understanding where they can be used according to the methodology'.<sup>165</sup> It also works with the lead agencies when the UN agencies ask for reports relating to various indicators.<sup>166</sup> The Australian Government is also working with a range of partners to gather additional data on the SDGs, including the Australian National Development Index (ANDI) and AURIN.<sup>167</sup>

*The Australian Government's online reporting platform on the SDG indicators*

3.67 A number of submissions called for the establishment of an SDGs data sharing platform to encourage accountability and accelerate implementation and research efforts.<sup>168</sup> A reporting platform was launched in July 2018.<sup>169</sup> Funded by DFAT, it was developed by DoEE and ABS to house Australian Government datasets.<sup>170</sup> DoEE engaged with United Kingdom and United States governments to learn from their experiences developing platforms.<sup>171</sup> The Australian platform uses similar open source technology and runs on a govCMS site.<sup>172</sup> The approach was recommended by a taskforce on national reporting platforms, and allowed agencies to

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162 Individual Deprivation Measure, <http://www.individualdeprivationmeasure.org/> (accessed 23 January 2019).

163 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 114.

164 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SDGs*, DFAT, 2018, p. 12.

165 Mrs Emily Walter, Director of Household Characteristics and Social Reporting, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 19.

166 Mrs Walter, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 19.

167 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the Sustainable Development Goals*, DFAT, 2018, p. 25; University of Melbourne and ANDI Limited, *Submission 97*; AURIN, *Submission 58*.

168 SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141*, p. 5; Mr Clinton Moore, *Submission 78*, p. 6; GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 6].

169 <https://www.sdgdata.gov.au/>

170 *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 113.

171 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 8.

172 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SDGs*, DFAT, 2018, p. 12.

invest 'effort not in a technology but, rather, in coordinating information that goes behind all of that'.<sup>173</sup>

3.68 The platform is expected to reduce the potential reporting burden and streamline reporting for other purposes, such as the Sendai Framework and State of the Environment report.<sup>174</sup> Some departmental officials indicated that the requirements for providing data via the platform were manageable and did not represent too great a burden.<sup>175</sup> For example, the committee heard that the Department of Education and Training is drawing on information that it 'would be reporting anyway or that would be reported in international fora', and suggested it is more an issue of 'working through the alignment with the SDG methodology'.<sup>176</sup>

3.69 The platform indicates the status of Australian data collection against all 232 global SDG indicators.<sup>177</sup> Each indicator is colour-coded based on whether data is reported or not (rather than according to Australia's progress against the indicator). As of 30 January 2019:

- 118 indicators had Australian Government datasets included on the platform;
- work was underway to explore and identify data sources for 57 indicators;
- 12 indicators were not reported because the indicators were judged as irrelevant to Australia and the development of data sets was not seen as an efficient or effective use of resources; and
- 57 indicators were not reported as the global methodology had not been set.<sup>178</sup>

3.70 Chapters 4 and 5 outline suggestions that the platform be expanded to include data from state, territory and local governments and non-government sources.<sup>179</sup>

### **National coordination body**

3.71 Many submissions proposed the establishment of new government bodies to complement the IDC, particularly a national coordination secretariat and a representative multi-sectoral reference group. Other countries have adopted a variety

173 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SDGs*, DFAT, 2018, p. 12; Dr Paul Jelfs, General Manager, Population and Social Statistics, ABS, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 13.

174 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 113.

175 See, for example, Ms Lisa Elliston, Division Head, International Policy and Engagement Division, Department of the Treasury, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, pp. 21–22.

176 Ms Karen Sandercock, Group Manager, International Group, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018 p. 23.

177 *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 113.

178 Australian Government, 'Methodology', SDG Reporting Platform, <https://www.sdgdata.gov.au/about/methodology> (accessed 30 January 2019).

179 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Submission 76*, p. 12; SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141*, p. 5.

of SDGs governance and coordination bodies, suggesting 'no single institutional model is intrinsically more appropriate than the others'.<sup>180</sup> A recent UN report found:

In a sample of 60 countries, 27 had created a new structure for SDG implementation (including 17 new cross-sectoral entities). SDG implementation is chaired, coordinated or led by Heads of State and Government in 27 countries [including Australia].<sup>181</sup>

3.72 It would appear important that 'the institution leading SDG implementation has sufficient clout, the ability to mobilise resources and the vision and capacities necessary to plan SDG implementation in a comprehensive, coherent and integrated way and in the whole country'.<sup>182</sup> The next sections summarise suggestions for the establishment of government coordination bodies. Proposals for consultative mechanisms are outlined in chapter 5, which covers partnerships beyond government.

### ***National coordination secretariat***

3.73 Many submissions called for the creation of a national government secretariat to coordinate SDGs implementation across all levels of government, academia, civil society and the private sector.<sup>183</sup> SDSN Australia/Pacific summarised this proposal:

Coordination on aspects of SDG implementation, such as priorities, communication approach, information sharing, and measurement and reporting, will help enhance uptake, improve efficiency, reduce transaction costs and maximise collaboration. While different sectors and actors, including SDSN Australia/Pacific, have been strongly active in helping to build partnerships and coordinating efforts among sectors, our reach and resources are limited. We strongly believe a national coordination hub or secretariat, funded by the Government and [run] in collaboration with a cross-sector advisory group, will significantly enhance national SDG action.<sup>184</sup>

3.74 A coordination secretariat could develop a national implementation plan, including managing the consultation process.<sup>185</sup> Submissions generally viewed PM&C as the appropriate place for a national implementation plan to be developed.<sup>186</sup> IWDA emphasised that it 'is important that cross-government coordination is resourced, both in terms of human and financial resources', and supported the proposal for a government-funded secretariat to coordinate action on the SDGs.<sup>187</sup> Other

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180 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 6.

181 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Supplementary submission 37.1, Working together*, pp. x–ix.

182 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 6.

183 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 7; ACSI, *Submission 92*, [p. 2]; GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 6]; ACOSS, *Submission 140*, p. 2.

184 *Submission 55*, p. 4.

185 Cbus, *Submission 139*, p. 3; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 5.

186 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 6.

187 *Submission 98*, p. 5.

submissions called for government to take a greater leadership and coordination role without specifically proposing the creation of a 'secretariat'. For example, CPD and BCSDA suggested some form of coordinating entity based in a central agency such as PM&C.<sup>188</sup> Strategic Sustainability Consultants suggested states and territories could have associated sub-committees.<sup>189</sup>

3.75 Mr Marc Purcell, Chief Executive Officer, ACFID, indicated that proposals for a new coordinating body have faced resistance from the Australian Government:

At the summit we made our calls for a national plan and a government coordinating point that organisations like Australia Post, ourselves and others could liaise with. Unfortunately, the PM&C representative said that wasn't needed and that wasn't their intent. We don't think that's good enough. We think that the government should have a central contact point and there should be a more formal mechanism for engaging regularly rather than on an ad hoc basis.<sup>190</sup>

3.76 Some other countries have SDGs coordination mechanisms within government. For example, Finland and Germany 'established coordination secretariats at the level of Prime Minister or President's office to guide SDGs work within their respective governments'.<sup>191</sup> The German Federal Chancellery is responsible for the National Sustainable Development Strategy, supported by coordinators for sustainable development in each ministry.<sup>192</sup> Some developing nations have created dedicated ministries, or secretariats within ministries, that are tasked with SDGs delivery, such as Colombia, Indonesia, Seychelles and Mauritius.<sup>193</sup>

3.77 The government-based national coordination secretariat received widespread support in submissions. The following proposals were raised by fewer submissions.

#### ***Independent policy assessment body***

3.78 ACFID recommended the creation of a new, independent body 'to assess policies and provide advice on policy coherence against the SDGs'.<sup>194</sup> This would:

...support the delivery of a national implementation plan by considering policies from different areas of government against the SDGs to ensure a coherent approach. By virtue of its independence, this body would be in a position to provide advice on the degree to which longer-term threats to national and regional achievement of the SDGs and associated agendas are being [adequately] addressed—an aspect of the agenda which poses a

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188 CPD, *Submission 129*, p. 2; BCSDA, *Submission 48*, [p. 5].

189 *Submission 50*, p. 19.

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

191 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 9.

192 *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, 2016, (tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, ACFID, on 24 August 2018), p. 4.

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

194 *Submission 135*, p. 8.

challenge to typical, electorally-based policy cycles. It would also be well placed to consider cross-cutting issues including gender equality, inclusion and partnership. This body could report to the existing interdepartmental committee and its reports should be made public.<sup>195</sup>

3.79 The suggestion of an independent policy assessment body was supported by several other submissions, including the South East Queensland special network joint submission, which proposed that independent commissioners could consider both regional and national issues.<sup>196</sup> SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific and Oaktree supported the establishment of a Future Generations Commission to 'work independently to develop key areas for youth action' and 'help identify gaps in SDG implementation especially pertaining to youth policies'.<sup>197</sup> Oaktree reasoned that the 'short term nature of electoral cycles impedes the ability to design and deliver long term policy priorities necessary to sustain the implementation of the SDGs to 2030'.<sup>198</sup> Wales has established a Future Generations Commission that builds sustainable development principles, goals and progress measures into the long term development of Wales.<sup>199</sup>

### ***Independent monitoring and reporting body***

3.80 A number of submissions broadly supported the creation of an independent body to monitor and report on progress against the SDGs, though the specifics of these proposals varied. For example, UNAA and SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific called for an SDG Commission to monitor and report on the SDGs, comprising distinguished members from civil society, business and academia.<sup>200</sup> One Stone Advisors noted Brazil has established a National SDGs Commission.<sup>201</sup>

3.81 Other submissions suggested the creation of a central overseeing body to report to the federal government and UN, or the establishment of a National Sustainability Commission coupled with a National Environmental Protection Authority.<sup>202</sup> Another submission proposed the establishment of an independent monitor similar to the Independent Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor established in Victoria following the Royal Commission.<sup>203</sup> Instead of establishing a

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195 *Submission 135*, p. 8.

196 *Submission 53*, [p. 2], [original emphasis removed]. See also Plan International, *Submission 67*, p. 2; The Institute for Human Security and Social Change at La Trobe University, *Submission 77*, p. 3, [original emphasis removed].

197 SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141*, pp. 4–5; Oaktree, *Submission 42*, [pp. 2–3].

198 *Submission 42*, p. 3.

199 SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141*, p. 6; Australian National Development Index (ANDI) Limited and the University of Melbourne, *Submission 97*, p. 7; AASW, *Submission 133*, p. 7.

200 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 7; SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, *Submission 141*, p. 5.

201 *Submission 90*, p. 2.

202 AASW, *Submission 133*, p. 3; Doctors for the Environment, *Submission 33*, p. 2.

203 Dr Blaustein, Dr Fitz-Gibbon and Professor White, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

new organisation, CARE Australia suggested government task and fund a body, such as the AHRC, to report annually on progress by all Australian Governments.<sup>204</sup>

3.82 While statistical offices are responsible for monitoring SDGs implementation, most countries also have other monitoring mechanisms.<sup>205</sup> For example, Bangladesh has an Inter-Ministerial SDG Monitoring and Implementation Committee, while the independent Ombudsman in the Argentinian National Congress established a Monitoring and Evaluation Program.<sup>206</sup> In other nations, the bodies leading the implementation of the SDGs also hold reviewing responsibility, such as the Nepalese National Planning Commission and Maldives Ministry of Environment and Energy.<sup>207</sup>

3.83 Submissions did not focus on the potential role of the Australian National Audit Office, however a recent UN report noted that Supreme Audit Institutions 'can play a key role in examining the overall, cross-sectoral effects of policies and [provide] oversight on governments' efforts to deliver on the SDGs'.<sup>208</sup> The Brazilian audit institution contributed to its VNR and was part of the delegation to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.<sup>209</sup>

### ***Ministerial and parliamentary mechanisms***

3.84 A few submissions called for new SDGs parliamentary processes and positions. For instance, World Vision Australia agreed that the SDGs 'require dedicated leadership at the political level given their significance and broad reach'.<sup>210</sup> It suggested the SDGs could be 'included as a key responsibility in the charter letters for all ministers' and proposed government appoint an Assistant Minister for Sustainable Development.<sup>211</sup> This Assistant Minister would be supported by a secretariat, develop a national plan and work with PM&C and DFAT to coordinate implementation.<sup>212</sup> Examples of countries that have appointed ministers to lead on sustainable development include Belgium, France and Luxembourg.<sup>213</sup>

3.85 PwC supported the creation of 'a governance committee with high level standing (eg: chaired by a Member of Parliament)' to increase accountability.<sup>214</sup> A

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204 *Submission 123*, [p. 2], [original emphasis removed].

205 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 10.

206 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, pp. 10–11.

207 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 10.

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

209 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, pp. 11–12. Other examples of countries with SAIs that have engaged with the SDGs include Costa Rica and Indonesia.

210 *Submission 25*, p. 18.

211 *Submission 25*, pp. 2, 11.

212 World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, pp. 2, 18.

213 World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 18.

214 *Submission 30*, [p. 3].

'substantial number of countries have created new inter-ministerial committees to spur and coordinate the implementation of the SDGs' such as Bangladesh, Denmark, Germany and Japan.<sup>215</sup> Some of these are chaired by the head of state or government, such as Finland, Germany and Mexico.<sup>216</sup> Nigeria, Thailand and Zimbabwe have all established parliamentary committees or sub-committees on the SDGs.<sup>217</sup> While the committee heard a range of suggestions for new SDG-related bodies, the national coordination secretariat and multi-sectoral reference group (covered in chapter 5) received the most consistent support in submissions.

### **Integration of the SDGs by Australian Government agencies**

3.86 The SDGs 'touch on all facets of the Australian Government's work'.<sup>218</sup> A recent UN report noted:

It is the public service that implements the national strategies and plans and plays an important role in the practical, day-to-day implementation. Hence, public servants need to have the understanding, incentives and mandates to work towards the realization of the SDGs.<sup>219</sup>

3.87 However, the committee heard that while a few government agencies are integrating the SDGs into their planning, reporting and communications, submitters perceived it to be insufficient overall. Dr Caroline Lambert, IWDA, said:

I think there's a real challenge within the Australian implementation of the SDG agenda to see it as a living document that will help guide policy decisions, budget allocations and legal changes...we're still waiting to see how domestic agencies, domestic departments, at the federal, state and local government levels, can take the SDG and use them as a mechanism to support their strategic planning, to support their ambitions for what they want to do and how they're going to measure success.<sup>220</sup>

3.88 Mr Purcell, ACFID, observed that some government departments, 'like Environment and Training, get it and are enthusiastic' while others are 'probably begrudging'.<sup>221</sup> Attendees at the 2018 Summit expressed the broad view that 'alignment to the SDGs for Government remains largely a retrofitting exercise, undertaken by individual departments within various government agencies, or is otherwise focused on activities in developing countries'.<sup>222</sup> A witness from ACOSS

215 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 5. See also the *German Sustainable Development Strategy: Summary*, 2016, (tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, ACFID, on 24 August 2018), p. 15.

216 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, p. 5.

217 UN, *Compendium*, 2018, pp. 7–8.

218 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 5].

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

220 Director of Research, Policy and Advocacy, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, pp. 28–29.

221 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 49.

222 The Australian Academy of Science and FEA, *Submission 108*, p. 5.

said that 'at most, the government views its domestic obligations around the SDGs as being to do with monitoring rather than as being a framework for action'.<sup>223</sup> She related Professor Peter Saunders' analysis:

...of what was required to reach the SDG targets on the poverty front. We are currently at 11.3 percent poverty rate for men, 12.2 percent for women and 17.2 percent for children. If we're going to halve that by 2030 we're talking about getting down to a rate of 5.7 percent for men, 6.1 percent for women and 8.6 percent for children. As he pointed out, it would require a radical change—a pretty drastic change—to current policy settings to get there. We certainly won't get there on the current policy settings.<sup>224</sup>

3.89 Therefore, organisations such as the CPD called for the SDGs to be more systematically incorporated into the 'roles and mission of other government departments'.<sup>225</sup> Volunteering Australia emphasised:

...that accountability measures at all levels of Government and within funding structures [are] largely absent, with no reporting obligations on the goals to primary funders, mandatory reporting and linkages with existing workplans, activities or programs. It is vital that local, State/Territory and Federal Governments work together to update reporting processes across jurisdictions and align existing processes to include the 2030 Agenda.<sup>226</sup>

### **Government view**

3.90 Mr McDonald, PM&C, acknowledged: 'There are grey areas here about how enthusiastic different agencies should be, but certainly it's government policy to adopt and implement the SDGs'.<sup>227</sup> He accepted that there will be:

...different levels of commitment across the government, so some agencies like the Department of Environment have been very strongly pro SDGs, using them and applying them in delivering government policy, and others haven't seen them as useful in achieving the government's agenda.<sup>228</sup>

3.91 DFAT explained that 'Australian Government agencies are identifying the best ways to integrate the SDGs into their existing systems and strategies'.<sup>229</sup> Generally agencies have been taking a minimal approach:

The strong view was that, because basically...our core business is aligned to the SDGs, a minimalist approach made sense. Obviously there is a balance in that, because you don't want people to forget about the SDG agenda when they're talking about something that's obviously related to it.

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

224 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 34.

225 CPD, *Submission 129*, [p. 7]. See also EAROPH Australia; *Submission 14*, p. 3.

226 *Submission 127*, p. 5. See also UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 6.

227 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 21.

228 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 19.

