



E-PAPER

Australia

Transitioning to Sustainable Development?

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by Peter Langkau

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Introduction

In 2015 all countries of the United Nations demonstrated their willingness and their ambition to stop climate change (Paris Agreement) and agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a future where «no one is left behind»^[1]. The countries are now asked to take all necessary steps to fulfill the commitments made under these frameworks. Therefore, it is important to ensure that national growth and investment strategies are coherent with these multilateral commitments. This paper will particularly focus on Australia and its activity under the G20 and analyze whether its course is in line with the SDGs and the Climate Goals.

For this purpose, the paper will pay attention to four specific SDGs that are highly relevant in the context of Australia's national strategy: *Goal 5* (Gender Equality), *Goal 9* (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), *Goal 13* (Climate Action) and *Goal 14* (Life Below Water). It should be noted that this paper does not intend to provide an in depth and comprehensive analysis on this topic, but to highlight Australia's current approach and future tendencies.

SDGs and INDCs

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the result of years of consultation and sets the priorities for the next 15 years – comprising 17 goals and 169 targets.^[2] The 2030 Agenda, which follows after the Millennium Development Goals, is globally agreed by all developing and developed countries. Its main purpose is to end poverty, to strengthen universal peace and freedom, foster human rights and gender equality, and to «shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path»^[3]. Another event of equal importance was the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP) in Paris at the end of 2015. The outcome was the so called «Paris Agreement» with its commitment to limit global warming to «well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5 C»^[4]. To put this into practice, all countries were asked to submit their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), which can now be used to evaluate the efforts to date and into the future.

1 United Nations: Transforming our World. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (7/7/2016).

2 See *ibid.*

3 *Ibid* p.3.

4 UNFCCC: Conference of the Parties. Adoption of the Paris Agreement, in: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf> (7/8/2016).

The question remains open whether all countries will meet their pledges over the next years and put themselves on track. Australia as member of the G20 and one of the world's largest exporters of coal plays an important role in this transition.^[5] After a brief outline of the four SDGs and the INDCs relevant for this article, Australia's implementation path will be taken into consideration.

- Goal 5: Gender Equality – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 13: Climate Action – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact*
- Goal 14: Life Below Water – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

[*Official remark: Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.][^{6]}

Since *Goal 13* was reinforced by the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC (as major forum for international climate negotiations), the INDCs are going to be the point of reference to evaluate Australia's climate ambitions. At the core of Australia's INDCs is the «economy-wide target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 26 to 28 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030»^[7]. This target – as stated by the Australian government – is supposed to double Australia's rate of emissions reductions, and reduce the emissions per capita and per unit of GDP significantly (compared to the prior 2020 target).^[8]

The next section will briefly outline Australia's growth strategy as reported to the G20/OECD and highlighted in further official documents, while the main focus will be on the commitments to the above mentioned goals. The ensuing section will then analyze whether the national strategy is coherent with the commitments made at the global level. In other words: *Is there a conflict between Australia's national plan and its obligations towards the SDGs and the Climate Goals?*

5 See IEA: IEA Statistics. Key Coal Trends 2015, p. 4, in: www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/KeyCoalTrends.pdf (7/11/2016).

6 See United Nations: Transforming our World. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (7/7/2016).

7 See UNFCCC: Australia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution to a new Climate Change Agreement, in: www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Australia/1/Australias%20Intended%20Nationally%20Determined%20Contribution%20to%20a%20new%20Climate%20Change%20Agreement%20-%20August%202015.pdf (7/8/2016).

