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'.[1] 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'.[2]

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.[3] 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'.[4] 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.[5]

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'.[6] 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.[7] Australia has participated in each HLPF, and in 2017 sponsored a side event on closing the gender data gap.[8]

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'.[9] 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.[10] 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.[11] 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'.[12]

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.[13] It also noted efforts 'to develop and implement policy that strengthens the alignment between sport policy and the SDGs'.[14] 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'.[15]

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.[16] 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.[17] 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.[18]

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.[19]

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'.[20]

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.[21] 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.[22]

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'.[23] 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.[24]

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.[25] 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'.[26] 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.[27]

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.[28]

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.[29]

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'.[30] 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...[31]

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.[32]

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'.[33]

4.20   Several submissions proposed that COAG should play a larger role in implementing the SDGs in Australia across different levels of government.[34] 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".[35] The Centre for Policy Development (CPD) described how:

> COAG could play a crucial rule 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.[36]

4.21   MSDI argued that the SDGs should be 'incorporated in the deliberations and reporting of Ministerial Councils'.[37] 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'.[38] 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'.[39]

4.22   Some submissions supported the development of a COAG working group or subcommittee on the SDGs.[40] 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'.[41] Another called for COAG to develop and resource a strategy for aligning existing state and territory reporting mechanisms with the goals.[42]

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'.[43] The committee heard that the Australian Government representative, Ms Lin Hatfield Dodds, Deputy Secretary, PM&C, has taken the SDGs to COAG twice.[44] 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.

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.[45]

4.24   In response to a question on notice, PM&C advised that there 'has been no formal COAG statement about the SDG Agenda'.[46] 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.[47]

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'.[48]

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'.[49] 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.[50]

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.[51] 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'.[52]

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'.[53] It suggested that a national SDGs scorecard 'should be filtered down throughout all levels of government and sectors of society'.[54] It highlighted that 'existing state and local government reporting processes could provide the mechanism to report performance towards the set national targets'.[55] 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.[56]

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 co-ordinate the activities and investments of states and territories and local communities'.[57] The committee heard that data from each level of government should be fed into a coordinated national spatial data infrastructure.[58] 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.[59]

4.31   Some submissions suggested that a framework for subnational monitoring and reporting should be included in a national implementation plan.[60]

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.[61]

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.[62] 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.[63]

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.[64]

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.[65] 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'.[66]

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.[67]

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'.[68] This requires 'adequate capacities, resources and decision-making power, and some estimate that decentralising responsibilities in the absence of such conditions may stall implementation'.[69]

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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.[70] 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'.[71] UNAA called for the Australian Government to provide resources 'to 'demystify' the SDGs, and to make them more widely understood'.[72]

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.[73] 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.[74]

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'.[75]

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'.[76] 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.[77]

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.[78] 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.[79]

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'.[80] MSDI also noted that some state and local government bodies are starting to use the SDGs as 'a benchmarking and planning tool'.[81] 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'.[82] 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.[83]

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'.[84] 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.[85]

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.[86] 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.[87]

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'.[88] 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.[89]

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'.[90]

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.[91] 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'.[92] 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.[93]

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'.[94] 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.[95]

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].

a mandate from the highest levels of government and ideally needs to be linked to central budgets that then cascade to the municipal level.[96]

4.51   The Global Compact—Cities Programme noted that similar integrated approaches are being implemented in Honolulu and the state of Sao Paulo.[97]

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.[98]

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'.[99] 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.[100]

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'.[101] 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'.[102] She explained that there 'is interest but no-one really knows what to do'.[103]

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'.[104] 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'.[105]

4.56   There are resources available online for localising and implementing the SDGs at the local level, such as the SDGs Cities Guide.[106] 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.[107]

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.[108]

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'.[109] 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'.[110] EAROPH Australia agreed local governments should embed the SDGs in their planning.[111]

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'.[112] 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'.[113] It is 'commencing work to incorporate the SDGs into strategic planning processes'.[114] 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.[115]

4.60   The City of Sydney has embedded the SDGs into the overarching local strategy, Sustainable Sydney 2030.[116] 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'.[117] The Perth Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council is also incorporating the SDGs into its planning processes.[118]

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.[119] She described how the City of Newcastle, in consultation with the community, aligned their holistic community strategic vision with the SDGs.[120] 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.[121]

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.[122]

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'.[123] 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.[124] 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.[125] They noted that, following community consultations, Wollongong and Shellharbour councils have revised their community strategic plans to incorporate the SDGs.[126]

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.[127]

4.65   The City of Newcastle echoed this view.[128] 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.[129]

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.[130]

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.[131]

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.[132]

US Cities Index

4.69   Several submissions nominated the United States (US) Cities SDG Index as an example of international best practice.[133] 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.[134] The Index has been applied to the 100 most populous cities in the US.[135] 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.[136]

4.70   The City of Melbourne noted '[t]here has been no work undertaken in the Australian city context to take a similar approach'.[137] 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.[138]

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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.[139]

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.[140]

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.[141]

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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.