229 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

Getting that balance is still a work in progress. We've very much taken this mainstreaming approach of saying that the SDGs are everyone's business. It's very easy in all of our business to see the alignment, but not everyone talks the language yet. It's still a work in progress to make sure everyone is talking about it when they should be talking about it...<sup>230</sup>

3.92 An official from the Attorney-General's Department elaborated:

...our core business and the day-to-day work is already very well aligned with goal 16, in particular. We can very clearly have a line of sight to how our existing work and priorities help to achieve particular targets under the Sustainable Development Goals. From that perspective we don't think that there's any need to realign our business planning, reporting processes et cetera around the SDGs, but we can certainly draw a clear line of sight to how we're working towards achieving particular targets under SDGs.<sup>231</sup>

3.93 The Department of the Treasury stated that though it is the lead agency for goals 8 and 10, the 'majority of policies and programs underpinning progress towards the goals are administered by other portfolios', and it 'has no plans to formally incorporate the SDG agenda into the annual report or work plans'.<sup>232</sup>

#### ***Alignment with existing policy and reporting frameworks***

3.94 The 2030 Agenda encourages parties to support the implementation of existing strategies in alignment with the SDGs, and the UN has signalled 'that existing international reporting mechanisms should be 'double purposed' to lighten the real or perceived reporting obligations'.<sup>233</sup> The VNR detailed examples of alignment between the work of government agencies and the SDGs, and stated that the SDGs 'are consistent with Australian Government priorities and long-standing efforts across a range of sectors such as health, education, agriculture, water, the environment, the economy, and gender equality'.<sup>234</sup> As an example, the Department of Health stated:

The design of Australia's health system is based around the principle of universal health coverage, a focal point of all health-related SDGs, and this provides a strong foundation to deliver this vision...The 2030 Agenda also aligns with Australia's focus on integrated and multi-sectoral approaches to health, health promotion and wellbeing.<sup>235</sup>

3.95 Mr Andrew Petersen, Chief Executive Officer of BCSDA also noted that the Australian Government is undertaking some actions addressing the SDGs, such as the:

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230 Mr Tinning, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 42.

231 Ms Moore, Assistant Secretary, International Cooperation, Attorney-General's Department, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 42.

232 Department of the Treasury, answer to question on notice, 24 August 2018 (received 6 September 2018).

233 AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 13.

234 *Report on the Implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 6, [original emphasis removed].

235 *Submission 143*, pp. 1–2.

...national waste audited accounts...That goes to SDG 12—responsible consumption and production. But it also goes to SDG 3. It also goes to SDG 8 and SDG 9...What's heartening to see is that, whilst a lot of people may claim the government is not doing anything on the SDGs, it actually is. It just perhaps has not identified it in such a way and highlighted to its key constituency that it is in fact doing some great work in that area.<sup>236</sup>

3.96 Some submissions agreed that governments should further integrate the SDGs with existing departmental and cross-government plans, coordination mechanisms and commitments.<sup>237</sup> Agencies also could be tasked with reviewing how domestic policies within their portfolios align with the SDGs.<sup>238</sup> Professor Carol Adams proposed that departments should report on their contributions to the relevant SDG targets and ensure they are incorporated into strategy, planning and resource allocation.<sup>239</sup>

3.97 Some submissions also referred to specific policy frameworks that should be aligned with the SDGs, such as the Bureau of Meteorology National Water Performance Report; second Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; and Australia's 3rd Universal Periodic Review of human rights in 2020.<sup>240</sup> UNAA noted recent examples that did not refer to the SDGs, including the 2017 Review of Climate Change Policies, Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Energy Market, and National Innovation and Science Agenda.<sup>241</sup>

3.98 The Closing the Gap framework could also be aligned with the SDGs, and the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples Co-Chair, Mr Rodney Little, emphasised that:

Australia has always maintained that there's a clear line of sight between the focus of the Human Rights Council on Indigenous rights, the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples...All of those other things that we talk about in the Redfern Statement Alliance, the Closing the Gap Refresh and the Close the Gap Campaign, if they are all related to each other, then that keeps the line of sight with all and enables the focus to not drift off to the sides and drift off to particular projects or activities and investment.<sup>242</sup>

3.99 The National Congress cautioned that:

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236 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 29.

237 IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 6; CBM Australia, *Submission 93*, p. 1.

238 World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 1.

239 *Submission 1*, p. 3.

240 Australian Water Association, *Submission 61*, [p. 2]; ACFID, *Submission 135*, pp. 6–7; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 6; Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security, *Submission 59*, p. 5; AHRC, *Submission 138*, p. 7; Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 9. See also UNICEF, *Submission 87*, p. 3.

241 *Submission 47*, pp. 5–6.

242 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, pp. 1, 4. See also National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 20 December 2018), [p. 2].

The SDGs should not form the sole goals for Closing the Gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. Concerted efforts should also be addressed to improve incarceration rates, child removals, family and community safety, housing and homelessness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which should also be priorities for Government policies and programs.<sup>243</sup>

3.100 Mr McDonald, PM&C, noted that senior officials from the Indigenous Affairs Group within PM&C have participated in the IDC and attended an international meeting. He told the committee: 'I expect to see more, going forward, on how the SDGs can actually influence policy' but noted 'we are at the early stages'.<sup>244</sup>

### ***Approaches to communication***

3.101 Officials expressed varying views about the extent to which agencies need to explicitly embed the SDGs into their internal and external communications and strategies. DoEE is 'actively integrating' the SDGs into its policies, strategies, programs and corporate documents.<sup>245</sup> It is also integrating the environment and energy goals into Australia's next State of the Environment digital platform and report in 2021.<sup>246</sup> An official agreed when asked whether 'the workload involved is not so much a new workload as a restructuring and a relanguaging'.<sup>247</sup> She described that DoEE's general approach to delivering and implementing the SDGs is 'to integrate that into our day-to-day business so it's not something that's on the side and difficult to get attention on; it's integrated into the day-to-day business across all of our different functions'.<sup>248</sup>

3.102 Several other agencies expressed enthusiasm for the SDGs and were in the process of incorporating the SDGs into their communications and strategies to varying degrees. For example, while the 'vast majority' of work done by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) was described as consistent and compatible with SDG 6, it was not typically labelled or 'co-tagged' as such domestically.<sup>249</sup> However, DAWR had developed an internal communications

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243 *Submission 154*, p. 5. See also ACFID, *Submission 135*, pp. 6–7; MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 5]; AHRC, *Submission 138*, pp. 7, 14; Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Submission 76*, p. 9.

244 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 23.

245 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 3.

246 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 3.

247 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 33.

248 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, pp. 33–34.

249 Mr Richard McLoughlin, Assistant Secretary, Murray Darling Basin Plan Taskforce Head, International Engagement Branch, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, pp. 34–35.

strategy, so is 'looking to increase references to the SDGs'.<sup>250</sup> In relation to the Department of Jobs and Small Business, the committee heard:

We are developing communication products, in the first instance with a focus on internal communication with other areas within the department, but that will very soon spread to our external face also.<sup>251</sup>

3.103 Some agencies described information sessions and seminars intended to inform staff about the SDGs, including the Department of Jobs and Small Business and the Attorney-General's Department.<sup>252</sup> The former included staff based in state offices via skype.<sup>253</sup> The Attorney-General's Department has encouraged staff members to refer to the SDGs in speeches and media releases where appropriate, and mapped the work of each branch against Goal 16.<sup>254</sup> DFAT has formed a 'reference group that gathers people from the across the department to talk about how the SDGs affect their work or are implicated in their work'.<sup>255</sup> Chapter 5 covers the IDC's development of external communication products that are expected to be available through DFAT's website in 2019.<sup>256</sup>

3.104 The committee heard that further government leadership and coordination on the SDGs should not be delayed.<sup>257</sup> GCNA, for example, stated that 'urgent action is required to meet the goals and to seize the opportunities'.<sup>258</sup> CPD agreed:

Given long lead times on investment and policy development, and the scale of the efforts needed on both fronts to achieve the 2030 goals, this potential can only be realised if we integrate the SDGs into governance, regulatory guidance and policy formulation now.<sup>259</sup>

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250 Mr Matthew Worrell, Assistant Secretary, Bilateral Market Access, DAWR, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 28. See also DAWR, answers to questions on notice, 24 August 2018 (received 14 September 2018).

251 Mr Malcolm Greening, Branch Manager, Labour Market Strategy Group, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 40.

252 Mr Greening, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 40; Ms Moore, Attorney-General's Department, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 37.

253 Mr Greening, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 43.

254 Ms Moore, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 37.

255 Ms Stephanie Aeuckens, Director, Global Development Branch, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 38.

256 Dr Cate Rogers, Dr Cate Rogers, Assistant Secretary, Development Policy and Education Branch, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, pp. 19–20; Mr McDonald, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 20.

257 Ms Garcia, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 6; Mr Clinton Moore, Vice-President of EAROPH Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 11.

258 GCNA, *Submission 130*, [p. 4].

259 CPD, *Submission 129*, p. 1.

# Chapter 4

## Partnering with other levels of government

4.1 Evidence received during the inquiry largely focused on the national government level. However, Australia's first voluntary national review (VNR) noted that 'many targets in the SDGs are in the purview of subnational levels of government'.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the committee heard that, to 'be effective, a governance structure that provides for coordination and communication across the Australian Government and between the three levels of government will be needed'.<sup>2</sup>

4.2 This chapter summarises suggestions from the evidence for how the Australian Government can support SDGs implementation at international, state and territory, and local government levels. It also includes some examples illustrating how other levels of government are engaging with the SDGs.

### International organisations

4.3 The evidence received by the committee on the challenges to SDGs implementation in Australia was similar to the situation in some other countries such as the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> However, the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) contended that Australia can learn from the countries ranked highest on the international SDG Index (Sweden, Denmark, and Finland) as well as 'the so-called developing nations that have been required to practise sustainable development for many years'.<sup>4</sup> The Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA) stated:

A review of best practice across international examples reveals several consistent elements for delivering effective progress toward the SDGs; clear lines of responsibility, clear mechanisms for engaging and communicating with a broad set of local and international stakeholders, a comprehensive/national strategy, planning and policy approach, with targets that refer to the SDGs and assessment of decisions, policies and programmes against SDG outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

4.4 Examples from submissions of international best practice in SDGs implementation are dispersed throughout this report.

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1 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2018, p. 12.

2 City of Sydney, *Submission 54*, p. 5.

3 House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, *Sustainable Development Goals in the UK*, Ninth Report of Session 2016–17, 2017, (tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, ACFID, on 24 August 2018).

4 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 9; Sachs, J., Schmidt-Traub, G., Kroll, C., Lafortune, G., Fuller, G., *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2018*, Bertelsmann Stiftung and SDSN, New York, 2018.

5 *Submission 130*, [p. 8].

4.5 While it appears as though the SDGs have not been a consistent or significant focus in ministerial statements and speeches to Parliament, submissions from Australian Government agencies provided examples of international engagement on the SDGs. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has engaged 'with international counterparts to discuss approaches to implementing the SDGs and preparing VNRs'.<sup>6</sup> Examples include bilateral discussions with development partners; high level development dialogues with Canada, the EU, Korea, Japan and Germany; and engaging on the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, and UN General Assembly Second Committee.<sup>7</sup> Australia has participated in each HLPF, and in 2017 sponsored a side event on closing the gender data gap.<sup>8</sup>

4.6 Similarly, the Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) stated that it would continue to review VNRs and work directly with other countries 'as appropriate to learn from their experiences'.<sup>9</sup> It has engaged on the SDGs at a range of levels with bilateral partners such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the European Union.<sup>10</sup> It has also engaged through multilateral organisations, and the majority of meetings and conferences of the parties to various international environmental agreements have standing agenda items on the 2030 Agenda.<sup>11</sup> An official from the Department of Jobs and Small Business also said that the SDGs 'are often a reference point for us in our consultations and discussions in the G20, the OECD, APEC and the International Labour Organisation'.<sup>12</sup>

4.7 Other examples include the Department of Health, which has been involved in the work of the OECD Health Committee to gradually integrate the SDGs into its reviews.<sup>13</sup> It also noted efforts 'to develop and implement policy that strengthens the alignment between sport policy and the SDGs'.<sup>14</sup> When Australia hosted and chaired the 9th Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting, a key agenda item was 'leveraging sport investment as a contributor to the SDGs and human rights'.<sup>15</sup>

4.8 Australian Government agencies have also contributed to the international effort to develop the global indicator framework and develop data systems to allow measurement and tracking of the SDGs. In particular, the Australian Bureau of

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6 *Submission 60*, p. 4.

7 *Submission 60*, p. 4.

8 DFAT, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 January 2019), [p. 2].

9 *Submission 115*, p. 9.

10 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 8.

11 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 8.

12 Mr Malcolm Greening, Branch Manager, Labour Market Strategy Group, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 40.

13 Department of Health (DoH), *Submission 143*, p. 10.

14 *Submission 143*, p. 11.

15 DoH, *Submission 143*, p. 11.

Statistics (ABS) has 'made a considerable investment, and played a key role', in developing the global indicator framework.<sup>16</sup> Geoscience Australia is also contributing to SDG data and monitoring at the international level, and its Digital Earth Australia analysis platform is being considered internationally as a tool for contributing to the SDGs and monitoring and reporting progress.<sup>17</sup> Some departmental submissions also claimed that their general, pre-existing contributions to UN bodies, such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, can be seen to support the SDGs.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Regional organisations***

4.9 Some submissions highlighted opportunities for Australia to further contribute to the regional implementation of the SDGs. Vision 2020 Australia suggested that:

Agreements through the ASEAN on the SDGs could lead to the betterment of many people throughout South-East Asia and Australia. It would also cultivate closer ties with a region of growing importance to the Australian economy and security.<sup>19</sup>

4.10 Business Call to Action and Business for Development further proposed that government support 'countries in the ASEAN region to develop inclusive business policy as a means to stimulate private sector contribution to the SDGs', including by assisting 'member countries in developing specific initiatives, platforms and support structures that will amplify SDG impact'.<sup>20</sup>

4.11 Some Australian Government agencies indicated that they were already engaging on the SDGs through regional organisations. DFAT, for example, noted that it has worked with the Pacific Island Forum.<sup>21</sup> It has also participated in:

...regional and global meetings including the G20 and the Spring Meetings of the World Bank, the ASEAN Ministers Workshop on 'Navigating the Headwinds of Sustainable Development in ASEAN', the Asia Pacific Development Effectiveness Facility conference on Financing the SDGs, and Asia-Pacific Forums on Sustainable Development.<sup>22</sup>

4.12 The Department of Health gave examples of contributing to the implementation of the SDGs through a range of regional organisations. For example in '2016 and 2017, Australian representatives participated in WHO [World Health Organization] regional consultations to develop a monitoring framework for tracking

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16 ABS, *Submission 96*, p. 3. Other entities, such as the CSIRO, also contributed to the global indicators. See Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 114, [original emphasis removed].

17 *Submission 74*, [p. 9].

18 Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, *Submission 86*, p. 6.

19 *Submission 19*, p. 5.

20 Business Call to Action and Business for Development, *Submission 101*, [p. 10].

21 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

22 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

progress of the health-related SDGs in the Western Pacific Region'.<sup>23</sup> The Department of Education and Training also noted that the then Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills, the Hon Karen Andrews MP, presented Australia's approach to SDG 4 to the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Fiji.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Group of Twenty***

4.13 Mr Garth Luke, an international development consultant, acknowledged that the UN can assist with the implementation of the SDGs, but argued that the 'G20 is the one co-operative body that has the heft, coverage, flexibility and economic focus to drive the achievement of the SDG's'.<sup>25</sup> He suggested that the 'achievement of the SDGs within all of the G20 countries would transform the global economy, would put pressure on all other nations to prioritise the SDGs and would provide much of the knowledge required by all other nations to achieve the Goals'.<sup>26</sup> He proposed that Australia promote and engage in discussions about the following commitments:

1. That achievement of the SDGs becomes a core part of the continuing G20 agenda.
2. That each G20 member nation commits to achieving the SDGs domestically.
3. That each G20 member also commits to actively support SDG achievement in their neighbouring region.<sup>27</sup>

4.14 Business Call to Action and Business for Development also suggested government:

Share learnings on approaches for stimulating the development of inclusive business with member economies of the G20 through the G20 Inclusive Business Platform. The Australian government can also play a leadership role in providing support to G20 members interested in developing aid policy that is supportive of inclusive business.<sup>28</sup>

4.15 The Department of Health indicated that, as a participant in the G20 Health Working Group in 2018, it contributed to considering the 2030 Agenda and a range of health issues including antimicrobial resistance, childhood malnutrition and obesity, and universal health coverage.<sup>29</sup>

### **Supporting SDGs implementation across different levels of government**

4.16 The committee heard that 'the SDGs are a global agreement between member states through the UN process but that their implementation...happens at the city or

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23 DoH, *Submission 143*, p. 10.

24 *Submission 144*, p. 3.

25 *Submission 66*, p. 1.

26 *Submission 66*, p. 2, [original italicisation removed].

27 *Submission 66*, p. 1, [original italicisation removed].

28 *Submission 101*, [p. 10].

29 *Submission 143*, p. 10.

municipal level'.<sup>30</sup> As a result, submissions agreed that the Australian Government needs to support subnational governments—state, territory and local governments—to implement the SDGs. Countries have adopted a variety of approaches towards SDGs implementation at different levels of government, as summarised in a UN report:

Some countries have used legal and regulatory instruments to enshrine the SDGs in the environment of subnational governments...In many countries, sub-national governments have been aligning their strategies and plans to the SDGs, sometimes under a legal mandate. Some national governments have issued guidelines or templates to facilitate these efforts. In some countries, genuine multilevel structures or mechanisms for planning have been put in place, where local and national governments can collaborate. The so-called 'SDG localization' effort has been wide-ranging...<sup>31</sup>

4.17 For example, it noted that:

In Indonesia, a Presidential regulation has been drafted, which ensures the role of provincial governments in leading the implementation of the SDGs at their level and in the districts under their supervision.<sup>32</sup>

4.18 Submissions made suggestions for promoting the implementation of the SDGs across Australia, including prioritising the SDGs within the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), developing a framework for measuring and reporting regional progress, and funding implementation by local governments.

### ***Council of Australian Governments***

4.19 Professor Rod Glover, Deputy Director of the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI), identified the federal system 'as one of the big challenges that not many people have spoken about in the SDG space in Australia', noting 'how this works in a federal system, how it relates to COAG processes or intergovernmental processes, is something that has been underdone'.<sup>33</sup>

4.20 Several submissions proposed that COAG should play a larger role in implementing the SDGs in Australia across different levels of government.<sup>34</sup> It was suggested that COAG 'is the appropriate body to oversee achievement of the SDGs', partly because it includes representation of local governments, ensuring a 'whole of

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30 Professor Jago Dodson Global Advisor, UN Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 52.

