MONASH University

MONASH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

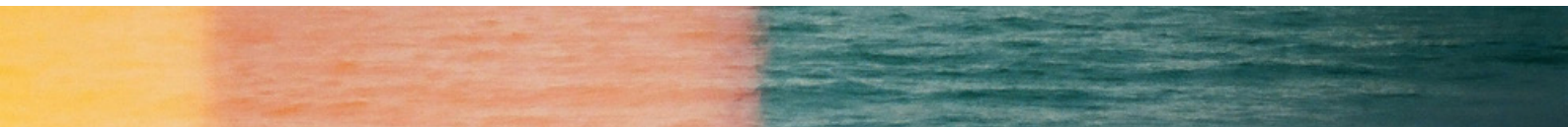
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Monash Sustainable Development Institute supports the Sustainable Development Goals

TRANSFORMING AUSTRALIA

SDG PROGRESS REPORT 2024

CONTENTS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We recognise their inherent rights as custodians of land, waters and that sovereignty was never ceded. We affirm that this always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

As an organisation committed to shaping a better future for Australia, we value First Nations Peoples' Knowledge systems and practices and honour those who protect, preserve and celebrate them, leaving a profound legacy for future generations of Elders and leaders.

We're committed to fostering a society that recognises, respects and includes Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledge by working with and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to advance the wellbeing of people and the planet for current and future generations.

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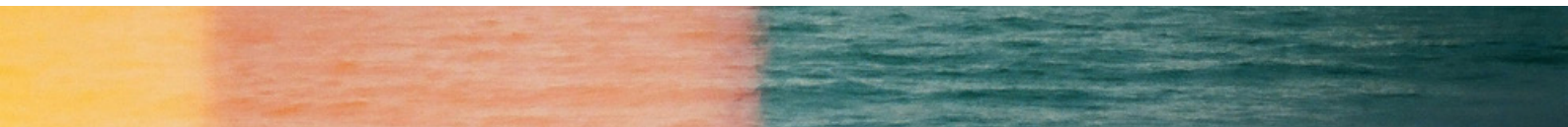


ABOUT MONASH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

In 2007, Monash University set up the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI) to better drive real world change through pioneering research, education and innovation.

With more than 200 academic and professional staff, and drawing on expertise across Monash's 10 faculties, MSDI works across 6 key areas – climate action, environment and health, sustainable cities and regions, circular economy, inclusive prosperity, and leadership for the SDGs – to advance the wellbeing of people and the planet for current and future generations in Australia and the region.

Leveraging our expertise in systems and behavioural change, we convene and collaborate with governments, industry, academia and communities to shape policy, build capacity, and develop strategies that unpack complex issues, test innovative solutions, and support systems transformation for sustainable development.

We provided input to help the United Nations shape the SDGs back in 2013, and have since developed significant expertise and reputation as a regional and global leader in mobilising SDG implementation.

Particular areas of expertise include SDG localisation and measurement, governance for SDG transformations, mobilising universities for the SDGs, and education and capacity building for the SDGs. MSDI also Chairs the Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the Australia New Zealand and Pacific region.

MSDI houses a number of key initiatives including:

Climateworks Centre – specialists in climate transitions with a mission to accelerate transition to net zero emissions in Australia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, aligned with the global goal of limiting global warming to 1.5C.

BehaviourWorks Australia – a leading behaviour change research enterprise which brings researchers together with government and industry to find behavioural solutions to social, environmental and organisational problems. BehaviourWorks also hosts the Evidence Review Service.

MSDI Water and Water Sensitive Cities Australia – collaborating with partners to build knowledge and capacity, and drive practical change to transform water systems for sustainable development in Australia and our region.

Circular Economy Labs – accelerating circular transitions by combining world-class research with practical tools and partnerships between policymakers, industries, and academics.

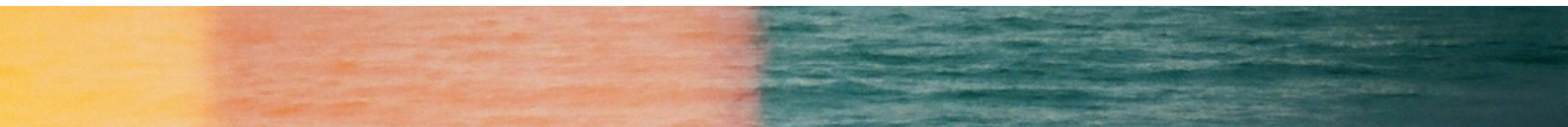
Sustainable Development Education – including accredited education with Monash University Faculties and Campuses, professional education, and co-curricular programs.

Research – transdisciplinary research on sustainability transitions, sustainable development governance, futures and adaptive planning, and justice and social inclusion. Also includes our Graduate Research Program.

Revitalising Informal Settlements and their Environments (RISE) – a global first research program providing water and sanitation in 24 informal settlements in Fiji and Indonesia to improve environmental and health outcomes.

Fire to Flourish – a 5-year transdisciplinary program supporting four disaster-affected communities to lead their own recovery, co-create foundations for resilience and wellbeing, and disrupt cycles of entrenched disadvantage, while building evidence and insight to drive reform.

More information – monash.edu/msdi



LEAD RESEARCHER – CAMERON ALLEN

Dr Cameron Allen is a Senior Research Fellow at Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI) where he has been the Chief Analyst and modeller for the Transforming Australia project since its inception.

Cameron has worked for more than two decades with governments and the United Nations to advance sustainable development and has worked extensively with countries around the world to implement the SDGs and develop methods for evaluating progress.

Through collaborations with the Millennium Institute and UNSW, Cameron has also been at the forefront of global research applying national scenario modeling to explore future pathways that accelerate progress towards the SDGs and net zero greenhouse gas emissions. This research has received global recognition through groundbreaking publications in *Nature Sustainability* and *Nature Communications* and has featured in UN publications and the media.

Cameron is the recipient of several prestigious national research grants, including a Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) from the Australian Research Council (ARC) on modeling socio-political dynamics of sustainability transitions, and an ARC Discovery Project on modeling post-growth futures.

Cameron's latest research is integrated into the new Transforming Australia assessment to evaluate Australia's current performance on the SDGs and identify key policies that can boost Australia's progress on the SDGs by 2030 and 2050.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global framework for sustainable development, aiming to ensure future generations are better off than their predecessors while leaving no one behind.

In the Australian context, the SDGs serve as a foundation for assessing progress across social, environmental, and economic indicators, offering a pathway to address critical challenges and opportunities tailored to Australia's unique priorities, including its environmental challenges, social equity goals, and economic context.

The ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** is the third in a series of reports produced by the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI) assessing Australia's progress toward achieving the SDGs. The reports, including previous iterations in 2018 and 2020, build on the methodology developed by the National Sustainable Development Council in 2018 that adapted the SDG framework to reflect the Australian context.

Australia's journey toward achieving the SDGs reveals a nuanced narrative of progress and persistent challenges. The 2024 update evaluates 80 indicators, offering a holistic review of the nation's economy, the health and wellbeing of its population, and the state of the environment.

It also delves into future pathways that leverage ambitious policies to accelerate progress on the 17 SDGs.
Our findings highlight the need for bold, coordinated action to secure a sustainable and equitable future by 2030 and beyond.

Looking back: Assessing Australia's progress to date

The first analysis offers a report card of Australia's progress across 80 indicators with the most recent data. Overall, Australia's performance is mixed (Figure 1) – around 30% of indicators are on track to meet 2030 targets, while 34% are going backwards. None of the 17 SDGs are completely on track.

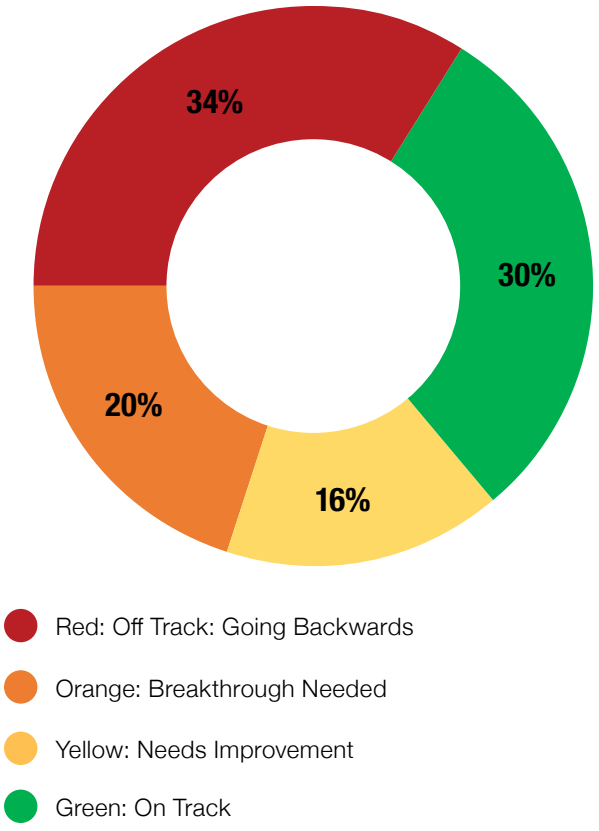


Figure 1. Assessment results – share of indicators in each traffic light category.

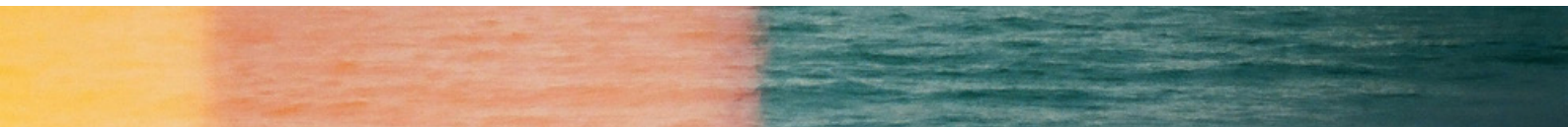
Australia is doing well on gender equity, clean energy, employment, and safety

Australia is on track and performing well against our peer countries in key areas:

- Average life expectancy of 83.2 years is above the OECD average of 80.6 years (SDG 3). The share of Australians with a tertiary education at 48.7% exceeds the OECD average of 40%, with the highest levels in the ACT (65.7%) (SDG 4).
- Government net debt is less than half the average for advanced economies, and per capita disposable income is higher than many of our peers including the UK, Canada, Sweden and Japan (SDG 8).
- Australia performs better than the OECD average for per capita water consumption (SDG 6) and our cities experience very low levels of air pollution compared to world standards (SDG 11).
- Australia is also a safe country with low homicide rates and comparatively high feelings of safety and levels of trust compared to our peers (SDG 16).

Australia has also made promising and rapid advancements in recent years across several key goals

- Significant progress has been made in reducing the gender gaps in superannuation (21%), and wages (12%) and the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women (38.4%) has jumped above the OECD average (32.8%) (SDG 5).
- Five of the nine economic indicators from SDG 8 are on track to meet 2030 targets, with recent large gains in rates of unemployment (3.7%), underemployment (6.4%) and youth unemployment (8.5%).
- Public investment in infrastructure (SDG 9) has received a 10% boost in recent years to 2.2% of GDP.
- The share of renewable electricity (SDG 7) has almost quadrupled since 2010 to 35% (but remains below the OECD average of 50%) and greenhouse gas emissions continue to decline (SDG 13).



However, growing disparities threaten the wellbeing of many Australians

While most Australians enjoy a good quality of life, Australia lags our peer countries on a range of key indicators and many of us are being left behind. Persistent poverty continues unabated and socio-economic inequalities are clearly worsening across domains such as wealth, housing, health, and education:

- Over 3 million Australians live below the poverty line (SDG 1), with a similar number experiencing food insecurity (SDG 2). Poverty in Australia (12.7%) is higher than the OECD average (12.1%) and worse than many peer countries such as Finland (5.7%), The Netherlands (8.2%), Canada (8.6%) and the UK (11.2%).

- Wealth inequality is twice as high as income inequality in Australia and continues to worsen (SDG 10). The share of the nation's wealth of the bottom 40% declined by around a third since 2004 to around 5.5%. Close to 24% of wealth is held by the top 1% of Australians, well above peer countries such as The Netherlands (13%), Finland (18%), and the UK (21%)

- Around 42% of lower income renter households are living in housing stress, paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs (SDG 11). The rate of Indigenous homelessness is more than ten times higher than non-Indigenous Australians in cities and more than 20 times higher in remote areas.

- Psychological distress and suicide rates continue to rise and are more than twice as high for Indigenous Australians (SDG 3). National suicide rates are 20% worse than the OECD average, and rates for males are more than three times higher than for females.

- Disparities in education outcomes between low and high socio-economic groups have widened dramatically since 2018, placing Australia well behind peer countries such as Japan, the UK, and Canada (SDG 4).

A mixed economic outlook as Australia falls behind on innovation

Recent high inflation has reduced real wages, and Australia is falling further behind our peer countries when it comes to investment in innovation and economic diversification:

- Investments in both research and development and knowledge-based capital (SDG 9) have declined to 40% below the OECD average – or around a third of the levels invested in leading countries.

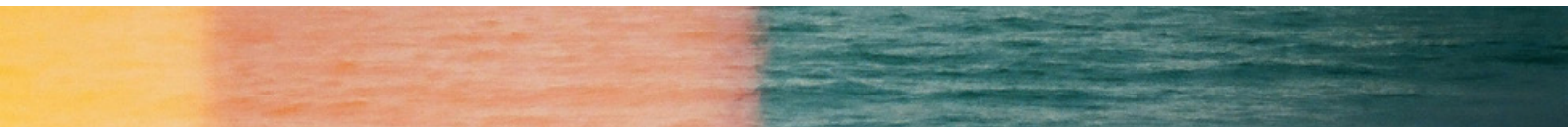
- Government revenue as a share of GDP in Australia was 36% in 2022 (SDG 17), below the OECD average of 42% and well behind peer countries such as Norway (65%), France (54%), and Finland (53%).

- Australia's economic complexity (SDG 9) has steadily deteriorated over the past 20 years – placing us 93rd among 130 countries, just behind Honduras, Armenia and Uganda.

Australia continues to face critical environmental challenges

The state of Australia's environment raises significant sustainability challenges, with continued decline in threatened species (SDG 15) and worsening impacts from natural disasters (SDG 13).

Australia is falling behind our peers when it comes to the circular economy and efficient resource use (SDG 12). Australia's material footprint is nearly double that of leading countries while circularity rates in Europe are almost three times higher.



Looking forward: Pathways to accelerate progress

The second analysis employs a national system dynamics model developed with the Millennium Institute to explore opportunities for accelerating progress towards the SDGs in Australia by 2030 and 2050.

It evaluates two future scenarios: a *Business-as-Usual Pathway* and the *Transform Australia Pathway.*

The modelling reveals that:

- The *Business-as-Usual Pathway* results in stagnation and decline, achieving only 55% progress on SDG targets by 2050.
- The *Transform Australia Pathway* achieves 80% progress on all SDGs targets by 2030 and 90% by 2050 through bold, integrated policy shifts.
- These shifts result in transformative impacts, including achieving net zero emissions by 2050, halving poverty, reducing income inequality by 30%, and delivering significant improvements in biodiversity conservation and resource efficiency. Australia's GDP is also projected to be $300 billion higher than the *Business-as-Usual Pathway* by 2050.

The *Transform Australia Pathway* identifies six key transformations that research and modelling confirm hold the greatest potential to achieve the SDGs:

- Wellbeing and resilience
- A sustainable and just economy
- Sustainable food systems
- Energy decarbonisation
- Sustainable urban development
- Regenerating the environmental commons

Among these, Wellbeing and Resilience, Energy Decarbonisation, and Sustainable Food Systems emerge as critical enablers, unlocking broader progress across multiple SDGs through their significant "spillover" effects and interconnected impacts.

This pathway includes a 7% annual increase in public expenditure over 10 years, financed by increased revenue. This investment addresses Australia's most pressing challenges – modernising infrastructure, advancing climate adaptation, and improving health and education outcomes for the most disadvantaged.

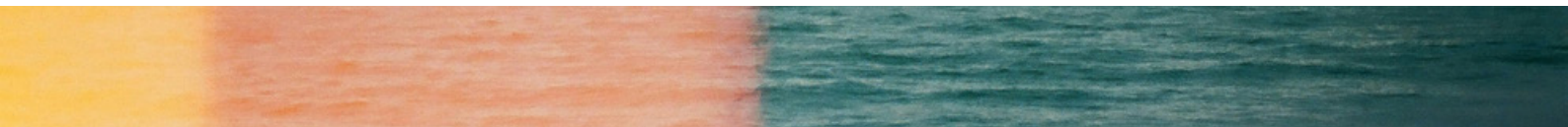
By prioritising these areas, it creates a foundation for long-term economic and social stability, enhances societal wellbeing, and positions Australia as a leader in sustainability and equity – delivering transformative benefits that extend far beyond immediate GDP metrics.

