

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee**

Answers to questions on notice
Environment and Energy portfolio

Question No: 3
Hearing: Budget Estimates
Outcome: Corporate
Program: Policy Analysis and Implementation (PAAI)
Topic: Sustainable development goals – cross portfolio
Hansard Page: 10
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Reynolds asked:

CHAIR: It struck me because Austrade and DFAT are aware of what they are doing but it is not specifically their responsibility. They look at it more as a mining, energy or environmental issue. Would you mind taking on notice for me to see if there is a way that it can be done cross-portfolio? There is a lot of good work and if we could capture that model—what has been done in the environment, in your portfolio, and in others—it would be a great template for others globally but also, to pick up on the issues Senator Moore raised, bring some of those lessons home as well.

Dr de Brouwer: We will do that.

Answer:

The Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy recognises the large amount of work undertaken by business, industry, non-government organisations, and the community and philanthropic sectors that supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aims to improve environmental outcomes.

There are a number of mechanisms that can be used to model work being undertaken across sectors and across portfolios that support the SDGs:

1. **Partnerships for SDGs database** – The United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform hosts a database of global partnerships that have been registered as supporting implementation of the SDGs, including those involving Australian governments, businesses, industry and non-government organisations. This database is designed to showcase models of activities and partnerships that give effect to the SDGs. It is a useful platform that could be used to promote work undertaken by a range of sectors. New partnerships can be registered on the database. The database can be accessed here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnerships/>.
2. **Australian Business and Biodiversity Initiative (ABBI)** – To support private sector engagement with the protection of Australia's biodiversity, an alliance of organisations and individuals from business, government and civil society called the Australian Business and Biodiversity Initiative (ABBI) has been formed under the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity. Led by Business and supported by the Australian Government, ABBI members are committed to exploring and promoting the integration of biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of ecosystem services into business policies and practices in Australia. Their aim is to raise awareness and improve understanding of the ways in which the degradation and loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services is a critical risk and opportunity for Australian businesses. ABBI also aims to support the development and uptake of practical solutions that

enable businesses to integrate consideration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into business decision-making and ultimately improve the health and resilience of both our environment and economy. More about the ABBI can be found here:

<http://www.sba.asn.au/sba/i-abbi.asp>

3. **National reporting** – Case studies of work undertaken by Australian business and industries are often captured in a range of reporting undertaken by the Department, such as the State of the Environment report, the OECD’s Environmental Performance Review as well as national reports that track Australia’s progress in meeting obligations under the various conventions to which Australia is party. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs are to be delivered by countries twice over the life of the 2030 Agenda. The Australian Government is considering the most suitable timing for Australia’s first VNR. This process will consider opportunities to showcase work by a range of sectors across Australia.
4. **Partnerships for environmental outcomes:** The Department of the Environment and Energy is actively exploring how we might further our engagement with business, non-government organisations and the community and philanthropic sectors to improve environmental outcomes through partnerships and collaboration. Our objectives in doing so are to better align public and private investment, promote innovation, reinforce shared stewardship of environmental problems and solutions, and enable greater effectiveness of our joint efforts by focusing on outcomes. The Department has established a dedicated Partnerships team to assist and coordinate efforts across the portfolio and to instigate, test and apply innovative approaches to conservation partnership and investment.