31 Dr Nina Hall and Professor Karen 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. xi.

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

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

34 The Public Health Association of Australia, *Submission 99*, p. 6; The Smith Family *Submission 45*, p. 6; South East Queensland special network joint submission, *Submission 53*, [p. 4].

governance approach that is both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'.<sup>35</sup> The Centre for Policy Development (CPD) described how:

COAG could play a crucial role co-ordinating action and accountability on the SDGs across different jurisdictions, as well facilitating sharing of innovations and best practice from local and state governments that are already advanced in their use of the SDGs.<sup>36</sup>

4.21 MSDI argued that the SDGs should be 'incorporated in the deliberations and reporting of Ministerial Councils'.<sup>37</sup> World Vision Australia proposed that this be formalised through the development of an intergovernmental agreement on the SDGs to 'signal the Goals as a national priority and to unify action on sustainable development across Australian jurisdictions'.<sup>38</sup> RESULTS Australia recommended COAG 'considers Australia's progress towards meeting the SDGs domestically once per year, and agrees on actions to address those SDGs in areas where Australia is falling behind in implementation'.<sup>39</sup>

4.22 Some submissions supported the development of a COAG working group or subcommittee on the SDGs.<sup>40</sup> One submission suggested this 'could assist to overcome this lack of integration across tiers of government' and 'provide an integration function to mitigate the potential for siloed approaches'.<sup>41</sup> Another called for COAG to develop and resource a strategy for aligning existing state and territory reporting mechanisms with the goals.<sup>42</sup>

4.23 DoEE explained that the SDGs are considered through COAG processes to a certain extent, as the SDGs and 2030 Agenda 'are included for discussion in the forward agenda for meetings of the Senior Officials Group of the National Environment Protection Council and the Meeting of Environment Ministers over the 2018–19 period'.<sup>43</sup> The committee heard that the Australian Government representative, Ms Lin Hatfield Dodds, Deputy Secretary, PM&C, has taken the SDGs to COAG twice.<sup>44</sup> In describing the preparation of the first VNR, she stated:

PM&C [the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet] has provided information at COAG meetings, and at the official meetings that sit behind

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35 *Submission 14*, p. 2.

36 *Submission 129*, [p. 8].

37 *Submission 121*, [p. 5].

38 *Submission 25*, p. 2.

39 *Submission 71*, p. 2.

40 World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 3; Name withheld, *Submission 109*, p. 2; The Smith Family, *Submission 45*, p. 6.

41 Name withheld, *Submission 109*, p. 2.

42 Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS), *Submission 145*, [p. 2].

43 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 6.

44 Mr Jason McDonald, Chief Adviser, Domestic Policy Group, PM&C, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 17.

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the COAG meetings, since at least August 2017, and we've been distributing on an iterative basis relevant information to state, territory and local government contacts. We've been trying to not just have the Australian government forward facing and coherent but to work across all Australian governments.<sup>45</sup>

4.24 In response to a question on notice, PM&C advised that there 'has been no formal COAG statement about the SDG Agenda'.<sup>46</sup> It appears that the SDGs have not been a priority.

### ***Framework for SDGs implementation across different levels of government***

4.25 Many submissions proposed the development of a framework for monitoring and reporting SDG-related data that could be adopted by state, territory and local governments. Professor Jago Dodson, Global Advisor, UN Global Compact—Cities Programme, identified the need for a framework:

...because it's the national government—the federal government, in Australia's case—that has signed up to the SDGs and is responsible for reporting on progress against them. Therefore, there needs to be some kind of framework by which the federal government accounts for the performance of Australia as a country.<sup>47</sup>

4.26 He suggested 'a wider perspective is likely to be needed' and described 'setting up an effective monitoring and evaluation regime that can track the performance of municipalities, metropolitan areas or state governments in responding to the SDGs'.<sup>48</sup>

4.27 The Strategic Sustainability Consultants estimated over 100 of the 169 SDG targets are applicable at a local government level, and called for the Australian Government to engage with the Australian Local Government Association to 'encourage local governments to report annually on progress towards the achievement of the SDGs in a standardised format'.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, the City of Newcastle argued:

A detailed nationally driven research and data framework should be completed for implementation at the State and local level. This framework would address measuring, monitoring and reporting in a transparent manner. An integrated and consistent approach to data collection then allows for nuanced indicators of progress and reporting across relatively small geographic or local areas...A national data and delivery framework would reduce costs for councils and stop individual councils capturing information in different formats and having disparate data sets that can't be analysed to tell a state or national story. Data with the credibility that ABS

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45 Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2018, p. 152.

46 Answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 January 2018), [p. 4].

47 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 52.

48 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 52.

49 *Submission 50*, pp. 8, 20.

delivers is integral to reporting on global imperatives across all levels of government.<sup>50</sup>

4.28 It emphasised that 'a streamlined, integrated measurement framework for local government' would also facilitate comparisons between other local governments and identify best practice.<sup>51</sup> Councillor Nuatali Nelmes, Lord Mayor of the City of Newcastle warned that 'unless there's a way to capture the data at a local level and actually assimilate that and then assess it and report back on it, we're not going to be able to achieve these SDGs in the 15-year time frame'.<sup>52</sup>

4.29 The City of Melbourne also proposed that the Australian Government develop 'a reporting and evaluation framework [that] all levels of government and business can easily feed into, that doesn't contribute to [an] additional reporting burden'.<sup>53</sup> It suggested that a national SDGs scorecard 'should be filtered down throughout all levels of government and sectors of society'.<sup>54</sup> It highlighted that 'existing state and local government reporting processes could provide the mechanism to report performance towards the set national targets'.<sup>55</sup> The City of Sydney concurred:

Many local governments across Australia already have datasets that measure the wellbeing of their communities across a range of indicators and it may be possible that this data could be used to contribute to the overall picture of progress toward the SDG outcomes.<sup>56</sup>

4.30 Several submissions outlined the benefits of drawing data from regions within Australia into a national database or monitoring program. For instance, the Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH) Australia suggested that a 'national monitoring program is needed, one that is cross-sectoral and includes specific tailored targets and measures for cities, so as to effectively coordinate the activities and investments of states and territories and local communities'.<sup>57</sup> The committee heard that data from each level of government should be fed into a coordinated national spatial data infrastructure.<sup>58</sup> Submitters from the University of Melbourne agreed:

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50 *Submission 164*, p. 2.

51 City of Newcastle, *Submission 164*, p. 2.

52 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 9.

53 *Submission 68*, p. 3.

54 *Submission 68*, p. 5. See City of Melbourne SDGs Scorecard, *Opportunities and recommendations report 2017: Annual Plan Initiative 1.13* <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/sitecollectiondocuments/sustainable-development-goals.pdf>. One Stone Advisors also supported SDG dashboards for state and local governments (*Submission 90*, p. 1).

55 *Submission 68*, p. 5.

56 *Submission 54*, p. 11.

57 *Submission 14*, p. 3.

58 AURIN, *Submission 58*, p. 5.

Developing a platform that enables the harmonization of datasets that measure and monitor SDG indicators at different levels of governments...would minimize redundant efforts and encourage cooperation between different levels of governments, the private sector, academic institutions, and civil society organizations, enhancing evidence-based policymaking towards achieving the SDGs, and ensure accountability of all stakeholders.<sup>59</sup>

4.31 Some submissions suggested that a framework for subnational monitoring and reporting should be included in a national implementation plan.<sup>60</sup>

4.32 In response to a question regarding the possible inclusion of state, territory and local government area data on the Australian Government's reporting platform on the SDG indicators, the ABS stated:

Where appropriate and available the platform currently includes data at the state and territory level. For example, indicator 4.2.2. Local government area data can be supported by the platform if the Agency loading the data has obtained data and deems it appropriate.<sup>61</sup>

#### *Streamlining reporting requirements*

4.33 The City of Melbourne called for a collaborative review to understand the reporting requirements that already exist for local and state governments, in order to avoid a net increase in reporting burden and to ensure cities and communities can learn from each other.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the City of Newcastle stated:

Unless the SDGs are integrated or streamlined within existing reporting frameworks (e.g. IP&R) there is a risk of added costs to Councils, including increased resourcing to meet additional reporting requirements. It will be important that the Australian Government consult with State and Local Governments before developing new or modifying current reporting frameworks to ensure there is no net increase in reporting obligations.<sup>63</sup>

4.34 The University of Queensland identified examples of existing mechanisms that could be leveraged by the Australian Government to encourage state and local governments to support the SDGs:

- SDG implementation and metrics should be added to the COAG agenda with targets and milestones recorded in a COAG Performance Dashboard;

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59 Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety and Centre for Spatial Data Infrastructures and Land Administration, *Submission 75*, [p. 3].

60 Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN), *Submission 58*, p. 6.

61 Answer to additional written question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 17 January 2019), [p. 7]. 4.2.2 is: Participation rate in organised learning (one year before the official primary entry age).

62 *Submission 68*, pp. 4, 6. The City of Melbourne noted that existing reporting frameworks include those set out in state government legislation (such as the Victorian *Local Government Act 1989*), the Global Reporting Initiative, and individual council strategies and commitments.

63 *Submission 164*, p. 2.

- Requirements for environmental impact statements should be updated to better align with SDG requirements;
- Urban and regional development plans should be updated to include transport links; and
- Individual ministries should be required to develop, and report against, SDG implementation plans.<sup>64</sup>

4.35 The committee heard varying views about whether subnational levels of government should be encouraged or compelled to report progress against the SDGs. Mr Kennealy, for example, suggested state and local governments should have the option to report against the SDGs.<sup>65</sup> In contrast, Professor Carol Adams suggested that governments 'should be required to report on their material contributions to the SDGs and their material negative impacts on the achievement of the SDGs'.<sup>66</sup>

4.36 A recent UN report summarised some international approaches to monitoring and reporting progress against the SDGs at subnational levels of government:

Vertical integration at the level of monitoring, evaluation, follow-up and review is not common, but there are innovative examples from different regions. In some countries, the national level recognizes sub-national and local SDG indicators, or supports their development. Some countries also ensure that SDG implementation is monitored at the sub-national level, either through central government efforts, through the establishment of sub-national monitoring structures, or through joint, multi-level structures and mechanisms. Such joint mechanisms are observed in several European and Latin American countries, among others.<sup>67</sup>

### ***Supporting implementation at the local level***

4.37 The Addis Agenda acknowledged that, generally, 'expenditures and investments in sustainable development are being devolved to the subnational level', and included a commitment to 'support local governments in their efforts to mobilize revenues as appropriate'.<sup>68</sup> This requires 'adequate capacities, resources and decision-making power, and some estimate that decentralising responsibilities in the absence of such conditions may stall implementation'.<sup>69</sup>

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64 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Submission 76*, p. 10.

65 *Submission 69*, p. 3.

66 *Submission 1*, p. 3.

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

68 UN, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)—Resolution 69/313*, p. 11.

69 UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, *Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 7.

4.38 Mr Clinton Moore, Vice-President of EAROPH Australia, identified raising capacity within local governments as a priority.<sup>70</sup> The City of Melbourne suggested that the Australian Government provide practical support to state and territory governments to implement the SDGs, '(potentially in the form of grant funding, toolkits, guidelines, networking opportunities, interactive website or events) to assist state and local governments to deliver on the SDGs'.<sup>71</sup> UNAA called for the Australian Government to provide resources 'to 'demystify' the SDGs, and to make them more widely understood'.<sup>72</sup>

4.39 Healthy Cities Illawarra (HCI) and the University of Wollongong have formed an intersectoral collaboration implementing the SDGs at the local level. HCI is 'closely connected to local government' and its board includes representatives from local councils.<sup>73</sup> Mr Justin Placek, General Manager, HCI, told the committee:

We are acting at a regional level in pursuit of the SDGs, and to date have resourced all of our local cross-sector engagement ourselves. Unfortunately this is not sustainable either. To accelerate Australia's pursuit of the SDGs, the federal government will benefit greatly by piloting a regional intersectoral approach to the SDGs, developing a replicable and scalable model with local indicators and effectively operationalising the approach across the country. We are seeking three years project funding as a catalyst to adequately resource the research, community engagement, analysis and creation of such a model.<sup>74</sup>

4.40 Councillor Nelmes noted that budget expenses for local government are 'often predominantly around infrastructure delivery', and noted that the SDGs 'help you look at how you can do that in a more efficient way, to actually have a quadruple bottom line effect that is positive in all respects'.<sup>75</sup>

### **Examples of state and territory government implementation**

4.41 MSDI noted that state and territory governments 'have a key role across most of the SDG and therefor[e] it is vital that they be actively involved in SDG implementation'.<sup>76</sup> Mr Moore, former Local Pathways Fellow and current Vice-President of EAROPH Australia, suggested:

...the state government level, in the context of the SDGs, is perhaps not talked about as much as the local and the national, but, if you have

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70 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 11.

71 *Submission 68*, p. 5.

72 *Submission 47*, p. 2.

73 Mr Placek, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 17.

74 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 16. See also answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 15 November 2018) [p. 1]; Mrs Sandra McCarthy, President of HCI, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 20.

75 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 10.

76 *Submission 121*, [p. 5].

something like planning, for example, where local governments are asked to interpret a planning scheme, that is determined by a state government.<sup>77</sup>

4.42 Mr Jason McDonald, then acting Chief Adviser, PM&C noted the 'different level of engagement on the SDGs across the different states' and indicated that some have been more active than others.<sup>78</sup> Some submissions provided examples of how state and territory governments are beginning to engage with the SDGs. For example, WWF-Australia noted:

...the Victorian government has a VicHealth Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Grant to look at well-being research. The NSW government tasked the Greater Sydney Commission with a priority on how to integrate SDGs with their work particularly SDG11 on Sustainable Cities. However, an effort will need to be made to ensure a more comprehensive uptake across all jurisdictions.<sup>79</sup>

4.43 Professor Glover added that 'at the state government level, the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability here in Victoria is using the SDGs framework to just do things differently and to do her reviews quite differently on a range of issues that are not just environmental issues but cut across economic and social'.<sup>80</sup> MSDI also noted that some state and local government bodies are starting to use the SDGs as 'a benchmarking and planning tool'.<sup>81</sup> For instance, the Victorian state government-owned water corporation Melbourne Water 'has used the SDG framework to consider the costs and benefits of alternative capital works proposals'.<sup>82</sup> MSDI provided the following example:

...in considering whether to upgrade a sewer that was spilling into the Dandenong Creek environment, Melbourne Water looked at options that would best achieve SDG outcomes relating to health (SDG3), sustainable cities (SDG11), infrastructure (SDG9) and biodiversity (SDG15). This process led Melbourne Water to choose to expend funds on restoring the upstream creek and catchment and improving the ecology and amenity of the area rather than the traditional method of building a new sewer pipe.<sup>83</sup>

4.44 In relation to New South Wales, Councillor Nelmes stated: 'I haven't really seen a broadscale discussion [about the SDGs] in the state, but what I have seen are opportunities for advocacy from local government up to state and federal to encourage the adoption'.<sup>84</sup> However, Ms Andrea Spencer-Cooke, Partner at One Stone Advisors, recounted working:

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77 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 13.

78 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 18.

79 *Submission 79*, p. 6.

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

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

82 MSDI, *Submission 121*, [p. 4].

83 *Submission 121*, [p. 4].

84 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, pp. 8, 10.

...closely with the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage. Through their Sustainability Advantage program they have been actively promoting the SDGs among their corporate and organisational membership. ...they're a very enlightened government organisation...In terms of dealings with government I have had excellent dealings at the state level through that body in terms of awareness of the SDGs and desire to promote them.<sup>85</sup>

### ***Australian Government engagement with the states and territories***

4.45 The Secretary of PM&C wrote to state and territory counterparts in August 2017 inviting them to contribute case studies to the first VNR.<sup>86</sup> Some Australian Government agencies have also sought to engage further with state and territory government officials on the SDGs. For example, DoEE noted:

At the officer level, we have reached out to our counterparts in state and territory governments on a number of occasions—to seek their engagement in SDG events, to seek input for the Voluntary National Review and to identify possible data sources that support the SDG Indicators....We received a strong response from state and territory governments following our request for case studies of work underway across Australia on the environment and energy Goals.<sup>87</sup>

4.46 DoEE has been 'working to strengthen our engagement with our state and territory counterpart agencies through more regular interactions and to identify opportunities for potential collaboration'.<sup>88</sup> Dr Rachel Bacon, First Assistant Secretary, Policy Analysis and Implementation Division, identified:

...willingness from states and territories in relevant environment related Commonwealth state forums to discuss the SDGs as a highly relevant agenda to the issues that we're tackling nationally and also to participate in things like the VNR exercise. There are lots of things happening in lots of different jurisdictions, including at the very local level.<sup>89</sup>

4.47 The Department of Health also stated that it 'will continue to advocate for opportunities to discuss and consider the 2030 Agenda within existing fora to ensure a strong and cohesive national approach'.<sup>90</sup>

4.48 In contrast, a number of Australian Government agencies acknowledged that while their work is consistent with the SDGs, they have not tended to explicitly refer to the goals or 2030 Agenda. For example, an official from the Department of Jobs and Small Business noted that the SDGs had not arisen as an agenda item during his

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85 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 5.

86 Ms Hatfield Dodds, PM&C, Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, *Committee Hansard*, 22 May 2018, p. 152.

87 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 6. See also Dr Rachel Bacon, First Assistant Secretary, Policy Analysis and Implementation Division, DoEE, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 35.

88 DoEE, *Submission 115*, p. 6.

89 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 35.

