

National Youth Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Melbourne

Outcomes Report



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The National Youth Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was co-hosted by SDSN Youth Australia/Pacific, the Foundation for Young Australians and Global Ideas.

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Introduction

The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute a shared global framework of development priorities to 2030 and aim to bring an end to extreme poverty, promote prosperity and wellbeing for all, protect the environment, address climate change, and encourage good governance and peace. They apply to all countries, including Australia.

Young people have a critical stake in ensuring the SDGs are achieved and a vital role to play in contributing towards their achievement. Gifted with imagination, energy and optimism, they have the potential to be the key drivers of sustainable development at the local, national and global level. Therefore, as the future inheritors of this planet, young people must spearhead the sustainable development movement and build a new system of governance founded on knowledge sharing, cooperating and prioritizing issues such as extreme poverty, our anthropogenic impact on Earth, increasing inequality, and a growing complexity of governance.

Driven by this vision, the National Youth Summit on the SDGs brought together 100+ passionate and motivated representatives from Australia's leading youth organisations and student associations as well as influential youth leaders (see Annex 2), to facilitate collaborative action towards the achievement of the SDGs in Australia. The Summit, one of the first such national youth gatherings on the SDGs in the world, was a joint initiative between Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Youth (Australia/Pacific chapter), the Foundation for Young Australians and Global Ideas.

The Summit objectives were to:

- Evaluate Australia's performance towards achievement of the SDGs
- Build a common understanding of the SDGs and what they mean for Australia
- Showcase examples of successful campaigns, research and projects that have led to the advancement of the SDGs
- Explore the actions young people should take to put the SDGs into practice
- Facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration between youth and student groups to advance the SDGs
- Raise awareness of the SDGs among young people in Australia

The program (Annex 1) got participants to discuss these issues through a mixture of talks and table discussions. This report provides a summary of what was discussed at the Summit, including the next steps.

This Summit was a follow up event to the Australian SDG Summit, which took place on 7 September 2016 and was convened by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Australia/Pacific and SDSN Youth, the Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA), the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). It brought leaders from business, academia, government and civil society organisations together to develop a plan for the implementation of the SDGs in Australia.

The National Youth Summit built on the momentum created by the [Youth Pledge on the SDGs](#) – a document outlining a set of priorities and commitments, which was signed by 25 Australian youth and student organisations (see Annex 3).



Workshops and Sessions

The National Youth Summit on the SDGs took place on 17 October 2016 at the Melbourne Bowls Club in West Melbourne. More than 100 young Australian leaders from 60+ student associations and youth organisations (from all states and territories) gathered to discuss and collaborate on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in Australia.

First Session: Welcome and Keynote - Future Generations and the SDGs

The day was opened by the Deputy Secretary for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, Dr Paul Smith, who spoke about the Victorian government's commitment to sustainable development and pledged support for the efforts of young Australians in implementing the SDGs in their communities.

Next the Co-Chair of SDSN, Professor John Thwaites, spoke about Australia's progress on the SDGs and how young people can play a role in making the SDGs a reality within Australia.

The participants then heard from Catherine Hunter, Chair of GCNA and Partner at KPMG, who spoke about the importance of bringing the business sector into the implementation process for achieving the SDGs in Australia. Catherine also cited a recent business statement signed by 33 Australian CEOs supporting the SDGs.

Second Session: The role of Australian youth groups and student associations in implementing the SDGs

This session began with a panel featuring young leaders from prominent Australian youth organisations, including the Oaktree Foundation, Oxfam, YGap, University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) and Undress Runways.

Following the panel the delegates also heard from the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, Ahmad Alhendawi, who recorded a special video message for the occasion.



Video: UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth, Mr Ahmad Alhendawi (full video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5cEFTAJTnw>)

Following speeches, all delegates were invited to ask questions from the panel or to make comments from the floor. This led to a fruitful discussion on Australia's performance towards the SDGs; how we should build a common understanding of what the SDGs mean for young Australians and finally how student and youth groups can collaborate to advance the goals in Australia.



