MONASH University
Monash Sustainability Institute

GROUP OF EIGHT

What sustainable development goals should Australia aim for

13–14 May 2013, Melbourne

Workshop Report

Edited by Robert Watson, John Thwaites, Dave Griggs & Tahl Kestin

MSI Report 13/7
June 2013

Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Solutions

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK
A GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

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Sustainable Development Goals ⇔ Sustainable Development Solutions is a three-year project, led by the Monash Sustainability Institute, bringing together business, government, civil society and academic leaders in a series of national and regional workshops to advance sustainable development goals and solutions in Australia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

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Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Solutions

First national workshop

What sustainable development goals should Australia aim for

13–14 May 2013
The Bowl, National Australia Bank Building
500 Bourke Street, Melbourne

Workshop Report

An initiative of:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK
A GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

MONASH University
Monash Sustainability Institute

Harold Mitchell Foundation

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Executive Summary

The workshop "What sustainable development goals should Australia aim for" (Melbourne, 13–14 May 2013) brought together senior leaders from government, business, civil society and academia to develop a vision of what a sustainable future means for Australia and for the world. Participants discussed what a sustainable Australia might look like, what sustainable development goals it should aim for, and how Australia could influence the UN process to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that would apply to all countries post 2015.

The workshop opened a three-year initiative of Monash University and the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) to provide Australian and regional leadership in the development of the SDGs and the solutions for implementing them.

The initiative, *Sustainable Development Goals ⇔ Sustainable Development Solutions*, is supported by the Harold Mitchell Foundation, the National Australia Bank, the City of Melbourne and the Australian Government.

The key points raised at the workshop were:

Role of Australia

Australia as a developed country surrounded by developing countries can play a facilitating and unifying role in the international negotiation process for the SDGs. Australia has the opportunity to share skills to deal with sustainability issues such as water markets, energy efficiency and food pricing.

Australia should build a national conversation around sustainable development to become a driver for positive change, nationally and globally. We should encourage people to take ownership of the SDG development process and the SDGs.

Better communication of sustainability and the SDGs

There is a need to depoliticise and promote a common understanding of sustainability and to ensure that the connotations of unsustainable development are translated to a set of factors that are meaningful to average households. It is important to share positive stories from around the world in order to promote hope. The language around sustainability may have to be changed and it is important to give concrete examples of good sustainable practice.

It is important to integrate social, economic and environmental considerations into each of the goals, and create a fully integrated yet simple set of SDGs

Governance and participation in sustainable development

Strong global governance that is not held back by electoral cycles has an important role in taking this process forward. The G-20 heads of government meeting in Brisbane next year presents an opportunity to deliver a clear message on sustainable development. The non-government sector should play a significant role.

Young people should play a significant role in achieving change. They have an important role in the process. Younger people want to work for organisations that do good.

Indigenous perspectives

When we consider how SDGs apply to Australia, a focus should be on how they relate to Australia's Indigenous communities, as this is where the gap in prosperity, wellbeing and inclusiveness relative to Australia in general is still the biggest and where there is considerable potential for social and economic development to take place. In terms of identifying pathways for social and economic development, these should be developed in partnership with Indigenous communities and be based on their self-identified needs, aspirations and solutions.

Role of business

Paying attention to sustainability in its variety of forms is good business. For example, taking into account how the risks of environmental degradation and resource depletion might affect a business in the short and long term is good risk management. Also considering sustainable development in the regions where the business operates (or wishes to operate) is important; a more developed society provides a better business environment and more potential customers. Business should play a lead role in sustainable development – encouraging a race to the top rather than a race to the bottom. Business should be involved in the SDGs development process. The acknowledgement of constraints can be the moment and opportunity for innovation by business. Change may be achieved by taking a series of small steps. Communication and behaviour change techniques will be important.

Sustainability issues must be built into core business objectives, strategies and annual reporting. Large corporations can influence sustainable practices along their supply chain.

Water, energy, food and cities

Cities are key drivers for food, water and energy demand. However cities can also drive the solutions to sustainability challenges for example by supplying their own water and energy. Australia has the opportunity to play a global leadership role in energy and water efficiency.

Australian agriculture can play an important role in meeting increased regional demand for food. However there are challenges including knowledge gaps, (particularly in relation to northern Australia), skills shortages, climate change, soil degradation and water availability.

Education, health and social inclusion

Addressing inequalities in health and education in Australia is vital. It is important to attract quality teachers and provide support for them. Universities have a key role to play in sustainable development.

Social inclusion depends upon people's ability to participate economically, socially and civically. Important factors influencing disadvantage and inequality are access to good jobs, gender, child-care, vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather, poor food, domestic violence and access to the digital world.

Superannuation

Superannuation funds can play an important role as an investor in sustainable development both now and increasingly in the future. This will require a proper risk allocation with government and a long-term pipeline of projects.