90 DoH, *Submission 143*, p. 11.

engagement with state colleagues.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, an official from the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities indicated he had not recently engaged with states and territories or local governments explicitly on the SDGs, and suggested 'awareness in the states would vary among agencies and among individuals in those agencies'.<sup>92</sup> The committee heard from the Attorney-General's Department:

There are multiple different examples of where the work of both the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and our state equivalent agencies are already aligned with the goal 16 targets. But we haven't specifically sought to reach out to state and territory government agencies in relation to the SDGs and to put that within the framework of the SDG agenda at this stage.<sup>93</sup>

### *International examples of state initiatives*

4.49 The Global Compact—Cities Programme provided the example of the Paraná, a state government in Brazil that is 'leading nationally and globally with an integrated approach to SDG implementation'.<sup>94</sup> Paraná's integrated approach to the SDGs has the following six pillars:

- Formal commitment of all the municipalities of Paraná to the SDGs;
- Training of municipal administration officers to develop projects that meet the SDGs with the support of the private sector;
- Alignment of SDG priority and eligible indicators for the State of Paraná;
- Development of technological solutions, such as Business Intelligence and the Bank of Good Practices, for integrated management of indicators;
- Incorporation of SDGs into the State budget. As early as 2018, the State will have its first thematic budget fully aligned with the goals of the SDGs;
- Provision of government accounts based on the SDGs, through a model being developed by the Court of Audit of Paraná for both state accounts and municipal accounts.<sup>95</sup>

4.50 Key lessons from Paraná's approach include:

...to appoint one lead agency with carriage for bringing all departments together, have all department[s] analyse their current priorities and reporting systems in relation to alignment with SDGs and pool this data centrally but share responsibility for implementation. This process requires

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91 Mr Malcolm Greening, Branch Manager, Labour Market Strategy Group, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 40.

92 Mr Richard Wood, Acting Executive Director, Portfolio Coordination and Research, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 41.

93 Ms Karen Moore, Assistant Secretary, International Cooperation, Attorney-General's Department, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 42.

94 Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Submission 103*, [p. 4].

95 Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Submission 103*, [p. 4].

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a mandate from the highest levels of government and ideally needs to be linked to central budgets that then cascade to the municipal level.<sup>96</sup>

4.51 The Global Compact—Cities Programme noted that similar integrated approaches are being implemented in Honolulu and the state of Sao Paulo.<sup>97</sup>

### **Examples of local government implementation**

4.52 The committee heard that local governments are also crucial in implementing the SDGs, as the Strategic Sustainability Consultants described:

It is at this level that meaningful results can be achieved in areas such as recycling, infrastructure, infant health and tackling climate change. Local government is also the best conduit to community engagement with the 2030 Agenda through public forums and community events.<sup>98</sup>

4.53 The Australian Academy of Science and Future Earth Australia agreed the 'combination of practical goal-setting and implementation may, indeed, have its greatest potential for transformational leverage at the city-region level'.<sup>99</sup> Councillor Nelmes stated:

...a lot of those on-the-ground outcomes, whether it's around waste collection, sewer, access to clean drinking water—all of those municipal type services that local government provides, on top of the community and cultural services—are done at a very local level.<sup>100</sup>

4.54 The Global Compact—Cities Programme suggested that there is 'a wealth of sustainability activity at the local government level, but most of this is not articulated in connection to the SDGs'.<sup>101</sup> Submissions generally agreed that while there are a few active local governments and cities (as detailed below), many local governments have not engaged with the SDGs. For example, Ms Nikki Jordan, Team Leader, Sustainability Integration, City of Melbourne, undertook a desktop review for Victoria and 'nothing really came up'.<sup>102</sup> She explained that there 'is interest but no-one really knows what to do'.<sup>103</sup>

4.55 CSIRO acknowledged the work of some local governments, such as the Melbourne City Council, but stated 'the direct experience of CSIRO researchers indicates that appreciation [of the SDGs] is heterogeneous across Australia's jurisdictions'.<sup>104</sup> WWF-Australia suggested leading cities should 'share their

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96 Global Compact—Cities Programme, *Submission 103*, [p. 4].

97 *Submission 103*, [p. 4].

98 *Submission 50*, p. 8.

99 *Submission 108*, p. 7.

100 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 8.

101 *Submission 103*, [p. 2].

102 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 52.

103 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 52.

104 *Submission 85*, p. 11.

leadership model with other capital city councils along with other local governments'.<sup>105</sup>

4.56 There are resources available online for localising and implementing the SDGs at the local level, such as the SDGs Cities Guide.<sup>106</sup> A UN report noted that '[a]ction at the local level is critical to realise most of the targets', and stated:

An increasing number of initiatives are being promoted by national and subnational governments to foster vertical integration across levels of government to implement the SDGs. However, there are still few examples of full and effective vertical integration across national, subnational and local levels for SDG implementation.<sup>107</sup>

4.57 Mr McDonald, Chief Adviser, PM&C, told the committee at a hearing in December 2018 that there were no plans to link formally with local government networks on the SDGs.<sup>108</sup>

### ***Integrating the SDGs into local government planning***

4.58 The literature supports 'the development of long- and medium-term spatial plans for state/local implementation of the national vision and sectoral strategies'.<sup>109</sup> The City of Melbourne argued that the SDGs should be 'localised' for state and local governments to 'address specific issues that are relevant in a local context that work to contribute to the national and global effort'.<sup>110</sup> EAROPH Australia agreed local governments should embed the SDGs in their planning.<sup>111</sup>

4.59 The committee heard that some local governments are 'taking really strong action and using the SDGs to inform their own sustainability and development frameworks'.<sup>112</sup> For example, the City of Melbourne stated: 'As a major Australian capital city, we have a key role to play in localising and addressing the issues articulated in the Goals'.<sup>113</sup> It is 'commencing work to incorporate the SDGs into strategic planning processes'.<sup>114</sup> Ms Jordan described:

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105 *Submission 79*, p. 6.

106 SDSN and German Cooperation Deutsche Zusammenarbeit, *Getting started with the SDGs in Cities: A guide for stakeholders*, 2016, <https://sdgcities.guide/> (accessed 19 September 2018).

107 Dr Hall and Professor Hussey, *Supplementary submission 37.1*, UN, *Working together*, p. xi.

108 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 23; PM&C, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 January 2018), [p. 6].

109 Mr Cameron Allen, Professor Graciela Metternicht and Associate Professor Thomas Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, pp. 4–5.

110 *Submission 68*, p. 5. See also Ms Glenys Jones, *Submission 104*, p. 5.

111 *Submission 14*, p. 3.

112 Ms Alice Ridge, Acting Director of Policy and Advocacy, ACFID, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 50.

113 *Submission 68*, p. 1.

114 *Submission 68*, p. 3.

We've integrated them into our new strategy development guidelines. So when anyone in the organisation is developing a new strategy they will have to refer to the SDGs, together with the megatrends that have been articulated for the City of Melbourne...We are also looking at integrating into the Municipal Strategic Statement, which sets vision for the city.<sup>115</sup>

4.60 The City of Sydney has embedded the SDGs into the overarching local strategy, *Sustainable Sydney 2030*.<sup>116</sup> Ms Andrea Beattie, Executive Manager, Strategic Outcomes, City of Sydney, characterised this as 'a plan for the delivery of the SDGs in our local area'.<sup>117</sup> The Perth Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council is also incorporating the SDGs into its planning processes.<sup>118</sup>

4.61 Councillor Nelmes explained that every local government area in New South Wales is required to develop an adopted community strategic plan under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.<sup>119</sup> She described how the City of Newcastle, in consultation with the community, aligned their holistic community strategic vision with the SDGs.<sup>120</sup> When asked by the committee if this alignment entailed a major administrative change, she responded:

No. The SDGs were embedded in the work we were already delivering. What we have done is aligned it with our strategy and what SDGs align with different parts of the strategy.<sup>121</sup>

4.62 She told the committee:

The way we have done it is by looking at our seven strategic objectives for the city—they are around transport; protected environment; vibrant, safe and activated public spaces; inclusive community; liveable and built environment; smart and innovative city; and open and collaborative leadership—and then mapping the appropriate SDGs that meet and match with the achievement of those seven overall strategies for the city.<sup>122</sup>

4.63 The Central Coast Council also considered local government community strategic planning to be 'a vehicle for enabling greater understanding and awareness of the SDG in the wider community'.<sup>123</sup> It completed 'an extensive community engagement project to develop the Central Coast Community Strategic Plan' which

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115 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 53.

116 *Submission 54*, p. 2. See also Ms Andrea Beattie, Executive Manager, Strategic Outcomes, City of Sydney, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 15.

117 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 15.

118 Australian Government, *Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2018, p. 12.

119 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 9. See also City of Newcastle, *Submission 164*, p. 1.

120 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, pp. 7, 9; City of Newcastle, *Submission 164*, p. 1.

121 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 10.

122 *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 8.

123 *Submission 155*, [p. 2].

links eight community planning areas to relevant SDG.<sup>124</sup> HCI and UOW also reiterated the importance of 'incorporating the SDG narrative into the governance frameworks' of local governments and networks, such as local government area community strategic plans.<sup>125</sup> They noted that, following community consultations, Wollongong and Shellharbour councils have revised their community strategic plans to incorporate the SDGs.<sup>126</sup>

### ***Communicating about the SDGs at the local level***

4.64 Several submissions representing local areas emphasised the importance of connecting the 2030 Agenda to community values. The Central Coast Council noted:

For the SDG to become part of the vernacular of people in place, we accept that people must first identify with their own aspirations, for themselves, their children, community, opportunity and environmental areas, and, that local government is best placed to connect citizens and communities to the SDG.<sup>127</sup>

4.65 The City of Newcastle echoed this view.<sup>128</sup> Ms Beattie, City of Sydney, said:

...the issues that sit behind the Sustainable Development Goals are things that our community cares about and wants us to act on. So it's the issues that sit behind them, and it's how you talk about them, rather than if you present the 17 goals and the 169 targets...it's not a language that the community would understand.<sup>129</sup>

4.66 Mr Placek, HCI, explained:

We need our people to feel that we own these things...I think both our submission and the submission from the City of Sydney are about community engagement versus this top-down compliance issue. If we go this compliance route with the SDGs I think it's going to become really hard work. But if we engage our communities around it, I think that's where the energy and the power will come from.<sup>130</sup>

4.67 The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples also called for the SDGs to be implemented in connection with the needs of local people, stating:

We stress that a myopic focus on national statistics has led to a failure to account for the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in remote and regional communities. Local solutions, based

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124 *Submission 155*, [p. 2].

125 *Submission 134*, p. 3.

126 Mr Placek, *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 17.

127 *Submission 155*, [p. 2].

128 *Submission 164*, p. 1.

129 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 19.

130 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 19.

on the expertise and experiences of community members, must play a greater role in any implementation of the SDG.<sup>131</sup>

### *International examples of local level initiatives*

4.68 Submissions provided examples of how different countries have approached implementing the SDGs at the local level. For instance, WWF-Australia stated:

Cities such as New York, Sydney, and Davao in the Philippines are all using the SDGs as a framework for achieving their respective visions by balancing economic, social and environmental needs and opportunities.<sup>132</sup>

### *US Cities Index*

4.69 Several submissions nominated the United States (US) Cities SDG Index as an example of international best practice.<sup>133</sup> The Index includes a consolidated database of indicators to monitor sustainable development in America; a snapshot of where cities stand on SDGs implementation to help identify priorities for early action in each city; and a list of data gaps that are hindering cities' and the federal government's ability to effectively monitor sustainable development at the local level.<sup>134</sup> The Index has been applied to the 100 most populous cities in the US.<sup>135</sup> The City of Melbourne noted:

San Jose, Baltimore and New York City are taking steps to implement the SDGs within their jurisdictions. They are surveying how their citywide plans and data monitoring systems could be made more holistic and ambitious, consulting local stakeholders to define priorities, and developing strategies to achieve sustainable development through evidence-based policy and investment.<sup>136</sup>

4.70 The City of Melbourne noted '[t]here has been no work undertaken in the Australian city context to take a similar approach'.<sup>137</sup> Ms Jordan told the committee:

It would be great to see some kind of benchmark between cities...I think what's missing is some direction from the federal government around how the SDGs translate to the city level...We talked about doing a localisation process at the City of Melbourne but, if we did that in isolation, we didn't think it would mean much. But if you could benchmark yourself against Adelaide and get a bit of competition going, that could also help inform where you spend your dollars in terms of developing programs.<sup>138</sup>

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131 *Submission 154*, p. 3.

132 *Submission 79*, p. 10.

133 City of Sydney, *Submission 54*, p. 11; City of Melbourne, *Submission 68*, p. 6; Mr Clinton Moore, *Submission 78*, p. 6.

134 City of Melbourne, *Submission 68*, p. 6.

135 City of Sydney, *Submission 54*, p. 11.

136 *Submission 68*, p. 6.

137 *Submission 68*, p. 6.

138 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 52.

## 4.71 She elaborated:

There would be indicators that would be common to all cities, which would feed into the national indicators and then, complementary to that, there would be local indicators that would be relevant to each council, whether it is a major capital city or a regional area. So, you would probably need the cities index and then maybe a regional version to sit beside it...there needs to be some kind of framework for councils to work collaboratively towards. There is just nothing there at the moment...We don't really know how we can help the government live up to its commitments.<sup>139</sup>

*City Partnerships Challenge*

## 4.72 Professor Dodson described the City Partnerships program as:

...a model of engagement where it works with cities—principally municipalities—but also local civil society and local private sector academia to identify projects through which all the partners can come together to give support, which will enable the implementation of the SDGs.<sup>140</sup>

4.73 EAROPH Australia suggested this approach could be used to help accelerate action on sustainable urban development via the official development assistance program and effective cross-sectoral partnerships.<sup>141</sup>

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139 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 52.

140 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 51.

141 *Submission 14*, p. 5.

# 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].

### *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

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.

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.



## Chapter 6

### Supporting the SDGs through official development assistance

6.1 The committee heard that supporting the implementation of the SDGs in other countries offers Australia the opportunity to promote the prosperity and stability of its region, and bolster its international reputation.<sup>1</sup> Former Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, connected funding the SDGs in Australia's region with regional security and Australia's national interest, stating:

The stability, prosperity and security of our region is second only to the defence of Australia. And so therefore, we share very much our interest in ensuring particularly our Pacific partners lift their economic growth and prosperity. For that reason, Australia has stepped up its engagement in the Pacific...We invest our funds in this way not only because Australians are generous, we believe in supporting our neighbours, but more importantly, this is for us an important way of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which are not just in our regional interest, but more importantly in our own national interest.<sup>2</sup>

6.2 Professor John Thwaites, Chair of the Monash Sustainability Development Institute (MSDI) explained that Australia is:

...surrounded by developing countries where the Sustainable Development Goals are a very high priority. The classic example of that is Indonesia, where the whole Sustainable Development Goals process is led by the President...For Australia, if we're going to build our relationship in the region, the goals are a fantastic platform to do that. We can provide a lot of real assistance in implementing the goals across Asia, and for that I think there'll be huge benefits to Australia in terms of trade, business, soft power and better security.<sup>3</sup>

6.3 This chapter addresses the integration of the SDGs into Australia's aid program, and summarises perspectives about the extent to which Australian aid should be targeted towards particular goals. It ends with various views on how to fund Australia's support for the SDGs overseas.

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1 PwC, *Submission 30*, [p. 6]; Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Submission 96*, p. 3.

2 Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator the Hon Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, 'Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative: The Big Picture on Small States', *Speech*, Chatham House, London, 16 April 2018.

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

## Integration of the SDGs in Australia's aid program

6.4 Submissions generally supported the integration of the SDGs into Australia's official development assistance (ODA) program. For example, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID):

...strongly advocates for the SDGs to be affirmed in the purpose of Australia's aid program, and integrated across its thematic and geographic policies, programs, reporting, and performance benchmarks. The SDGs provide internationally consistent goals that should be at the heart of Australia's overseas development assistance.<sup>4</sup>

6.5 A few submissions argued that changes are needed to make achieving the SDGs the primary purpose of the ODA program.<sup>5</sup> WFF-Australia noted that 'there is little indication that aid investment decisions are in any way guided by the Goals', and posited that the 'aid program prioritisation is often inconsistent with the SDGs' commitment to 'reach the furthest behind first'.<sup>6</sup> However, submissions largely agreed that aspects of the ODA program, particularly relating to gender equality and disability inclusive development, are in alignment with the SDGs.<sup>7</sup> The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) was congratulated for integrating the SDGs through its ODA program by Mr Lachlan Hunter, National Executive Director of the United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA).<sup>8</sup>

6.6 The *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* 'highlights the centrality of the SDGs in providing the framework for global efforts and notes the opportunity that the SDGs provide for Australia to share our experience with partners around the world'.<sup>9</sup> DFAT stated that the 'ODA program is aligned with and makes a strong contribution to the SDGs', and addresses each goal in some way.<sup>10</sup> The specific details are outlined in DFAT documentation, including online Aid Fact Sheets and the annual public performance of Australian aid reports.<sup>11</sup> This documentation is being gradually updated, and references to the SDGs are expected to increase as the SDGs are further embedded into DFAT policies'.<sup>12</sup> The aid investment plans in place for all bilateral development partners will also integrate the SDGs as they are progressively updated.<sup>13</sup>

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4 *Submission 135*, p. 10.

5 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 11; Global Citizen, *Submission 22*, p. 7; World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 1.

6 *Submission 79*, p. 7.

7 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 11.

8 *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 2. See also Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 10.

9 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 3.

10 *Submission 60*, pp. 3–4, 12.

11 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 6, 11; Dr Cate Rogers, Assistant Secretary, Development Policy and Education Branch, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 14.

12 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 11.

13 Ms Stephanie Aeuckens, Director, Global Development Branch, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 24 August 2018, p. 38.

DFAT indicated that this approach to gradually incorporating the SDGs is shared by many other countries including Switzerland, South Korea, Turkey and the United Kingdom (UK).<sup>14</sup>

6.7 DFAT described supporting developing country partners to engage with the SDGs.<sup>15</sup> It noted Australia's contribution of funds through a range of mechanisms, including Indonesia's SDG Secretariat, the Asia Pacific Development Effectiveness Facility and international efforts to help Pacific Island countries mobilise development finance and implement the SDGs. Australia also supported the development of the *Pacific Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Development*.<sup>16</sup>

### *Examples of how Australia is supporting the SDGs*

6.8 The table below maps Australia's six investment priorities against the specific SDGs with which they align.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 1—Alignment of the Australian Government's development policy investment priorities with the Sustainable Development Goals**

Investment priority	Relevant SDG
Infrastructure, trade facilitation and international competitiveness	2, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 17
Agriculture, fisheries and water	1, 2, 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15
Effective governance: policies, institutions and functioning economies	8, 10, 16 and 17
Education and health	3, 4, 5 and 6
Building resilience: humanitarian assistance, disaster risk reduction and social protection	1, 11 and 13
Gender equality and empowering women and girls	All SDGs in particular 5 and 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 11

Source: DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 11.

