

UNAA Statement on the Sustainable Development Goals November 2019

The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) is the peak body for promoting the United Nations (UN) in Australia. The UNAA supports human rights for all peoples, working to reduce inequalities, protecting the environment, and actively promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. We do this by promoting sustainable partnerships and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a framework which forms the basis of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Introduction

- All UN Member States adopted the SDGs in 2015, but there has been limited coordinated action or leadership on the SDGs in Australia, and public awareness is low.
- In the past four years, Australia's ranking on the SDGs has decreased on the World SDG Index from 17th in 2016 to 38th in 2019. Australia is on track to achieve just two of the 17 SDGs by 2030 - No Poverty, and Good Health and Wellbeing, ranking 38th and 2nd respectively.¹
- Australia's progress on the SDGs ranks among the worst among OECD countries. Climate Action and Responsible Consumption of Energy are currently the poorest performers, ranking 161st and 156th respectively on the World SDG Index.²
- Australia's negative environmental externalities, specifically through the exportation of fossil fuels, are undermining the ability of other countries to implement the SDGs.

The UNAA notes

- Australia should learn from countries leading on the SDGs such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France and Norway. Australia should continue to support less developed countries, in particular in the Pacific region, and continue to integrate the SDGs in its foreign aid programs.
- It is important Australia work with countries in the region and across the world on issues requiring a regional or global approach, such as peace and security, treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, climate change, ocean health, modern slavery, and food and water security.
- Despite limited progress in implementing and integrating the SDGs into domestic policy and programs, Australia is in a position to be a world leader and achieve all 17 of the SDGs by 2030.

¹ UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *Sustainable Development Report 2019*, p.20, 69.

² Ibid, p.69.

Recommendations to the Australian Government

- Join countries leading on the SDGs and work with organisations such as the UNAA to develop and implement a national action plan for sustainable development.
- Fund a secretariat to coordinate national action on the SDGs and develop a national public awareness campaign to increase understanding, engagement and commitment to the SDGs.
- Establish a group of representatives from civil society, business, state, territory and local governments, and academia to sit alongside the existing inter-departmental committee to enhance transparency, collaboration and communication on the implementation of the SDGs.
- Undertake regular reporting of Australia's progress towards the SDGs, drawing on the expertise of independent bodies which focus on sustainable development.