8 Ibid.

Australia's Growth Strategy

The official G20 Leaders' Communiqué from the Antalya summit in 2015 declares: «We are strongly committed to implementing its [SDGs] outcomes to ensure that no-one is left behind in our efforts to eradicate poverty and build an inclusive and sustainable future for all.»^[9] Nevertheless, it is questionable if the national course of action adapts to these changes. Australia is in the midst of a transition to non-mining drivers of growth, while mining is still an important growth factor.^{[10][11]} Weak commodity prices are challenging Australia's economy, while «the timing and magnitude of the pickup in non-mining activity remains a key uncertainty.»^[12] The shift towards non-mining investment is supposed to be underpinned by a variety of growth commitments:

- (1) A\$ 50 billion Infrastructure Investment Program,
- (2) A\$ 5.5 billion supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs),
- (3) A\$ 4.4 billion Family Packages for labor force participation (child care, education and training reforms),
- (4) reducing regulatory and administrative burdens by A\$ 1 billion and
- (5) free trade agreements with China, Korea, Japan and other regional partners.^[13]

In the context of Goal 9, further crucial infrastructure projects are: the buildup of a fast broadband service by 2020 (A\$ 29.5 billion); the Asset Recycling Initiative^[14], which supports the privatization of state and territory owned assets, in case the proceeds are reinvested into infrastructure; the Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility^[15] (A\$ 5 billion) to encourage private sector investments with concessional loans for projects that otherwise

9 See G20: G20 Leaders' Communiqué. Antalya Summit, 15–16 November 2015, in: <http://g20.org.tr/g20-leaders-commenced-the-antalya-summit> (7/8/2016).

10 Australian Government – Department for Industry, Innovation and Science: Resources. Mining, in: <https://industry.gov.au/resource/Mining/Pages/default.aspx#> (7/11/2016).

11 See G20/OECD: G20/OECD Report on G20 Investment Strategies. Volume II, p.6, in: www.oecd.org/investment/G20-OECD-Report-on-Investment-Strategies-Vol-2.pdf (7/11/2016).

12 G20: Adjusted Growth Strategy. Australia, p.3, in: <http://g20.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Adjusted-Growth-Strategy-2015-Australia.pdf> (7/11/2016).

13 Ibid. p. 2.

14 The government supports the privatization of infrastructure assets (e.g. ports, state owned energy companies etc.) to leverage even more infrastructure investment. States and territories will receive 15 % of the price of the asset sold if all the sale proceeds are allocated to new infrastructure investment. See Australian Government: The Asset Recycling Initiative helping states unlock their balance sheets, in: www.budget.gov.au/2014-15/content/glossy/infrastructure/html/infrastructure_04.htm (7/11/2016).

15 See Australian Government: Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, in: <https://industry.gov.au/industry/Northern-Australia-Infrastructure-Facility/Pages/default.aspx> (7/11/2016).

would not be build; and the 15 years Infrastructure Plan^[16] to set out the investment priorities for the next 15 years.

In order to meet the challenges of climate change (Goal 13), Australia implemented a variety of measures as laid down in their INDCs reported to the UNFCCC. One of its core contributions is the Emissions Reduction Fund which offers incentives for businesses to reduce their costs by investing in new energy efficient technologies. So far the government has provided A\$ 2.55 billion to this Fund.^[17] Moreover, Australia implemented a Renewable Energy Target scheme with the main objective to provide about 23.5 per cent of Australia's electricity with renewable sources by 2020.^[18] To improve its energy productivity^[19] by 40 per cent until 2030, Australia has also set a National Energy Productivity Target.^[20]

Goal 14 (Life Below Water) is also of high importance for Australia and especially applies to the Great Barrier Reef: the world's largest coral reef system with 400 types of corals, 1.500 different species of fish and 4.000 types of mollusk.^[21] This goal is highly connected with Goal 13 (Climate Action) since the «damage to the GBR [Great Barrier Reef] ecosystem will depend to a large degree on the amount of change in the world's climate»^[22]. So far Australia has implemented the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan to protect and manage the Great Barrier Reef. The plan is underpinned with a funding of A\$ 2 billion and an additional investment framework to identify investment priorities.^[23]

Within the scope of Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Australia has taken different steps over the past decades. With the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984^[24], Australia has formalized its commitment to gender equality, elimination of sexual harassment and discrimination. Besides, Australia created a Workplace Gender Equality Agency in 2012 to develop strat-

16 See Australian Government: Australian Infrastructure Plan, in: <http://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/publications/Australian-Infrastructure-Plan.aspx> (7/11/2016).