6.9 DFAT and other submitters provided examples of how the ODA program has contributed to the SDGs overseas, some of which are summarised briefly below.

14 Submission 60, p. 5.

15 Submission 60, pp. 3–4.

16 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 11–12.

17 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 11.

*Economic resilience: SDGs 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 16 and 17*

6.10 DFAT outlined its commitment to offering aid for trade, supporting infrastructure development, improving workplace safety and equality and contributing to economic resilience in the Pacific. The Australian Government committed to increase aid for trade to 20 percent of the total ODA budget by 2020.<sup>18</sup> Oxfam Australia cautioned that though 'well-managed international trade is important for economic growth, it does not guarantee poverty reduction', and argued that Australia's current focus 'does not appear to be sufficiently inclusive to maximise poverty reduction benefits'.<sup>19</sup> The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) further suggested that gender analysis be integrated into aid for trade activities.<sup>20</sup>

6.11 DFAT described its support for 'infrastructure development in the region in transport, energy, large-scale water and communications, including through co-financing projects such as the Cao Lanh bridge in Vietnam, and better linking communities to markets and services'.<sup>21</sup> Australia has also worked with 'innovative organisations that help partner governments prepare investment-ready projects for the private market'.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Australia 'is helping improve workplace safety and reduce gender discrimination in the global supply chain' through the International Labour Organization's Better Work Programme, which has 'has benefited more than 1.5 million workers (80 percent of whom are women) in factories across Asia'.<sup>23</sup>

6.12 Other economic development programs include Australia's Market Development Facility, which 'stimulates investment, business innovation and regulatory reform to create additional jobs and increase income for poor women and men in rural and urban areas in five countries in the Indo-Pacific region'.<sup>24</sup> DFAT asserted that the 2017 Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus 'will promote the economic development of Pacific Island Forum countries through greater regional trade and economic integration'.<sup>25</sup>

*Education: SDGs 4, 5, 16 and 17, and contributes to all SDGs*

6.13 Education exchange programs such as the Australia Awards and the New Colombo Plan 'build genuine two-way engagement, advancing development and deepening economic, academic and cultural links'.<sup>26</sup> DFAT has also worked with partner countries to 'help them deliver comprehensive and high-quality education

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18 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 9–10.

19 *Submission 18*, p. 12.

20 *Submission 98*, pp. 6–7.

21 *Submission 60*, pp. 9–10.

22 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 9–10.

23 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 9–10.

24 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 12.

25 *Submission 60*, pp. 9–10.

26 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 10–11.

services', including 'a particular focus on enabling those most marginalised in society, including girls, ethnic minorities and children with a disability, to receive quality education'.<sup>27</sup> In 2016–17:

Australian ODA assisted over 965,000 more children to enrol in schools across the region, trained approximately 126,000 teachers to help improve education quality and helped almost 5,200 women and men to gain recognised post-secondary qualifications, with programs demonstrating strong links to labour market needs.<sup>28</sup>

### *Environmental goals*

6.14 Australia donated \$93 million to the Global Environment Facility over 2014-18, assisting developing countries to 'undertake activities to improve biodiversity conservation and protection, land regeneration, protection of international waters, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and management of persistent organic pollutants and the ozone layer'.<sup>29</sup>

6.15 Australia also supports the Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio, which 'seeks to improve the integrated management of water, energy and food in three major Himalayan river basins covering Pakistan, northern India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan'.<sup>30</sup> DFAT noted that it 'includes a strong cross-cutting focus on both gender and climate change issues'.<sup>31</sup>

### *Gender equality: SDGs 5, 8, 10 and 16 and underpins all SDGs*

6.16 Many submissions highlighted Australia's commitment to supporting gender equality as a cross-cutting issue and 'driver' of development. IWDA recognised that Australia 'has shown a clear commitment to SDG 5 and to the importance of gender equality for sustainable development'.<sup>32</sup> The recent OECD peer review of Australian aid described Australia's commitment to mainstreaming gender as 'strong' and 'particularly noteworthy', and stated that 'Australia continues to champion gender equality internationally, regionally and bilaterally'.<sup>33</sup>

6.17 DFAT referred to specific policies that prioritise gender equality, including the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.<sup>34</sup> DFAT also provided examples of how it supports gender equality in the region. For example, the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for

27 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 10–11.

28 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 10–11.

29 Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE), *Submission 115*, p. 8.

30 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 12.

31 *Submission 60*, p. 12.

32 *Submission 98*, pp. 2–3.

33 OECD, *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Australia 2018*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 19.

34 *Submission 60*, p. 10.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2012–2020) 'works to increase the participation of women in the workforce, improves access to social protection programs and empowers women to influence change at the grassroots level'.<sup>35</sup>

6.18 Gender equality is mainstreamed across DFAT's activities, and it has 'a target that at least 80 percent of all its development efforts effectively address gender equality', regardless of sector.<sup>36</sup> Submissions were supportive of this target, though Oxfam Australia suggested it could be made 'more meaningful' by increasing the assessment process and allocating additional funding for programs prioritising gender equality.<sup>37</sup> IWDA further proposed that DFAT contractually require international organisations and contractors to work with local women's organisations.<sup>38</sup>

*Health: SDGs 3, 5, 16 and 17*

6.19 Australia 'supports countries to build strong, functioning health systems, which are critical to promoting stability and achieving sustainable economic growth'.<sup>39</sup> Examples include supporting the training of specialist non-communicable disease nurses in Tonga, improvements to family planning and maternal health services in Timor-Leste, and the Cambodian Government and other partners to provide free essential health care to the poorest 20 percent of Cambodians.<sup>40</sup>

6.20 The Indo-Pacific Health Security Initiative (\$300 million, 2017–22) will 'support efforts to prevent and contain disease outbreaks in the Indo-Pacific that have the potential to cause social and economic impacts on a national, regional or global scale'.<sup>41</sup> DFAT has worked with multilateral health organisations including the World Health Organization, United Nations Population Fund and UNAIDS, and has donated to partnerships such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.<sup>42</sup>

*Other areas in which Australia has expertise*

6.21 Australia's first Voluntary National Review (VNR) noted that the ODA program already 'reflects the relevant experience and expertise Australia can provide'.<sup>43</sup> CSIRO contended that:

...a key question to consider should be less about which SDGs Australia is best suited to achieving through our ODA program and more about

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35 *Submission 60*, p. 13.

36 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 10.

37 Save the Children, *Submission 84*, p. 26; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 6; WWF-Australia, *Submission 79*, p. 7; Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, pp. 18-19.

38 *Submission 98*, pp. 2–3.

39 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 9.

40 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 9.

41 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 9.

42 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 9.

43 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 110, [original emphasis removed].

introducing a process that is informed by complex systems analysis and helps to guide and consolidate investment decisions on transformational opportunities as they arise.<sup>44</sup>

6.22 Nevertheless, a few submissions identified particular areas of expertise and argued that these should receive more attention and resourcing through Australia's ODA program, such as agriculture, road safety, or water, sanitation and hygiene.<sup>45</sup>

6.23 Many submissions acknowledged Australia's statistical capabilities and expertise and called for the Australian Government to continue to invest in the collection of data (disaggregated by sex, age, income and geographic location) and building the capacity of national statistics offices across the region.<sup>46</sup> The committee heard that '[l]imited human and institutional capacity to collect and analyze quality data is one of the major challenges prevalent in Indo-Pacific countries'.<sup>47</sup> Data gaps are a particular problem in the Pacific.<sup>48</sup> Several submissions called specifically for better data collection on adolescents.<sup>49</sup>

6.24 Australia has been assisting 'developing country partners to strengthen their statistical capacity, and engaging in initiatives to improve data collection'.<sup>50</sup> For example, DFAT funds the Australian Bureau of Statistics to 'support regional statistical capability development and institutional strengthening' through five long-term partnerships with national statistics offices in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Pacific region.<sup>51</sup> DFAT has also provided some funding to the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions, which is 'supporting Pacific audit offices to identify gaps in national system preparedness and to provide national parliaments with practical recommendations to strengthen institutional arrangements

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44 *Submission 85*, p. 17.

45 See, for example, Business Call to Action (BCtA) and Business for Development, *Submission 101*, [pp. 7–8]; Crawford Fund, *Submission 8*, [p. 1]; Australasian College of Road Safety, *Submission 160*; Water Services Association of Australia, *Submission 38*.

46 See, for example, Mr Cameron Allen, Professor Graciela Metternicht and Associate Professor Thomas Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 7; Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 5; IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 11; ACFID, *Submission 135*, pp. 11–12.

47 The University of Melbourne Centre for Disaster Management and Public Safety and Centre for Spatial Data Infrastructures and Land Administration's, *Submission 75*, [p. 5].

48 See, for example, Peacifica, answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 27 November 2018), [p. 2]; Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Community and the Pacific SDG Partnership at UNDP, *2018 Pacific SDGs Progress Wheels*, 2018.

49 See, for example, Burnet Institute, *Submission 10*, p. 5; Oaktree, *Submission 42*, p. 2; UNICEF, *Submission 87*, pp. 24–27.

50 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 14. See also Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SDGs*, p. 23.

51 ABS, *Submission 96*, p. 6; ABS, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 17 January 2019).

to enable them to achieve the SDGs'.<sup>52</sup> Submissions provided a range of other examples of Australia's support for the data and reporting capacity of partner countries, such as:

- pioneering the Open Data Cube technology, which enables countries to freely access Earth observation data;
- providing \$12 million over the past five years to support the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy;
- contributing to innovative gender data and statistics initiatives including the Individual Deprivation Measure, the Making Every Woman and Girl Count program, and the kNOwVAW data program on violence against women; and
- engaging with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics to develop inclusive indicators for SDG 4.<sup>53</sup>

6.25 Australia has also contributed more broadly to the development of indicators and communicating these to partner countries.<sup>54</sup> For example, CSIRO has 'developed a comprehensive indicator set for Asia and the Pacific' and 'aims to support countries in that region to enhance their national policy efforts in achieving the SDG outcomes'.<sup>55</sup>

### **Possible prioritisation of particular goals**

6.26 The inquiry terms of reference question whether Australia's ODA should be consolidated to focus on achieving core SDGs. Many submissions emphasised the importance of particular SDGs, but only a minority suggested that they should be prioritised over other goals. For example, one witness suggested focusing on the first six SDGs until 2020 and then slowly building out to encompass other goals.<sup>56</sup> A few submissions argued 'peaceful and inclusive societies, justice and effective institutions are transformative components of the SDG framework' and so argued that Australia's ODA should be concentrated on achieving SDG 16, particularly in the Pacific.<sup>57</sup> However, some of these acknowledged Goal 16 should be pursued as part of a comprehensive approach, as its success depends on other SDGs such as 5 and 13.<sup>58</sup>

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52 Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH) Australia, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 December 2018), [p. 3].

53 Geoscience Australia, *Submission 74*, [p. 14], DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 14–15; Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SDGs*, pp. 18–19.

54 Dr Rogers, *Committee Hansard*, 7 December 2018, p. 21.

55 CSIRO, *Submission 85*, p. 37.

56 Miss Sarah Meredith, Country Director (Australia), Global Citizen, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 31.

57 Peacifica, *Submission 70*, p. 2; Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), *Submission 107*, [p. 3]; UNSW Law Society, *Submission 20*, p. 10; Dr Jarrett Blaustein, Dr Kate Fitz-Gibbon and Professor Rob White, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

58 Peacifica, *Submission 70*, p. 3; Dr Blaustein, Dr Fitz-Gibbon and Professor White, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

6.27 While acknowledging the need to be responsive to the priorities and needs of aid recipients, the majority of submissions agreed that the SDGs are integrated and indivisible, and therefore argued that Australia's ODA should not be consolidated to focus only on some specific goals.<sup>59</sup> This aligns with the preamble to the 2030 Agenda declaration, which stated that the SDGs 'are integrated and indivisible' and that the 'interlinkages and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the new Agenda is realized'.<sup>60</sup> ACFID agreed, and provided the following example of interconnectedness:

...decades of experience in gender equality have shown that gender equality outcomes are indivisible, and achievements in one area substantially improve a wide range of other opportunities. If you seek to promote a woman's leadership and participation in decision making for example, you must also address barriers to her receiving a quality education or having meaningful control over her reproductive health.<sup>61</sup>

6.28 CSIRO reasoned that it is more effective to focus on actions that advance multiple goals at once, and that focusing on 'individual SDGs is likely to be counter-productive in the longer term'.<sup>62</sup> For example 'pursuing certain forms of economic development (e.g. infrastructure development under Goal 8 and 9) without due consideration of environmental implications, and without addressing gender and social inclusion aspects, maximum benefit will not be realised, and there may be potential to do harm'.<sup>63</sup>

6.29 Therefore, instead of 'cherry-picking' goals, many submissions suggested Australia's aid program should focus on cross-cutting issues and systemic drivers, such as climate change and gender equality, instead of only supporting specific goals in isolation.<sup>64</sup> Prioritising investments with benefits for multiple SDGs 'will ensure potential to create transformative change that links economic prosperity with environmental concerns and social equity'.<sup>65</sup> Dr Caroline Lambert, Director of Research, Policy and Advocacy, IWDA, emphasised the 'transformative potential of

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59 See, for example, World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 8; Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Australia/Pacific, *Submission 55*, p. 5; Western Sydney University, *Submission 57*, p. 3; Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women Peace and Security, *Submission 59*, p. 8; Plan International, *Submission 67*, p. 2.

60 UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Resolution 70/1* pp. 1–2.

61 *Submission 135*, pp. 3–4. See also Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 2.

62 *Submission 85*, p. 7.

63 Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney (UTS), *Submission 102, Attachment 1*, p. 4.

64 See, for example, Edmund Rice Centre, *Submission 35*, p. 2, [original emphasis removed]; WWF-Australia, *Submission 79*, p. 8; IWDA, *Submission 98*, pp. 1–2; 350 Australia, *Submission 111*, p. 3; Josephite Justice Office, *Submission 113*, p. 2.

65 The Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS, *Submission 102, Attachment 1*, p. 5.

the entire SDG agenda...being able to maintain a focus on all 17 is really important'.<sup>66</sup> Some submissions also argued the ODA program should embed the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.<sup>67</sup> A few suggested other potential priority areas, such as capacity building and enterprise development or supporting public institutions.<sup>68</sup>

6.30 Submissions reiterated that these focus areas should be identified through consultation with partner countries on their priorities and local circumstances.<sup>69</sup> The committee heard that:

...we should focus on some goals in particular countries where the countries have also identified that they need support and assistance...We can't presume to know what the country particularly needs or wants.<sup>70</sup>

6.31 Ms Kelly Dent, Food, Climate and Humanitarian Advocacy Manger, Oxfam Australia, said:

We also need to take into account the priorities of our development partners with the relevant specific SDGs being addressed on a project-by-project basis, depending on the context on which the program is being delivered and ensuring maximum impact. But our aid program needs to tackle the SDGs as a whole if the future is to be sustainable and extreme poverty ended by 2030.<sup>71</sup>

6.32 DFAT agreed that the SDGs 'are inter-linked, with all goals contributing to and mutually reinforcing the progress of others', and 'were designed to be complementary, rather than being implemented independently of each other'.<sup>72</sup> DFAT explained its approach:

Each of Australia's developing country partners has a breadth of development priorities that intersect with numerous SDGs, with each country differing according to their national circumstances and needs. Therefore, the focus of Australian ODA is highly context specific and addresses the SDGs as a complementary package rather than seeking to prioritise one SDG over another. This allows us to address the complexity

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66 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 31.

67 See, for example, Fred Hollows Foundation, *Submission 36*, p. 6; Marie Stopes International, *Submission 82*, pp. 1–2.

68 See, for example, Dr Tapan Sarker, *Submission 15*, pp. 4–5; Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals, *Submission 151*, p. 8, [original emphasis removed]; Monash University, *Submission 120*, p. 5.

69 See, for example, Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 10; University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, p. 3; Plan International, *Submission 67*, p. 3.

70 Professor Caroline Homer, Co-Program Director, Maternal and Child Health, Burnet Institute, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 30. See also Mr Chris Turner, Executive Officer and Regional Director, Marie Stopes International Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 31.

71 *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 37.

72 *Submission 60*, p. 14.

of development challenges and ensure we are maximising our impact on promoting Australia's national interests by contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction in our region.<sup>73</sup>

6.33 DFAT considers local priorities when delivering aid, noting that 'Aid Investment Plans set out the priorities at the country or regional program level, which reflect discussions held with partner governments on their development priorities'.<sup>74</sup> The recent OECD review of the Australian aid program suggested that:

Australia could give more attention to the policy aspirations of its partner countries in the articulation of regional and country strategy documents, however. While Aid Investment Plans 'must be informed by consultation, they are not formally negotiated with or endorsed by partner government[s]'.<sup>75</sup>

6.34 Nevertheless, DFAT argued that Australia is working with 'partner countries to advance their development priorities, including the SDGs, particularly in our region and our immediate neighbourhood in Southeast Asia and the Pacific'.<sup>76</sup>

#### ***Localisation and prioritisation in partner countries***

6.35 It appears as though many of Australia's developing country partners have been engaging with the SDGs. For example, CSIRO noted that Goal 14 (life below water) was included in the 2030 Agenda only due to advocacy by Fiji and other countries.<sup>77</sup> Pacific nations are also 'localising' the SDGs and indicators for their circumstances and identifying local priorities.<sup>78</sup> A recent overview stated:

The Pacific has made a good start. Many countries have localised the goals, and aligned their own national plans and strategies. At a regional level, countries have worked together to select 132 SDG indicators (the Pacific Sustainable Development Indicators) that best tell the regional development story in the Pacific and have committed to regular reporting against these in order to closely monitor progress and focus attention where it is most needed.<sup>79</sup>

6.36 This localisation process was illustrated in the 2017 *Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development*.<sup>80</sup> Australia participated in the Pacific SDGs Taskforce, led

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73 *Submission 60*, p. 14.

74 *Submission 60*, p. 12.

75 OECD, *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Australia 2018*, p. 81.

76 *Submission 60*, p. 11.

77 *Submission 85*, p. 18.

78 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 8.