The Sustainable Australia Report

There is a need for better national data and local-scale data on environmental indicators (e.g., on biodiversity and waterway health). Geospatial data can be very helpful.

We should move away from reliance on GDP as a measure of progress. Some process indicators may be valuable as well as outcome indicators. There should be more governance indicators. It is important to capture a combination of subjective and objective measures of wellbeing. The Sustainable Australia Report should discuss the causes and risk factors of sustainability.

Follow up papers on key issues

It was agreed that a series of short thought papers would be produced to provide the basis for discussions in the future and building consensus. The papers would set out the global and Australian challenges and suggest goals and indicators.

A communications strategy, incorporating social media and other internet tools, was also discussed as well as developing a public profile that signals to people that the work around the SDGs needs to involve all relevant stakeholders.

Introduction

Following the Rio+20 United Nations (UN) Conference on Sustainable Development, world governments embarked on a process to develop universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, which would come into effect in 2016, will apply to all countries and promote an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations. This workshop opens a three-year project – *Sustainable Development Goals ⇔ Sustainable Development Solutions* – to provide Australian and regional leadership in the development of the SDGs and the solutions for implementing them.

The project, which is an initiative of Monash University and the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), is being carried out through a series of annual Australia-based and regional workshops engaging senior leaders from government, the private sector, civil society and academia in a dialogue on what kind of sustainable future we want and how we get there.

The outcomes of the workshops will be published and passed on to national and international organisations and processes linked to the development of the SDGs. These include the SDSN, of which Monash University is the Regional Centre for Australia/Pacific. The SDSN is led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University; its objective is to build a global network of universities, research institutes, companies, and civil society to promote solutions that accelerate sustainable development and to support the process of developing SDGs. They also include the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, to which the Chair of the project, Sir Bob Watson, is the UK's representative; and the National Sustainability Council, chaired by project leader Professor John Thwaites.

The project is supported by the Harold Mitchell Foundation, the National Australia Bank, the City of Melbourne and the Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

The first Australia-based workshop took place on 13–14 May 2013 in Melbourne with almost 100 participants from diverse backgrounds (Appendix A). It focussed on developing a vision for what a sustainable Australia might look like, what sustainable development goals it should aim for, and how Australia could influence the international discussion around SDGs. Key areas of discussion included:

- Activities and processes taking place nationally and internationally to contribute to the development of the SDGs;
- Where Australia is now in terms of sustainability and where it is headed, drawing on the National Sustainability Council's report *Sustainable Australia Report 2013: Conversations with the Future*[1], which was released in early May;
- Sustainable development challenges and opportunities for Australia, within a changing global and regional socio-political environment;
- Potential goals and targets for sustainability in Australia;
- Implications of the global debate on sustainable development for Australia, and how can Australia influence it.

This report provides a summary of the presentations and discussion at the workshop and indicates next steps.

1 National Sustainability Council, Sustainable Australia Report 2013: Conversations with the Future, www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/measuring/publications/sustainable-australia-report-2013.html

Session Summaries

Session 1: Opening

This session explained the United Nations and other political processes underway to develop a set of universal Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2016. It highlighted why sustainable development is a global imperative, how the SDGs are relevant to Australia and explained the purpose of the Monash series of SDGs workshops.

Welcome

Edwina Cornish (Provost, Monash University) welcomed the attendees and described how Monash University and the Monash Sustainability Institute are addressing the big sustainability issues.

Keynote Speaker

Sir Bob Watson (Sir Louis Matheson Fellow, Monash University) provided an insight into the key environment and development-related challenges facing the world today and explained the political and environmental context for the workshop's discussions on sustainability and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). He argued that the key global challenges included eliminating poverty and hunger, addressing population and consumption, resource efficiency, a transition to a low-carbon economy, the drivers of biodiversity loss, a transformation of the economic system and going beyond GDP, and governance and the influence of vested interests.

Sir Bob emphasised the importance of conceptualising the dimensions of sustainable development – including environmental, economic and social – as closely interlinked strands, like DNA, rather than as separate pillars. He also noted the challenges associated with bringing together the various international processes relating the post-2015 development agenda, and stressed the important role of national and international research programs and assessments.

By considering where Australia is now, where it is going and how this differs from an ideal vision for the future, Sir Bob explained, there is a distinct opportunity for Australians to build a national conversation around sustainable development goals and to become a driver for positive change, nationally and globally.

Commentator

Tim Costello (CEO, World Vision Australia) highlighted some of the major challenges in achieving meaningful change on a complex, global issue like sustainable development. He noted the need for strong global governance that is not held back by issues like electoral cycles and that civil society has an important role in taking this process forward. He also outlined the need to depoliticise and promote a common understanding of sustainability and to ensure that the connotations of unsustainable development are translated to a set of factors that are meaningful to average households. He noted that the meeting of G-20 heads of government next year (Brisbane, 2014) presents an opportunity to deliver a clear message on sustainable development.