17 See G20/OECD: G20/OECD Report on G20 Investment Strategies. Volume II, p.44, in: www.oecd.org/investment/G20-OECD-Report-on-Investment-Strategies-Vol-2.pdf (7/11/2016).

18 See Australian Government: The Renewable Energy Target (RET) scheme, in: www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/renewable-energy-target-scheme (7/11/2016).

19 GDP/Energy Consumption (ratio)

20 See UNFCCC: Australia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution to a new Climate Change Agreement, in: www4.unfccc.int/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Australia/1/Australias%20Intended%20Nationally%20Determined%20Contribution%20to%20a%20new%20Climate%20Change%20Agreement%20-%20August%202015.pdf (7/8/2016).

21 See World Heritage Convention: Great Barrier Reef, in: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/154> (7/11/2016).

22 Ibid.

23 See Australian Government: Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, in: www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/64c29368-0f1c-4de5-89f4-f8de3e6c76c1/files/reef-2050-long-term-sustainability-plan-factsheet.pdf (7/11/2016).

24 See Australian Human Rights Commission: Sex Discrimination Act 1984, in: www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/legal/legislation#sda (7/11/2016).

egies and toolkits to foster the progress towards equal rights for women and men.^[25] At the Brisbane summit 2014, all G20 members also agreed «to reduce the gender gap in labor market participation rates by 25 % by 2025»^[26]. Different gender strategies to promote equality have since been implemented among governmental institutions and the private sector.^[27]

The next part will now discuss future tendencies and whether the measures adopted by the Australian government are sufficient to fulfill the commitments made under the SDGs and Climate Goals.

- 25** See Australian Government: Building a gender equality strategy, in: www.wgea.gov.au/lead/building-gender-equality-strategy (7/11/2016).
- 26** OECD: Bringing gender equality to the core of the G20 agenda, in: www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/bringing-gender-equality-to-the-core-of-the-g20-agenda.htm (7/11/2016).
- 27** Employers with 100 or more employees are obliged to report their status on gender equality See Australian Government: Relevant employers, in: www.wgea.gov.au/who-needs-report/relevant-employers (7/11/2016). For governmental institutions' strategies also see e.g. Australian Government: Australia's assistance for gender equality, in <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/investment-priorities/gender-equality-empowering-women-girls/gender-equality/Pages/australias-assistance-for-gender-equality.aspx> (7/11/2016); Australian Government: Balancing the future. The Australian Public Service gender equality strategy 2016-2019 (7/11/2016); Australian Government: Gender Strategy 2015–2018, in: www.ga.gov.au/about/careers/diversity-program/gender-strategy (7/11/2016).

Coherence or Contradiction?

At a first glance it seems like Australia's national plan is coherent with its commitments on the global level. In fact, it is to be welcomed that Australia is attempting to transition to non-mining drivers of growth.^[28] However, when taking a closer look, this is not happening to the extent necessary and a delay could be costly for Australia and even the world.^[29] There are several reasons why Australia is at risk to miss its opportunity to implement its transition on time:

First of all, mining is still accountable for about 60 per cent of Australia's exports and around 9 per cent of its GDP, while coal has a major share in it.^{[30][31]} Decreasing commodity prices and policy changes in energy markets remain an uncertainty for Australia's future growth.^[32] China – the largest importer of Australian coal – is supposed to slow down its demand shortly after 2030, while the world's 2°C target could even shorten this time frame.^[33] Leading global coal corporations, such as Peabody and Anglo American are already struggling on the Australian market but instead of phasing out, new coal projects are under consideration by the Australian government – such as the Carmichael Mine Project, which could become Australia's largest coal mine.^{[34][35][36][37]} Moreover, the Australian Greens calculated that the government could save a total of A\$ 23.9 billion over the next