79 Catrina Rowe, 'Harnessing the power of data to tell a regional story', Pacific Office in Fiji, UNDP website, 16 September 2018.

80 UNAA, *Submission 47*, p. 9. See also Pacific Island Forum, *Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development*, September 2017.

by the Pacific Island Forum, which guided the drafting of the Roadmap.<sup>81</sup> The Roadmap identified a sub-set of 127 of the 232 SDG indicators, and five regional indicators.<sup>82</sup> Pacific countries will select indicators from this sub-set to align with their local contexts.<sup>83</sup> Peacifica listed the Pacific's six regional priorities as:

- Climate change and disaster risk reduction;
- Oceans and fisheries;
- Poverty reduction, reducing inequality and improving quality of education;
- Improving connectivity (ICT);
- Non-communicable diseases; and
- Empowering women and girls, and people with disabilities.<sup>84</sup>

6.37 There are a number of other regional strategies and roadmaps, including the 2017 *Regional Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*.<sup>85</sup> This included 'priority areas (including social development, disaster risk reduction, climate change, management of natural resources, connectivity and energy), implementation arrangements (with a focus on regional level cooperation), and a process to track progress on the SDGs'.<sup>86</sup>

6.38 The *United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018–2022* outlines the collective response of the UN system to the development priorities in 14 Pacific Island Countries and Territories, to 'enable the targeting of valuable UN resources to areas where they are most needed'.<sup>87</sup> It identifies the following six outcomes: climate change, disaster resilience and environmental protection; gender equality; sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment; equitable basic services; governance and community engagement; and human rights.<sup>88</sup>

6.39 Australia's partner countries are also localising the SDGs at the national level. For instance, PNG's new five year Medium Term Development Plan has been structured around the SDGs. The committee heard that 'all donor agencies are being asked to shift their own priorities within PNG, with a significant increase in funding being sought for infrastructure and activities which will contribute to inclusive

81 DFAT, answer to question taken on notice on 25 October 2018, Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee.

82 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SDGs*, pp. 24, 26.

83 Mr Allen, Professor Metternicht and Associate Professor Wiedmann, *Submission 17*, p. 7.

84 *Submission 70*, p. 5.

85 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SDGs*, p. 26; UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *Regional Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*, 2017.

86 Australian Government, *Tracking Australia's progress on the SDGs*, p. 26.

87 UN in the Pacific, *United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018 – 2022*, 2017, p. 15.

88 UN in the Pacific, *United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018 – 2022*, UN in the Pacific, 2017, p. 15.

sustainable economic growth'.<sup>89</sup> Vanuatu also has an overarching national sustainable development plan that embraces the SDGs, and Australia's aid program aligns with the priorities identified in Vanuatu's plan.<sup>90</sup>

6.40 Other nations including Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Fiji and the Solomon Islands are aligning their development strategies and policies with the SDGs.<sup>91</sup> Timor-Leste has released an implementation roadmap and established a SDGs working group to localise them in national development efforts.<sup>92</sup> While goals 5, 16 and 17 were identified as cross-cutting, IWDA did not indicate that Timor-Leste is prioritising only particular goals. Instead, a focal point for the SDGs has been identified in every line ministry and government agency, and responsible government agencies have been identified for each of the SDGs targets.<sup>93</sup> This consideration of how to implement all the SDGs is also illustrated in the report of the SDGs conference held in Timor-Leste with Victoria University in July 2017.<sup>94</sup>

### **Increasing Australia's support for the SDGs overseas**

6.41 This section includes suggestions from the evidence regarding the appropriate amount of Australia's ODA, and identifies various mechanisms for funding the implementation of the SDGs.

#### ***Amount of official development assistance***

6.42 DFAT stated that 'Australia's \$3.9 billion overseas development program (2017–18) makes a strong contribution to the SDGs'.<sup>95</sup> This represented 0.22 percent of Gross National Income (GNI).<sup>96</sup> Oxfam Australia described this as 'significantly lower than the OECD Donor Assistance Committee (DAC) average of 0.32 percent of GNI' and 'a significant abrogation of Australia's commitment to international aid'.<sup>97</sup> Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom all have aid budgets at the 0.7 target or above.<sup>98</sup>

6.43 Many submissions suggested that to effectively support the implementation of the SDGs in partner countries, Australia needs to increase its ODA. A number argued

89 EAROPH Australia, answer to question on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 December 2018), [p. 2].

90 EAROPH Australia, answer to question taken on notice, 7 December 2018 (received 18 December 2018), [p. 2].

91 IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 7.

92 IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 7; Peacifica, answer to question on notice, 2 November 2018 (received 27 November 2018), [pp. 3–4].

93 *Submission 98*, p. 7.

94 Victoria University Timor-Leste Reference Group, *Submission 65, Attachment 1*.

95 *Submission 60*, p. 11.

96 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 49.

97 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 49.

98 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 49.

that 'the diminished funds available for aid have severely constrained DFAT's ability to effectively respond to the challenges of achieving the goals'.<sup>99</sup> UNICEF noted that from '2012–2015, child related ODA decreased by 24 percent as compared to 17 percent for all other ODA from Australia'.<sup>100</sup> World Vision Australia warned '[t]here is growing concern that if the Australian Government does not act soon to restore aid to previous levels, we will fail to meet our commitments under the SDGs'.<sup>101</sup>

6.44 ACFID argued that 'the Australian aid program must be rebuilt' to work with developing countries to achieve the SDGs.<sup>102</sup> It proposed increasing Australia's ODA to 0.7 percent of GNI by 2030 through yearly increases to the budget.<sup>103</sup> This was also advocated by a range of other submissions, including development organisations and academics.<sup>104</sup> Oxfam Australia agreed on the need to increase the aid budget, but suggested this should be achieved 'well before 2030'.<sup>105</sup> The proposed increase aligns with the 2030 Agenda, which states that ODA providers will reaffirm their commitments:

...including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 percent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15 percent to 0.20 percent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries.<sup>106</sup>

6.45 The recent OECD peer review of Australian aid recommended 'Australia should re-introduce an ambitious target for increasing ODA against gross national income and set out a path to meet the target'.<sup>107</sup> However, Senator the Hon Fierravanti-Wells noted the:

...Lowy Institute's 2017 poll found that, as with previous years, Australians as a whole were largely unconcerned by reductions in our aid program. Although most people overestimated the aid budget, almost three out of

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99 University of Sydney, *Submission 52*, p. 6. See also Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS, *Submission 102, Attachment 1*, p. 4; RESULTS Australia, *Submission 71*, p. 5; Burnet Institute, *Submission 10*, p. 2; Oaktree, *Submission 42*, [p. 2].

100 *Submission 87*, p. 19.

101 World Vision Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 21.

102 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 10.

103 ACFID, *Submission 135*, pp. 6, 10.

104 See, for example, IWDA, *Submission 98*, p. 10; Global Citizen, *Submission 122*, p. 7; Equality Rights Alliance, *Submission 149*, p. 4; CBM Australia, *Submission 93*, p. 2; Vision 2020 Australia, *Submission 19*, p. 15; the Fred Hollows Foundation, *Submission 36*, p. 2; Dr Nina Hall and Professor Karen Hussey, *Submission 76*, p. 13.

105 Oxfam Australia, *Submission 18*, p. 8.

106 Target 17.2, UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Resolution 70/1*, pp. 11, 26.

107 OECD, *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Australia 2018*, p. 23.

four feel that the Government still spends either too much, or about the right amount on aid.<sup>108</sup>

### ***Mobilising private sector investment***

6.46 The Addis Agenda highlighted that international public finance, including ODA, can be used to mobilise additional resources from other sources.<sup>109</sup> It encouraged 'exploring additional innovative mechanisms based on models combining public and private resources such as green bonds, vaccine bonds, triangular loans and pull mechanisms and carbon pricing mechanisms'.<sup>110</sup> Ms Helen Steel, Chief Executive Officer of the Shared Value Project, explained that this approach is relevant in the Australian context, stating:

Government funding is not increasing, and I think one of the things that impressed us about DFAT's approach was realising that issue and trying to be innovative in considering how that shortfall effectively could be made up. I guess that's why they've come to business as part of the solution.<sup>111</sup>

6.47 ACFID also encouraged Australia to develop new and innovative blended finance approaches to 'lead the region in mobilising the trillions of dollars required to respond to specific strategic challenges that threaten to push vast numbers of people back into poverty, such as climate adaptation across the Asia Pacific'.<sup>112</sup> It suggested 'approaches might include developing intermediary financial instruments so that public aid funds can be used to leverage additional investment from private and philanthropic sources'.<sup>113</sup> Such approaches 'should be accompanied by strong aid assistance in the areas of governance, regulatory oversight and financial and institutional capacity-building to avoid pushing risky public-private partnerships onto taxpayers in developing nations'.<sup>114</sup>

6.48 The committee heard that the private sector 'can bring to bear capital, creativity, innovation, and expertise to help meet the SDGs' using Shared Value and inclusive business models.<sup>115</sup> Ms Steel described the Shared Value approach as 'a relatively new business strategy that puts achieving positive social and environmental

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108 Senator the Hon Fierravanti-Wells, 'Address to the Australian Council for International Development National Conference', Melbourne, 1 November 2017.

109 UN, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda)—Resolution 69/313*, p. 17. See also UN, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—Resolution 70/1*, p. 11.

110 UN, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda*, p. 21.

111 *Committee Hansard*, 29 October 2018, p. 47.

112 *Submission 135*, p. 14.

113 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 14.

114 ACFID, *Submission 135*, p. 14.

115 Cardno International Development, *Submission 64*, p. 1.

impact at the core of business for competitive advantage and profit'.<sup>116</sup> She explained to the committee that:

...we sense a danger of this becoming, in regard to the SDGs, a box-ticking exercise. Shared Value is very much a business strategy and something that companies embed, not a corporate social responsibility exercise, which is often a marketing exercise and an adjunct to normal business conduct.<sup>117</sup>

6.49 Cardno International Development stressed how such models can be used to 'identify and work towards mutually beneficial change for business and society'.<sup>118</sup>

6.50 Business Call to Action (BCtA) and Business for Development suggested that DFAT should seek to increase the number of companies engaged in the aid program using inclusive business approaches.<sup>119</sup> They described how other countries are utilising inclusive business as a means of achieving sustainable development, including the Inclusive Business Action Network established by the Germany and the European Union 'to scale and replicate the development of inclusive business globally'.<sup>120</sup>

6.51 The OECD peer review of Australian aid found that Australia is increasingly using its ODA program to 'leverage domestic resources and to engage the private sector'.<sup>121</sup> For example, DFAT has supported the Shared Value Project, which promotes shared value approaches to business in the region.<sup>122</sup> An example of a project supported by the Share Value Project is Digicel PNG, which works in partnership with DFAT to distribute solar systems to off-grid households and businesses.<sup>123</sup>

6.52 Further, the Business Partnerships Platform (BPP) 'contributes directly to accelerating Australia's collaboration with business, to address development challenges in our region through co-funding'.<sup>124</sup> The BPP matches funding from business for projects that support commercial objectives and aid investment priorities, leveraging the experience and ability of business to address development challenges.<sup>125</sup> The InnovationXChange—Frontier Innovators also provides support for

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

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

118 *Submission 64*, p. 1.

119 *Submission 101*, [p. 11].

120 *Submission 101*, [p. 6].

121 OECD, *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Australia 2018*, p. 19.

122 *Submission 60*, p. 7.

123 Shared Value Project, *Submission 49*, p. 5.

124 Business Call to Action and Business for Development, *Submission 101*, [p. 5].

125 DFAT, 'What is the Business Partnerships Platform?', <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/who-we-work-with/private-sector-partnerships/bpp/Pages/what-is-the-business-partnerships-platform.aspx> (accessed 11 July 2018).

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'innovative businesses in the Asia-Pacific that are delivering impact through their work' supporting the SDGs.<sup>126</sup>

6.53 DFAT has also supported other initiatives to mobilise private sector funding, including through multilateral partnerships such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF).<sup>127</sup> Australia contributed \$200 million over 2015–2018 to catalyse climate investments from the private sector, and DFAT reported 'USD1.3 billion has been approved for eleven private sector proposals, making up 50 percent of the GCF's total project portfolio'.<sup>128</sup>

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126 Business Call to Action and Business for Development, *Submission 101*, [p. 5].

127 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 13–14.

128 DFAT, *Submission 60*, pp. 13–14.



# Chapter 7

## Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 The committee's inquiry into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and associated 2030 Agenda was a challenge due to the large scope of the agenda. There are 17 goals and 169 supporting targets, covering a broad swathe of economic, social and environmental policy issues. Adding to the challenge, the inquiry received more than 160 written submissions from diverse sectors including business, international development, education and civil society. Throughout the inquiry, the committee spoke with some highly engaged sectors, organisations and individuals. However, despite all UN member states committing to the SDGs in 2015, awareness for the general population of the SDGs is generally low across Australia, and the inquiry has been the first time the parliament has engaged with the SDGs in a comprehensive manner.

7.2 This chapter outlines the committee's view of the potential benefits and costs of implementing the SDGs in Australia. The chapter then summarises the current domestic policy landscape and details recommendations for improving implementation by strengthening the leadership and coordination role of the national government; establishing awareness-raising initiatives; and creating partnerships with other levels of government, the private sector and civil society. The chapter ends with the committee's conclusions regarding Australia's support for the international implementation of the SDGs through official development assistance.

### Potential benefits, opportunities and costs

#### *Benefits and opportunities*

7.3 Throughout the inquiry, the committee heard that implementing the 2030 Agenda in Australia and achieving the SDGs would bring many benefits. For example, a key aspect of the 2030 Agenda is the pledge 'that no one will be left behind'. The committee recognises that acting on this commitment would improve conditions for many Australians, including people with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Evidence to the inquiry also highlighted that the 2030 Agenda provides the opportunity to improve domestic policy coherence by identifying where initiatives in one sector may impact on efforts in other areas.

#### *Costs*

7.4 The committee heard that public and private investment will be required to meet the funding gap across a range of sectors in order to achieve the SDGs. A few submissions also noted that some businesses may face costs as they transition towards using more sustainable practices in alignment with the SDGs. However, the committee also heard that sustainable business practices can be more efficient, and is aware that many businesses are already seeking to align with the SDGs because they are perceived as an opportunity for business rather than a burden.

7.5 Implementing the SDGs could also impose additional reporting requirements on private and public sector organisations—unless reporting is effectively aligned

with existing processes. Acknowledging that pursuing the SDGs will require some financial investment, the committee nevertheless believes that the potential costs are outweighed by the business and employment opportunities and other benefits presented by the SDGs.

### **Current situation**

7.6 The committee acknowledges the committed and innovative efforts to engage with the SDGs made by some civil society organisations, businesses, universities, schools, leading local governments and a number of Australian Government agencies. However, the committee was concerned to hear that the SDGs are generally unknown across Australia, apart from some highly engaged stakeholders. It further heard that when the SDGs are considered, they are often mistakenly viewed as only relating to overseas aid. While Australia is supporting other countries to implement the SDGs through its aid program, the committee firmly believes that Australia also needs to concentrate on domestic implementation to make the most of the opportunities presented by the agenda.

#### ***The Australian Government's approach***

7.7 Several departmental officials asserted that the Australian Government has been adopting a whole of government approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda. Central to this approach is an interdepartmental committee (IDC) at the Deputy Secretary level, which is co-chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). The IDC has been supported by working groups at the First Assistant Secretary (FAS) and executive officer level.

7.8 Individual agencies are responsible for integrating the SDGs into their policies, communications and reporting. Various agencies have also been designated 'lead' and 'supporting' responsibility for domestic reporting on each of the SDGs for Australia's first Voluntary National Review (VNR). Australia presented its first VNR in 2018, and has committed to presenting at least one more before 2030. The Australian Government has also supported the development of an online reporting platform on the SDG indicators and a website with domestic case studies and links to resources on the SDGs.

#### ***Concerns regarding the approach***

7.9 Submissions revealed some scepticism regarding the Australian Government's level of commitment to the SDGs, and the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. The committee heard that, while officials indicated that they were implementing a whole of government approach, individual agencies are engaging with the SDGs to different degrees without clear standards or an agreed communication strategy. Several lead and supporting agencies failed to make written submissions to the inquiry. An agency was also initially resistant to appearing at a public hearing, despite having lead responsibility for more than one goal. The committee was concerned that this did not reflect the necessary and avowed commitment and coordinated leadership on the SDG agenda. Moreover, unlike many other countries, Australia does not have mechanisms for coordinating the national implementation of

the SDGs, such as an overarching plan, formal consultative platform or regular progress report.

7.10 The committee is concerned that this lack of focussed national leadership is hindering the implementation of the SDGs. The terms of reference for this inquiry did not include an assessment of Australia's progress against the SDGs. However, evidence indicated that Australia has the scope to do better domestically against most of the SDGs, particularly with regards to climate action and reducing inequalities. In 2018, Australia was ranked 37<sup>th</sup> in the world by the independent Bertelsmann Stiftung and SDSN SDG Index. The committee is concerned that this is likely to continue to fall unless the national government takes on a more active role in advancing the SDGs. Evidence to the inquiry identified many suggestions for how to improve the Australian Government's approach to the SDGs to ensure that consistent action is taken across all agencies. The key suggestions are summarised below.

## **National government role**

### ***National implementation plan***

7.11 The committee believes that a national implementation plan is needed to 'localise' the SDGs to the Australian context and coordinate their implementation. A plan should be developed to identify national priorities, designate responsibilities to stakeholders and establish a regular reporting mechanism. The plan should identify priorities by incorporating existing Australian concerns in consultation with civil society and the private sector. Approaches such as SDG interaction mapping and scenario modelling could also assist.

### **Recommendation 1**

**7.12 The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, publish a national Sustainable Development Goals implementation plan that includes national priorities and regular reports of Australia's performance against the goals.**

### ***Regular reporting***

7.13 The committee notes that the reporting associated with the plan should go beyond narrative case studies to actually evaluate Australia's progress against the SDG targets and indicators. The committee views the Australian Government's online reporting platform on the SDG indicators as providing a foundation for regular analysis reports. The site will better illustrate Australia's performance once the colour-coding system is updated to reflect whether Australia is improving or declining against an indicator (rather than just showing whether data is provided for each indicator or not).