These transformations require long-term vision and an integrated approach to policymaking, underpinned by strong political leadership and a robust social license to drive and sustain change.

Establishing mechanisms such as a Future Generations Commissioner, integrating broader metrics like wellbeing and environmental sustainability into the Intergenerational Report, and embedding long-term perspectives in policymaking processes could help align decision making with our economic, social and environmental goals.

Together, these measures, combined with the data insights and modelling tools presented in this report, aim to stimulate a conversation about what Australia could become in the future – an equitable, sustainable and thriving nation for generations to come.

This report highlights that transformational change is not only necessary but achievable. By leveraging the insights provided and fostering collaborative efforts, Australia can align its development pathway with the ambition and urgency of the SDGs, creating a sustainable, equitable, and resilient future for all.



FOREWORD

The decisions we make today will determine the future we create for our children and grandchildren. Too much of our politics is focused on short-term issues and not enough on how to tackle longer-term challenges that will determine if the next generation is the first to be worse off than their parents.

It's important that legislation, policy and business decisions are based on evidence about where Australia is today and whether we are on track to meet the goals we have for ourselves and our children.

The SDGs address universal challenges that affect all countries and provide a framework and targets to help us achieve our goals like decent work and economic prosperity, climate action, good health and wellbeing and reduced inequalities.

The ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** complements other important monitoring initiatives in Australia, including Australia's national wellbeing framework, *Measuring What Matters*.

The assessment includes a broad and balanced coverage of economic, social and environmental issues, and the introduction of 2030 target or benchmark values to evaluate progress and increase transparency.

For the first time, our ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** also models future opportunities to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. This shows that with the right policy settings, Australia can achieve SDG targets to reduce poverty, improve health and wellbeing, address climate change and environmental degradation, and deliver economic prosperity.

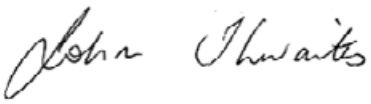
It also demonstrates that the SDGs are complementary. Actions taken to achieve one SDG often have positive "spillover" effects that promote the achievement of other goals.

While the increased public investment envisaged in the modelling is ambitious, it is a strategic investment in long-term prosperity driving stronger economic performance, resilience, and social equity by 2050.

At the Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI), through the Climateworks Centre, we've been using modelling to demonstrate how we can decarbonise to achieve net zero emissions and have convened coalitions to shape policies accordingly. We're seeing this work gain momentum and the share of renewables in electricity has grown rapidly at close to 15% per annum over the past five years.

The wellbeing of future generations depends on the foundations we build today and we need to work together to replicate these achievements across the other transformations that build resilience, a sustainable and just economy, and sustainable food, urban and natural systems.

It's time to think and to plan for a better future for our children and grandchildren.



Prof John Thwaites AM

Chair – Monash Sustainable Development Institute & Climateworks Centre

ABOUT TRANSFORMING AUSTRALIA

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a global roadmap for sustainable development, holding the promise that we leave future generations with a world better than today's. In 2015, Australia joined 193 other UN Member States in committing to achieve these goals by 2030.

The Monash Sustainable Development Institute (MSDI) took part in the process of shaping the SDGs and has been at the forefront of monitoring Australia's progress towards achieving them. Since 2018, when we launched the inaugural ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report,*** we have provided critical insights into Australia's advancement on these global benchmarks.

The first report, led by the National Sustainable Development Council – a multidisciplinary body of experts from government, business, research, and civil society – established a baseline assessment of 144 indicators and 86 targets across all 17 SDGs, adapted for local relevance. This foundational report offered valuable perspectives on national progress.

In 2020, a follow-up report focused on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development outcomes.

This 2024 update marks the third iteration of the ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Reports,*** offering two key analyses, shown below (Figure 2).

LOOKING BACK: ASSESSING AUSTRALIA'S PROGRESS TO DATE

This analysis evaluates Australia's progress by providing a comprehensive assessment of advancements across 80 indicators – 26 economic, 27 social, and 27 environmental – and targets. It identifies areas where accelerated action is needed to meet 2030 targets, including:

- **Historical Trends:** Examining data trends dating back to 2000.
- **Recent Changes:** Highlighting developments since our 2020 assessment.
- **Progress Against Targets:** Assessing proximity to 2030 target values.

Additionally, most indicators include comparisons against OECD and international benchmarks or disaggregated datasets (e.g., by gender, age, remoteness, Indigenous status).

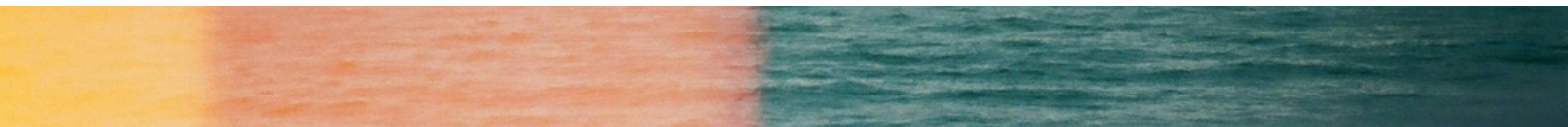
LOOKING AHEAD: EXPLORING FUTURE PATHWAYS TO 2030 AND 2050

This forward-looking analysis explores potential pathways for Australia to accelerate progress towards the SDGs by 2030 and 2050. Using system dynamics modelling, we evaluate six key transformations and 16 policy shifts – collectively termed the *Transform Australia Pathway* – and compare these projections against a *Business-As-Usual Pathway*. Key features include:

- **Scenario Modelling:** Demonstrating the impact of adopting a set of transformative policies versus maintaining the status quo.
- **SDG Interlinkages:** Highlighting the interconnected nature of the goals and the synergistic effects of integrated strategies.

Figure 2. The two key analyses included in *Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*.

More information and graphs of all indicators can be found at monash.edu/msdi/initiatives/transforming-australia



ALIGNMENT WITH *MEASURING WHAT MATTERS*

The ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** complements other relevant national frameworks, including *Measuring What Matters (MWM)*, Australia's wellbeing framework.

Overall, 43% of the SDG indicators included in the ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** have no comparable metric within MWM. These gaps are particularly evident in areas such as food security (SDG 2), access to clean water (SDG 6), access to affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), industry and innovation (SDG 9), inequality (SDG 10), ocean health (SDG 14), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17).

Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024 also includes 2030 target values or benchmarks for each indicator, which enables an evaluation of progress and improves transparency and accountability. These distinctions underscore the complementary roles of the two frameworks in providing a holistic understanding of Australia's progress.

Additional details on the alignment between Transforming Australia and Measuring What Matters, as well as on how the Transforming targets were set, can be found in Appendix 2: Methodology.

HOW THE TARGETS IN TRANSFORMING AUSTRALIA WERE SET

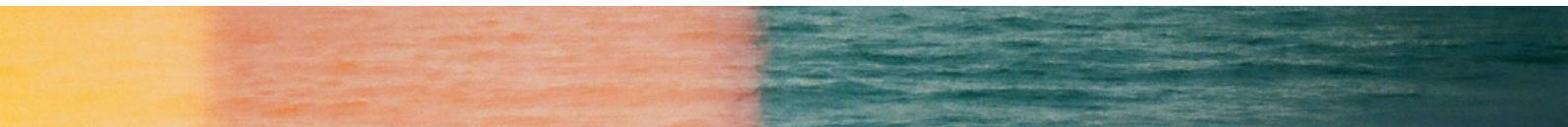
Target and benchmark values for the 2030 goals were established using a systematic decision-making process, prioritising:

1. Official numerical SDG targets.
2. Existing national targets or national strategies.
3. Targets set by the National Sustainable Development Council for the 2018 assessment.
4. Benchmarks from global or regional SDG assessments, including the Sustainable Development Solutions Network's global SDG Index.
5. Comparisons with top-performing peer countries (e.g. the top five OECD performers).
6. Steady improvement benchmarks based on a compound annual growth rate of 1% from the 2015 baseline.

While this methodology enables the systematic setting of targets across all indicators, further conversations on their relevance within the Australian context are essential.

Declaration on Future Generations

In September 2024 Australia along with 192 other countries committed at the United Nations to the *Declaration on Future Generations*. Under the Declaration, Australia agreed to safeguard the needs and interests of future generations by leveraging science, data, statistics and strategic foresight to ensure long-term thinking and planning, by promoting the use of forward-looking evidence-based impact assessments and through encouraging the use of measures of progress that complement and go beyond gross domestic product. ***The Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** can help Australia fulfill its commitments under the Declaration.



Looking back: Assessing Australia's progress to date

Key findings from the assessment of Australia's progress on the SDGs

The 2024 SDGs progress report assesses progress using the latest available data and methods for an updated set of 80 SDGs indicators to determine if Australia is on track to meet 2030 target values.

The assessment analyses both long-term trends since 2000 and short-term trends over the last five years of data. This provides vital information on both Australia's long-term trajectory as well as recent developments.

Progress is assessed using a quantitative method that compares historical trends with theoretical 'Target Paths' required to meet 2030 targets. Each indicator's progress is evaluated against its target or benchmark value using time series data.

Based on this assessment, each indicator is allocated a 'traffic light' symbol reflecting Australia's progress over both the long-term and short-term.

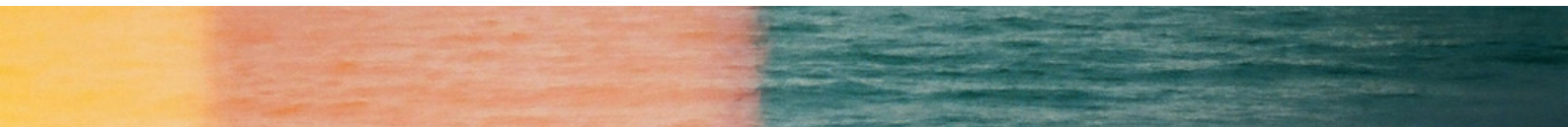
A brief summary of the traffic light assessment results for each indicator is provided in the Summary Dashboard on the following page, in which each traffic light symbol represents the assessment result for a single indicator (based on the long-term trend, where available).

Detailed data on the full list of indicators, including trends, targets, and progress assessments, can be explored further in the dashboard at Appendix 1, and graphs and benchmark data are available for each indicator at **monash.edu/msdi/initiatives/transforming-australia**. Further information on the methods is available in Appendix 2.

SUMMARY DASHBOARD – LONG-TERM TRENDS

Red: Off Track – Going Backwards Orange: Breakthrough Needed Yellow: Needs Improvement Green: On Track

GOAL	RESULT BY INDICATOR
1: NO POVERTY	
2: ZERO HUNGER	
3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELLBEING	
4: QUALITY EDUCATION	
5: GENDER EQUALITY	
6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	
7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	
8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	
9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES	
11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND ECONOMIES	
12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	
13: CLIMATE ACTION	
14: LIFE BELOW WATER	
15: LIFE ON LAND	
16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	
17: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS	



This brief snapshot shows that Australia's long-term performance is mixed, with none of the goals entirely on track.

- Australia is performing comparatively well on decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), and gender equality (SDG 5).
- However, the results for reduced inequalities (SDG 10), poverty (SDG 1) and food security (SDG 2) are notably falling behind.
- There have also been some important recent changes in Australia's progress since our previous assessments in 2020 and 2018. These include both rapid gains and losses in several indicators, suggesting areas where recent beneficial policy changes or negative shocks are having important implications for SDGs progress.
  See Table 1 below.

The remainder of the "Looking back" section will further explore the details of these and other key results along the following themes:

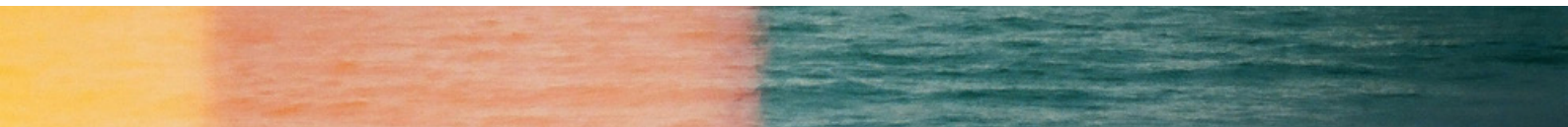
- Driving economic prosperity, the net zero transition and innovation
- Protecting our planet: Progress on environmental sustainability
- Building an inclusive Australia: Advancing social equity and wellbeing
- Building trust, safety and global partnerships

TABLE 1: RAPID GAINS AND LOSSES IN SDG INDICATORS

Numbers in brackets refer to the indicator number.

RAPID GAINS ON THE SDGS IN RECENT YEARS	
GOAL	INDICATOR
5: Gender Equality	Parlimentary seats held by women (5.5.1) Gender gap in superannuation (5.5.NEW1)
7: Affordable and Clean Energy	Renewable share in final energy consumption (7.2.1) Renewable share of electricity (7.2.1.ALT)
8: Decent work and Economic Growth	Unemployment rate (8.5.2) Underemployment rate (8.5.2.ALT) Youth underemployment (8.6.1)
9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Public infrastructure investment (9.1.NEW)
12: Responsible Consumption and Production	Quality of sustainability reporting by ASX200 (12.6.1)
13: Climate Action	Total GHG emissions (13.2.2)

RAPID LOSSES ON THE SDGS IN RECENT YEARS	
GOAL	INDICATOR
3: Good Health and Wellbeing	Indigenous life expectancy (3.4.NEW3) Harmful use of alcohol (3.5.2)
4: Quality Education	Socio-economic parity in mathematics (4.5.1)
8: Decent work and Economic Growth	Growth in real average weekly earnings (8.5.1.ALT)
11: Sustainable Cities and Economies	Active and public transport to work (11.2.NEW)
13: Climate Action	Population afftected by disasters (13.1.1)
15: Life on Land	Total forest area (15.1.1)
16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Volunteer work (16.6.NEW2)



Driving economic prosperity, the net zero transition and innovation

OVERVIEW

- SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy
- SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
- SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- SDG 13: Climate Action

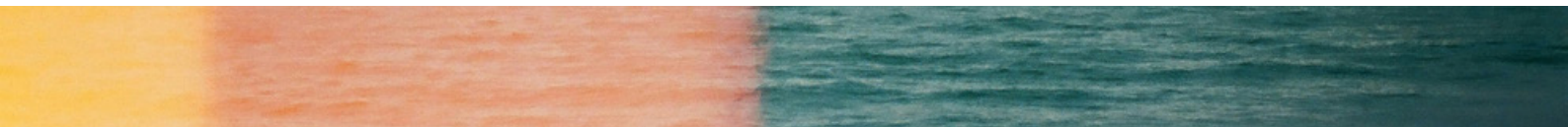
These goals collectively address the critical interplay between economic growth, technological innovation, and climate action. Australia's long-term economic prosperity (SDG 8) depends on its ability to improve energy systems (SDG 7) and tackle climate change (SDG 13). Innovation (SDG 9) plays a pivotal role in this transition, enhancing the nation's competitiveness while fostering more sustainable and resilient economic growth.

Table 2 provides a snapshot of trends in Australia's progress on these SDGs, and we follow this by a discussion of key insights from these results.

TABLE 2: INDICATOR SNAPSHOT – DRIVING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND INNOVATION

Red: Off Track – Going Backwards Orange: Breakthrough Needed Yellow: Needs Improvement Green: On Track

INDICATOR	LATEST VALUE	YEAR OF DATA	TARGET VALUE FOR 2030	SHORT-TERM TREND	LONG-TERM TREND
7.2.1.ALT Renewable energy share in electricity (%)	33.9	2023	55		
7.3.NEW1 Energy productivity rate of improvement (index 2003/4=100)	145.5	2022	198		
8.1.NEW1 Real net national disposable income per capita ($)	71,024	2023	71,061		
8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (%)	8.5	2023	5.9		
9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as share of GDP (%)	1.7	2021	2.4		
9.5.2.ALT Investment in knowledge-based capital (KBC) as share of GDP (%)	2.5	2022	4		
13.2.2 Total Greenhouse gas emissions (Mt CO_2-eq)	432.8	2023	314		



KEY INSIGHTS

Mixed economic outlook, with rising incomes and strong employment masking underlying productivity concerns

- Real net national disposable income per capita rose by about 9% from $66,143 in 2019 to $71,024 in 2023 (8.1.NEW1), despite recent high inflation driving down average weekly earnings in real terms since the COVID-19 pandemic (8.5.1.ALT).

