Acknowledgement:

This work was carried out for the Griffith Centre by Sustainable Enterprise at Griffith University. The views expressed herein are not necessarily the views of the Griffith University.

The role of Griffith Centre for Sustainable Enterprise at Griffith University is to be a leader in generating knowledge necessary for government, business and the community to develop a more sustainable society.

Author: Dr Rob Hales

Date: May 2019

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Executive Summary

Australia’s ranking of 37\(^1\) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) dashboard indicates that for a developed country there are aspects of Australian society that need to be altered if it deserves to be placed in the top 20 OECD countries. The continued focus on economic development, as the dominant measure and mode of progress in Australia, needs to be broadened to include other aspects of development. The SDGs are a United Nations agreement which redefines how prosperity is measured and achieved. Australia is a signatory to this agreement which consists of 17 goals broken down into a further 169 specific targets\(^2\). This report examines the alignment of the SDGs with the election policies of the ten major federal political parties.

We conclude that there is significant variation in the alignment of the ten political parties in relation to their election policies aligning with the SDG targets. The following points highlight the key findings of the research:

- The Liberal Party policies were found to have moderate to minimal alignment with the SDG targets.
- The One Nation and Australian Conservative Party policies had the least alignment with the SDG targets, they both received negative ratings because they opposed the SDGs and or the United Nations.
- One Nation and the Australian Conservatives scored negatively on SDG 13 because they want to pull out of the Paris Climate Change Agreement.
- The Labour Party and the Greens Party policies both have mostly significant alignment with all the SDG targets, but there was still room for improvement.
- The Australian Greens were the stand out party with the most significant alignment of all parties.
- The Centre Alliance Party had closer alignment to the SDG targets compared to the National Party, with the National Party rating zero for eight SDGs.
- The United Australia Party were found to have zero alignment with all SDG targets with the exception of SDG 5 on gender equality.
- The five smaller parties had predominantly zero evidence of policy alignment with the SDGs because of a lack of content and objectives related specifically to the SDG targets.
- The SDGs with the most alignment across all political party policies is SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 to promote peaceful and inclusive societies.
- Seven of the ten political parties have a gap in relation to SDG 17 on strengthening the means of implementation, with two of the seven parties scoring negatively.
- Support across all political parties for the SDGs is an important step for Australia to improve its international SDG ranking, and thus contribute to the prosperity of Australia.

\(^1\) [https://sdg-tracker.org/](https://sdg-tracker.org/)
Summary scorecard of the alignment of SDGs with political party election policies:

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<td>Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</td>
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<td>Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries</td>
<td>-1</td>
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<td>Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</td>
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<td>Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</td>
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<td>Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</td>
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<td>Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</td>
<td>-1</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Rating Key: (3) Significant evidence of alignment with SDG, (2) Moderate evidence of alignment with SDG, (1) Minimal evidence of SDG alignment, (0) No evidence of alignment with SDG, (-1) Evidence that policy opposes SDG.
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2.0 Research approach ........................................................................................................................................... 6
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1.0 Introduction

With the increasing global challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, and peace and justice, the Sustainable Development Goals has emerged as the most important policy framework for redefining prosperity for people, profit and the planet. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a United Nations agreement of which Australia is a signatory and consist of 17 goals which have been broken down into a further 169 specific targets.

The United Nations’ SDGs remind us of the need for every country to collectively participate in driving the sustainability agenda. There are urgent calls for action to embed SDG targets into policies and governance of countries to achieve the SDGs by 2030. It is therefore critical that Australian parties develop policies that align with the SDGs.

This research aims to analyse the extent that each of the ten major political parties election policies would, should they be implemented, contribute to Australia’s part in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This report presents research undertaken by Griffith University researchers who analysed the policies of ten political parties (i.e.: Australian Labour party, Australian Greens, Liberal Party of Australia, National Party of Australia, Centre Alliance, Australian Conservatives, Derryn Hinch's Justice Party, One Nation, United Australia Party, Katter's Australian Party) against the 169 SDG targets using desktop analysis to address the following two questions:

1. **What SDGs align with the election policies** announced by the different political parties in Australia?

2. **What are the SDG policy gaps** that need to be addressed by each political party?

The study, through the production of a score card, provides an indication of the policy intent of each party for each SDG. The more detailed and specific the election policy that related to the SDG and associated targets, the higher the rating they obtained. The rating does not evaluate the quality of the policy, or whether the policy of each party can achieve the SDG by 2030 as there are many external variables that influence this outcome. The methodological approach is described in the next section, followed by the key findings and opportunities for next steps in leveraging Australian policies to promote sustainable development.
2.0 Research approach

2.1 Data collection and preparation

Relevant literature on the Sustainable Development Goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), was reviewed to establish key words and terms that aligned to each SDG. This was followed by a key SDG word search review of the available election policy documents of ten different political parties. Relevant and applicable policy information was extracted. The policies of the political parties were drawn from publically accessible websites at the end of April 2019, and the websites are listed in Section 5. The election is still in progress so policies from the ten political parties may continue to be released during this time, and this review may not capture subsequently released policy information.

2.2 Data Analysis

The qualitative data extracted from the policy documents were entered into the NVivo Pro software. Firstly, data driven coding was conducted through the NVivo program to develop nodes from the 169 targets of the SDGs. The coding analysis of the 169 targets was then cross checked by researchers reading and manually checking each policy against the 169 targets. The list of United Nations SDG 169 targets and 260 indicators can be found here: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/.