7.14 The disaggregation of data sets is an ongoing challenge. However, the committee is reassured that the Australian Bureau of Statistics is seeking to improve disaggregated data collection in partnership with other government agencies, and encourages efforts to monitor whether anyone is being left behind.

7.15 Evidence indicates that parliaments can contribute to the implementation of the SDGs through their legislative, budgetary and oversight functions. The committee

believes that the Australian Government should provide a regular public update to parliament on progress against the SDGs. This would help to inform the Australian public and parliament and facilitate further engagement with the SDGs.

## **Recommendation 2**

**7.16 The committee recommends that the Australian Government provide an indicator-based assessment to parliament at least every two years that tracks Australia's performance against the Sustainable Development Goals.**

### *Voluntary national reviews*

7.17 The committee was pleased with aspects of the first VNR, including the use of artwork by the Wiradjuri artist Jordana Angus. Evidence regarding the stakeholder consultation process was also largely positive, though the committee heard that advocates for people with disability were not sufficiently included. This review consultation process should have provided a solid basis for ongoing engagement across the community.

7.18 Australia has committed to presenting a second VNR before 2030, and some other countries are intending to present three. The committee recommends that the Australian Government begin considering how future VNRs will be developed. In particular, it should consider how to ensure stakeholder views are incorporated into the document, and how to demonstrate progress without any baseline data from the first VNR. While the first VNR adopted a narrative and case study approach, future VNRs should include quantitative data showing Australia's performance against the SDGs, targets and indicators in line with the data collected on the Australian Government's reporting platform on the SDG indicators.

## **Recommendation 3**

**7.19 The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, establish an approach to preparing future voluntary national review/s that ensures data on Australia's performance against the goals is included.**

### *Coordination secretariat*

7.20 While the IDC will continue until 2030, it meets relatively infrequently and is comprised of high-ranking officials. Therefore, the evidence identified a need for a dedicated secretariat to support the work of the IDC. This could also support the development of the national implementation plan, prepare Australia's future VNR/s and partner with civil society and the private sector to support national action on the SDGs.

7.21 The committee acknowledges the work in DFAT over many years in the SDG agenda through the international development of policy and reporting responsibilities. DFAT has led the Australian response, through its portfolio, and has clearly provided support across other areas. Significantly, there appears to be a perception across the community, and in some areas of the public sector, that the SDG agenda relates principally to our international programs, in line with the earlier Millennium Development Goals process. The committee believes that there must be greater

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understanding of the domestic policy commitments and effective coordination. This should be reflected in the location and resourcing of a coordination secretariat.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**7.22 The committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a national Sustainable Development Goals secretariat to provide ongoing support to the interdepartmental committee, develop a national implementation plan and provide effective coordination of Australia's actions to implement and report on the SDG agenda. The location of the secretariat should be determined by government to ensure the best use of resources.**

#### *Alignment of Australian Government agencies and policies with the SDGs*

7.23 The committee acknowledges that some agencies have embraced the SDGs, particularly DFAT and the Department of the Environment and Energy. The latter has committed to embedding the SDGs into departmental planning and integrating information on the environment and energy SDGs, targets and indicators into Australia's next State of the Environment report. However, evidence to the inquiry indicated that many Australian Government agencies are failing to integrate the SDGs into their communications, policies and reporting frameworks.

7.24 The committee encourages all agencies to make a greater effort to engage with the SDGs. In particular, the committee supports the consideration of the SDGs when other documents and strategies are updated, such as the second Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and the 'refresh' of the Closing the Gap targets and indicators.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**7.25 The committee recommends that Australian Government agencies integrate the Sustainable Development Goals across all internal and external websites, strategies and policies as they are updated.**

7.26 The committee was pleased that a number of agencies referred to the SDGs in their recent annual reports, noting that there was some variety in the extent of the information provided. Most referred to the SDGs in broad terms, without including data on how the agency was making positive or negative contributions to the SDGs. At least one 'lead' agency did not refer to the SDGs in its most recent annual report at all. Therefore, the committee recommends that the Australian Government develop a framework that agencies can adopt to report against the SDGs consistently.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**7.27 The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee and Department of Finance, develop a framework to ensure that agencies include the Sustainable Development Goals in their annual reporting by 2020–21.**

#### **Increasing awareness and understanding**

7.28 The committee was pleased to receive evidence from some highly engaged sectors about their awareness of the SDGs. However, the committee believes there is

scope to increase awareness about the SDGs across the Australian Government and the general community.

### ***Sharing best practice across government***

7.29 There is a general lack of understanding of the SDGs across Australian Government agencies. However, the body of literature on the SDGs is developing rapidly, and many information resources are being developed to guide the implementation of the SDGs, including some tailored specifically for governments. The committee encourages agencies to engage in best practice reviews. The committee recommends that this information should be regularly disseminated through the IDC.

### **Recommendation 7**

**7.30 The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, regularly share resources on international best practice across government to improve Australia's performance against the Sustainable Development Goals.**

### ***Promoting awareness beyond government***

7.31 Evidence showed that a few sectors have a high level of awareness and understanding of the SDGs, such as international development groups, large businesses and the tertiary sector. However, the committee is concerned that Australia will not fully benefit from the 2030 Agenda unless the general community's awareness of the SDGs improves.

7.32 The committee views that some sectors require guidance on how to understand and implement the SDGs. For example, while sustainability is one of three cross-curriculum priorities under the Australian Curriculum, the committee was concerned to hear that school educators have found it difficult to access and interpret Australian information on the SDGs.

7.33 The committee is pleased that some links to information resources and case studies are already provided on the Australian SDGs website, launched in June 2018. The committee recommends that the IDC undertakes a literature review and updates the resources section regularly with the website partner Global Compact Network Australia. In addition, the committee recommends that the Australian Government partner with a range of stakeholders to develop and disseminate guidance on implementing and reporting against the SDGs for fields that have identified a need for Australian information, such as primary schools. The committee notes that the partnership between CSIRO and the Australian Council for International Development to develop the online SDGs Toolkit may provide a model.

### **Recommendation 8**

**7.34 The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, undertakes a literature review relating to the Sustainable Development Goals and updates the links to the information resources on the Australian website at least annually. Where gaps are identified,**

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**the committee recommends that the interdepartmental committee partners with stakeholders to develop and disseminate Australian information resources.**

### *Awareness-raising campaign*

7.35 The committee understands that DFAT has engaged a communications company to develop some SDGs communication products, but that the Australian Government does not have a communications strategy for the SDGs. A few agencies are developing their own communication strategies. The committee is concerned that this is unnecessarily duplicating work, and risks sending a confused message to stakeholders across and beyond government. Therefore, the committee recommends that the IDC develop a strategy for communicating the SDGs to reduce duplication and ensure that agencies are adopting consistent messaging.

7.36 The committee supports suggestions from submissions that communication initiatives should emphasise the link between the SDGs and Australian values, and highlight how individuals, communities and businesses can contribute to progress against the SDGs. However, the evidence was mixed regarding whether the Australian Government should establish a nation-wide awareness campaign or whether it would be more effective to tailor smaller campaigns to specific stakeholder groups. Therefore, the committee recommends that the IDC assess the merits of each approach before developing the communication strategy.

## **Recommendation 9**

**7.37 The committee recommends that the interdepartmental committee develop a Sustainable Development Goals communication strategy for the Australian Government after assessing the merits of a national awareness campaign compared to targeted communication campaigns for specific stakeholder groups.**

### **Partnerships with other levels of government**

7.38 State and territory governments and the local government association did not participate in the inquiry. While participation was voluntary, it means that the committee did not receive much evidence on SDGs implementation at these levels. However, the committee was pleased to hear of a few local governments that have been embracing the SDGs, including the Cities of Melbourne, Sydney and Newcastle. Innovative approaches are also being implemented at the local level, including through the Western Australian SDG Network and the partnership between Healthy Cities Illawarra and University of Wollongong.

### *Council of Australian Governments*

7.39 The committee was disappointed to learn that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has not made a formal statement about the SDGs agenda. This should be rectified to ensure a strong and collaborative national approach to implementing the SDGs. The committee acknowledges the discussion of the SDGs at meetings of the Senior Officials Group of the National Environment Protection Council and the Meeting of Environment Ministers. The committee believes that similar approaches should be taken by other COAG councils and advisory and support bodies.

## **Recommendation 10**

**7.40 The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with state and territory governments to add the Sustainable Development Goals to Council of Australian Governments council agendas for regular discussion.**

### *Data collection and reporting*

7.41 Evidence illustrated that many of the SDGs, targets and indicators relate to activities being undertaken at the state, territory and local levels. Therefore, the committee recommends that the Australian Government consider how information from these jurisdictions could be collated. The committee considers that the Australian Government reporting platform on the SDG indicators could provide a platform to bring together available data, but acknowledges that this would require the cooperation of multiple levels of government. Therefore, the committee recommends that opportunities to achieve this be considered through the COAG process. The committee is aware that this level of cooperation is likely to be a challenge, however, believes that longer-term projects are worthwhile in the context of the 2030 Agenda, and suggests that it would have value even if only achieved for some indicators.

## **Recommendation 11**

**7.42 The committee recommends that the Australian Government seek, through the Council of Australian Governments process, to assess opportunities to include data from state, territory and local government levels on its reporting platform on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators.**

### *Information resources and guidance*

7.43 The committee heard concerns that implementing the SDGs might create extra planning and reporting requirements for state, territory and local governments. Therefore, the committee recommends that the national implementation plan be accompanied by information resources to support state, territory and local governments integrating the SDGs into their plans, policies and reporting processes. The committee notes that implementation toolkits, guidelines, networking opportunities or events to share best practice may be of assistance.

## **Recommendation 12**

**7.44 The committee recommends that the Australian Government provide information resources alongside the national implementation plan to support state, territory and local governments to create their own plans supporting the implementation of the SDGs in their jurisdictions.**

## **Partnerships with civil society and the private sector**

7.45 The committee recognises that the participation of civil society and the private sector is crucial for the achievement of the SDGs. However, the committee is concerned that these stakeholders have generally only engaged with the SDGs to a limited and uneven extent. There needs to be a strategy for structured engagement and support, particularly celebrating and sharing achievements and best practice.

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### *Multi-sectoral reference group*

7.46 The committee acknowledges the consultation undertaken in preparation for the first VNR by Australian Government agencies with stakeholders from state and territory governments, local governments, civil society organisations and the private sector. The benefits of this consultative process were emphasised by participants throughout the inquiry. However, the committee is concerned that there is no mechanism for stakeholders to inform the domestic implementation of the SDGs on an ongoing basis.

7.47 Therefore, the committee considers that this consultative approach should be formalised through the establishment of a multi-sectoral reference group to consult with and advise the IDC. This group should include representatives from academia, civil society, the private sector, and marginalised groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with disability. The group should advise on the development of the national implementation plan and future VNR, and enhance partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector. In addition, the group could identify opportunities to streamline SDGs reporting requirements with existing reporting frameworks.

### **Recommendation 13**

**7.48 The committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a representative, multi-sectoral reference group to advise the interdepartmental committee on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals until 2030.**

### *Partnerships with civil society*

7.49 The committee was pleased to hear examples of government and non-government organisations cooperating to advance the SDGs. For example, DFAT contributed funding to the civil society-led Australian SDGs Summit in March 2018. There have also been a range of other collaborative events, including, for instance, the co-hosted SDGs Forum on the environment and energy goals in 2017. The committee recommends that such support continues.

### **Recommendation 14**

**7.50 The committee recommends that the Australian Government continue to support civil society engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals, including by supporting events, summits and the development and dissemination of information resources.**

### *Partnerships with the private sector*

7.51 Evidence to the inquiry emphasised that the private sector is already contributing to the implementation of the SDGs in Australia through their business practices and investment choices. The committee heard that companies are eager to expand this contribution, and it is pleased that the Australian Government is partnering with businesses on the SDGs to a certain extent. For example, DFAT supports the Global Compact Network Australia, a business-led network that advances corporate sustainability and the private sector's contribution to sustainable

development. However, the committee is concerned that many businesses remain unaware of the SDGs.

#### *Guidance on reporting*

7.52 The committee is concerned with how to increase awareness without creating an additional reporting burden for businesses. Throughout the inquiry, businesses called for guidance on how to measure and report their impact on the SDGs. Some international and domestic resources are already being developed to support businesses reporting against the SDGs. Therefore, the committee recommends that the Australian Government partner with stakeholders in the private and tertiary sectors to build on these efforts and ensure Australian businesses have access to guidance on how to report against the SDGs in a transparent and streamlined way.

7.53 This would also reduce the risk of businesses superficially adopting the language of the SDGs without making substantive changes or acknowledging their negative impacts on the SDGs ('SDG-washing').

#### **Recommendation 15**

**7.54 The committee recommends that the Australian Government partners with private and tertiary sector stakeholders to develop and disseminate Australian guidance on reporting against the Sustainable Development Goals in order to ensure consistent and transparent reporting and minimise the reporting burden for businesses.**

#### *Supporting small and medium enterprises*

7.55 The committee was concerned that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) may face barriers in engaging with the business opportunities presented by the SDGs. In particular, the committee seeks to ensure that small and medium enterprises can access the opportunities without facing prohibitive reporting requirements. Therefore, the committee suggests that the IDC identify opportunities to assist SMEs to build capacity to use SDG-related procurement and reporting systems.

#### **Recommendation 16**

**7.56 The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, identify opportunities to assist small and medium enterprises to build capacity to access sustainable procurement and reporting systems.**

#### *Other initiatives*

7.57 The committee also recommends that the Australian Government consider how to further support initiatives that promote deeper private sector engagement with the SDGs. The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider supporting sustainable development by incorporating the SDGs throughout public procurement processes. It should also consider promoting social impact investment by establishing an impact investment institution with the private and community sectors.

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**Recommendation 17**

**7.58** The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the interdepartmental committee, assesses opportunities to encourage sustainable public procurement, impact investment and business practices that support the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Official development assistance**

7.59 The SDGs are a global blueprint to end extreme poverty, and the committee believes that they should guide Australia's international development program. Australia's existing official development assistance approach and investment priorities are aligned with the SDGs, particularly with regards to gender equality, and DFAT has committed to continuing to integrate the SDGs into DFAT policies.

7.60 The committee supports DFAT's approach, which is to support holistic action on the SDGs (rather than seeking to prioritise one SDG over another) while considering the contexts and priorities of countries receiving aid. The committee also acknowledges efforts to mobilise private sector investment to support the SDGs through co-funding and other arrangements. Australia needs to support the implementation of the SDGs in partner countries through adequate official development assistance.

**Recommendation 18**

**7.61** The committee recommends that the Australian Government continue to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals throughout the international development program and prioritise the commitment to leave no one behind.

**Senator Alex Gallacher**

**Chair**



# Dissenting Report from Coalition Senators

## Introduction

Australia was active in shaping the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and supported the inclusion of standalone goals for economic growth (SDG8), peace and good governance (SDG16), oceans (SDG14), and gender equality (SDG5).<sup>1</sup> Coalition Senators welcome the Federal Government's commitment to implementing the SDGs in Australia. Achieving the SDGs is in Australia's interests because it will:

...contribute to lasting regional and global prosperity, productivity and stability. The SDGs are consistent with Australian Government priorities and long-standing efforts across a range of sectors such as health, education, agriculture, water, the environment, the economy, and gender equality.<sup>2</sup>

Coalition Senators note that in supporting the SDGs, the Federal Government was clear that it wanted to see meaningful action over benchmarks for benchmarks sake. This is the same approach Australia took to its Presidency of the G20 in 2014.

That said, Coalition Senators firmly contend that Australia as the most free, democratic and prosperous nation in the world should be considered as the gold-standard in terms of all of the SDGs. While there is always room for improvement, Coalition Senators are disappointed by the approach taken by Labor and Greens which focuses on over-regulating the implementation of these goals rather than either celebrating the positive situation Australia is in and how we can better support lagging nations around the world to implement the SDGs.

## The Federal Government's governance arrangements

Australia has successfully presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) and established the whole of government arrangements required to advance the SDGs.

Since first committing to the SDGs in 2015, the Federal Government has decided to 'mainstream' the SDGs across government. This has involved the creation of governance arrangements and initiatives that are facilitating the implementation of the SDGs across government without overturning longstanding budgetary and policy processes. Individual departments and agencies have been given the flexibility to integrate the SDGs into their work, and share information and best practice through an Interdepartmental Committee (IDC).

The IDC is co-chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). It is comprised of Deputy Secretaries representing a range of departments and agencies, demonstrating the Federal Government's commitment to the SDGs.

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1 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 7.

2 Australian Government, *Report on the implementation of the SDGs*, 2018, p. 6.

Among other things, the IDC provides a forum for ensuring that data is contributed to the Federal Government's online Reporting Platform on the SDG Indicators. Launched in July 2018, the Platform is expected to reduce the potential reporting burden and streamline reporting for other purposes, such as the Sendai Framework. The Platform was described in the evidence as 'a great initiative [that] provides a useful centralised database where one can access official data on the SDGs'.<sup>3</sup>

### **Working with non-government stakeholders**

Progress on the SDGs requires partnership with all sectors of Australian society and all levels of government. The IDC has received information from business and non-profit stakeholders, a positive practice which is expected to continue.

Many stakeholders were also invited to provide input during the development of Australia's first VNR, including local, state and territory governments; civil society organisations; business bodies; science agencies and universities; communities and individuals. This consultative approach resulted in Australia's successful presentation of its VNR to the United Nations in 2018.

The Federal Government has partnered with stakeholders more broadly, for example, it provided funding for the 2018 Australian SDGs Summit. In addition, it has supported the Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA) to engage the private sector on the SDGs and to develop the Australian SDG website. This website provides Australia with 'a live and ongoing platform to centralise and showcase action being taken across government, business, civil society and academia to advance the SDGs in the Australian context'.<sup>4</sup>

### **Supporting the SDGs across the region**

Australia's overseas development program, which was \$3.9 billion in 2017–18, already makes a strong contribution to the SDGs.<sup>5</sup> Coalition Senators accept evidence from DFAT that it is 'actively supporting developing country partners to engage with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda', with a particular focus on the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>6</sup>

Coalition Senators also recognise and welcome the Federal Government's shift in focus to ensure that its overseas development program is outcomes focused rather than on simple financial outlays.