- In 2023, strong labour demand continued following COVID-19, with unemployment (8.5.2), underemployment (8.5.2.ALT) and youth unemployment (8.6.1) at record lows since 2000. The long-term unemployment ratio of 19% of unemployed persons (8.5.NEW2) has also recovered since COVID-19 and remains below the OECD average (25% of unemployed), but is higher for men (21.5%) than women (18.6%).

- Australia's total factor productivity (TFP) (8.5.1.ALT) demonstrated an upward trend during the COVID-19 period, with both metrics significantly improving compared to 2019-20. However, by 2022-23, TFP showed a slight decline (-0.5%), and labour productivity experienced a sharp contraction (-2.9%), suggesting insufficient capital investment or other structural factors may be limiting output per worker.

Energy transition is making strong progress, but still needs improvement

- Despite an 11% decline in greenhouse gas emissions since 2019 (13.2.2), achieving the SDG target of a 50% reduction from 2005 levels by 2030 still requires additional effort.

- Progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions has been driven by an increase in the share of renewable electricity, which reached 33.9% by June 2023 and 34.9% by the end of 2023 – averaging an impressive 15% annual growth over the past five years (7.2.1.ALT). Despite these gains, a significant gap remains to achieve the Government's ambitious target of 82% by 2030.

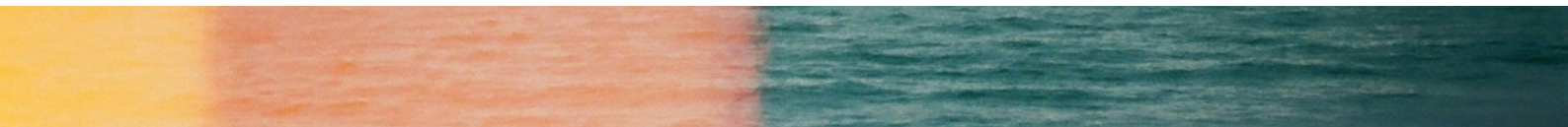
- The country has also seen an improving trend in energy productivity (7.3.NEW1), indicating progress in using energy more efficiently.

- Significant work remains to decarbonise sectors such as transport, health, agriculture, and industry, as the share of renewables in final energy consumption (12.3%) remained low compared to leading countries like Norway (61%), Sweden (58%), and Finland (50%) (7.2.1).

Falling behind in innovation: A challenge for Australia's competitiveness and long-term prosperity

- As of 2022, investments in research and development (9.5.1) and knowledge-based capital (9.5.2.ALT) in Australia continued to decline, leaving the country nearly 40% below OECD averages for both indicators. Countries like the USA, Republic of Korea, Sweden, and Japan invest at least twice as much in innovation as Australia.

- Unlike most wealthy countries, Australia's economy lacks both diversification and sophistication, ranking 93rd out of 130 countries on the Economic Complexity Index (9.B.1.ALT), which measures the complexity of exported goods and services – placing it just behind Honduras, Armenia, and Uganda.



Protecting our planet: Progress on environmental sustainability

OVERVIEW

- SDG 6: Clean Water
- SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 14: Life Below Water
- SDG 15: Life on Land

These goals emphasise the importance of a natural environment where biodiversity thrives, habitats are preserved, resources are used efficiently and sustainably, and ecological processes are maintained. Healthy marine and terrestrial ecosystems underpin human wellbeing, providing clean air, water, food, and climate regulation, while supporting economic prosperity and resilience to global challenges like climate change. For Australia, home to unique and diverse ecosystems, preserving biodiversity and restoring habitats is critical to safeguarding the ecological systems that sustain its social, cultural, and economic future.

Table 3 provides a snapshot of trends in Australia's progress on these SDGs, and we follow this by a discussion of key insights from these results.

TABLE 3: INDICATOR SNAPSHOT – PROTECTING OUR PLANET: PROGRESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Red: Off Track – Going Backwards Orange: Breakthrough Needed Yellow: Needs Improvement Green: On Track

INDICATOR	LATEST VALUE	YEAR OF DATA	TARGET VALUE FOR 2030	SHORT-TERM TREND	LONG-TERM TREND
6.3.NEW1 Proportion of total water supply sourced from recycled water (%)	6.6	2023	8.8		N/A
6.4.1.ALT2 Water consumption per unit gross value added for agriculture, forestry and fisheries (L/$)	196.4	2022	202.9		
12.2.1 Material footprint per capita (tonnes)	31.5	2023	25.3		
12.5.NEW2 Circularity rate (%)	4.4	2023	11		
14.5.1 Average proportion of marine Key Biodiversity Areas covered by protected areas (%)	65.6	2023	>50		
14.4.1.ALT Status of Australian fish stocks – Proportion of fish stocks assessed as not subject to overfishing (%)	73.5	2023	95		
13.2.2 Total Greenhouse gas emissions (Mt CO_2-eq)	432.8	2023	314.0		
15.2.1 Proportion of forest area with a long term management plan (%)	28.2	2021	95		N/A
15.5.1 Red List Index for threatened species (score 0 to 1, where 1 is best)	0.8	2021	0.9		

N/A – only recent data available.

KEY INSIGHTS

Protected areas: Increasing protection for key ecosystems

- Key biodiversity areas in marine (14.5.1), freshwater (15.1.2A) and terrestrial (15.1.2B) ecosystems are well represented in protected areas in Australia (65%, 38% and 57% respectively). These protected areas cover around 45% of Australia's total marine areas and 22% of the total terrestrial areas, which places Australia in a strong position to reach the 30% by 2030 target agreed to under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Biodiversity in decline: Conservation efforts struggle to reverse trends

- Despite the increased coverage of protected areas, the conservation status of Australia's biodiversity continues to decline, as measured by the Red List Index (15.5.1). This indicator is moving in the wrong direction and is assessed as 'Off Track' to meet the SDG Target of 0.9 by 2030.

Forests and fisheries: Mixed progress in sustainable management

- As of 2021, the total forest area has slightly increased in the last five years, following a steady positive trend since 2008 (15.1.1). However only a quarter of this area is covered by long-term management plans (15.2.1).

- The proportion of fish stocks assessed as 'not subject to overfishing' has declined from 82% in 2018 to 73% in 2022 (14.4.1.ALT). While the long-term trend remains 'On Track' to meet the SDG target of 95%, the recent decline raises concerns.

Australia needs to advance resource efficiency and circularity

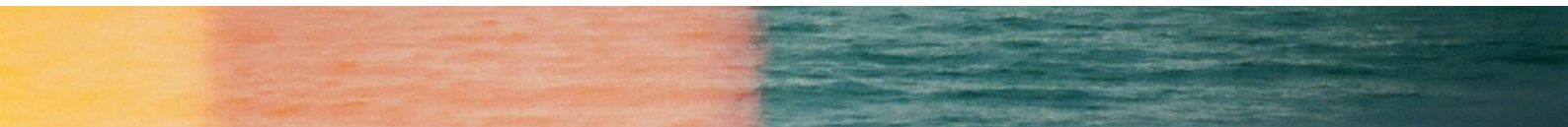
- Australia's material footprint at 31.1 tons per capita (12.2.1) has slightly improved since 2019, however, it remains nearly double that of leading countries such as the UK, France and Japan (17.7, 18.0 and 18.1 tons per capita respectively).

- Australia's circularity rate – the proportion of materials used that are not 'virgin' and a measure of how efficiently resources are reused and recycled – has slightly declined since 2019 and, overall, has shown very little improvement since 2010 (12.5.NEW2). At 4.4% in 2023, it remains well below the global average (7.2%) and significantly lower than the European average (11.5%).

- Agricultural water efficiency has improved by 16% from 2019 to 2023 (6.4.1 ALT2). The recycling and reuse of water (6.3.NEW1) is particularly low and has declined since 2019 to less than 7% of water supply.

Growing corporate commitment to sustainability

- The share of ASX200 companies submitting sustainability reports ranked as 'detailed' or better has risen significantly, increasing from 50% in 2017 to 71% in 2021 (12.6.1). This indicator is on track to meet its 2030 target, reflecting a growing recognition among Australian corporations of the importance of transparent and robust sustainability practices.



Building an inclusive Australia: Advancing social equity and wellbeing

OVERVIEW

- SDG 1: No Poverty
- SDG 2: Zero Hunger
- SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing
- SDG 4: Quality Education
- SDG 5: Gender Equality
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

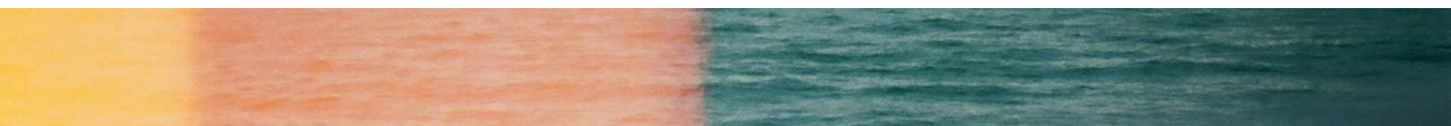
These SDGs focus on the core idea that prosperity must be reflected in the wellbeing of people. Achieving these goals means creating equal opportunities and the conditions for individuals to lead lives they value – free from poverty, hunger, and discrimination, with access to quality health care, education, and economic participation. Liveable and well-connected communities further enhance social equity and equal opportunities while embracing sustainability principles. Although Australia boasts high living standards, we know we can strive for even greater wellbeing, leaving no one behind.

Table 4 provides a snapshot of trends in Australia's progress on these SDGs, and we follow this by a discussion of key insights from these results.

TABLE 4: INDICATOR SNAPSHOT – BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AUSTRALIA: ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY AND WELLBEING

Red: Off Track – Going Backwards Orange: Breakthrough Needed Yellow: Needs Improvement Green: On Track

INDICATOR	LATEST VALUE	YEAR OF DATA	TARGET VALUE FOR 2030	SHORT-TERM TREND	LONG-TERM TREND
1.2.1 Poverty rate: proportion of population living below 50% of median equivalent income (after housing costs) (%)	12.7	2020	6.6		
1.3.NEW Adequacy of welfare payments (ratio of income benefits to the poverty line of 50% median income)	66	2022	100		
2.1.2 Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) (all ages)	12.9	2022	< 5		
2.2.2.ALT Prevalence of obesity: proportion of population age 18+ that is obese (body mass index >30)	31.7	2022	< 10		
3.4.NEW2 Average life expectancy at birth (both sexes, years)	83.2	2022	83.6		
3.4.NEW3 Indigenous life expectancy at birth (average for both sexes, years)	73.8	2022	83.6		
4.3.1.ALT Proportion of persons aged 25-64 with a tertiary education (%)	49.7	2021	50.6		
4.5.1 Low to high socioeconomic parity in mathematics (ratio, parity = 1)	0.53	2022	0.82		
5.2.1 Proportion of females (age 18+) who experienced physical violence from an intimate partner during the last 12 months (%)	1.5	2022	< 0.5		
5.5. NEW2 Gender pay gap in full-time average weekly earnings of women and men (%)	12	2023	< 5.0		
10.4.2 Gini coefficient (income) (number 0 to 100, where higher = more unequal)	32.4	2020	30.0		
10.4.NEW2 Share of household net worth of the first and second quintiles (%)	5.5	2020	8.2		
11.1.NEW1 Proportion of lower income renter households paying >30% of income on housing costs (%)	42	2020	31.9		



KEY INSIGHTS

Persistent challenges to address poverty and increasing household pressures

- Australia's level of poverty is higher than many peer countries and has shown little improvement in the last decade. Despite a high per capita income by global standards, as of 2020, approximately 3.3 million Australians (13% of the population) were living in poverty (1.2.1). This rate is slightly lower compared to 2017, likely reflecting the impact of temporary increased government income support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The adequacy of welfare payments for a single person without children (measured as the ratio of income benefits to the poverty line) was 66% in 2022, two percentage points lower than 2018 (1.3.NEW). This represents a significant decline of 33% from near-total parity with the poverty line in 2001. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, government support temporarily increased this parity to 78% – a level not seen since the early 2000s. While Australia performs better than Canada and the USA on this indicator, countries like the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Switzerland guarantee a minimum income of at least 50% of the median income.

- In 2022, 13% of the population experienced moderate to severe food insecurity – a condition where individuals lack access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food – reversing the improving trend observed since 2018 (2.1.2).

- As of 2020, housing costs accounted for an average of 14% of gross household income (11.1.NEW2). However, more than 40% of lower-income renter households spent over 30% of their income on housing – exceeding the housing stress threshold (11.1.NEW1). Additionally, approximately 20% of households exhibited financial vulnerability, reporting an inability to raise emergency funds (1.4.NEW).

- The impacts of recent high inflation, rising rents, and increasing interest rates are likely to exacerbate these indicators during the next 2023–2024 assessment period.

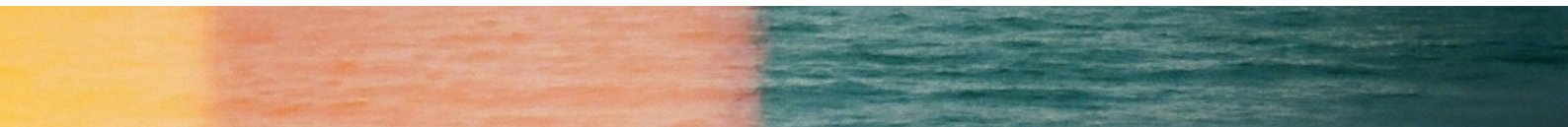
The growing divide: Inequalities in income, wealth, education, and health

- Income inequality, measured by the Gini Index, remains off track to meet the SDG target of 30 by 2030. Despite notable fluctuations, including a slight improvement in 2020, the index has stabilised over the past five years but has yet to return to 2000 levels, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to reduce inequality (10.4.2).

- Wealth inequality (10.4.NEW1) in Australia is almost double the level of income inequality, highlighting the greater concentration of assets compared to income. As of 2020, the highest 20% of households hold 63% of the nation's wealth, while the bottom 40% holds just 5.5%. This disparity has widened over time, with the bottom 40% seeing their share decline by 30% since 2004, while the top 20% increased their share by 7% (10.4.NEW2).This trend mirrors patterns seen in other high-income countries, particularly for the United States, where wealth disparities are significantly greater.

- While the average life expectancy for Australians continues to rise (3.4.NEW2), reaching 83.2 years in 2022, life expectancy for Indigenous peoples remains lower at 73.8 years – over 9 years shorter than the national average (3.4.NEW3). For Indigenous Australians, psychological distress (3.4.NEW1) and suicide mortality rates (3.4.2) are more than twice those of non-Indigenous Australians, and are particularly high in regional areas.

- The disparity in education outcomes, measured by low-to-high socio-economic parity in mathematics, has grown, with parity reducing by 25% since 2018 and 34% compared to 2000 (4.5.1). While many developed countries experienced declines in parity since 2018, Australia's sharper decline now places it below peers like Germany and the USA, which had larger disparities in 2018.



Advancing gender equality: Positive trends in safety, representation, and economic equity

- The proportion of women aged 18 and over who experienced physical violence from an intimate partner declined to 1.5% in 2022, representing a 34% decrease since 2016. However, the rate remains significantly higher for younger women aged 18–24 (8%) and women in regional areas (3–4%) (**5.2.1**).
- The gender pay gap has improved, decreasing to 12% in 2022, a reduction of about two percentage points compared to 2018. While this indicator has shown a rapid declining trend since 2015, breakthrough is needed to meet the 2030 target (**5.5.NEW2**).
- The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments increased sharply from 29% in 2018 to 38% in 2022. This progress puts us 'On Track' to meet the SDG target of achieving close to parity by 2030 (**5.5.1**).

Higher education on the rise: Significant growth in tertiary attainment

- The proportion of Australians with a tertiary education continues to grow strongly, reaching nearly 50% in 2021 – an impressive 77% increase since 2000 (**4.3.1.ALT**).