Discussion

The first session's group discussion covered a broad range of issues, including: the need to communicate the incentives and opportunities of engaging with the SDG process; opportunities for Australia to play a facilitating and unifying role in the international negotiation process; the value of good governance, innovation and young people in achieving change; the need for an international champion figure on sustainable development; challenges associated with differing interpretations and paradigms relating to sustainability; being cognisant of interrelationships across components of sustainable development; and the importance of both top-down and bottom-up action.

Session 2: Where are we now and where are we headed

This session drew upon the report from the National Sustainability Council – *The Sustainable Australia Report 2013: Conversations with the Future* – to assess Australia's current position and trends with respect to a series of sustainability indicators and what path they are taking us on.

Speakers

Malcolm Thompson (Deputy Secretary, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) presented a short background to the Australian Government's Measuring Sustainability program, which has led to the National Sustainability Council and the recently released Sustainable Australia Report. He shared some of the motivating factors for the creation of the measuring sustainability program, including the need

to manage a growing population, the need to find a shared understanding of sustainability issues and to ensure that environmental decision-making is based on data rather than just opinion. He also examined the connection between sustainability and wellbeing – where wellbeing is derived from a combination of economic, social and environmental capital and sustainability is about maintaining the stocks of these capitals over time.

John Thwaites (Chair, National Sustainability Council) presented an overview of the *Sustainable Australia Report 2013: Conversations with the future*. The report provides a current picture of Australia showing a sustained period of economic growth, increased levels of education, increased life expectancy, liveable cities, and other positive developments over recent years. In addition, Australia is ranked in the top two countries in the world on the Human Development Index. However, the report also presents a number of concerns and challenges for the future, including a growing inequality gap, a recent decrease in productivity, an increase in chronic disease, the high degree of native vegetation clearing (particularly along the East Coast) and the level of food wasted. John Thwaites suggested that the Report and the data contained within it should be used as an evidence base for decision-making and to begin a national conversation about sustainable development in the future.

Discussion

Audience discussion focused on the *Sustainable Australia Report,* covering gender; challenges of translating good research into business practice; a need for better national data (e.g., on biodiversity and waterway health) and local-scale data; the value of geospatial data for capturing and communicating information; the importance of making the outcomes of the report accessible by developing clear messages; and highlighting the interrelated nature of sustainable development by weaving together stories and indicators in the report.

Panel

Peter Harper (Deputy Australian Statistician, Australian Bureau of Statistics) described two key initiatives that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has been involved with for integrating economic and environmental statistical considerations. The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), which provides an environmental lens on national economic accounts, was adopted last year by the UN as an international standard. The Experimental Ecosystem Accounting within SEEA approaches this issue from the other direction, starting with the environment and looking to give it an economic dimension. He also described a need to bring together a range of disciplines to create a systematic set of statistics.

Rod Glover (National Sustainability Council) noted that recent economic growth was based on increases in productivity and terms of trade, but future long-term economic growth will need to be driven by human capital innovation and connectivity. He noted that Australia is highly entrepreneurial and does well in research, but faces the major challenge of translating innovation into business successes. He discussed the opportunity for the country to act as an international facilitator because of its size, wealth and geographic location.

Sue Richardson (Principal Research Fellow, National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University) argued that we must look beyond GDP as a meaningful measure of economic growth. She discussed humanity's growing capacity to destroy the environment, how increased levels of education of women have not translated into a corresponding change in their income levels, and how the shift away from the standard 40-hour work week has helped women combine work and raising children.

Steve Hatfield-Dodds (Research Director, the Integrated Carbon Pathways (ICP) collaboration, CSIRO) spoke about the three key components of adaptive governance: understanding the system, availability of technology and motivation to change. He also spoke about society's (misplaced) faith in progress, the psychology of decision-making and an initiative by the CSIRO for decoupling environmental health and economic growth.

Alan Oster (Chief Economist, National Australia Bank) outlined NAB's wellbeing indicators initiative, explaining the methodology and some of the key findings from their quarterly surveys, including that anxiety is largely caused by cost of living, concerns about government, and not having enough money to retire.

Discussion

The discussion covered issues of good governance and the transition away from the reliance on GDP as a measure of progress; caution about relying too heavily on international comparisons and indicators; the conversion of innovation into business productivity; the difference between outcome indicators and process indicators, a recommendation that the Sustainable Australia Report discuss the causes and risk factors of sustainability; and the importance of capturing a combination of subjective and objective measures of wellbeing.

Session 3: Where do we want to be

This session explored in both plenary and breakout groups what a sustainable Australia might look like, and what might be key priorities and potential sustainable development goals and targets for the country.

Speakers

Robert Doyle (Lord Mayor, City of Melbourne) – *A sustainable Australia: The local government perspective*

Robert Doyle emphasised that small action is better than big talk and described a number of programs that the City of Melbourne is implementing to improve the sustainability of the municipality, including retrofitting of buildings, doubling urban canopy cover and increasing urban stormwater capture. He highlighted the importance of explaining some issues in terms that carry meaning for the target audience, using the example of likening inner city temperature issues to the health of a child.