Third Session: How young people can contribute to the SDGs

After lunch, delegates convened to work in groups to explore the actions young people should take to put the SDGs into practice. The groups discussed barriers to youth implementation of the SDGs, mapped what youth organisations and student associations are already doing that is relevant to the SDGs, discussed actions that young people can take and identified opportunities for collaboration and partnerships among the organisations that were represented at the Summit. Some of the common barriers and problems that were identified by the participants were:

- *Access to finance and availability of resources*
- *Awareness of the SDGs amongst youth and the public in general*
- *Collaboration and communication among youth and student organisations*

Participants then shared the results of their discussions with the Summit. The discussions produced many overlapping and interesting outcomes, with some solid follow up actions.

Final Session: Wrap up

In the final session, the Summit convenors summarised the key challenges, opportunities and actions from the discussions and outlined the main action points going forward.



More photos and videos from the Summit are available at:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/OB5gHBgit2pk-Q1ZTanFGzZVZYXc>



Evaluation of Summit Objectives

Evaluate Australia's performance towards achievement of the SDGs

Several keynote speakers, including Professor John Thwaites, Matt Tinkler, Elliot Costello, Sam Loni and Paul Smith all evaluated Australia's performance towards the achievement of the SDGs. Each took a different lens to identify how Australia is doing in each thematic area and identify areas where further work was needed. Professor John Thwaites also outlined Australia's performance in the Global SDG Index, which was launched by SDSN earlier this year in New York. Australia is ranked 20th on Index, with poor performance in goal areas such as nutrition, climate change, biodiversity protection and international aid.

Build a common understanding of the SDGs and what they mean for Australia

Despite the variety of organisations and diversity of individuals that were in the room, the Summit was still able to build a common understanding of the SDGs around three core themes: using the SDG framework for greater collaboration; using the SDG framework to build momentum around the core issues (people, planet and prosperity) identified within the Goals; using SDGs as a benchmark for policy and future of Australian society.

Showcase examples of successful campaigns, research and projects that have led to the advancement of the SDGs

While the SDGs are new, some of the participants and speakers were able to show examples of successful use of the SDGs. Some are listed below:

- AIESEC Australia showcased the Youth Speak survey, which used the SDGs as a tool for creating surveys on the view of young Australians on the future of Australia and the world. Find out more at aiesec.org
- Catherine Hunter shared how the SDGs were used by Global Compact Network Australia to bring 33 leading Australian CEOs together to highlight sustainability issues, and the role of the private sector in achieving the SDGs. Find out more at unglobalcompact.org.au/2016/09/07/gcna-launches-ceo-statement-of-support-for-the-sdgs/
- Professor John Thwaites talked about how different governments and companies are using the SDGs as a guiding document and a benchmark for policies and strategies. Find out more at sdgindex.org
- Sockos showed how they are embedding the Goals into their strategies for positive social outcomes and increasing awareness of the SDGs. Find out more at sockosau.com
- Chat 4 Change demonstrated that they have shifted their focus to the SDGs as a means of educating young Australians about social, economic and environmental challenges. Find out more at chatforchange.net
- Siamak Sam Loni gave examples of multiple SDG focused projects and discussed SDSN Youth's global campaign in mobilising young leaders to contribute to the SDGs. Find out more at sdnyouth.org and youthsolutions.report



Explore the actions young people should take to put the SDGs into practice

The discussions produced a number of great suggestions for what youth should do to put the SDGs into practice:

- **Map activities and impacts against the SDG framework**
Many Australian youth groups and student organisations are already working on one or more of the SDGs, except that many of them have not yet labelled their activities and projects against the SDGs framework. By taking a simple step and labelling their work according to the SDGs, organisations would be aligning their work towards a common theme and build momentum around the agenda.
- **Raise public awareness of the SDGs**
Many Australians are not aware of the SDGs and in order to create greater support for the SDGs, the public must be informed about the goals and their importance. This can be done through creative campaigns. Several examples of successful public awareness campaigns were cited.
- **Collaborate for the Goals: SDG17**
The SDGs framework provides an opportunity for Australian youth to collaborate more effectively around a common agenda – this would enable more cooperation on specific issues and therefore increase impact significantly.

Facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration between youth and student groups to advance the SDGs

The most dominant theme during the entire Summit was the need for further collaboration. All participants understood the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration and how it would need to be done effectively for the SDGs to become a reality. More importantly, many participants called for digital platforms to facilitate this and committed to creating them.