Building trust, safety and global partnerships

OVERVIEW

- **SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions**
- **SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals**

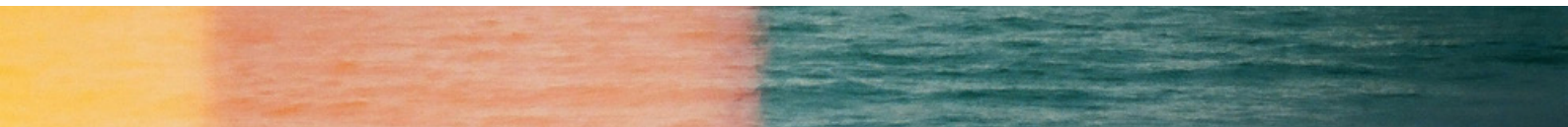
These SDGs emphasise the critical importance of safety, trust in institutions, and international collaboration in fostering social cohesion and enhancing the government's ability to address global and local challenges through strong partnerships with the international community.

Table 5 provides a snapshot of trends in Australia's progress on these SDGs, and we follow this by a discussion of key insights from these results.

TABLE 5: INDICATOR SNAPSHOT – BUILDING TRUST, SAFETY AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Red: Off Track – Going Backwards Orange: Breakthrough Needed Yellow: Needs Improvement Green: On Track

INDICATOR	LATEST VALUE	YEAR OF DATA	TARGET VALUE FOR 2030	SHORT-TERM TREND	LONG-TERM TREND
16.1.1 Victims of intentional homicide (per 100,000 population)	0.7	(2021)	0.9		
16.1.4 Proportion of the population who feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live (%)	90.7	(2022)	90		
16.1.3 Proportion of female population (18+) experienced any violence (sexual and/or physical) in the last 12 months (%)	4.2	(2022)	2.4		
16.6.NEW1 Levels of Trust – Edelman Trust Index (avg percent trust in NGOs, business, government and media, general population, %)	52	(2024)	> 60.0		
17.1.1 Total general government revenue as a proportion of GDP (%)	36.1	(2022)	41.5		
17.2.1 Net Official Development Assistance (ODA) as share of Gross National Income (GNI) (%)	0.2	(2023)	0.7		



KEY INSIGHTS

A safe nation: Progress in advancing public safety and reducing violence

- Australia has one of the lowest homicide rates in the world (16.1.1), at 0.74 in 2021, down from 0.85 in 2017. In addition, the proportion of Australians who feel safe walking alone at night has increased noticeably in the last five years, rising to 91% in 2022 from 87% in 2016 (16.1.4). However, this figure remains significantly lower for women, with 85% reporting feeling safe, compared to 95% for men.

- While Australia continues to make strides in safety and security, progress in reducing violence against women (16.1.3) highlights a critical area requiring attention. As of 2022, the proportion of Australian women who experienced any sexual or physical violence stood at 4.2%, reflecting a slight decline since 2016 and a steady downward trend since the early 2000s. However, the slow pace of improvement highlights the challenge of meeting the 2030 target of 2.4%, emphasising the need for more targeted interventions.

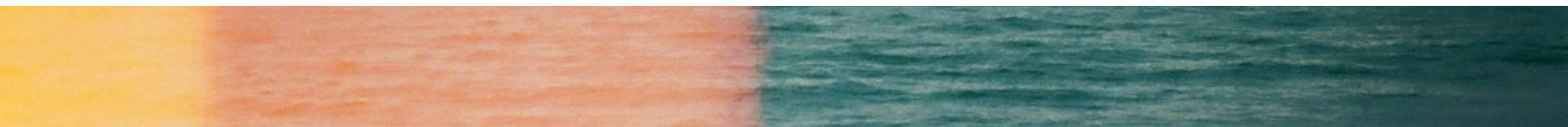
Trust in Australian institutions remains on track to meet its 2030 target

- In 2024, 52% of Australians reported trust in institutions (government, NGOs, business, and the media) (16.6.NEW1), reflecting a five-percentage-point increase since 2020 and a significant rise from 40% in 2012. Trust peaked at 59% in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic and, despite a subsequent decline, remains on track to meet the 2030 target of 60%. Australia's trust levels also slightly surpass those of peer OECD countries.

Opportunity to increase government revenue and development assistance

- Government revenue as a share of GDP in Australia was 36% in 2022 (17.1.1), below the OECD average of 42% and well behind peer countries such as Norway (65%), France (54%), and Finland (53%). Australia's comparatively lower revenue levels present an opportunity to enhance the Government's capacity to invest in long-term priorities such as infrastructure, social equity, and climate action.

- Net overseas aid (Official Development Assistance – ODA) (17.2.1) has declined since 2000 to 0.2% of Gross National Income (GNI), with a strong decline since its peak of 0.36%. Australia is well-below the UN target of 0.7% of GNI. Australia's net ODA is one of the lowest among our OECD peer countries and well behind leading countries, such as Sweden, Norway and Germany.



Looking forward: Pathways to accelerate progress

Opportunities to accelerate progress towards the SDGs

The assessment of Australia's current progress on the SDGs presented in the previous section is mixed, with some indicators on track and others falling behind. The analysis highlights that a shift from business as usual will be required if Australia is to fulfil its commitment to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

For the first time, the ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** includes modelling to explore future opportunities to accelerate Australia's progress towards the SDGs by 2030 and towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This builds on the methods and findings from our peer reviewed research publications, including in Nature Communications and Nature Sustainability. Further information on the modelling methods is available in these publications and in Appendix 2.

Modelling a *Transform Australia Pathway*

The modelling explores a *Transform Australia Pathway* which is benchmarked against a *Business-as-Usual Pathway* (see the outline of these in Figure 3 below). These two pathways were formulated as alternative recovery scenarios for Australia following the COVID-19 pandemic and start diverging from around 2022 onwards.

The *Transform Australia Pathway* identifies six key transformations that research and modelling indicate hold the greatest potential to achieve the SDGs:

1. wellbeing and resilience,
2. a sustainable and just economy,
3. sustainable food systems,
4. energy decarbonisation,
5. sustainable urban development, and
6. regenerating the environmental commons.

To drive progress across these transformations, we've modelled a scenario where 16 targeted policy shifts are implemented (Figure 4 on the next page), encompassing a mix of public expenditure, incentives, regulations, and measures to promote sustainable investment, technologies, and behaviour change. This includes additional government stimulus of approximately +7% annual expenditure to 2030, financed through tax reforms. Most policies are implemented between 2021 and 2030 to achieve the SDGs by the 2030 deadline, while longer-term policies focus on building resilience and reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

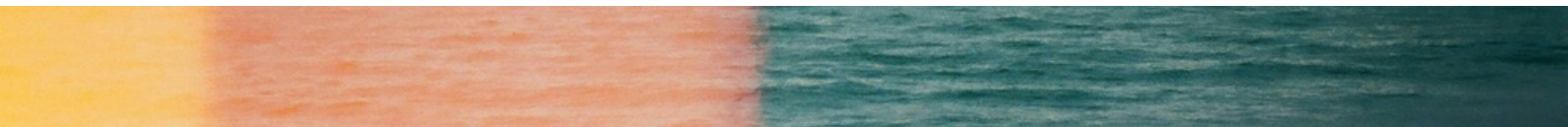
BUSINESS-AS-USUAL PATHWAY

Australia returns to pre-COVID-19 policy settings and levels of expenditure, maintaining incremental progress but without the transformative actions needed to meet the SDG targets.

TRANSFORM AUSTRALIA PATHWAY

Australia takes ambitious actions that accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs, including policies and investments to enable sustainable transitions in energy, food and urban systems while securing wellbeing, transforming the economy, and regenerating the natural environment.

Figure 3. Two pathways to explore Australia's future.



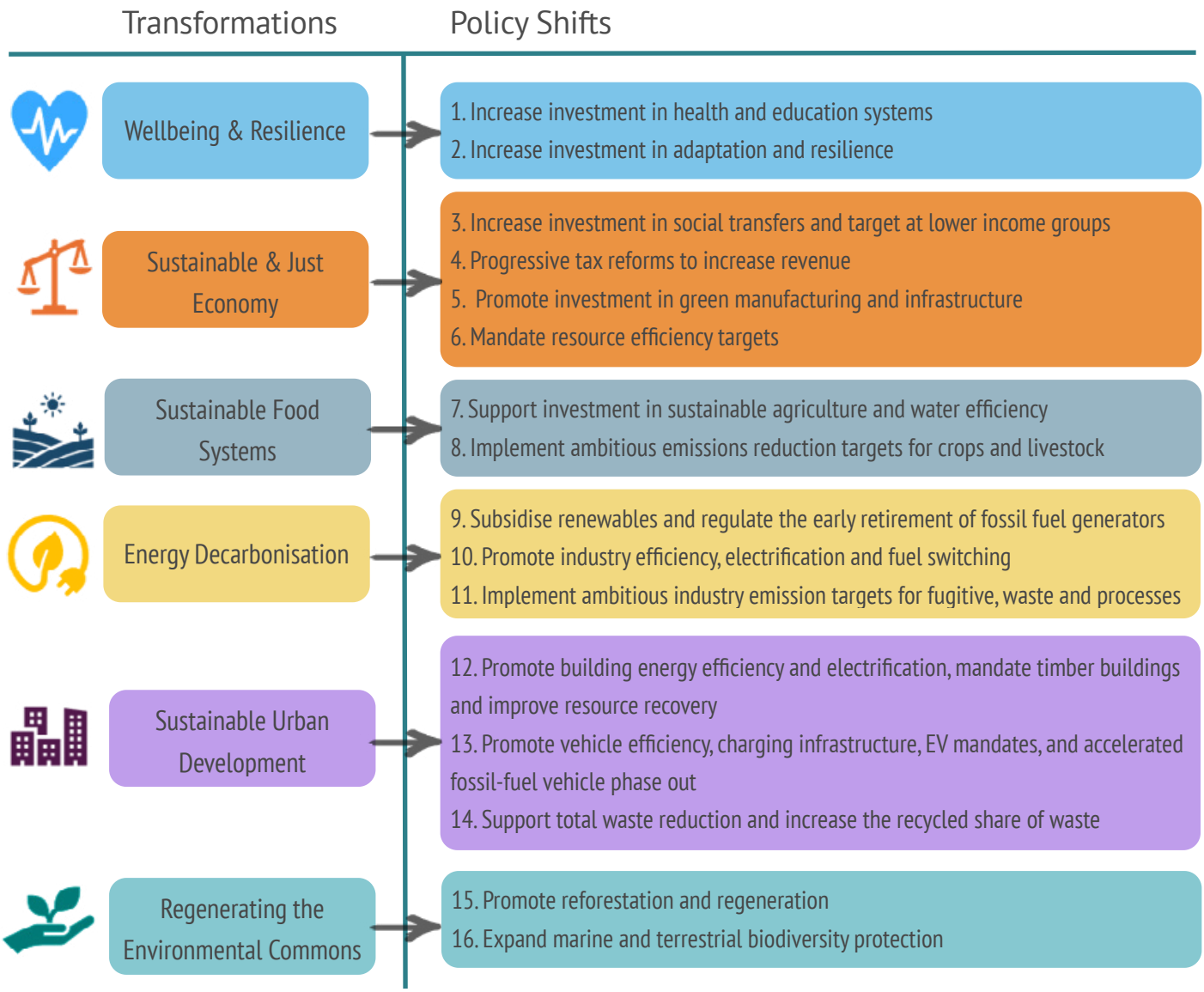
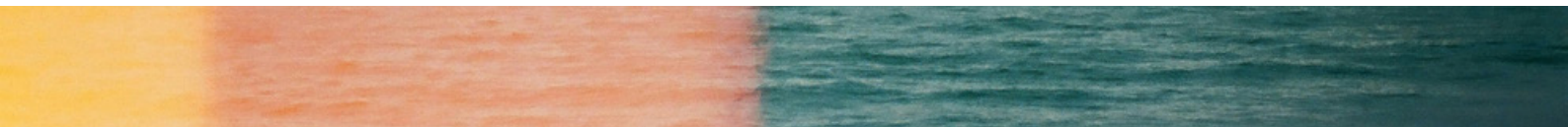


Figure 4. The *Transform Australia Pathway* – six transformations and 16 policy shifts.

The policy shifts are implemented in the modelling as a 'what if' scenario to explore their combined effects for Australia's future progress towards the SDGs by 2030 and 2050. The policies emerge from both national and global recommendations for advancing progress on sustainable development and addressing systemic challenges for achieving the SDGs and net zero emissions.

While these shifts serve as a conceptual framework rather than prescriptive measures for Australia, further analysis and consultation are essential to evaluate their feasibility and further tailor them to the Australian policy context.

By simulating a 'what-if' scenario, the model provides policymakers with insights into trade-offs, synergies, and long-term impacts on the achievement of future targets, enabling the prioritisation of actions that deliver the greatest benefits.



Key insights from the modelling analysis

STRONGER GAINS ON THE SDGS ARE WITHIN REACH BY 2030 AND 2050

The modelling results reveal the *Transform Australia Pathway* greatly improves progress towards the SDGs – reaching 82% average progress towards all targets by 2030 and around 90% by 2050 (Figure 5).

Without these ambitious policy shifts, a *Business-as-Usual Pathway* sees Australia's progress on the SDGs stagnate and decline over the long-term, reaching only 55% progress on all targets by 2050.

The *Transform Australia Pathway* delivers strong gains across a broad range of critical SDGs, including poverty reduction (SDG 1), food and nutrition (SDG 2), gender equality (SDG 5), green industry (SDG 9), reduced income inequality (SDG 10), sustainable cities (SDG 11), responsible production and consumption (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13), biodiversity (SDGs 14 and 15), and governance (SDG 16). This is shown in Figure 6 on the next page.

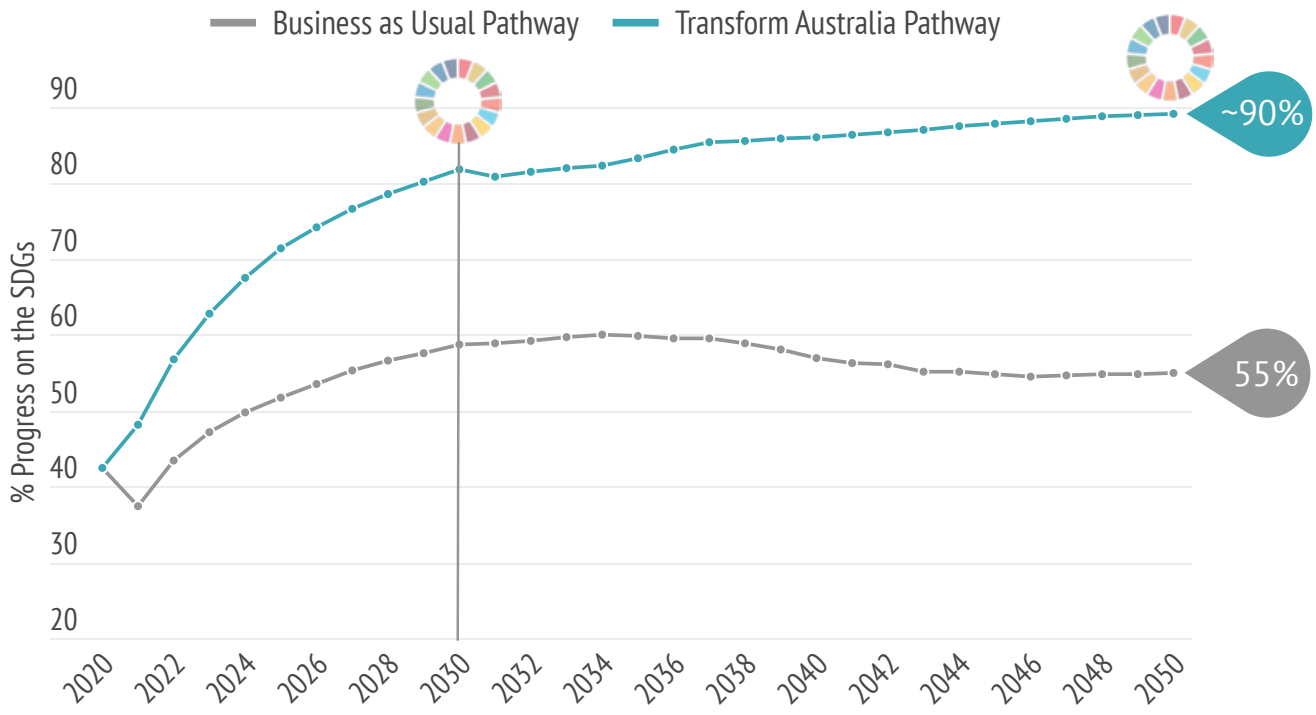


Figure 5. Model projections for the average progress towards all SDGs targets by 2030 and 2050 – *Transform Australia* and *Business-as-Usual* pathways.