Ed Byrne (Vice-Chancellor, Monash University) – *A sustainable Australia: The role of universities*

Ed Byrne set out the role of universities in promoting sustainability. He explained that universities drive sustainable innovation, undertake targeted research and provide education, all of which contribute to the infrastructure for solving some of the major challenges facing the community.

Discussion

The discussion explored the distinction between environmental sustainability and broader definitions of sustainability, touching on the importance of incorporating social and cultural considerations, particularly in relation to cities. There was an interest in green and white roofing as options for improving the sustainability of cities and comment on the value of universities partnering with the private sector.

Breakout groups

The Plenary then disbanded into five breakout groups to discuss specific goals and targets for Australia that we would like to see by 2030 for the following sectors:

- Cities and infrastructure, led by **Arron Wood (Councillor, City of Melbourne)** and **David McInnes (CEO, Earthwatch Institute (Australia))**
- Environment, led by **Don Henry (CEO, Australian Conservation Foundation)** and **Peter Cosier (Wentworth Group)**
- Social inclusion, led by **Tony Nicholson (Executive Director, Brotherhood of St Laurence)** and **Patricia Faulkner (Chair, National Health Performance Authority and Board of Jesuit Social Services)**
- Health and education, led by **Bronwyn Pike (former Minister for Education and Health, Victoria; Chairperson, South Australian Urban Renewal Authority)** and **Dr Mukesh Haikerwal (Chair, World Medical Association)**
- Rural and regional issues, led by **Mark Wooton (Chair, Climate Institute & farmer)**

Session 4: Where do we want to be (continued)

In this session plenary heard from the breakout groups and other participants regarding what a sustainable Australia might look like and potential sustainable development goals.

Breakout group reports

Cities and infrastructure

The cities and infrastructure group indicated that they struggled with the size of the problem and the solutions. Instead, they focused on questions and indicators that might be missing from the *Sustainable Australia Report*. These included resilience and liveability, flexibility and self-reliance, amenity, valuing externalities, climate risks and governance structures. The group made the point that city density should not be an aim in and of itself and that liveability and sustainability are closely connected.

Plenary discussion on this topic explored the link between vibrancy and social capital in cities as well as the importance of addressing resource flows into and out of cities when assessing sustainability. There was also a point about creating structures through city planning that increase social and cultural values, which often cannot be physically built.

Environment

The environment group identified six key domains for use in developing sustainable development goals – habitat and ecosystems, fresh water, agricultural productivity base, material flows, energy and emissions, and cultural context. Additional important considerations, as identified by the group, included reducing species loss, biodiversity connectivity and the ability to respond to and minimise the impacts of natural disasters. The group also reiterated that there is insufficient environmental data and that it is

important to articulate context when choosing goals (e.g., is water needed for drinking or boating?) and appropriate scales of data.

Plenary comments emphasised that environmental factors are particularly interlinked. There was also recognition of a need to balance aspiration and political reality when developing goals.

Social inclusion

The social inclusion group shared a set of drivers of exclusion and expanded on these drivers. The group suggested that inclusion depends on people's ability to participate economically, socially and civically. Economic participation is affected by access and quality of schools, teachers and education, which is in turn affected by things like amenity, urban planning, access to mass transportation and teaching approaches. Other important issues influencing exclusion are issues of gender, affordable child care, vulnerability to climate change, and lack of nutritious food and access to the digital world.

The plenary discussion emphasised the importance of access to digital services as well as issues relating to the accurate measurement of domestic violence. The discussion also touched on society's expectation of better jobs and the growing complexity of choosing immigrant settlement locations that maximise inclusion.

Health & education

The health and education group noted that health is a central component of sustainability because many activities influence human health and being healthy is essential for wellbeing. The mechanisms for decreasing inequalities are based on collecting evidence and the proper use of technology.

In terms of education, the group highlighted the importance of attracting quality teachers to the profession and providing them with support, professional standards and consensus about best practice teaching. In addition, there was recognition of needing better funding structures for public health and greater resources for disadvantaged children.

Comments in plenary touched on issues of enabling parents (particularly those with low educational levels) to encourage and support their children in school, enabling teachers to utilise digital resources, greater resources for disadvantaged students, and the importance of life-long education. A lack of access to health services and early intervention were seen as key reasons for lower life expectancy in rural communities.

Rural & regional issues

The rural and regional group concentrated on the challenges of scaling-up Australian agriculture as it tries to meet increasing levels of regional demand. These challenges include knowledge gaps (particularly in relation to northern Australia), implementation and investment issues, skills shortages, climate change, soil degradation, water availability, embedded water issues and consequences for sustainability and rural governance. The group also made the point that sustainability is about more than just the environment and water and soil need to be depoliticised.