Summit Outcomes

In the final session of the Summit, delegates worked in groups and discussed the need for greater partnerships and more effective coordination among Australian youth organisations and student associations in implementing the SDGs. While many ideas were generated from the discussions, the top three overarching suggestions focused on greater collaboration, alignment with the framework and public awareness. In particular, delegates emphasized the need for:

A – Creating a space for collaboration, coordination and exchange of ideas between different Australian youth and student groups, in order to increase collective impact. Suggestions included:

- A virtual cloud based collaboration space, such as a Facebook group for regular communication.
- Continuing with meetings such as the Summit in order keep the momentum going and keeping the movement strong.

B – Encouraging all youth and student organisations to align their existing objectives and missions with the SDGs framework. In particular to use the Goals as a label for their activities, in order to streamline priorities and objectives across Australian society. Suggestions included:

- Encourage organisations already working on one or more of the SDGs to use the SDG Indicators Wizard to determine how their existing activities relate to the goals and targets.
- Encourage organisations to refer to the SDGs in their work and publicly cite the SDGs within their existing activities and projects in order to generate greater partnerships in different spaces.

C – Launching a series of public awareness campaigns to inform the public, in particular youth about the SDGs and its importance to Australia’s future. Suggestions included:

- Using social media to generate interest about the SDGs
- Setup education workshops within universities to encourage engagement with the Goals

Participants also identified important tools and guides, which could be used for better understanding and application of the SDGs:

<p style="text-align: center;">SDG Compass</p> <p><i>SDG Compass</i> provides guidance for companies and businesses on how they can align their strategies as well as measure and manage their contribution to the realization of the SDGs. Find out more at sdgcompass.org</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SDG Academy</p> <p><i>SDG Academy</i> provides FREE, high-quality courses from a global faculty of experts in the field of sustainable development. Find out more at sdgacademy.org</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">SDG Indicators Wizard</p> <p><i>SDG Indicator Wizard</i> helps determine which SDGs and Targets relate to your work. It will assist in translating your strategic priorities into an SDG-compatible framework. Find out more sdgfunders.org/wizard</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SDG Index</p> <p><i>SDG Index</i> is a Global Report Card for tracking SDG progress and ensuring accountability. It ranks and compares countries against a set of indicators to establish where each stands on domestic implementation of the Goals. Find out more sdgindex.org</p>



Annex 1. Summit Program

8.30am Registration (Tea and Coffee)

Opening Remarks

Siamak Sam Loni, Global Coordinator – UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network – Youth

Welcome and Keynote: Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Goals

This session will provide an overview of what the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are, what they mean for Australia and why their implementation is important for Australia's future. The session will also outline the role of young people in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

9.00am

- **Dr Paul Smith**, Deputy Secretary for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning
- **John Thwaites**, Co-Chair of UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network & Chair of ClimateWorks Australia & Monash Sustainable Development Institute
- **Catherine Hunter**, Chair of UN Global Compact (Australia) & Head of Corporate Citizenship at KMPG Australia
- **Mat Tinkler**, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Save the Children Australia

10.30am Morning Tea

Video Presentation

Ahmad Alhendawi, the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Youth (via video)

Panel Discussion: Role of Australian Youth Groups and Student Associations

How youth groups and students associations can contribute to the implementation of the SDGs in Australia and overseas. The panel discussion will outline the key challenges of implementation and potential opportunities for each group.

11.00am

- **Chris Wallace**, CEO - Oaktree Foundation
- **Conor Costello**, Campaigns and Community Engagement Manager - Oxfam Australia
- **Elliot Costello**, Co-Founder & CEO - YGAP
- **Edda Hamar**, United Nations SDG Young Leader & Director of Undress Runways
- **Anisa Rogers**, Environmental Officer - University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU)

12.30pm Lunch

Discussion Groups: Mapping Efforts and Identifying Synergies

1.30pm

This session will involve participants in identifying and mapping efforts currently being undertaken by each association and organization and how those efforts could be aligned with the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

3.00pm Afternoon Break

YouthSpeak Presentation

Helen Lou, CEO of AIESEC (Australia)

3.15pm

Discussion Groups: Discussing Actions and Next Steps

This session will invite participants to identify major synergies for cooperation between different groups and associations and pathways for implementation of the SDGs in Australia.

This session will also help to highlight the importance of greater partnerships and identify tools and mechanisms that should be created to enhance coordination between different groups and associations.

4.30pm Final Wrap Up

This session will summarise key challenges, opportunities and actions from the Summit.

