FACT SHEET: MEASURING SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

About the Measuring Sustainability Program

Sustainability is about ensuring that the wellbeing of society – the combination of community liveability, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity – is maintained or improved over time.

This means that Australia’s sustainability cannot be measured by the strength of our economy, the functioning of society or the state of our environment alone, but rather by looking at these dimensions holistically.

To build a sustainable Australia we need improved information about our economy, environment and society, and the linkages between them, to better inform decisions and policy making. We also need to take a longer-term view and consider how actions and decisions today affect the opportunities available to future generations.

The $10.1 million Measuring Sustainability program supports these objectives by establishing a National Sustainability Council and a set of sustainability indicators for Australia.

The program offers a comprehensive and integrated approach to measuring and monitoring sustainability in Australia. It will provide information on current and emerging economic, environmental and social issues – and the linkages between them – to support decision-making and planning at national and community levels.

The Australian Government’s vision for a sustainable Australia is outlined in Sustainable Australia – Sustainable Communities: A Population Strategy for Australia.
About the National Sustainability Council

The National Sustainability Council was established by the Australian Government in October 2012 as an independent, expert body to provide advice on sustainability issues. The council reports to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

The council’s key role is to deliver a public report against a set of sustainability indicators for Australia every two years.

The expertise of the council will help ensure that the reports are relevant, useful and accessible to communities, business and industry, and governments.

The council will also provide interim, targeted advice on sustainability issues at the request of the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, as well as advice on potential improvements to the sustainability indicators over time as new data and methodologies become available.

Members of the National Sustainability Council

Members of the National Sustainability Council have been appointed because of their expertise across one or more of the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability, and their understanding of issues impacting on Australia’s sustainability more broadly.

Chair:

Professor John Thwaites (Chair, Monash Sustainability Institute and Chair, ClimateWorks Australia)

Members:

Mr Rod Glover (public policy and innovation expert, and former Deputy Secretary, Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet)

Dr Tom Hatton PSM (Group Executive, Energy, CSIRO and Chair, 2011 State of the Environment Committee)

Professor Graeme Hugo AO (Director, Australian Population and Migration Research Centre and Australian Research Council Professorial Fellow at the University of Adelaide)

Mr Mark Joiner (Executive Director Finance, National Australia Bank)

Ms Romilly Madew (Chief Executive, Green Building Council of Australia)

Ms Sam Mostyn (company director and corporate sustainability advisor)

Professor Sue Richardson AM (Principal Research Fellow, National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University).
Sustainability Indicators for Australia

Sustainability requires that the wellbeing of society – the combination of community liveability, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity – is maintained or improved over time. Measuring sustainability is about monitoring how each of these three dimensions is tracking over time. Put another way, it is about measuring our stocks of social and human, natural and economic ‘capital’ and ensuring that the resources inherited by future generations allow for the same (or greater) levels of wellbeing as enjoyed by Australians today.

The Australian Government has developed a set of sustainability indicators for Australia that will provide information about our:

- social and human capital (skills and education; health; employment; security; institutions, governance and community engagement)
- natural capital (climate and atmosphere; land, ecosystems and biodiversity; natural resources; water; and waste)
- economic capital (wealth and income, housing, transport and infrastructure, productivity and innovation).

The National Sustainability Council will produce public reports against the indicators every two years. The reports will highlight key trends and emerging issues across the dimensions of sustainability to support decision-making and planning by governments, business and communities.

The development of broader-based and more effective measures of progress and sustainability is a subject of considerable and growing effort, both domestically and internationally. For example, the United Nations, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and several other countries have significant programs underway. A number of community and local government organisations in Australia are also active in this area.

Further Information


Queries can be directed to: [MeasuringSustainability@environment.gov.au](mailto:MeasuringSustainability@environment.gov.au)
Sustainability Indicators for Australia

### Social and Human Capital

**Skills and Education**
- Educational attainment*
  - Primary education (literacy and numeracy)
  - Early development
  - Research and development

**Health**
- Self-reported physical health
- Life expectancy
- Mental health
- Smoking
- Obesity

**Institutions, Governance and Community Engagement**
- Level of trust in core institutions
- Volunteering
- Cultural activity attendance
- Participation in sport
- Community engagement by persons with a disability

**Employment**
- Under-employment
- Unemployment
- Hours worked
- Employment to population ratio

**Security**
- Feelings of safety
- Incidence of personal crime
- Incidence of household crime

### Natural Capital

**Climate and Atmosphere**
- Air quality
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Observed climate change
- Energy intensity
- Carbon stored in the landscape

**Land, Ecosystems and Biodiversity**
- Extent of native vegetation
- Ground cover
- Ecosystem protection (protected areas)

**Water**
- Water quality
- Water consumption
- Water availability to meet demand

**Waste**
- Waste disposed to landfill
- Recycling rate

**Natural Resources**
- Fish stocks
- Timber resources
- Mineral and fossil fuel reserves

### Economic Capital

**Wealth and Income**
- Household net worth
- Income disparity
- Financial stress

**Housing**
- Housing supply
- Housing affordability

**Transport and Infrastructure**
- Vehicle and passenger kilometres travelled
- Travel time to work
- Mode of transport to work
- Broadband internet connections

**Productivity and Innovation**
- Productivity
- Business innovation

*bold* denotes a headline indicator.

In addition, the following contextual indicators will provide key demographic information to assist with interpretation of the sustainability indicators:

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<th>Population</th>
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<th>Regional Migration</th>
<th>Land Use</th>
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<td>Proficiency in spoken English</td>
<td>International migration</td>
<td>Land use change</td>
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<td>Population density</td>
<td>Indigenous population</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gender and age profile</td>
<td>Country of birth</td>
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