Plenary discussion explored market valuation of land and the influence on agriculture, with some non-market factors often being missed and the ideal allocation of land use therefore being skewed. Similarly, differing discount rates when analysing the future were identified as influencing outcomes. The discussion also touched on food miles and issues relating to rule changes through the World Trade Organisation.

Additional perspectives

Indigenous

Joe Ross (Northern Australia Indigenous Land & Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)) spoke about the importance of spending time to listen and understand Indigenous communities before developing approaches to guide development in those communities, including approaches relating to the Sustainable Development Goals. He explained that Indigenous communities must be given the chance to influence change and take a sense of ownership in their ongoing development and management. Finally, he explained that development in Indigenous communities needs to be structured around an integrated program rather than disconnected initiatives.

The subsequent discussion covered the importance of building trust and capturing the legacy of what has happened in the past. There was also strong interest in exploring ways of capturing Indigenous knowledge in dealing with sustainable development challenges.

Youth

Kirsty Albion (Co-director, Australian Youth Climate Coalition) explained that young people see addressing climate change as an opportunity to readdress issues like wealth distribution and sustainability. She spoke about climate change as a unifying challenge, through which Australia has an opportunity to drive significant change. She highlighted the domestic consumption and export of coal as a serious issue and the need to transition to renewable energy resources.

Following this presentation, the group discussed some of the key challenges facing Australia in addressing climate change. The group also discussed the value of young people in dealing with sustainability issues like climate change and the growing importance of social media for building awareness and supporting change.

Session 5: The business case for sustainable development

This session, chaired by **Sam Mostyn (Director, Virgin Blue, Transurban and Citigroup Australia)**, examined why sustainable development is important for business

Speaker

Mark Joiner (Executive Director, Finance, National Australia Bank) opened the second day of the workshop by explaining that NAB's motivation for supporting sustainable development is simply good business. He noted that we are not adjusting to changes such as lower annual GDP growth rates, and the huge growth in aged pensions because of increasing life expectancy relative to retirement ages; and that the world is approaching tipping points, e.g., depletion of non-renewable natural resources and degradation of ecosystem services as a result of biodiversity loss. He then explained that NAB is working with its customers to respond to these risk factors. He shared his belief that the acknowledgement of constraints is the moment and opportunity for innovation. He also noted that younger generations want to work for organisations that do good rather than organisations that occasionally do good things.

Panel

John Denton (Partner and CEO, Corrs Chambers Westgarth) focused on where sustainable development might sit within Australia's regional and international engagement processes, acknowledging human, geopolitical and economic changes in Asia. He acknowledged that sustainability issues all have the potential to cause instability and that Australia has the opportunity to share skills to deal with sustainability issues such as water markets, energy efficiency and food pricing. He noted an opportunity to move the sustainable development agenda through the G-20 and B-20 processes given the G-20 is struggling to find purpose following the global financial crisis.

Nicholas Fleming (Chief Sustainability Officer, Sinclair Knight Merz) spoke about focusing on transparency, viability and compliance as drivers of sustainability in business. He explained the importance of strategy, design, innovation, systems thinking and leading change in dealing with productivity and sustainability issues – that more emphasis on multidisciplinary design processes, which attempt to eliminate long-term risks for business, can lead to more sustainable outcomes.

Bill Shannon (The Shannon Company) explored ways of driving behaviour change in relation to sustainability. He talked about the hopelessness that people often feel when trying to influence big issues like sustainable development at an individual level and that it is important to share positive stories from around the world in order to promote hope. He also suggested that the language around sustainability should be changed and emphasised that specifics outsell generalities in creating change.

Discussion

Discussion expanded on the importance of business and the private sector as current and future leaders in sustainable development, encouraging a race to the top rather than a race to the bottom. Issues included the courage required by business leaders in moving towards sustainable development due to the levels of uncertainty involved; international competitiveness; difficulties in making a strong business case for sustainability due to related political connotations and rhetoric; the challenge of dealing with inertia and the need to create a sense of achievability such that business leaders feel compelled to deal with sustainable development; creating change by taking a series of small steps and engaging communications specialists to support behaviour change campaigns; the challenge of encouraging innovation through less prescriptive procurement processes; the challenge of balancing shareholder expectations, short and long term interests and sustainability; and recognising that there is generally lower trust associated with big business and government when trying to drive change – trust is generally greater between peer-to-peer networks, such as through social media. Sustainability issues must be built into core business objectives, strategies and annual reporting.

Session 6: Where do we want to be (continued)

This session focused on what sustainable development means for key industry sectors.

Speaker

Alex Wonhas (Director, Energy Flagship, CSIRO) – *Sustainable development goals for Energy – Opportunities for Australia and beyond*

Alex Wonhas spoke about the UN *Sustainable Energy for All* initiative and opportunities for Australia to improve the sustainability of its energy sector. He argued that technological solutions are available to both provide affordable clean energy and transition to a low-carbon economy emphasising the potential of renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies. He described a variety of technological solutions for increasing the share of renewable energy in Australia, such as solar-gas hybrids. He emphasised the leadership role and export opportunity that is available to Australia in relation to energy efficiency.