The election policies are rarely worded in terminology that is consistent with the SDGs, which may explain some of the findings, although policies were carefully reviewed for alignment. Given that policies are predominantly focused on an Australian context, some targets of the SDGs may lack relevance in this country.

All of the above factors complicate a distinct comparison between the policies and SDGs. For this reason, rather than perform a strict literal comparison between the two, the decision was made to explore the concept of policy and SDG alignment. Such an approach does not necessarily guarantee exact SDG terminology being congruent with policy, rather it provides a judgement of the degree that policies would contribute to SDG attainment, i.e. the degree that they are intending to achieve

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3 Further analysis will be undertaken after the election for the purposes of preparing research to be submitted to a peer reviewed journal article.
the same outcomes. This analysis considers the presence of SDG relevant policy only. It does not consider the appropriateness and potential of each policy to realise the specific SDG target. Thus the analysis provides an indication of policy alignment.

The more detailed and specific the policy that related to the target the higher the rating (see rating guidelines in Table 1). A rating of 3 meant there was significant evidence of alignment with Sustainable Development Goals indicated by objectives and strategies that specifically addressed the SDGs. A rating of 1 indicated policies had minimal objectives and general statements unsupported by objectives or strategies.

Table 1: Rating guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Key</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Significant evidence of alignment with SDG</td>
<td>“Significant” evidence infers a very strong alignment between policies and SDG. Detailed policies exist in this circumstance for the majority of SDG outcome targets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Moderate evidence of alignment with SDG</td>
<td>“Moderate” evidence infers little doubt that the policy will contribute to the relevant SDG but lacks either the breadth of outcome target or detail to confidently assert that such contribution would be significant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Minimal evidence of SDG alignment</td>
<td>“Minimal” evidence of policy that addresses and/or acknowledge at least some element of an SDG. Generally vague general statements that lack any detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Zero evidence of alignment with SDG</td>
<td>“Zero” acknowledgement/mention of any element of SDG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>Negative – evidence that policy opposes SDG</td>
<td>“Negative” evidence that policy opposes attainment of at least one element of an SDG.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 3.0 Key Findings

This section presents the key findings of the study through the scorecard presented below, to demonstrate the alignment of SDGs to the election policies of ten different political parties in Australia.

#### 3.1 Overall alignment of policies

The overall summary of all political parties’ alignment of their policies to the SDGs is presented below.

Summary scorecard of the alignment of SDGs with political party election policies:

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</tbody>
</table>
Key findings of the scorecard include:

- The Liberal Party policies were found to have moderate to minimal alignment with the SDG targets.
- The One Nation and Australian Conservative Party policies had the least alignment with the SDG targets, they both received negative ratings because they opposed the SDGs and or the United Nations.
- One Nation and the Australian Conservatives scored negatively on SDG 13 because they want to pull out of the Paris Climate Change Agreement.
- The Labour Party and the Greens Party policies both have mostly significant alignment with all the SDG targets, but there was still room for improvement.
- The Australian Greens were the stand out party with the most significant alignment of all parties.
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- Support across all political parties for the SDGs is an important step for Australia to improve its international SDG ranking, and thus contribute to the prosperity of Australia.
4.0 Call to Action and Future work

In the lead up to the Australian 2019 election the Global Compact Network Australia, alongside ACFID, ACOSS, SDSN and UNAA released a joint statement as a group of organisations representing civil society, business, and academia\(^4\). The Statement calls on all political parties to support the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the Australian Government and in particular to undertake the following:

1. Develop a national implementation plan for the SDGs, outlining how Australia will achieve the goals, both in Australia and through our international development assistance.
2. Report to Parliament at least every two years on how Australia is tracking against each of the SDGs.
3. Establish a secretariat to provide ongoing support for effective and coherent implementation of the SDGs within the Government and to help leverage and coordinate action across all sectors.
4. Establish a representative, multi-sectoral reference group to advise the existing interdepartmental committee on the implementation of the SDGs.
5. Establish direct and indirect funding mechanisms to support the implementation of the SDGs by the Australian Government and by other sectors.

This report provides an initial examination of the alignment of SDGs with Australian political party election policies. The scorecard presents the variation of political party policy performance in relation to alignment with the SDGs. To enable the advancement of the SDGs, all political parties need to more closely align their policies to the SDGs.

The scorecard should provide a helpful analysis and reference point for Australian policy and decision makers. The findings identify alignment and non-alignment with the SDGs and illustrate potential areas to improve political parties engagement with the SDGs to collectively drive the sustainability agenda. This summary report is part of a larger project in which the findings will be published in a peer reviewed journal.

5.0 Links to Australian and International SDG Reporting

The Australian Government has provided a reporting platform to track the achievement of the SDGs. The link can be found here: [https://www.sdgdata.gov.au/](https://www.sdgdata.gov.au/)


To see how Australia is ranked internationally please refer to the SDG Tracker: [https://sdg-tracker.org/](https://sdg-tracker.org/)

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6.0 Political Policy Sources

The websites used to identify the policies of the ten political parties can be found here:

https://centrealliance.org.au/policies/
https://www.conservatives.org.au/our_policies
https://greens.org.au/policies
https://www.liberal.org.au/our-policies
https://www.unitedaustraliaparty.org.au/#