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communitycapacitybuilders
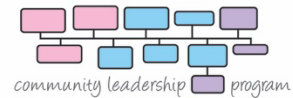
community leadership program

Committee Secretariat

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

To the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the inquiry into the United Nations
Sustainable Development Goals. Community Capacity Builders would like to provide
comment on three of the terms of reference:

**a.   the understanding and awareness of the SDG across the Australian Government and in
      the wider Australian community**

The Australian Government and the wider Australian community has some awareness of
Education for Sustainable Development which is represented in Target 4.7 of Sustainable
Development Goal 4. Target 4.7 is (UNESCO , n.d.1):
   'By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote
   sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable
   development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a
   culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural
   diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.'

There is the opportunity to increase understanding and awareness of the SDGs across the
Australian Government and in the wider Australian community by building upon Australia's
work in Education for Sustainable Development. As highlighted by UNESCO (2017, p. 1):
   'Education is both a goal in itself and a means for attaining all the other SDGs. It is not
   only an integral part of sustainable development, but also a key enabler for it. That is
   why education represents an essential strategy in the pursuit of the SDGs.'

The significance of Education for Sustainable Development was first described in Section 3,
Chapter 36 of the Agenda 21 report which was adopted at the 1992 United Nations
Conference on Environment and Development (United Nations Department of Economic
and Social Affairs, 1992). Section 3 of the report called attention to the significance of

education in developing the capacity of people to effectively participate in sustainable decision making:

'Both formal and non-formal education are indispensable to changing people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. It is also critical for achieving environmental and ethical awareness, values and attitudes, skills and behaviours consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in decision-making.'

In 2002, to encourage the world to take action on Education for Sustainable Development, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). In response, governments around the world developed DESD implementation schemes to reorientate their education, public awareness and training systems towards sustainable development (Department of Environment and Heritage, 2007, p.2).

The Australian Government's response to the DESD is contained in 'Caring for Our Future: the Australian Government Strategy for the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development' (Department of Environment and Heritage, 2007) and 'Living Sustainably: the Australian Government's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability' (Department of the Environment Water Heritage and the Arts, 2009).

b. the potential costs, benefits and opportunities for Australia in the domestic implementation of the SDG

Given that education is a means for achieving all of the SDGs (UNESCO, 2017, p. 1), an opportunity for Australia in the domestic implementation of the SDGs is to build upon its Education for Sustainable Development strategy and action plan. This could be achieved by contributing to the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development. The Global Action Programme is the follow-up programme to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. It has 5 priority action areas (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15): advancing policy, transforming learning and training environments, building capacities of educators and trainers, empowering and mobilizing youth, and accelerating sustainable solutions at local level.

UNESCO (2014, p. 24) suggests the following actions for Priority Action Areas 5 of the Global Action Program 'Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level':

'Actions in this Priority Action Area include strengthening multi-stakeholder networks at local level, and improving the quality of local platforms for learning and cooperation. Mobilising many new stakeholders to involve as large a stakeholder population as possible is an important objective. Local authorities and local leaders are called upon to increase and strengthen learning opportunities for the community through formal, non-formal, and informal venues. Empowering and increasing the capacity of civil society as critical agents of change is essential. Most of all, these concerned members and stakeholders will develop measures and mechanisms to resolve the sustainable challenges facing their communities.'

The pivotal role that local authorities can play in fulfilling the objectives of sustainable development was previously described in Section 1, Chapter 28 of the Agenda 21 report (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1992):

'Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development.'

There is a significant alignment between Priority Action Area 5 of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development and Strategy 4 of Australia's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability: Harnessing Community Spirit to Act (Department of the Environment Water Heritage and the Arts, 2009, p. 26). Actions for Strategy 4 include: Action 4.1.1 that the Australian Government should support best practice education for sustainability projects that have national application or have the potential to bring about systemic change, and Action 4.2.1 enabling local government to provide best practice community education for sustainability through initiatives such as the development of training programs and providing access to case studies (Department of the Environment Water Heritage and the Arts, 2009, p. 26).

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

While the Australian Government had the foresight to include Strategy 4 Harnessing Community Spirit to Act in its National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability, there has been no monitoring of initiatives to identify best practice education for sustainable development projects. Actions 4.1.1 and 4.2.1 or Australia's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability were not implemented.

As a first step in monitoring and communicating performance against the SDGs, it is suggested that data on initiatives and outcomes that are already occurring should be collected. These include outcomes that are being achieved in communities for Strategy 4 of Australia's National Action Plan for Education for Sustainability, which align with Priority Action Area 5 of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development and support Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Community Capacity Builders has been delivering its Education for Sustainable Development program in partnership with local government since 2006. All of the key elements of Education for Sustainable Development that are recognised in the literature are embedded into Community Capacity Builders program. These are: imagining a better future, systemic thinking, critical thinking and reflection, participation in decision-making, and working in partnerships (Tilbury and Wortman 2004, p. 11).

Community Capacity Builders has extensive evidence of the outcomes that the Community Capacity Builders program has achieved as determining the program's outcomes was the focus of a PhD inquiry (Zivkovic, 2014). In addition, the program was the subject of the chapter "How can Education for Sustainability create systemic change" in the book 'Envisioning Futures for Environmental and Sustainability Education' which was the final book in a United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development series (Zivkovic, 2017).

In 2014 UNESCO asked for voluntary commitments to implement activities for the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development. At that time Community Capacity Builders made a commitment to UNESCO under Priority Action Area 5 to scale its Community Leadership Program. Since making this commitment, Community Capacity Builders has developed a flipped classroom version of its program and has incorporated into the program a community education topic where program participants develop a learning activity that they deliver which incorporates Education for Sustainable Development principles. The development of the flipped classroom version of the program has involved putting all of Community Capacity Builders learning materials online and the development of facilitator guides so that others can deliver the program. This is a link to further information on Community Capacity Builders revised program: www.communitycapacity.com.au. Community Capacity Builders will commence delivering the flipped classroom version of the program on the 17th of March.

Yours sincerely

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