Panel

Resources & mining

Stuart Anstee (Chief Adviser-Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services, Rio Tinto) stated that he considers it is a given that the business community, including mining companies, has a role in is supporting sustainable development. He outlined a number of programs that Rio Tinto has put in place to improve the sustainability of its business practices by reducing its environmental footprint, especially on water resources and biodiversity, and improving the livelihoods and education of local communities.

Water

Tony Wong (CEO, CRC for Water Sensitive Cities) discussed water management and its close relationship with the sustainable management of cities. He argued that cities are key drivers for food, water and energy demand in Australia, hence exert a strong influence on water resources, but cities also have water resources (e.g., run-off and water recycling) that can be utilised. He described three principles to guide sustainable development in cities: cities are water supply catchments; cities can provide ecosystem services; and it is important to develop social and political capital for water sensitive city design.

Food

Helen Dornom (Manager Sustainability, including Food Safety & Integrity, Dairy Australia) described the inherent interest of the dairy industry in sustainability and that land managers naturally try to increase the long-term viability of their land. Nevertheless, she stated, it is important to remember that dairy products will always have some degree of environmental impact, that sustainability is not just about the environment and that imposing additional costs on the industry must have tangible benefits. She also argued that targets should be set but industry should be allowed to decide how to meet them.

Superannuation & investment

Steve Bracks (Former Premier, Victoria, 1999-2007. Currently Chairman of Cbus and the Industry Superannuation Network) spoke about the importance of superannuation as an investor in sustainable development and the SDGs both now and increasingly in the future. He discussed a number of requirements to facilitate investment by superannuation funds in SDGs-related projects, including liquidity guarantees, risk allocation between government and bidders, and, importantly, a secure long-term pipeline of projects, including overseas projects.

Discussion

The group explored issues of balancing profit and positive sustainability outcomes; recognising the value of water beyond its economic value; the importance of recognising good performance, and getting industries to adopt best practices; the importance of large corporations to influence sustainable practices along their supply chain; acknowledging that there are few if any constraints on the availability of low-carbon energy sources, hence on starting the transition to a low-carbon economy; managing the rebound effect through behaviour change when transitioning to efficient consumption technologies; getting the balance right in terms of capturing the value of economic returns and social returns for cost-benefit analysis and whether the correct time scales are being adopted; the challenge of directing superannuation investment into projects that deliver profits and social benefits; the importance of empowering people to make sustainable consumption choices and reduce wastage (e.g., food, water and energy); capturing local interests and wellbeing impacts when choosing superannuation investment projects; and creating behaviour change for health issues like obesity.

Session 7: The Sustainable Development Goals – insights and policy approaches

This session informed participants about some of the latest thinking relevant to sustainable development and key themes that are emerging from the policy process around likely SDGs.

Speakers

Ewen McDonald (Deputy Director General, Humanitarian & International Group, AusAID) – *The Australian Government position on Sustainable Development Goals*

As a background to Australia's aid program, Ewen McDonald explained that eighteen of the twenty countries surrounding Australia are developing countries. He said that the SDGs process will be an open and transparent process soliciting input and the challenge will be to synthesise this input into a simple set of goals that people will engage with. Key challenges include poverty alleviation, gender equality and jobs. He highlighted the importance of integrating the three themes (economic, social and environmental) and people taking the ownership of the SDG development process and the SDGs.

Dave Griggs (Director, Monash Sustainability Institute) *– A scientific approach to the SDGs*

Dave Griggs provided an overview of the worsening environmental degradation trends that have occurred over the last 60 years and the work that he and a team of scientists have recently completed to develop a set of possible SDGs by integrating a set of global environmental objectives with the existing MDGs. This resulted in the full integration of social, economic and environmental considerations into each of their goals, thus concluding that it is possible to create a fully integrated yet simple set of SDGs.

John Thwaites (Chairman, Monash Sustainability Institute) *– The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network recommended SDGs*

John Thwaites spoke about the purpose of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the role that Monash University is playing as a regional centre within the Network. He presented a list of ten potential SDGs that have been developed by the SDSN Leadership Council, which are open for consultation and comment until 22 May[2]. Some SDGs are thematic (e.g., food and energy security), whilst others are place-based (e.g., cities) or cross-cutting (e.g., gender and governance). He suggested that some of the SDGs, such as gender equality and access to early childhood care, are likely to have more of an impact on Australia than others and lead to change in some areas.

Sir Bob Watson (Sir Louis Matheson Fellow, Monash University) *– The UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals*

Sir Bob explained that Australia, the UK and the Netherlands share a seat in the Open Working Group, and that the troika of countries are currently developing a set of papers on key issues, outlining the challenges and potential sets of targets.