Figure 6. Model projections for the average progress towards each of the 17 SDGs by 2030 – *Transform Australia* (TA) and *Business-as-Usual* (BAU) pathways.

While SDG 8 (economy and jobs) shows slightly slower progress under the ***Transform Australia Pathway*** by 2030, by 2050, it outperforms the ***Business-as-Usual Pathway*** on all SDGs, including SDG 8, as the increased investment in sustainable and inclusive growth drive stronger economic performance, resilience, and social equity (see Table 6). In fact, the model estimates gains of $300 billion dollars above the ***Business-as-Usual Pathway*** by 2050.

The increased revenue settings (such as higher taxation and reallocation of funds) required to finance transformative reforms, such as investments in renewable energy, social transfers, and sustainable infrastructure, can temporarily constrain average household disposable income and dampen private consumption in the short term. However, these short-term effects represent a strategic investment in long-term prosperity.

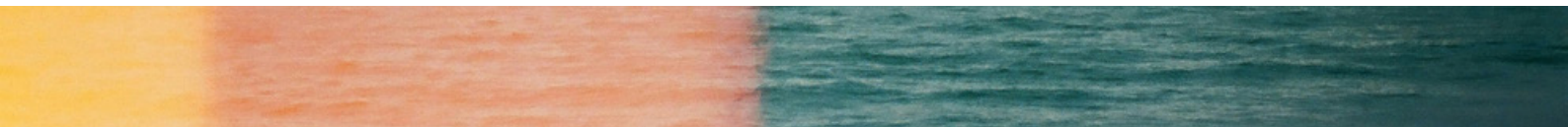
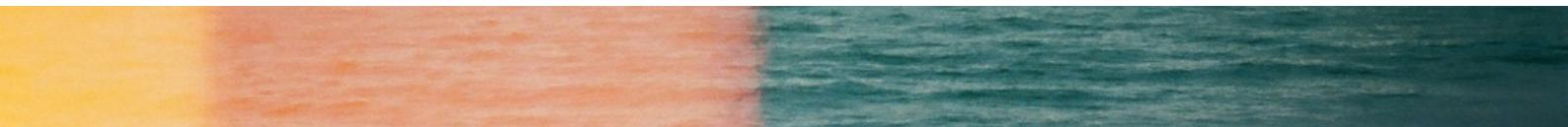


TABLE 6: KEY OUTCOMES BY 2050 UNDER THE TRANSFORM AUSTRALIA PATHWAY

Transformation	Policy Levers with High Impact Potential	Key Outcomes by 2050
Wellbeing and resilience	▪ Increased investment in health, education, adaptation and resilience (e.g., flood and bushfire-resilient infrastructure and ecosystem restoration), combined with a more rapid transition to net zero.	▪ Reduces the impacts of disasters on wellbeing, infrastructure, and productivity. ▪ Boosts productivity and generates widespread benefits across the SDGs over the long term.
Sustainable and just economy	▪ Increased investment in social transfers and targeted towards lower income groups. ▪ Progressive tax reforms to increase revenue. ▪ 10-year $20 billion investment in green manufacturing and infrastructure.	▪ Halves Australia's poverty rate. ▪ Reduces income inequality by 30%. ▪ Nearly doubles manufacturing output. ▪ Reduces material consumption by one-third.
Sustainable food systems	▪ Increased investment and incentives for sustainable agriculture and water efficiency. ▪ Social transfers to address food poverty.	▪ Achieves a rapid increase in sustainably harvested land. ▪ Reduces fertiliser consumption by 28%. ▪ Improves water efficiency by 23%. ▪ More than halves the food poverty rate.
Energy decarbonisation	▪ Subsidised renewables and early retirement of fossil fuel generators. ▪ Improved industry energy efficiency, electrification and fuel switching.	▪ Achieves ~100% renewables in electricity and 70% in total final energy consumption. ▪ Reduces primary energy intensity by 60%.
Sustainable urban development	▪ Investments in urban energy efficiency such as policies for electrification, timber buildings and building material recovery. ▪ Accelerated fossil-fuel vehicle phase out.	▪ Achieves net-negative operational and embodied emissions in the built environment. ▪ Fully electrifies Australia's vehicle fleet, reducing vehicle emissions by 99%.
Regenerating the environment	▪ Increased investments in reforestation and regeneration. ▪ Expansion of marine and terrestrial protected areas.	▪ Increases forested land area by 9 million hectares. ▪ Delivers significant improvements for threatened species.



WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE, ENERGY DECARBONISATION, AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS ARE KEY TO UNLOCKING BROADER SDG PROGRESS

The complementary effects of the six transformations and their associated policy interventions demonstrate how these targeted actions can simultaneously enhance Australians' wellbeing, drive economic progress, and protect the environment.

Building on this, the modelling results reveal that some transformations deliver larger contributions to SDG progress, while others generate significant 'spillover' benefits which unlock broader systems transformations. Together, these insights provide a clear basis for prioritising actions.

Contributions to multiple SDGs

The analysis in Figure 7 below shows that certain transformations have the highest impact on overall SDG progress.

In the figure, the grey segment indicates the progress achieved under the Business-as-Usual Pathway, while the coloured segments represent the additional contributions made by each of the six transformations to overall progress on the SDGs, with each transformation depicted in a distinct colour. For example:

- *Wellbeing and Resilience* contributes an additional 8.9% progress across all 17 SDGs.
- *Environmental Commons (6.7%)* and *Energy Decarbonisation (5.1%)* also rank among the top contributors, delivering substantial progress towards meeting SDG targets by 2050 (see Figure 7).

These transformations could be prioritised for their ability to accelerate SDG outcomes.

Figure 8 (on the next page) illustrates the interactions between the six transformations and the 17 SDGs, quantifying each transformation's contribution to achieving the SDGs by 2050. Each of the 17 bars represents the modelled percentage progress towards one of the 17 SDGs. Again, the grey segments indicate the progress achieved under the *Business-as-Usual Pathway*, while the coloured segments represent the additional contributions made by each of the six transformations towards each SDG, with each transformation depicted in a distinct colour.

The chart highlights that, for example, the policy shifts under Wellbeing and Resilience (light blue bars) make substantial contributions to advancing progress on SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), as well as notable impacts on SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), among others.

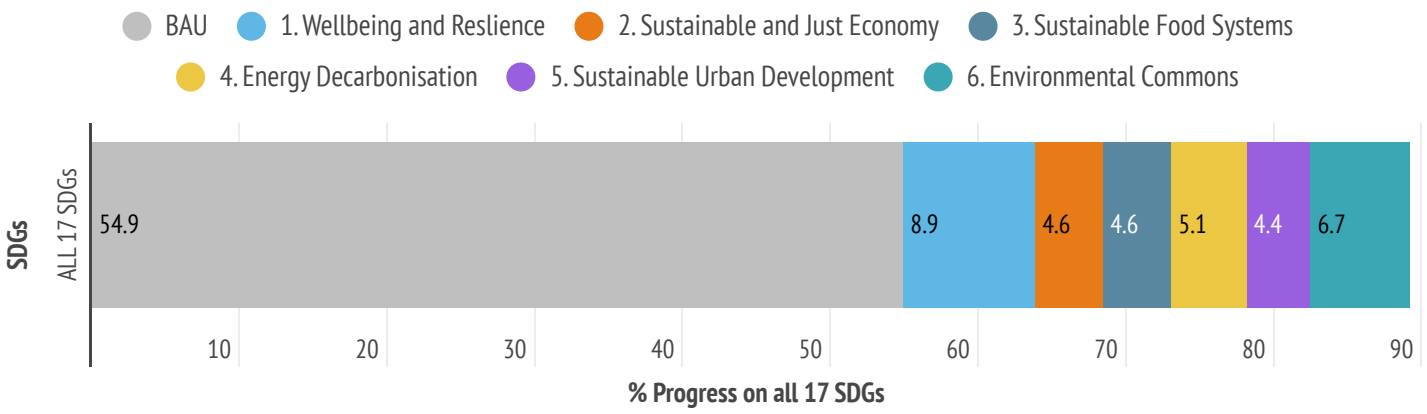


Figure 7. Additional progress made towards the SDGs from each transformation.

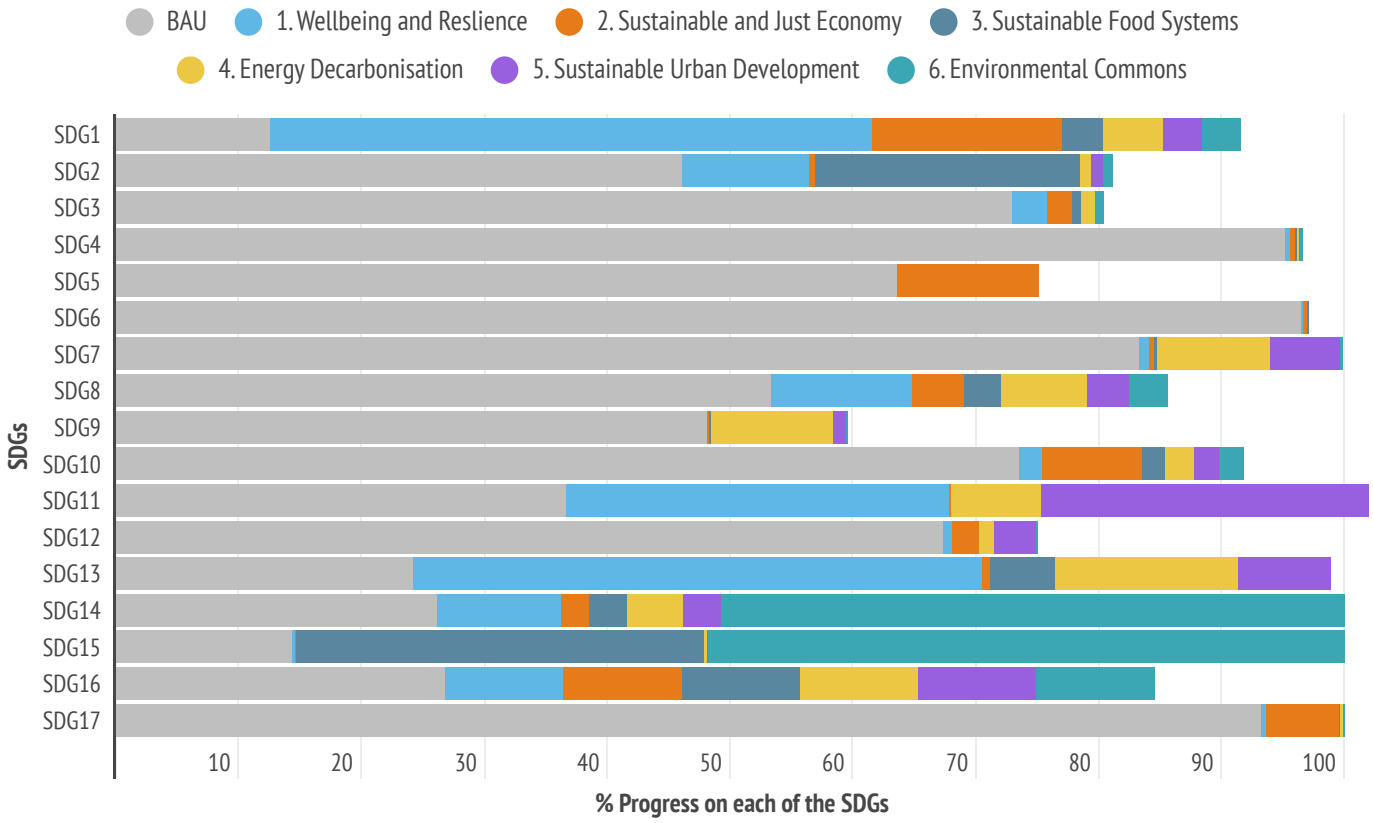


Figure 8. Transformations driving progress towards each of the 17 SDGs by 2050. Grey segments present the % progress towards each SDG by 2050 for the *Business-as-Usual Pathway*. Coloured segments show the additional boost in progress made towards each SDG by each of the six transformations.

Spillover effects supporting broad systems transformations

The six transformations included in the ***Transform Australia Pathway*** also interact with one another resulting in spillover effects which could promote or constrain the other transformations.

The modelling results for spillover effects between the six transformations are shown in Figure 9 on the next page, where the width of the flows represents the quantity or magnitude of these effects.

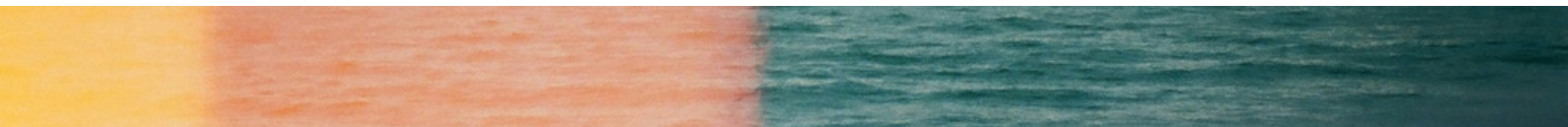
Figure 9 reveals that the transformations with the largest beneficial spillovers are:

Energy Decarbonisation: Enables the transformation of the economy (e.g., green industry and manufacturing), supports the clean electrification of buildings and transport in cities, and contributes to reducing emissions and pollution in the natural environment.

Wellbeing and Resilience: Ensures the long-term resilience of the economy, agricultural systems, and the built environment.

Food Systems: Supports environmental recovery and regeneration.

Given their strong enabling effects, these spillover-heavy transformations are critical to kick-starting broader systemic change and could also be prioritised for early implementation.



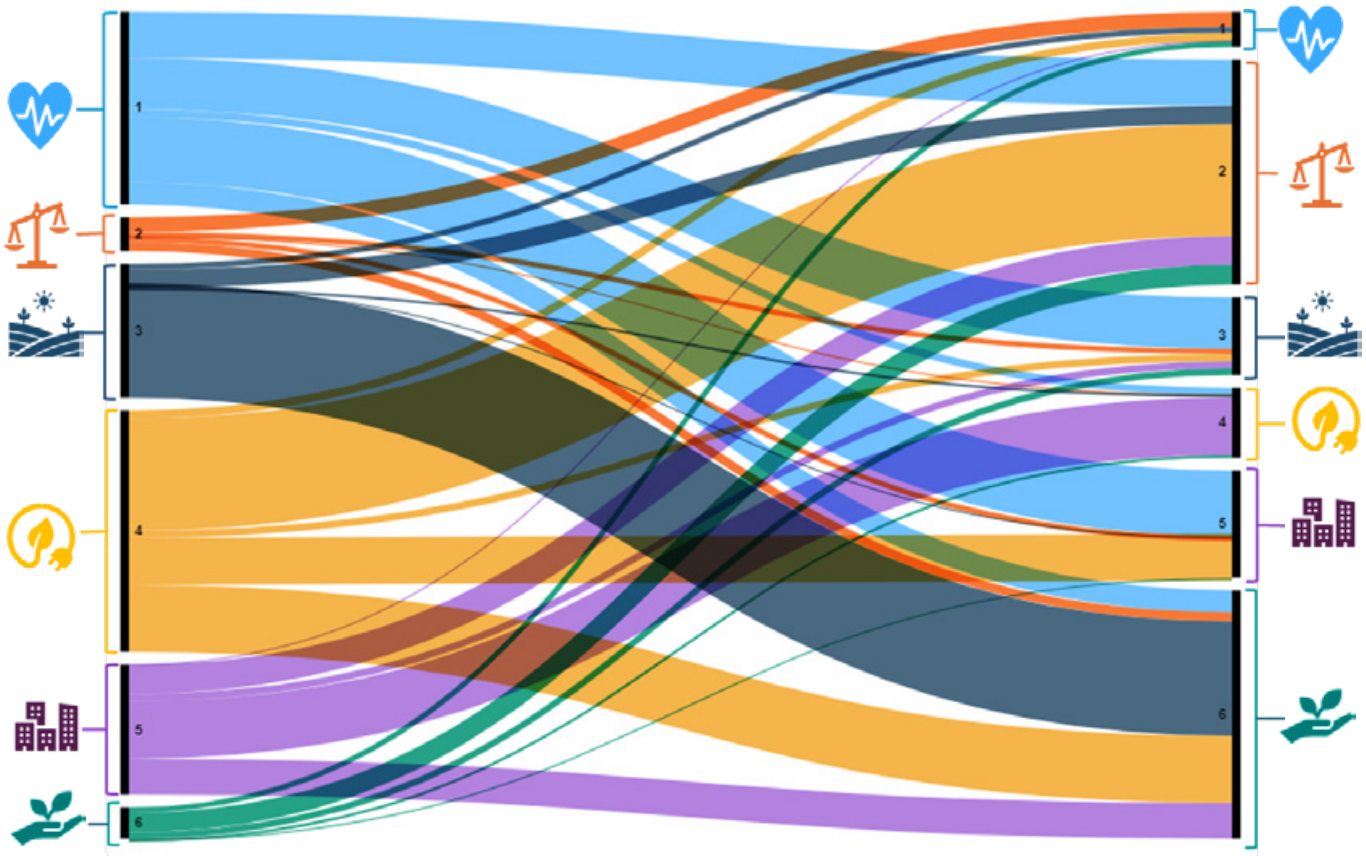
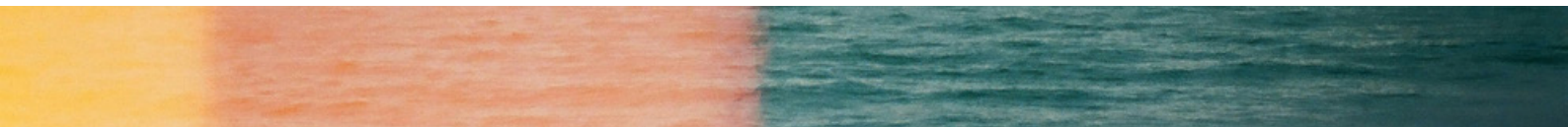


Figure 9. Flow diagram representing beneficial spillover effects from one transformation to another (the width of the flows represents the quantity or magnitude of beneficial spillover effects).

