

National workshop on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in Australia

6–7 May 2015, Melbourne

Workshop Statement

“Show me an educated person living in a healthy environment and a growing economy and I’ll show you someone who has a genuine chance of getting the most out of life – a healthy person, who is NOT living in poverty, is NOT oppressed and has HOPE for their children and their future”

A world-leading workshop on 6–7 May in Melbourne brought together representatives from federal, state and local governments, academia, business and civil society to develop Australia’s response to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. The Goals, which are currently under development, encompass a long-term vision for the world, promoting better health and education, social equity, environmental sustainability, peace and prosperity for all.

The issues at stake are relevant to all Australians. The workshop noted that Australia is facing a number of significant development challenges, including the considerable disadvantages experienced by many Indigenous communities. As indicated in the *Closing the Gap* reports, the *Sustainable Australia Report 2013* and the *Measures of Australia’s Progress, 2013*, ‘business-as-usual’ will likely result in declining economic prosperity for many Australians, increasing inequities and increasing degradation of the environment that underpins Australia’s economic prosperity.

To help address these challenges, the workshop calls on all sectors of Australian society to embrace the principles of sustainable development and support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals both nationally and internationally.

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals provides Australia with opportunities to build a thriving long-term future based on the significant progress made in previous decades. It will enable Australians to benefit from improvements in areas such as family income, employment, education, health, water use efficiency, air quality, natural environment, and a more inclusive and equitable society.

In particular, the workshop considers that an over-arching priority for Australia in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals should be to address the existing disadvantages experienced by Indigenous communities, including in areas of poverty, poor health and limited educational opportunities.

The workshop also acknowledged that in addition to addressing national challenges, Australia has a significant leadership role to play as a good international citizen. Australia should commit to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals through its international policies and roles, including its aid program and revitalised global partnerships.

The workshop urges the initiation of a national non-partisan dialogue, involving leaders from all sectors of Australian society, to develop a Sustainable Development Goals implementation plan for Australia, including Australia’s international role.

The workshop was organised by the Monash Sustainability Institute at Monash University and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Australia/Pacific. SDSN is a global network of universities and other organisations that mobilises scientific and technical expertise in support of sustainable development. It was launched by the UN Secretary General in 2012 and is led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs at Columbia University. Further information about the workshop can be found at ap-unsdsn.org/regional-initiatives/sdgs/implementing-sdgs.

The workshop statement was prepared by the organisers based on discussions at the workshop and extensive feedback to drafts circulated to all participants after the workshop. It is not necessarily endorsed by all of the participants or their organisations.