Panel

Tony McMichael (Professor Emeritus of Population Health, Australian National University) explained that the present should not be in competition with the future. He described the Australian Academy of Science program Australia in 2050: Towards an environmentally sustainable and socially equitable way of living, which is developing living scenarios to test and model change over time. He emphasised health as key issue.

Gemma Muir (MDGs Committee Co-Chair, World Model UN Melbourne 2013) spoke about the World Model UN in Melbourne this year, at which a group of young people from around the world developed a set of ten interrelated SDGs. They recognised the need for universal goals, while acknowledging regional and national differences, and the importance of intermediate targets between now and 2030 goals.

Discussion

There was broad support of the goals listed in the SDSN document on SDGs, particularly the inclusion of cities, although there was recognition that the second goal, ("Achieve development within planetary boundaries") needs significant revision. The SDSN report will provide the UN Open Working Group food for thought. There was also discussion about the role of culture and religion in the SDGs and how to use the networks of religious groups to support the SDG process. Other issues discussed included the importance of concentrating on domestic as well as international development issues; security and stability issues and the importance of developing a specific rule of law goal; recognition that economic growth should be measured by more than just GDP; how to present the SDGs so all are addressed and the synergies and trade-offs are understood; importance of entrepreneurship and innovation as a goal (only included in the youth list of SDGs); ways of building trust and removing personal issues when negotiating the SDGs; and balancing the acknowledgement of tough decisions in achieving sustainable development with giving a positive message and stimulating behaviour change, which the SDSN document doesn't seem to do.

[2] The final SDSN report, *An action agenda for sustainable development*, is now available from the SDSN website at unsdsn.org/.

Session 8: Implications of likely SDGs for Australia

This session examined the implications of the SDGs for Australia and discussed the way forward for this project to best support the SDGs process.

Panel

Tim Costello (CEO, World Vision Australia) raised the importance of translating the meaning of the SDGs into concrete terms for people to engage with. He also emphasised the need to develop language in relation to the SDGs that will be meaningful for different people with different motivations, and argued that materialism is society's biggest problem today.

Robert Hill (Chancellor, University of Adelaide, former Minister for the Environment Australia, and former Permanent Representative to the United Nations for Australia) spoke about the changing nature and increasing complexity of the sustainable development agenda since the Rio conference in 1992, which has made it increasingly difficult to achieve. He discussed the difficulties of finding agreement on environmental issues, e.g., climate change, at the international level. He cautioned that seeking broad ranging input and building consensus may lead to a very long laundry list of SDGs. Finally, beyond developing a set of goals, he highlighted the importance of developing monitorable targets, plans and indicators.

Joe Ross (Northern Australia Indigenous Land & Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)) emphasized the need to focus the SDGs on issues relevant to Australia and, in particular, that they need to be meaningful for and result in real and meaningful change for Indigenous communities.

Siamak Loni (President and CEO, World Model UN Melbourne 2013) explained that young people have energy, understanding and trust in the way they interact, which helps them to build relationships and makes them key change agents. He said youth was concerned by the lack of urgency in addressing sustainable development issues and that trust and cooperation was needed regionally and globally. He also talked about the influence of social media, travel and cultural exchange on young people and that they generally feel isolated and sidelined on important international issues. He suggested that including youth in the development of the SDGs and other international processes is important because they will be tasked with implementing many of the agreements that are being discussed.

Kate Auty (Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria) spoke about the significant steps that are required in the way that we understand sustainable development issues. She expressed the need to make an effort to create change by concentrating on inclusion; setting goals, aspirations and monitoring and evaluations frameworks; transcending disciplinary loyalties, and making sure people feel like they are part of the equation.

Discussion

The final group discussion covered the importance of not shying away from difficult discussions in relation to sustainable development; ensuring "sustainability" does not lose meaning by becoming politicised or being seen as incompatible with long-term economic growth; the value of snapshots and stories for explaining sustainable development; learning from past processes (such as the national ESD process in the 1990s) and ensuring inclusion and ownership of government, community and young people; recognition that governments often have limited power to achieve change and ensuring that SDGs are developed in partnership between government, the private sector and civil society; and the importance of setting appropriate but stretch targets, and capturing context when setting a target and managing the potential for perverse outcomes.

Wrap up and next steps

Bob Watson, Dave Griggs and John Thwaites (Monash Sustainability Institute) led a discussion on the process of moving forward on the SDGs following the workshop. There was agreement to produce a set of short thought papers to provide the basis for discussions in the future and building consensus. A communications strategy, incorporating social media and other internet tools, was also discussed as well as developing a public profile that signals to people that the work around the SDGs needs to involve all relevant stakeholders.

Workshop follow up

It was agreed that a series of short papers (about 3 pages each) be prepared by a small number of individuals and then widely reviewed by relevant individuals from academia, private sector and civil society in order to gain broad ownership. Each paper would describe one of the sustainable development challenges facing the world and Australia, and then suggest a potential set of goals and indicators for Australia.