Figure 9 also reveals two transformations that receive the most beneficial effects from other transformations – these transformations will only be possible when they are implemented together with the other transformations:

- **Regenerating the environmental commons:** The largest recipient of beneficial spillover effects is the environmental commons – in particular through the transformation of food, energy and urban systems.
- **A sustainable and just economy:** The second largest recipient of beneficial spillover effects is a sustainable and just economy, revealing again the importance of energy decarbonisation and wellbeing and resilience for transforming the economy.

These insights, highlighting which transformations have the largest contributions to SDG progress and which ones enable other interventions, can help prioritise actions. However, while prioritising may drive early progress, the modelling emphasises that true transformative change requires integrated efforts across all six transformations. Advancing these transformations together is essential to achieving a balanced approach that safeguards the environment, promotes social equity, and fosters long-term economic resilience.



Ready for the future? Australia's path to achieving the SDGs

Opportunities and challenges ahead for Australia

Australia's progress towards the SDGs presents a complex narrative of achievements and persistent gaps.

The insights from this report's two complementary analyses underscore both the opportunities and the challenges ahead, emphasising the need for bold transformational policies to accelerate progress across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, ensuring that future generations inherit improved opportunities and a healthier planet.

The divergence between the *Transform Australia Pathway* and the *Business-as-Usual Pathway* illustrates how policy designed and implemented now will have profound implications for the future.

Failing to implement bold, integrated policy shifts not only risks stagnation but also imposes significant costs on Australia's future. Without transformative action, Australia stands to forgo the opportunity to achieve critical milestones such as reaching net zero emissions by 2050, halving poverty, reducing inequality, and delivering significant improvements in biodiversity conservation and resource efficiency. The absence of these outcomes could deepen social disparities, accelerate environmental degradation, and undermine economic resilience, highlighting the substantial price of maintaining the status quo.

The modelling results help to inform policy priorities and the design of more coherent and effective measures. Policies promoting wellbeing and resilience, regenerating the environment, and accelerating energy decarbonisation deliver the greatest gains.

Accelerating the key transformations to achieve the SDGs and deliver long-term sustainable prosperity for Australia can generate both winners and losers and requires tough decisions. The analysis included in this report underscores that governments will need to step up and play a crucial role, however they cannot act alone.

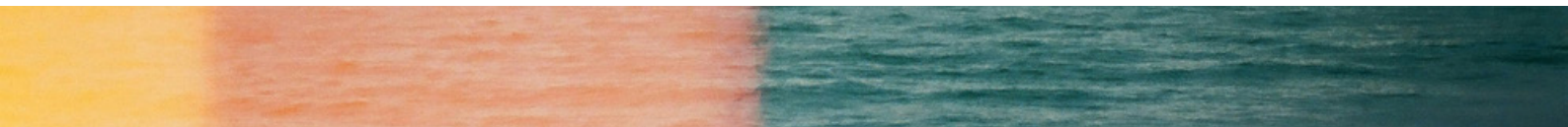
Other actors – impact-investing businesses, philanthropic communities, social movements, networks, entrepreneurial individuals and academia – will need to promote innovative ways to resolve challenges, drive social change, and build an enabling environment for more ambitious government action.

There are already promising signs that the necessary transformations are underway in Australia.

Wellbeing measurement initiatives are moving forward at different levels of government, the proposed tax cuts for wealthier Australians were suspended, the Future Made in Australia commitment has been launched, we have a new circular economy framework, most large businesses are reporting on a range of environmental, social and governance (ESG) measures, the energy transition is in full swing, and investments in emerging green technologies and manufacturing are increasing.

The *Transform Australia Pathway* highlights the benefits of adopting an integrated and long-term perspective alongside ambitious policy action. Achieving the SDGs requires embedding this forward-thinking approach into Australia's policy frameworks. To lay the foundation for sustained progress, we recommend building the structures and practices necessary to institutionalise long-term thinking in decision-making processes.

Medium- and long-term planning by government and business can help to ensure intergenerational equity, manage trade-offs and harness positive spillover effects. The SDGs are one framework that can be used to do this, and they are a powerful one. The fact that they have been adopted and endorsed by UN member states lends them legitimacy and makes international benchmarking easier. And the 17 SDGs align well with state and Commonwealth ministerial portfolios, enabling them to be integrated with existing ways of working.



Recommendations

We are not endorsing particular policies, nor advocating for increased expenditure in identified areas. Instead, our recommendations focus on the importance of measurement and planning for the future.

1. **For government departments to use the latest data and integrated modelling to evaluate and prioritise policies and to improve policy coherence.**

   In a complex and interconnected world, integrated modelling tools allow policy-makers to test the broader consequences of introducing different policy options, and to identify policy suites that maximise co-benefits and minimise trade-offs. Establish implementation plans for the 56 actions Australia has committed as part of the United Nations Pact for the Future.

2. **Establish implementation plans for the 56 actions Australia has committed as part of the United Nations Pact for the Future.**

   At the United Nations Summit of the Future on 22 September 2024, world leaders adopted the Pact for the Future, a renewed drive to achieve the SDGs, with 56 actionable commitments which the Australian Government is expected to turn into tangible strategies.

3. **Incorporate SDG-aligned targets into the *Measuring What Matters* framework and expand its scope to address gaps in monitoring outcomes critical to the wellbeing of future generations.**

   Integrating SDG-aligned targets into the *Measuring What Matters* framework is a critical step in ensuring accountability, gauging the magnitude of change required, and identifying the strategies and policies needed to achieve those targets.

   Strengthening the *Measuring What Matters* framework by aligning it with the SDGs and incorporating indicators that more comprehensively reflect the state of the environment, the sustainability of our cities, and resource use, among others, would provide a clearer understanding of the interconnections and trade-offs between present and future wellbeing.

4. **Use the Intergenerational Reports as an accountability mechanism, reporting on all the SDGs.**

   The Intergenerational Report provides a 40-year outlook on the economy and the Commonwealth Budget. While it provides valuable insights into economic and fiscal challenges, its narrow economic focus overlooks critical areas such as environmental sustainability, social equity, broader social trends and technological advancements that are crucial for a better future.

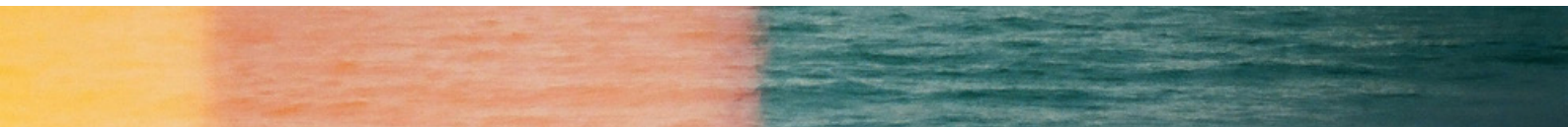
   Incorporating modelling and projections across the 17 SDGs would enable long-term assessments of future wellbeing and its drivers, and the development of scenarios that inform policy adjustments beyond business-as-usual.

   It is important that the monitoring and communication of performance against the SDGs does not exclusively rely on quantitative measures, but also captures the depth of experience and tacit knowledge of organisations actively working towards SDG implementation.

5. **Elevate the leadership, collective knowledge and intergenerational stewardship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.**

   Recognising the status and contributions of First Nations Peoples is integral to Australia's SDG journey. Integrating First Nations ways of knowing, being, and doing into future policy and governance presents a transformative opportunity to reimagine Australia.

   The authentic integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges into policy-making will require moving to a model of supporting the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples, as described in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



6. Establish a Commissioner for Future Generations.

Establish an independent, statutory Commissioner for Future Generations to advocate for and represent the long-term interests of future Australians and ensure intergenerational fairness is integrated into decision making across all sectors of government. The Commissioner's mandate would be cross-cutting, focusing on a 20-30 year time scale and fostering cross-portfolio collaboration to ensure policies made today consider long-term impacts. This would include mandated consultation processes with relevant government agencies and reporting to Parliament.

The role should be tailored for Australia, with key considerations including ensuring the Commissioner does not overlap with existing bodies, avoiding duplication of efforts, the need to define clear functions, establish effective powers, and ensure the role's mandate is both comprehensive and impactful.

7. Establish a representative, multi-sectoral reference group.

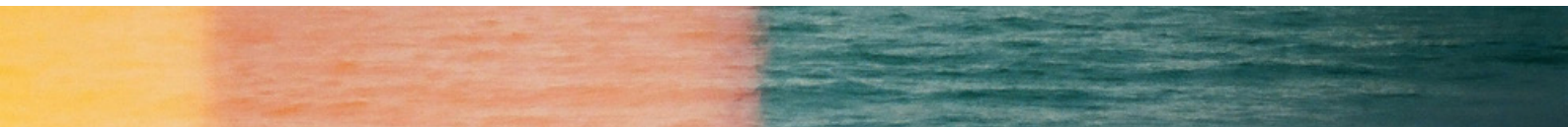
Create an independent, multi-sectoral reference group with representatives from civil society, the private sector, state and territory and local governments, and the academic sector to create a strong enabling environment for action on the SDGs.

The group would ensure that ministers make major policy decisions with an awareness of the spillover benefits and disbenefits that those decisions create to other transformations. The value-add of this independent body would be in facilitating alignment and coordinated action among various organisations. We envision that local and state governments could also feed into and participate in its processes.

8. Agree and adopt official national poverty measures.

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the **Henderson Review** – Australia's first major report on income poverty – however, Australia still has no nationally **agreed definition of poverty**, nor an official way of monitoring poverty rates.

We support **recommendations** for the Government to legislate official poverty measures, including a multidimensional poverty index, to provide a more comprehensive picture of the nature and extent of poverty, and to enable monitoring of trends and targeting of effort by population and dimensions such as health, education and living standards.



Appendix 1: Dashboard results

Assessing SDG indicator progress for the dashboard

Progress is measured using a quantitative method that compares historical trends with theoretical 'Target Paths' required to meet 2030 goals (see methods in Appendix 2). Each indicator's progress is evaluated against its target or benchmark value using available time series data. This includes an assessment of the long-term (LT) and short-term (ST) trend using compound annual growth rates (CAGR). For each indicator, the table below includes a range of values:

Initial: is the first value in the time series

Baseline: is the value for 2015 or closest year which is the starting point for the SDGs.

Latest: is the latest value in the timeseries.

CAGR-ST: is the short-term compound annual growth rate for the most recent 5 years of data.

CAGR-ST: is the long-term compound annual growth rate for the full time series.

2030 target: is the desired target or benchmark value set for 2030.

Source: is a brief description for the source of the target.

ST Trend: is the assessment result for the short-term trend.

LT Trend: is the assessment result for the long-term trend.

The results are visualised through a traffic light system (● ● ● ●), providing a dashboard-style summary of how Australia is tracking on each target.

The traffic light symbols reflect the following: ● Red: Off Track – Going Backwards ● Orange: Breakthrough Needed ● Yellow: Needs Improvement ● Green: On Track

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 1: END POVERTY										
1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line of 50% of median equivalent income (%)	2000-20	13.1	13.2	12.7	-0.8%	-0.2%	6.6	SDG Target 1.2 (halve)	●	●
1.3.NEW Adequacy of welfare payments compared to the poverty line (baseline = single person without children including housing benefits) (%)	2001-22	98.0	70.0	66.0	-1.2%	-1.9%	100.0	Parity	●	●
1.4.NEW Households able to raise $2,000 within a week for something important (%)	2006-20	83.3	83.9	81.0	-0.6%	-0.2%	>90.0	NSDC Target >90%	●	●

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 2: FOOD & NUTRITION										
2.1.2 Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) (all ages)	2015-22	10.8	10.8	12.9	0.3%	2.6%	<5.0	SDG Target 2.1	●	●
2.2.2.ALT Prevalence of obesity, proportion of obese persons (body mass index >=30) (%)	2008-22	24.6	27.9	31.7	0.3%	1.8%	<10.0	WHO Guideline	●	●
2.4.NEW Meat consumption per capita (beef and veal, sheep, poultry and pork)	2000-23	67.3	75.2	72.9	-1.0	0.3	58.0	EAT Lancet Diet	●	●

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 3: HEALTH & WELLBEING										

3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate (per 100,000 population)	2000-22	12.4	12.9	12.3	-1.4%	0.0%	8.6	SDG Target 3.4 (2/3)		
3.4.NEW1 Proportion of persons with high/very high psychological distress (18 years and over) (%)	2001-22	12.6	11.8	14.3	2.4%	0.6%	7.9	SDG Target 3.4 (2/3)		
3.4.NEW2 Average life expectancy (total population; both sexes) (years)	2000-22	79.3	82.5	83.2	0.1%	0.2%	83.6	Avg OECD Top 5		
3.4.NEW3 Indigenous life expectancy (both sexes) (years)	2007-22	70.1	73.6	73.8	0.0%	0.3%	83.6	Close the Gap		
3.5.2 Harmful use of alcohol – alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol (L)	2000-20	10.1	9.8	10.1	0.6%	0.0%	8.8	10% Reduction (National Alcohol Strategy)		
3.6.1 Road traffic fatalities per 100,000 population	2000-23	9.5	5.0	4.7	0.9%	-3.0%	2.5	SDG Target 3.6 is to halve		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION										
4.2.1 Proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable in 2 or more domains (physical, social, emotional, language, communication) (%)	2009-21	11.8	11.1	11.4	0.4%	-0.3%	5.6	Halve 2015 Baseline		
4.3.1.ALT Proportion of persons aged 25-64 with a tertiary education (%)	2000-21	27.5	42.9	49.7	2.6%	2.9%	50.6	Avg OECD Top 5		
4.5.1 Low to high socio-economic parity in mathematics for lower secondary students (ratio, parity = 1)	2000-22	0.81	0.71	0.53	-7.1%	-1.9%	0.82	Avg OECD Top 5		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY										
5.2.1 Proportion of females (age 18+) who experienced physical violence from an intimate partner in the previous 12 months (%)	2005-22	2.3	2.3	1.5	-6.9%	-2.5%	<0.5	SDG Target 5.2		
5.4.1 Gender parity in mean time spent on housework and care work, age 15+ (gender parity = 1)	2006-22	1.9	1.7	1.5	-1.6%	-1.5%	≤1.05	Parity (+/-5%)		
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)	2000-23	23.0	26.7	38.4	6.0%	2.3%	>45.0	Parity (+/-5%)		
5.5.NEW1 Gender gap in superannuation balances at retirement (average account balance at age 60-64) (%)	2012-21	46.7	42.0	21.0	-12.9%	-8.5%	<5.0	Parity (+/-5%)		
5.5.NEW2 Gender pay gap in full-time average weekly earnings of women and men (%)	2000-23	15.3	17.2	12.0	-3.2%	-1.1%	<5.0	Parity (+/-5%)		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 6: CLEAN WATER & SANITATION										