Evidence to the Inquiry largely agreed that aspects of Australia's official development assistance (ODA) programme, particularly relating to gender equality and disability inclusive development, are in alignment with the SDGs.<sup>7</sup> Coalition Senators also welcome the Government's focus on providing meaningful assistance and support to

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3 Professor Graciela Metternicht *Committee Hansard*, 2 November 2018, p. 9.

4 <https://sdgs.org.au/about-us/> (accessed 6 February 2019).

5 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 11.

6 DFAT, *Submission 60*, p. 4.

7 See, for example, the Australian Council for International Development, *Submission 135*, p. 11.

countries in the Indo-Pacific on the implementation of the SDGs to help foster economic growth, peace and good governance.

Therefore, Coalition Senators concur with the Committee's recommendation that the Australian Government continue to integrate the SDGs throughout the international development program in line with the Government's commitment to an outcomes focused ODA programme.

### **The focus of the United Nations**

While Coalition Senators remain supportive of the SDGs and the implementation of them, we are concerned with the continued approach of the United Nations in investing time and resources in assessing Australia's technical compliance with both the SDGs and other areas of government policies while turning a blind eye to genuine human rights abuses elsewhere in the world. An example of this is the continual criticism of Australia's approach to ensure an orderly migration programme to prevent drownings at sea while at the same time, the UN has been silent on the plight of Asia Bibi.

Similarly, Coalition Senators find it difficult to have confidence in the SDGs relating to improving human rights in circumstances where the UN Security Council continues to include amongst its membership some of the worst human rights offenders in modern history.

Noting that the Australian taxpayer funds the UN to the tune of tens of millions of dollars each year, Coalition Senators encourage the unelected officials of the UN to reconsider some of its recent actions which seem to indicate it wants to be a left-wing think tank rather than a promoter of peace and good to the world.

### **Concluding comments**

Coalition Senators are concerned that many of the Committee's recommendations would create an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy, regulation and expense for no benefit whatsoever.

This is particularly evident given that the SDGs are in alignment with Australian values and the Federal Government is already taking action to promote the agenda. Its responsible approach to mainstreaming the SDGs across the Federal Government has already put in place the foundations needed to pursue the goals.

On that basis, Coalition Senators respectfully encourage the Government to ignore the recommendations of the majority report.

**Senator the Hon Eric Abetz**  
**Deputy Chair**  
**Liberal Senator for Tasmania**

**Senator the Hon James McGrath**  
**LNP Senator for Queensland**



# Appendix 1

## Submissions

- 1 Professor Carol Adams
- 2 Name Withheld
- 3 Mr Graham Williamson
- 4 WaterAid
- 5 Teaspoons of Change
- 6 Community Capacity Builders
- 7 Mrs Shay Dougall
- 8 The Crawford Fund Ltd
- 9 Australian Library and Information Association
- 10 Burnet Institute
- 11 Blue Shield Australia
- 12 Mary Ward International Australia
- 13 Standards Australia
- 14 Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements  
(EAROPH)
- 15 Dr Tapan Sarker
- 16 Name Withheld
- 17 Cameron Allen, Graciela Metternicht and Thomas Wiedmann
- 18 Oxfam Australia
- 19 Vision 2020 Australia
- 20 UNSW Law Society Inc
- 21 ACCN, Church in Society Ministry Unit
- 22 Ms Maree Miller

- 23 Mr Tom Worthington
- 24 AustralianSuper
- 25 World Vision Australia
- 26 Principles for Responsible Investment
- 27 Ms Michelle Tesoriero
- 28 Forest Stewardship Council
- 29 Dr Jayne Meyer Tucker
- 30 PwC
- 31 Project Respect
- 32 Family Planning NSW
- 33 Doctors for the Environment Australia
- 34 Macquarie Sustainability
- 35 Edmund Rice Centre
- 36 The Fred Hollows Foundation
- 37 Dr Nina Hall and Professor Karen Hussey
- 37.1 Supplementary to submission 37
- 38 Water Services Association of Australia
- 39 Good Shepherd Microfinance
- 40 UNSW Canberra
- 41 Global Partnership for Education Secretariat
- 42 Oaktree
- 43 Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand
- 44 International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)
- 45 The Smith Family
- 46 Dr Jarrett Blaustein, Dr Kate Fitz-Gibbon and Professor Rob White
- 47 United Nations Association of Australia

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- 48 Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia (formerly Sustainable Business Australia)
- 49 Shared Value Project
- 50 Strategic Sustainability Consultants
- 51 Social Good Summit Australia
- 52 University of Sydney
- 53 South East Queensland special network joint submission
- 54 City of Sydney
- 55 Sustainable Development Solutions Network Australia/Pacific
- 56 AGL Energy
- 57 Western Sydney University
- 58 Australian Urban Research Infrastructure Network (AURIN)
- 59 Australian Civil Society Coalition for WPS
- 60 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- 61 Australian Water Association
- 62 International Sexual and Reproductive Health Consortium
- 63 Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand
- 64 Cardno International Development
- 65 Victoria University
- 66 Mr Garth Luke
- 67 Plan International
- 68 City of Melbourne
- 69 Mr Ryan Kennealy
- 70 Peacifica
- 71 RESULTS International Australia
- 72 Ms Jacklin Molla and Ms Sarah Griffin

- 73 National Archives of Australia
- 74 Geoscience Australia
- 75 Centre of Disaster Management and Public Safety, and the Centre for Spatial Data Infrastructure and Land Administration, University of Melbourne
- 76 Queensland Tourism Industry Council
- 77 Institute for Human Security and Social Change, La Trobe University
- 78 Mr Clinton Moore
- 79 WWF-Australia
- 80 Australian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (AMOS) Inc.
- 81 VicHealth
- 82 Marie Stopes International Australia
- 83 Futureye
- 84 Save the Children Australia
- 85 CSIRO
- 86 Department of Agriculture and Water Resources
- 87 UNICEF Australia
- 88 Impact Investing Australia
- 89 uBegin
- 90 One Stone Advisors
- 91 Ecological Society of Australia
- 92 Australian Council of Superannuation Investors (ACSI)
- 93 CBM Australia
- 94 UnitingCare Australia
- 95 Climate Change, Development and Migration Research Group
- 96 Australian Bureau of Statistics
- 97 University of Melbourne

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98	International Women's Development Agency
99	Public Health Association of Australia
100	Natural Impact Group Pty Ltd
101	Business for Development & Business Call to Action
102	Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney
103	UN Global Compact - Cities Programme
104	Ms Glenys Jones
105	Miss Jessica Madsen
106	Mr Jason Sprott
107	GOPAC Oceania Region
108	Australian Academy of Science and Future Earth Australia
109	Name Withheld
110	Mr Ray Barbero
111	350 Australia
112	Volunteering Tasmania
113	Josephite Justice Office
114	WA SDG Network
115	Department of the Environment and Energy
116	Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development
117	Mr Phil Jones
118	Professor Azizul Islam
119	Zoic
120	Monash University
121	Monash Sustainable Development Institute
121.1	Supplementary to submission 121
122	Global Citizen

- 123 CARE Australia
- 124 Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- 125 B Lab Australia & New Zealand
- 126 Anti-Slavery Australia
- 127 Volunteering Australia
- 128 Law Council of Australia
- 129 Centre for Policy Development
- 130 Global Compact Network Australia
- 131 Responsible Investment Association Australasia
- 132 Transparency International Australia
- 133 Australian Association of Social Workers
- 134 Healthy Cities Illawarra and the University of Wollongong
- 135 Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)
- 136 Children and Young People with Disability Australia and Disabled People's Organisations Australia
- 137 Philip Morris International
- 137.1 Supplementary to submission 137
- 138 Australian Human Rights Commission
- 139 Cbus
- 140 Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
- 141 Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth Australia/Pacific
- 142 Ms Donnell Davis
- 143 Department of Health
- 144 Department of Education and Training
- 145 WA Council of Social Services (WACOSS)
- 146 Students for Sensible Drug Policy Australia (SSDP)

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147	HESTA
148	Australian Dairy Industry Council (ADIC)
149	Equality Rights Alliance
150	Ms Lyndall McCormack
151	Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals
152	Minerals Council of Australia
153	Aunty Ruby Sims and Ms Donnell Davis
154	National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
155	Central Coast Council
156	City West Water
157	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)
158	Dr Matthew Rimmer
159	Ecosystem Science Council
160	Australasian College of Road Safety
161	Professor Manohar Pawar
162	Ms Catherine Sullivan
163	Forrest Primary School
163.1	Supplementary to submission 163
163.2	Supplementary to submission 163
164	City of Newcastle



## **Appendix 2**

### **Tabled documents, Additional information, Answers to questions on notice**

#### **Tabled documents**

- 1 Commonwealth Agency lead on Goal 16 Targets tabled by Ms Karen Moore, Attorney-General's Department at a public hearing in Canberra on 24 August 2018.
- 2 UK Environmental Audit Committee inquiry report tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, Australian Council for International Development at a public hearing in Canberra on 24 August 2018.
- 3 Germany's Sustainable Development Strategy (summary) tabled by Mr Marc Purcell, Australian Council for International Development at a public hearing in Canberra on 24 August 2018.
- 4 Handbook for the Preparation of VNRs tabled by Ms Andrea Spencer-Cooke, One Stone Advisors at a public hearing in Sydney on 2 November 2018.
- 5 Poverty in Australia 2018 report tabled by Dr Cassandra Goldie, Australian Council of Social Services at a public hearing in Sydney on 2 November 2018.

#### **Additional information**

- 1 Additional information provided by uBegin, received 19 November 2018.
- 2 Additional information provided by Minerals Council of Australia, received 10 January 2019.

#### **Answers to questions on notice**

- 1 Treasury, Answer to question taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 6 September 2018.
- 2 ACFID, Answer to question taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 13 September 2018.
- 3 UNAA, Answer to question taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 14 September 2018.

- 4 DAWR, Answers to questions taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 14 September 2018.
- 5 DoH, Answers to questions taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 17 September 2018.
- 6 Volunteering Australia, Answer to question taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 18 September 2018.
- 7 DET, Answer to question taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 24 September 2018.
- 8 PM&C, Answer to question taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 28 September 2018.
- 9 DSS, Answer to question taken on notice at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 9 October 2018.
- 10 DFAT, Answer to question on notice taken at 24 August 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 19 October 2018.
- 11 Cardno, Answer to question taken on notice at 29 October 2018 hearing in Melbourne, received 12 November 2018.
- 12 SDSN Youth, Answer to question taken on notice at 29 October 2018 hearing in Melbourne, received 12 November 2018.
- 13 Healthy Cities Illawarra, Answer to question taken on notice at 2 November 2018 hearing in Sydney, received 15 November 2018.
- 14 AHRC, Answer to question taken on notice at 2 November 2018 hearing in Sydney, received 15 November 2018.
- 15 ACOSS, Answer to question taken on notice at 2 November 2018 hearing in Sydney, received 16 November 2018.
- 16 Oxfam Australia, Answers to questions taken on notice at 2 November 2018 hearing in Sydney, received 16 November 2018.
- 17 One Stone Advisors, Answer to question taken on notice at 2 November 2018 hearing in Sydney, received 20 November 2018.
- 18 UOW, Answer to question taken on notice at 2 November 2018 hearing in Sydney, received 22 November 2018.
- 19 CPD, Answer to question taken on notice at 29 October 2018 hearing in Melbourne, received 22 November 2018.

- 20 Peacifica, Answer to question taken on notice at 2 November 2018 hearing in Sydney, received 27 November 2018.
- 21 EAROPH Australia, Answer to question taken on notice at 7 December 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 18 December 2018.
- 22 National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, Answer to questions taken on notice at 7 December 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 20 December 2018.
- 23 ABS, Answers to questions taken on notice at 7 December 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 17 January 2019.
- 24 PM&C, Answers to questions taken on notice at 7 December 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 18 January 2019.
- 25 DFAT, Answers to questions taken on notice at 7 December 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 18 January 2019.
- 26 DFAT, Answers to questions taken on notice at 7 December 2018 hearing in Canberra, received 22 January 2019.



# **Appendix 3**

## **Public hearings and witnesses**

**Friday 24 August 2018, Canberra Australian Capital Territory**

### **United Nations Association of Australia**

Mr Lachlan Hunter, National Executive Director

Ms Patricia Garcia, National Sustainable Development Goals Manager

Ms MacCallum Johnson, National Executive Adviser

### **Volunteering Australia**

Ms Lavanya Kala, Policy Manger

### **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

Dr Paul Jelfs, General Manager, Population and Social Statistics

Mrs Emily Walter, Director, Household Characteristics and Social Reporting Section

### **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Mr Chris Tinning, First Assistant Secretary

Ms Stephanie Aeuckens, Director, Global Development Branch

### **Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Mr Jason McDonald, Acting Chief Advisor, Domestic Policy Group

### **Department of Social Services**

Dr Tim Reddel, Group Manager

### **Department of Agriculture and Water Resources**

Mr Matt Worrell, Assistant Secretary, Bilateral Market Access

**Department of Health**

Ms Tania Rishniw, First Assistant Secretary, Portfolio Strategies Division

**Department of Education and Training**

Ms Karen Sandercock, Group Manager, International Group

**Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Ms Rachel Livingston, Acting Assistant Secretary, Office for Women

**Department of the Treasury**

Ms Lisa Elliston, Division Head, International Policy and Engagement Division

**Department of the Environment and Energy**

Dr Rachel Bacon, First Assistant Secretary, Policy Analysis and Implementation Division

**Attorney-General's Department**

Ms Karen Moore, Assistant Secretary, International Cooperation

**Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities**

Mr Richard Wood, Acting Executive Director, Portfolio Coordination and Research

**Department of Jobs and Small Business**

Mr Malcolm Greening, Branch Manager, Labour Market Strategy Group

**Australian Council for International Development**

Mr Marc Purcell, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Alice Ridge, Acting Director of Policy and Advocacy

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**Monday 29 October 2018, Melbourne Victoria**

Professor Carol Adams

**Centre for Policy Development**

Mr Sam Hurley, Policy Director

**Monash Sustainable Development Institute**

Professor John Thwaites, Chair

Professor Rod Glover, Deputy Director, Enterprise

**Sustainable Development Solutions Network Australia, New Zealand and Pacific**

Dr Tahl Kestin, Network Manager

**Children and Young People with Disability Australia and Disabled People's Organisations Australia**

Ms Stephanie Gotlib, Chief Executive Officer, Children and Young People with Disability Australia

Ms Therese Sands, Co-Chief Executive Officer, People with Disability Australia

**Australian Civil Society Coalition for Women, Peace & Security**

Dr Ludmilla Kwitko, Member of Steering Group

**Global Citizen Limited**

Miss Sarah Meredith, Country Director (Australia)

**International Sexual and Reproductive Health Consortium**

Mr Chris Turner, Executive Officer and Regional Director, Marie Stopes International Australia

Professor Caroline Homer, Co-Program Director Maternal and Child Health, Burnet Institute

**International Women's Development Agency**

Dr Caroline Lambert, Director of Research, Policy and Advocacy

**Impact Investing Australia**

Ms Sally McCutchan, Chief Executive Officer

**Principles for Responsible Investment**

Mr Matthew McAdam, Head, Australasia

**Responsible Investment Association Australasia**

Mr Simon O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer

**Business for Development**

Mr Mark Ingram, Chief Executive Officer

**Cardno International Development**

Ms Danielle Alford, Regional Manager—Asia

**Shared Value Project**

Ms Helen Steel, Chief Executive Officer

**City of Melbourne**

Ms Nikki Jordan, Team Leader, Sustainability Integration

**UN Global Compact—Cities Programme**

Professor Jago Dodson, Global Advisor

**Friday 2 November 2018, Sydney New South Wales****One Stone Advisors**

Ms Andrea Spencer-Cooke, Partner

**uBegin**

Mr Cameron Cross, Chief Executive Officer

**Zoic Environmental Pty Ltd**

Ms Kylie Lloyd, Managing Director

**University of New South Wales (Faculty of Science)**

Professor Graciela Metternicht

Mr Cameron Allen

**City of Sydney**

Ms Andrea Beattie, Executive Manager, Strategic Outcomes

**Healthy Cities Illawarra and the University of Wollongong**

Dr Belinda Gibbons, Senior Lecturer, University of Wollongong

Mrs Sandra McCarthy, President, Healthy Cities Illawarra

Mr Justin Placek, General Manger, Healthy Cities Illawarra

**Global Compact Network Australia**

Ms Kylie Porter, Executive Director

**Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia (formerly Sustainable Business Australia)**

Mr Andrew Petersen, Chief Executive Officer

**Australian Council of Social Service**

Dr Cassandra Goldie, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Jacqueline Phillips, Director of Policy and Advocacy

**Australian Human Rights Commission**

Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher, President

**Oxfam Australia**

Ms Kelly Dent, Food, Climate and Humanitarian Advocacy Manager

**Peacifica**

Mr James Cox, Executive Director

**Monday 26 November 2018, Canberra Australian Capital Territory**

**Forrest Primary School**

Ms Carolyn Davis, Classroom Teacher

Ms Sarah Bauer-McPhee, Classroom Teacher

Mr Daniel Heap, Classroom Teacher

Miles Maguire, Student

Honey Proudfoot, Student

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**Friday 7 December 2018, Canberra Australian Capital Territory****National Congress of Australia's First Peoples**

Mr Rodney Little, Co-Chair

**City of Newcastle**

Councillor Nuatali Nelmes, Lord Mayor

Ms Amber Stewart, Community Planner

**Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH)  
Australia**

Mr Clinton Moore, Vice-President

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

Mrs Emily Walter, Director, Household Characteristics and Social Reporting

Mr Simon Bartlett, Assistant Director, Household Characteristics and Social Reporting

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

Dr Cate Rogers, Assistant Secretary, Development Policy and Education Branch

Ms Deb Livermore, Assistant Director, Development Policy Division

**Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet**

Mr Jason McDonald, Chief Advisor, Domestic Policy Group

Mr Adam Sheppard, Acting Assistant Secretary, Economic Policy Branch