It is proposed to prepare papers on some or all of the following issues:

- Sustainable economic growth
- Food security and nutrition
- Water security
- Energy security and the transition to a low-carbon economy
- Health care
- Social inclusion, including education and gender issues
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Governance
- Financial inclusion
- Cities
- Indigenous

The template for each paper, which would integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects, would be:

- The current and future global challenge
- The current and future challenges for Australia
- Suggested national goals, within a possible global goal(s)
- A set of outcome indicators, with possible process indicators

These papers will provide input to the next domestic workshop and help inform the Australian Government regarding potential Sustainable Development goals and targets for Australia, hence input to the Intergovernmental Open Working Group and domestic debate.

Appendix A: Participants

Kirsty Albion
Australian Youth Climate Coalition

Stuart Anstee
Rio Tinto

Tony Arnel
Norman Disney & Young Global

Kate Auty
Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Victoria

Rosemary Bissett
National Australia Bank

Ed Boydell
CARE Australia

Steve Bracks
Former Premier, Victoria Chairman Cbus, Industry Superannuation Network

Martin Brennan
ICLEI - Oceania

Ed Byrne
Monash University

Lisa Cameron
Monash University

Megan Christensen
Oil Search Ltd

Peter Christoff
University of Melbourne

Stephanie Copus Campbell
Harold Mitchell Foundation

Edwina Cornish
Monash University

Peter Cosier
Wentworth Group

Tim Costello
World Vision Australia

Sasha Courville
National Australia Bank

Shaun Cox
Melbourne Water

John Denton
Corrs Chambers Westgarth

Helen Dornom
Dairy Australia

Robert Doyle
City of Melbourne

Ed Dunn
Sustainable Agriculture Fund

Jane Edquist
AusAID

Patricia Faulkner
Chair, National Health Performance Authority

Ross Fitzgerald
Visy Industries

Mark Flanigan
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

Nicholas Fleming
Sinclair Knight Merz

Rob Gell
World Wind

Rod Glover
National Sustainability Council

Dave Griggs
Monash Sustainability Institute

Mukesh Haikerwal AO
World Medical Association

Peter Harper
Australian Bureau of Statistics

Molly Harris Olson
EcoFutures

Steve Hatfield-Dodds
CSIRO

Jim Henneberry
Australian Paper

Don Henry
Australian Conservation Foundation

Robert Hill
University of Adelaide

Lucy Johnston
National Australia Bank

Mark Joiner
National Australia Bank

Caryn Kakas
Property Council

Jane-Frances Kelly
Grattan Institute

Tony Kelly
Yarra Valley Water

Tahl Kestin
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Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

David Lansley
World Vision Australia

Geoff Lawler
City of Melbourne

Siamak Sam Loni
World Model UN Melbourne 2013

Romilly Madew
Green Building Council of Australia

Jacky Mandelbaum
Columbia University

Gordana Marin
Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

Alicia Maynard
Baulderstone

Jenny McAllister
AECOM

Ewen McDonald
AusAID

Kim McGrath
Timor-Leste Governance Project

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David McInnes
Earthwatch Institute (Australia)

Tony McMichael
The Australian National University

Clare Meeker
Monash University

Krista Milne
City of Melbourne

Harold Mitchell
Harold Mitchell Foundation

Tim Morris
World Vision Australia

Sam Mostyn
Director, Virgin Blue, Transurban and Citigroup Australia

Gemma Muir
World Model UN Melbourne 2013

Martyn Myer
The Myer Foundation

Sarah Newton
Monash University

Tony Nicholson
Brotherhood of St Laurence

Carl Obst
System of Environmental-Economic Accounting United Nations

Tim O'Leary
Telstra

Kelly O'Shanassy
Environment Victoria

Alan Oster
National Australia Bank

Andrew Petersen
Sustainable Business Australia

Bronwyn Pike
South Australian Urban Renewal Authority

Sue Richardson
Flinders University

Victoria Rogers
Sustainable Agriculture Fund

Joe Ross
North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA)

Pierce Russell
World Model UN Melbourne 2,013

Graeme Samuel

Bill Shannon
The Shannon Company

David Shelmerdine
The Myer Family

Rob Skinner
Monash University

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Clean Energy Council

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Zoe Wainer

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CRC for Water Sensitive Cities

Alex Wonhas
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Chi Mun Woo
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City of Melbourne

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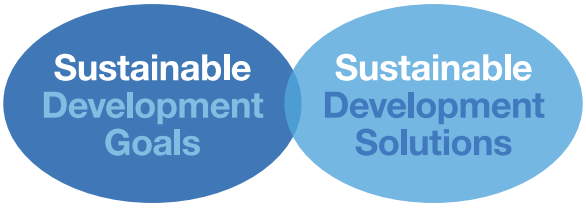

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