6.1.NEW Average weekly household expenditure on water, sewerage and wastewater as a share of household disposable income (all households) (%)	2015-2020	2.2	2.2	2.2	**0.0%**	-	<3.0#	3% Global benchmark		N/A
6.3.NEW1 Proportion of total water supply sourced from recycled water (%)	2018-23	7.8	7.8	6.6	**-3.2%**	-	8.8	Increase by 1% CAGR		N/A
6.3.NEW2 Proportion of wastewater treated at a tertiary level (as a % of total wastewater treated at primary, secondary or tertiary levels)	2013-23	52.8	53.7	53.6	**-1.0**	**0.1**	80.5	SDG Target 6.3 (50% increase)		
6.4.1.ALT1 Water consumption per capita (m^3)	2001-21	1156.4	713.8	631.4	**-0.6%**	**-3.0%**	613.9	Reduce by 1% CAGR		
6.4.1.ALT2 Water consumption per unit gross value added for agriculture, forestry and fisheries (L/$)	2015-22	235.9	235.9	196.4	**-3.6%**	**-2.6%**	202.9	Reduce by 1% CAGR		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 7: AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY										
7.1.NEW Average weekly expenditure on electricity as a share of household disposable income (all households) (%)	2010-20	2.4	2.7	2.9	**1.4%**	**2.0%**	<3.0#	3% Benchmark		
7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption (%)	2000-21	8.4	9.4	12.3	**5.2%**	**1.8%**	30.0	NSDC Target		
7.2.1.ALT Renewable energy share in electricity (%)	2000-23	8.5	13.5	33.9	**14.7%**	**6.2%**	55.0	NSDC Target		
7.3.NEW Energy productivity rate of improvement (index 2003/4=100)	2004-22	100.0	121.5	145.5	**3.3%**	**2.1%**	198	Double rate (3.3% pa)		
7.3.NEW2 Residential total final energy consumption per capita (GJ)	2003-22	20.9	18.6	19.1	**0.7%**	**-0.5%**	9.5	50% reduction on 2015 baseline (ClimateWorks)		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 8: ECONOMIC PROSPERITY										
8.1.NEW1 Real net national disposable income per capita ($)	2000-23	48.0k	61.2k	71.0k	**1.9%**	**1.7%**	71.1k	Increase by 1% CAGR		
8.1.NEW2 Government net debt as share of GDP (%)	2000-23	8.7	16.7	20.3	**1.3%**	**3.7%**	47.9#	Benchmark from OECD Avg		
8.1.NEW3 Household debt as share of GDP (%)	2000-23	70.2	120.9	109.7	**-2.1%**	**2.0%**	67.3#	Benchmark from OECD Avg		
8.5.1.ALT Annual real growth in average weekly earnings (index 2000=100, both sexes)	2000-23	100.0	126.8	127.1	**-0.3%**	**1.0%**	155.3	NSDC Target		
8.5.2 Unemployment rate (%)	2000-23	6.3	6.1	3.7	**-7.0%**	**-2.3%**	<5.0	SDG Index		
8.5.2.ALT Underemployment rate (%)	2000-23	6.3	8.5	6.4	**-5.5%**	**0.1%**	6.3	Reference level in year 2000		
8.5.NEW1 Employment to population ratio (%)	2000-23	59.2	61.0	64.2	**0.7%**	**0.4%**	65.9	Avg OECD Top 5		
8.5.NEW2 Long-term unemployment ratio (% of total unemployed population)	2000-23	25.8	23.3	19.4	**-4.6%**	**-1.2%**	15.0	Historic minimum		
8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training (%)	2000-23	12.1	13.1	8.5	**-6.5%**	**-1.5%**	5.9	Avg OECD Top 5		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 9: INDUSTRY, INNOVATION & INFRASTRUCTURE										
9.1.NEW Value of construction work done for the public sector as proportion of GDP (%)	2000-23	1.9	1.5	2.2	2.4%	0.8%	2.2	Avg Top 5 Values		
9.5.1 Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP (%)	2000-21	1.5	1.9	1.7	-1.9%	0.6%	2.4	OECD Avg		
9.5.2ALT Investment in knowledge-based capital as share of GDP (%)	2000-22	2.8	2.6	2.5	-0.5%	-0.5%	4.0	OECD Avg		
9.b.1.ALT Economic Complexity Index (index ranking, best = 1)	2000-21	60.0	81.0	93.0	0.9%	2.1%	55.0	Best historic value		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES										
10.1.1 Growth rates of household income among the bottom 40% of the population compared to the total population (ratio, 1=parity)	2001-20	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.1%	-0.1%	>1.0	SDG Target 10.1 (>1)		
10.4.1 Labour share of GDP (%)	2000-23	48.9	48.7	46.9	-0.1%	-0.2%	49.9	Avg OECD peer countries		
10.4.2 Gini coefficient (income) (number 0 to 100, where higher = more unequal)	2000-20	31.0	32.3	32.4	-0.5%	0.2%	30.0	SDG Index green threshold		
10.4.NEW1 Gini coefficient (equivalised net worth) (number 0 to 100, where higher = more unequal)	2004-20	56.5	60.5	61.1	0.2%	0.5%	52.6	Reduce by 1% CAGR on 2015 baseline		
10.4.NEW2 Share of household net worth of first and second quintiles (%)	2004-20	7.8	5.9	5.5	-1.4%	-2.2%	8.2	Avg Top 5 OECD Countries		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES & COMMUNITIES										
11.1.NEW1 Proportion of lower income renter households paying more than 30% of income on housing costs (%)	2008-20	35.0	44.3	42.0	-0.7%	1.5%	31.9	COAG national benchmark (2015)		
11.1.NEW2 Housing costs as a proportion of gross household income (%)	2000-20	12.0	13.8	13.6	0.0%	0.6%	12.0	Maintain at 2000 baseline		
11.1.NEW3 Homelessness – clients of specialist homelessness services (per 10,000 population)	2012-23	105.8	108.9	105.2	-2.2%	-0.1%	92.6	15% reduction on 2015 baseline – COAG Benchmark		
11.2.NEW Proportion of population who used public or active transport as the method of travel to work (% employed persons age 15+)	2001-21	17.0	18.9	11.8	-9.0%	-1.8%	21.8	Increase by 1% per annum		
11.6.2 Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter PM2.5 in cities (ug/m^3)	2000-22	5.4	6.0	5.4	-1.8%	0.0	<10.0	SDG Index green threshold		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION & PRODUCTION										

12.2.1 Material footprint per capita (t)	2000-23	33.3	32.3	31.5	-1.2%	-0.2%	25.3	OECD Avg		
12.5.NEW1 Non-recycled municipal solid waste per capita (kg)	2000-21	693.7	586.3	543.1	-1.1%	-1.2%	365.0	SDG Index green threshold		
12.5.NEW2 Circularity rate (%)	2010-23	3.8	4.2	4.4	0.5%	1.1%	11.0%	Pathway to 30% by 2050		
12.6.1 Share of ASX200 listed companies submitting sustainability reports ranked as detailed or better (%)	2008-21	19.5	48.5	71.4	7.2%	10.5%	90%	90% of ASX200 companies		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION										
13.1.1 Number of directly affected persons attributed to disasters (per 100,000 population, 3-year avg)	2011-22	56.7	20.9	114.8	29.8%	6.6%	17.9	Reduce by 1% CAGR		
13.2.2 Total greenhouse gas emissions (Mt CO_2-eq)	2000-23	559.3	512.8	432.8	-2.8%	-1.1%	314.0	50% Reduction on 2005 (ClimateWorks)		
13.2.2ALT Per capita greenhouse gas emissions (tCO2-eq/capita)	2000-23	29.2	21.4	16.0	-4.1%	-2.6%	10.7	Consistent with 13.2.2		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 14: LIFE BELOW WATER										
14.1.1 Beach litter originating from national land-based sources that ends in the beach or ocean (t)	2017-21	3851.0	3851.0	4387.0	3.3%	-	1925.5	SDG Target 14.1 (50% reduction)		N/A
14.2.NEW Ocean biodiversity: Great Barrier Reef mean hard coral cover (mean value, 3-year avg).	2000-20	23.1	17.0	17.7	0.8%	-1.3%	24.1	Avg top 5 mean values		
14.4.1.ALT Status of Australian fish stocks – Proportion of stocks assessed as not subject to overfishing (%)	2004-22	16.2	84.9	73.5	-2.4%	8.8%	95.0	SDG Target 14.4 (end overfishing)		
14.5.1 Average proportion of Marine Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) covered by protected areas (%)	2000-23	42.4	61.6	65.6	0.4%	1.9%	>50.0	SDG Index green threshold		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND										
15.1.1. Total forest area (million ha)	2000-21	132.9	132.5	133.6	0.1%	0.0	137.5	+5Mha on 2015 baseline (ClimateWorks)		
15.1.2a Proportion of important sites for freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas (%)	2000-23	22.6	33.5	37.6	0.3%	2.3%	>45.0	SDG Index green threshold		
15.1.2b Proportion of important sites for terrestrial biodiversity that are covered by protected areas (%)	2000-23	33.5	51.8	57.3	0.4%	2.4%	>50.0	SDG Index green threshold		
15.2.1 Proportion of forest area with a long-term management plan (%)	2016-21	32.3	32.3	28.2	-2.7%	-	95.0	CBD Target: all areas		N/A
15.5.1 Red List Index (score 0-1, where 1 is best)	2001-21	0.9	0.8	0.8	-0.4%	-0.4%	0.9	SDG Index green threshold		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND

SDG 16: TRUST, SAFETY & STRONG INSTITUTIONS										
16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide (per 100,000 population)	2000-21	1.9	1.0	0.7	-4.5%	-4.4%	0.9	Reduce by 1% CAGR		
16.1.3 Proportion of female population (18+) experienced any violence (sexual or physical) in the last 12 months (%)	2005-22	7.1	4.7	4.2	-1.9%	-3.0%	2.4	Halve 2015 baseline value		
16.1.4.ALT Proportion of the population who feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live (%)	2005-22	84.6	87.8	90.7	0.5%	0.4%	90.0	SDG Index green threshold		
16.2.3.ALT Victims of sexual assault (per 100,000 population)	2010-22	85.6	92.2	123.7	4.4%	3.1%	46.1	Halve 2015 baseline value		
16.3.NEW Prison population (per 100,000 people)	2006-23	165.1	195.8	202.3	-1.8%	1.2%	99.0	SDG Index green threshold		
16.6.NEW1 Levels of Trust – Edelman Trust Index (avg percent trust in NGOs, business, government and media, general population, %)	2012-24	40.0	42.0	52.0	1.6%	2.2%	>60.0	Edelman Index 'Trust' category		
16.6.NEW2 Proportion of persons (aged 18 and over) who have undertaken unpaid voluntary work through an organisation in the last 12 months (%)	2011-21	17.8	19.0	14.1	-5.8%	-2.3%	21.5	Increase by 1% CAGR on 2015 baseline		

INDICATOR	DATA SERIES	INITIAL	BASELINE (~2015)	LATEST	CAGR-ST	CAGR-LT	2030 TARGET	SOURCE	ST TREND	LT TREND
SDG 17: PARTNERSHIP FOR THE GOALS										
17.1.1 Total general government revenue as a proportion of GDP (%)	2000-22	35.1	35.2	36.1	0.3%	0.1%	41.5	OECD Avg		
17.2.1 Net official development assistance (ODA) as share of Gross National Income (GNI) (%)	2000-23	0.3	0.3	0.2	-3.4%	-1.4%	0.7	SDG Target 17.2		
17.8.1 Proportion of population using the internet (%)	2000-22	46.8	84.6	94.9	1.9%	3.3%	98.2	Increase by 1% CAGR		
17.8.NEW Broadband internet connection speeds – % subscribers with >50Mbps	2019-23	67.6	67.6	74.5	2.5%	-	100.0	All >50MBps		N/A

Appendix 2: Methodology

Progress update assessment

The ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** builds on the foundation of the indicator set and methods established in previous editions, which are peer reviewed.[1] This methodology aims to maintain consistency with earlier assessments while refining the approach to enhance its relevance in the current context.

INDICATOR SELECTION PROCESS

The original ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** in 2018 identified 144 priority indicators through a rigorous and consultative process led by the National Sustainable Development Council.

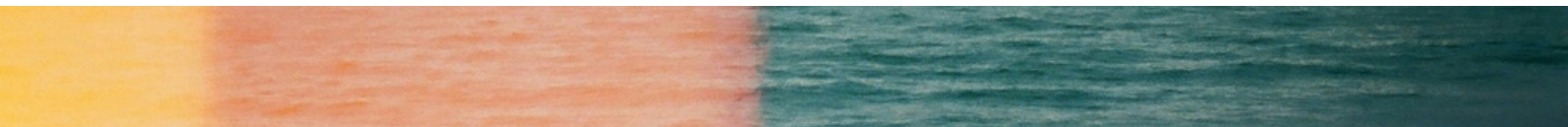
For the 2024 assessment, the number of indicators was reduced to 80, making the analysis more targeted and manageable while maintaining comprehensive coverage of key sustainable development priorities.

The following criteria guided the selection of the 2024 indicators:

- **Relevance to Australia's sustainable development:** indicators that reflect current policy priorities, the national context, and complementarity with Australia's *Measuring What Matters* framework.
- **Data availability:** indicators with updated data post the 2020 assessment from reliable data sources including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) among others.
- **Balanced coverage:** a mix of economic, social, and environmental indicators to ensure representation across all 17 SDGs.
- **Target or benchmark availability:** indicators with defined targets or benchmarks.
- **Relevance to key transformations:** indicators aligned with key SDG transformations identified by experts.[2]

[1] Allen, C., et al., *Assessing national progress and priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): experience from Australia.* Sustainability Science, 2019. 15: p. 521-538 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-019-00711-x.

[2] IGS, *Global Sustainable Development Report 2023*. 2023, United Nations: New York



INDICATOR TYPES AND LABELS

To maintain clarity and consistency, indicators are categorised and labelled based on their relationship to the official SDG framework, as shown in the table below.

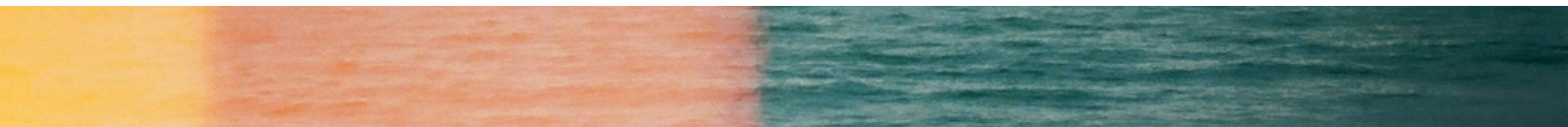
Indicator Type	Label	Description	Example
Official SDG Indicators		Indicators directly from the SDG framework, retaining their original numbering.	**1.2.1** (Proportion of population living below the national poverty line)
Alternative SDG Indicators	ALT	Adapted versions of SDG indicators aligned with Australian datasets or reporting needs. Multiple adaptations of the same indicator are numbered sequentially.	**6.4.1.ALT1** (Water consumption per capita) **6.4.1.ALT2** (Agricultural water efficiency)
Complementary National Indicators	NEW	New indicators chosen to complement the SDG framework, focusing on relevance to specific SDG targets in the Australian context.	**1.3.NEW** (Adequacy of welfare payments)

MAPPING THE TRANSFORMING AUSTRALIA INDICATORS TO THE MEASURING WHAT MATTERS FRAMEWORK

The ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** complements other relevant national frameworks, including *Measuring What Matters (MWM)*, Australia's wellbeing framework.

MWM tracks 50 indicators and 77 metrics grouped into five themes: healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive, and prosperous, providing a valuable lens on key aspects of societal wellbeing. However, there are notable differences in scope and emphasis between the two frameworks.

Approximately one-third of the indicators assessed in the ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** align directly with those in the *MWM* framework (Figure A1). A further quarter use similar metrics or slight variations.