5.30pm Networking Drinks



Annex 2. Participating Organisations

1. 1 Million Women
2. 3000acres
3. ACCSR
4. AIESEC Australia
5. AIESEC Monash
6. Amnesty international Monash Club
7. Australian Medical Students Association
8. Australian National University Student Association
9. AsiaLink
10. Australian Youth Climate Coalition
11. Bayside Council
12. Black.ai
13. Campaign for Australian Aid
14. Chat for Change
15. Crepes for Change
16. CrowdInk
17. Earth Australia
18. Emergent
19. Engineers Without Borders
20. Ernst & Young
21. Ethical Living Challenge
22. Fairtrade Australia/New Zealand
23. Feel Think Flow
24. Foundation for Young Australians
25. Future Business Council
26. Future Farmers Network
27. Future Health Leaders
28. Global Compact Network Australia
29. Global Health Collective
30. Global Ideas
31. Global Voices
32. Graduate House
33. Green Steps
34. Hallmark
35. Health and Human Rights Group
36. Health Delivered
37. Global Shapers Community
38. Healthy Futures
39. High Resolves
40. Koorie Youth Council
41. Laika Academy
42. Law Squared
43. LIL Project
44. MIDPA
45. Monash Health
46. Monash International Affairs Society
47. Monash Student Association
48. Monash Sustainability Network
49. Monash Sustainable Development Institute
50. Monash University
51. My Green World
52. National Youth Council of Australia
53. Nexus Australia
54. Oaktree Foundation
55. Philanthropy Australia
56. RESULTS
57. RMIT University
58. Scouts Australia
59. SDSN Australia/Pacific
60. SDSN Youth
61. Sockos
62. Students for Sensible Drug Policy
63. The Cricket Effect
64. UN Youth Australia
65. UN Youth Victoria
66. Undress Runways
67. University of Melbourne
68. University of Melbourne Student Union
69. University of Notre Dame
70. University of Western Australia Student Guild
71. VGen - World Vision Australia
72. YGAP
73. Young Australians in International Affairs
74. Youth Talk"ers"



Annex 3. Australian Youth Pledge on the Sustainable Development Goals

Australian Youth Pledge for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) On 1 January 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came into effect. The 17 SDGs and their 169 targets were agreed to by 193 governments in September 2015 at the United Nations. The goals constitute a shared global framework of development priorities to 2030 and aim to bring an end to extreme poverty, promote prosperity and wellbeing for all, protect the environment, address climate change, and encourage good governance and peace.

The SDGs are ambitious and require action beyond ‘business as usual’. Achieving the goals will require all stakeholders to play their part – governments, civil society, business, academia and youth – and to collaborate extensively.

Poverty and inequality, weak governance, conflict and instability, lack of infrastructure and the depletion of our natural resources contribute to long term and often irreversible problems and undermine the efforts of communities and societies to grow and prosper. Young people will have a vital role to play in addressing these critical global challenges and achieving the SDGs.

These challenges are relevant to all countries of the world, including Australia. As both a regional and global leader, Australia has a critical role in driving sustainable development. While Australia is an advanced country, we still face major challenges, including gender equity, domestic violence, homelessness, the rise of non-communicable diseases, environmental degradation, climate change, closing the gap experienced by Indigenous Australians amongst other issues.

Youth have the opportunity to play a central role in tackling the sustainable development challenges of the 21st century. Gifted with imagination, energy and optimism, young people should be considered the key drivers of sustainable development. They have the opportunity to tackle some of the biggest challenges of the 21st century by spearheading the sustainable development movement at the local, national and global level. This pledge recognises the role of Australian youth in this important global agenda.

We the undersigned:

- Recognise the enormous social, economic and environmental challenges facing the world;
- Recognise that future development must take place in a way that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable;
- Recognise that the SDGs establishes an agenda for the achievement of sustainable development by 2030;
- Stress the unique qualities possessed by youth that make them important stakeholders in achieving the SDGs, namely, creativity, enthusiasm and optimism;
- Stress the vitally important role that youth can play in achieving a sustainable future through advocacy, monitoring and implementation;
- Commit to the achievement of the SDGs;
- Undertake to align our priorities and activities with the SDGs and their targets; and
- Undertake to hold government, academia, business and civil society accountable in ensuring that concrete action is taken to achieve the SDGs.



Signed