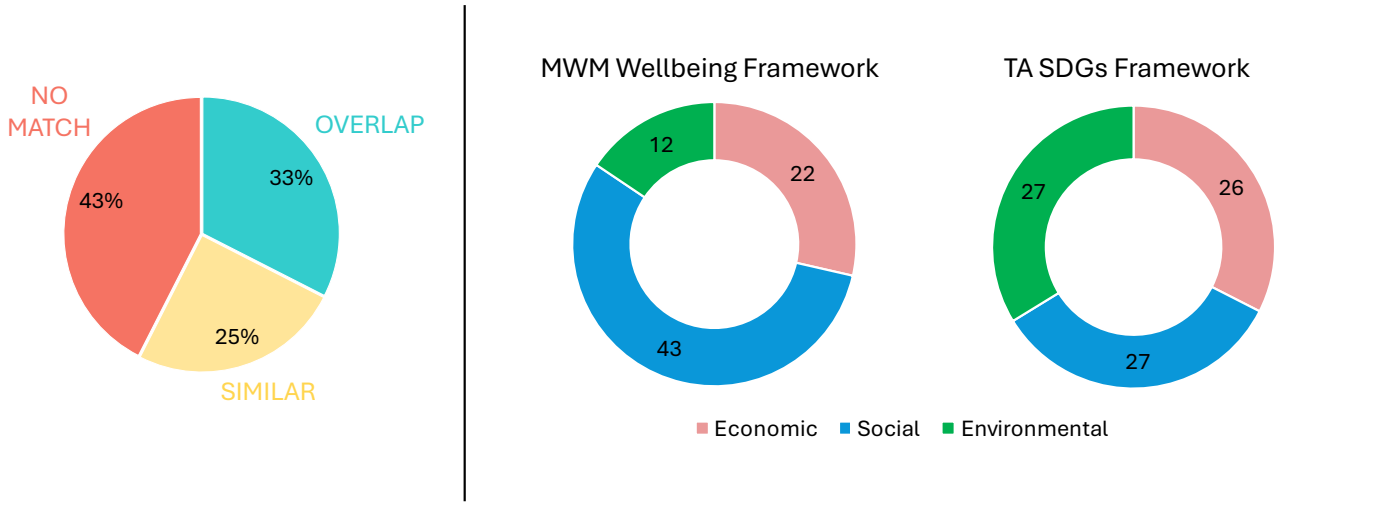


Figure A1. Mapping of the *Measuring What Matters* (MWM) and *Transforming Australia* (TA) indicator frameworks. Left: percentage of TA indicators with comparable metrics in the MWM framework. Right: number of indicators in each framework classified as economic, social or environmental.

However, 43% of the SDG indicators included in the ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** have no comparable metric within *MWM*. These gaps are particularly evident in areas such as food security (SDG 2), access to clean water (SDG 6), access to affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), industry and innovation (SDG 9), inequality (SDG 10), ocean health (SDG 14), and partnerships for the goals (SDG 17).

While *MWM* provides robust coverage of social and economic issues, it places less emphasis on environmental dimensions, highlighting a key distinction between frameworks for monitoring sustainable development and wellbeing.

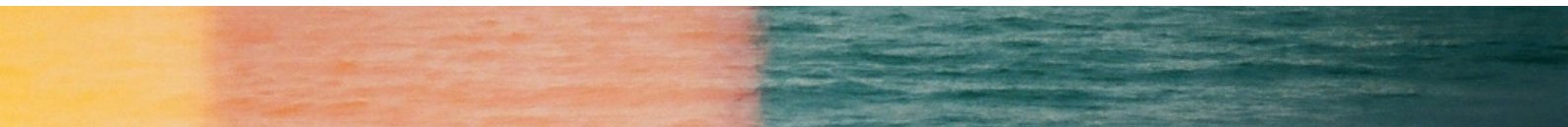
The ***Transforming Australia: SDG Progress Report 2024*** also includes 2030 target values or benchmarks for each indicator which enables an evaluation of progress and improves transparency and accountability. These distinctions underscore the complementary roles of the two frameworks in providing a holistic understanding of Australia's progress.

TARGET SETTING

Target and benchmark values for the 2030 goals were established using a systematic decision-making process, prioritising:

1. Official numerical SDG targets.
2. Existing national targets or national strategies.
3. Targets set by the National Sustainable Development Council for the 2018 assessment.
4. Benchmarks from global or regional SDG assessments, including the Sustainable Development Solutions Network's global SDG Index.
5. Comparisons with top-performing peer countries (e.g., the top five OECD performers).
6. Steady improvement benchmarks based on a compound annual growth rate of 1% from the 2015 baseline.

While this methodology enables the systematic setting of targets across all indicators, further conversations on their relevance within the Australian context are essential. Ideally, this approach should prompt a national dialogue on what targets Australia should aim for, akin to other initiatives such as net zero commitments or *Closing the Gap* targets, ensuring alignment with our unique challenges and aspirations.



ASSESSING PROGRESS

Progress is assessed using a quantitative method that compares historical trends with theoretical 'Target Paths' required to meet 2030 goals (Figure A2). Each indicator's progress is evaluated against its target or benchmark value using time series data.

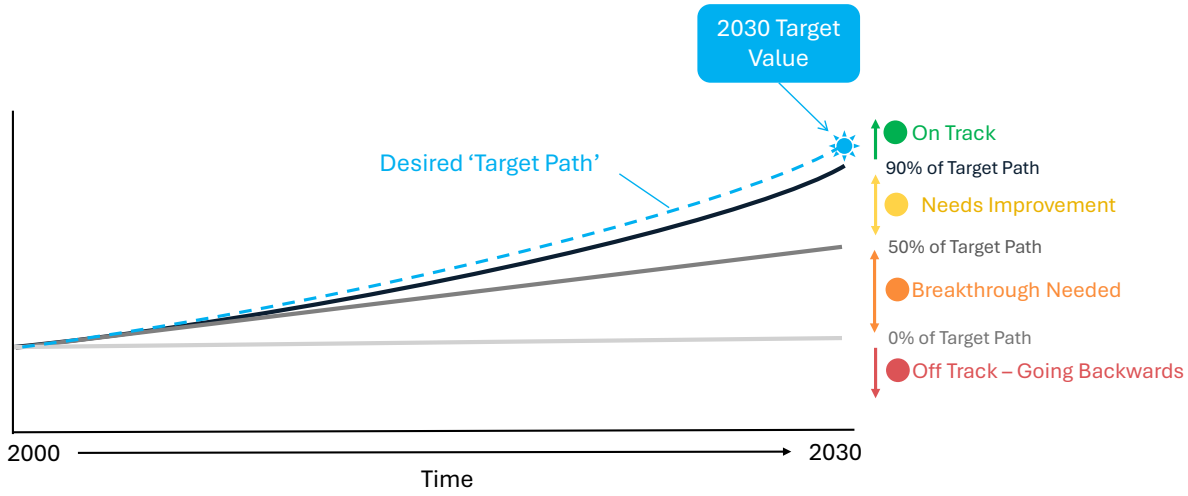


Figure A2. Conceptual diagram of the theoretical 'Target Path' and threshold values for assessing indicators and allocating traffic lights.

The results are visualised through a traffic light system (●●●●), providing a dashboard-style summary of how Australia is tracking on each target. The traffic light symbols reflect the following:

- Green (●): On track to meet the target.
- Yellow (●): Some progress, but needs improvement.
- Orange (●): Limited progress; breakthrough needed.
- Red (●): Off track and moving away from a target.

For more detailed information please refer to our technical note on the Transforming Australia website.

ASSESSMENT PERIOD

This assessment incorporates the most recent data available for each indicator, with 30% of indicators updated to 2023 and 21% to 2022. However, 28% of indicators rely on data from 2020 and 2021, as more recent updates have not yet been released by their respective sources.

The progress assessment for each indicator considers both the long-term trend (from 2000 to the most recent data point) and the short-term trend (covering the last five years of data, where available).

Based on the latest data and changes on these trends, the dashboard includes traffic light symbols aligned to both the long-term and the short-term trends.

Modelling the pathways to sustainable progress

The modelling was undertaken with an integrated, macroeconomic system dynamics model (iSDG-Australia 2.0) developed in partnership with the Millennium Institute.

The iSDG Australia Model:

- System dynamics simulation model – for 'what if' scenarios
- Over 3,000 variables integrated across 36 modules
- Extensive validation and sensitivity analysis – calibrated and optimised on 30+ years of historical data (1990-present)
- Builds on four decades of development by the Millennium Institute and multi-disciplinary expertise – 40+ national applications
- Rigorously peer reviewed – publications in world-leading journals including *Nature Sustainability, Nature Communications, Global Sustainability, PNAS*

A description of each of the sectoral modules along with key assumptions and source literature is available in the model documentation[3] and a brief summary of the model structure is provided in Figure A3 below.

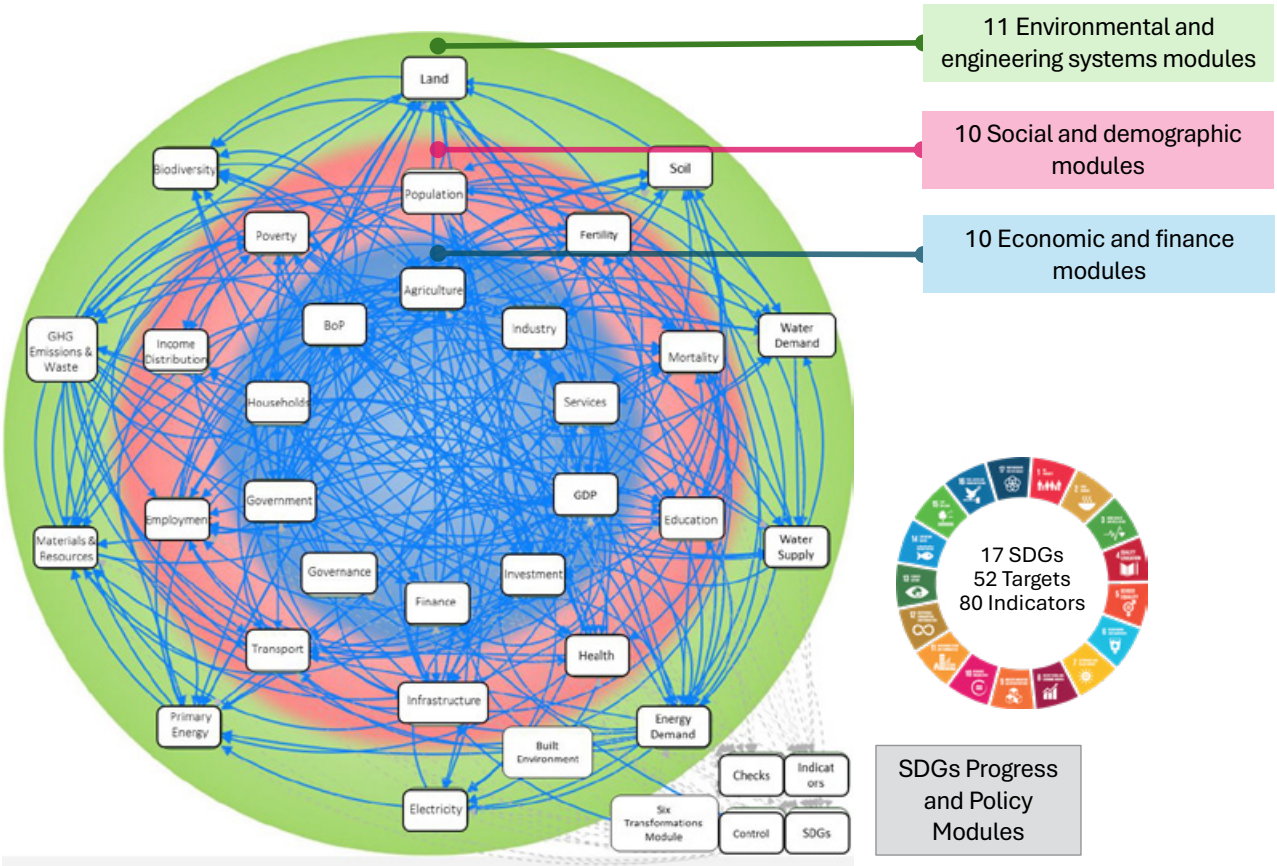


Figure A3. Overview of the structure for the iSDG-Australia system dynamics model.

[3] Millennium Institute, *iSDG Model Documentation.* 2022, Millennium Institute: Washington D.C. https://isdgdoc.millennium-institute.org/en/index.html

The performance of the two pathways as well as each of the six transformations was evaluated against a set of 80 unique indicators covering all 17 goals in 2030 and 2050 – 23 economic, 29 social and 28 environmental. Due to model limitations, there are differences between the indicator set used in the modelling and the indicator set used in the progress assessment earlier in the report.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS OF THE MODEL

Both pathways, the *Business-as-Usual* and the *Transform Australia Pathway*, incorporate assumptions about policy settings (e.g., investments in education, renewables, and environmental protection) and exogenous drivers (e.g., global temperature changes, climate impacts, technological change, and trade dynamics) that influence future outcomes. These assumptions are documented and integrated into the system dynamics simulation model (iSDG-Australia)[4].

Quantitative policy settings and assumptions for each transformation are paired with narrative storylines grounded in socio-technical analysis, providing context and plausibility to the scenarios (see accompanying technical note for details). The storylines include qualitative assumptions relating to processes and mechanisms that create favourable conditions for implementing ambitious policies and interventions, accelerating each transformation.

Key assumptions incorporated into the *Transform Australia Pathway* include:

1. **Ambitious Policy Action and Sustainable Investments:** Governments act to introduce bold new policies, while other actors, including businesses, civil society, and individuals, invest in sustainable solutions and alternative practices. This collective action drives transformative change.

2. **Crises Catalyse Momentum for Reform:** Societal awareness and urgency for systemic change are heightened by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and rising inequality. These events create public and political pressure for ambitious reforms and increased investment.

3. **Adoption of Wellbeing-Focused Frameworks:** Governments integrate wellbeing principles into decision-making processes, such as wellbeing budgets and preventative health strategies, guiding public expenditure and aligning investments with SDGs.

4. **Technological Innovations Accelerate Progress:** Rapid advancements in renewable energy, digital health, sustainable agriculture, and resource efficiency are assumed to continue, enabling transitions in hard-to-abate sectors and supporting progress towards net zero emissions.

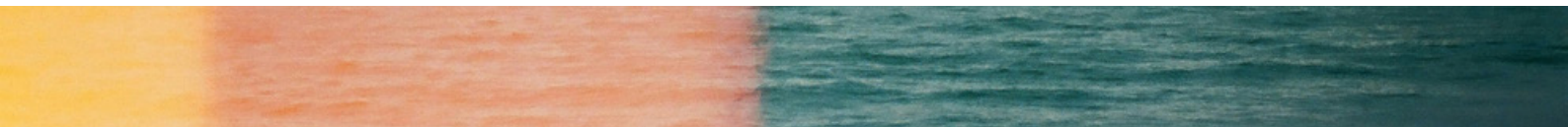
5. **Collaborative Multi-Stakeholder Action:** Effective partnerships among governments, businesses, Indigenous communities, and civil society are critical. These collaborations foster shared visions, coordinated action, and the alignment of policies and investments with SDG targets.

6. **Global and Regional Influences Encourage Action:** Successes in peer countries and international commitments (e.g., SDGs, net-zero targets) inspire Australia to adopt similar frameworks and reforms, ensuring competitiveness and alignment with global sustainability goals.

7. **Effective Policy Design and Implementation:** Policies and interventions are assumed to be properly designed and effectively implemented, ensuring that they achieve their intended outcomes and generate the desired impacts across social, economic, and environmental systems.

These assumptions underpin the modelling of the *Transform Australia Pathway*, providing the contextual backdrop for the policy shifts and scenarios explored in the analysis.

[4] Allen, C., et al., Modelling six sustainable development transformations in Australia and their accelerators, impediments, enablers, and interlinkages. Nature Communications, 2024 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-023-44655-4



ASSESSING INTERLINKAGES AND SPILLOVER EFFECTS BETWEEN THE TRANSFORMATIONS AND THE SDGS

The iSDG model's broad scope, combined with the six-transformations approach, enables a comprehensive quantitative analysis of feedback loops and interlinkages across systems and targets.

Each transformation is associated with a unique set of SDG targets relevant to its theme (e.g., the wellbeing transformation focuses on health and education targets). While designed to accelerate progress toward their specific targets, the transformations also generate broader effects or 'spillovers' that influence progress on other transformations.

In the *Transform Australia Pathway*, policy settings were used to parameterise and project each transformation individually before simulating all transformations simultaneously as a single, aggregated pathway. This approach allowed for an assessment of interactions and spillover effects, such as how a sustainable and just economy can positively impact wellbeing and capabilities. It also enabled an evaluation of each transformation's impacts on the full suite of SDG targets and indicators, as well as a comparison of individual and aggregated outcomes.

This methodology reflects a rigorous, evidence-based approach that integrates quantitative modelling with qualitative narrative analysis. By leveraging historical data, systems thinking, and cross-sectoral linkages, it provides a robust framework to evaluate Australia's pathways toward achieving the SDGs.