- 28** See Morrison, Scott: Australia. A strong and transitioning economy, in: <http://sjm.ministers.treasury.gov.au/files/2016/04/2016-012.pdf> (7/12/2016).
- 29** WWF: Delaying climate action would be costly for Australia and the world, p. 3–5, in: http://awsassets.wwf.org.au/downloads/fs093_delaying_climate_action_would_be_costly_for_australia_and_the_world_25may15.pdf (7/13/2016).
- 30** Frydenberg, Josh: Mining and the Australian economy: the Australian Government's priorities for the mining sector, in: www.minister.industry.gov.au/ministers/frydenberg/speeches/mining-and-australian-economy-australian-governments-priorities-mining (7/13/2016).
- 31** Australian Government: Resources and Energy Quarterly, p. 145, p. 30f., in: <https://industry.gov.au/Office-of-the-Chief-Economist/Publications/Documents/req/REQ-June-2016.pdf> (7/13/2016).
- 32** Ibid. p.5.
- 33** WWF: Delaying climate action would be costly for Australia and the world, p. 16, in: http://awsassets.wwf.org.au/downloads/fs093_delaying_climate_action_would_be_costly_for_australia_and_the_world_25may15.pdf (7/13/2016).
- 34** See Queensland Government: Carmichael Coal Mine and Rail Project. Project overview, in: www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/assessments-and-approvals/carmichael-coal-mine-and-rail-project.html (7/13/2016).
- 35** See West, Michael: Digging a deeper hole for coal, in: www.smh.com.au/business/energy/digging-a-deeper-hole-for-coal-20160218-gmxgqe.html (7/13/2016).
- 36** See Rucinski, Tracy/ Hals, Tom: Leading global miner Peabody files for bankruptcy, in: www.reuters.com/article/us-peabody-energy-bankruptcy-idUSKCN0XA0E7 (7/13/2016).
- 37** See Wilson, James/ Hume, Neil: Anglo American closing in on Australian coal mines sale, in: www.ft.com/content/db73228a-3bae-11e6-8716-a4a71e8140b0#axzz4EispK1Wz (7/13/2016).

four years if it reduces fossil fuel subsidies.^[38] Besides, different mechanisms – such as fuel tax credits – are also playing a role in terms of subsidizing the oil, gas and coal industry through the backdoor.^[39] All in all, the Australian Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia – Josh Frydenberg – put it concisely when paraphrasing Mark Twain: «the rumors of the death of Australia's resources are greatly exaggerated.»^[40] Therefore, a transition away from mining and a path towards resilient infrastructure investment cannot be entirely confirmed, even though the government is taking steps to improve, for instance, the service and residential construction sector, and lowering the regulatory burdens of SMEs.^{[41][42]}

Limiting global warming would also entail that «over 90 % of Australian coal reserves, over 50 % of gas reserves and 40 % of oil reserves are likely to be unburnable under a 2°C carbon budget.»^[43] Inadequate implementation of policies to achieve climate targets could have vast implications for the long-term and could result in a global write-off of capital unprecedented in scale.^[44] Nevertheless, it is hard to say whether Australia is able to turn the corner at this point, especially against the backdrop of the recent elections.

When it comes to Climate action, Australia's performance is far from sufficient and has been classified as «inadequate» by the Climate Action Tracker.^[45] Australia's current efforts are falling far behind its INDCs. At the moment «Australia's emissions are set to increase substantially to more than 27 % above 2005 levels by 2030, which is equivalent to an increase of around 61 % above 1990 levels.»^[46]

Australia is lacking substantial and comprehensive measures to fulfill its commitments. But instead of steering in the opposite direction, the Coalition government repealed the carbon

- 38** See The Greens: Fully Costed Election Platform. Standing up for what matters, in: http://greens.org.au/sites/greens.org.au/files/AG_Costed%20Platform_A4_v2.pdf (7/13/2016); for 2013–2014 figures see also Bast, Elizabeth, et al.: Empty promises. G20 subsidies to oil, gas and coal production, in: www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9957.pdf (7/13/2016).
- 39** See Makhijani, Shakuntala: Fossil fuel exploration subsidies. Australia, in: www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9260.pdf (7/13/2016).
- 40** Frydenberg, Josh: Speech. The Resilience of Australia's Energy and Resources Sectors in Challenging Times, p.4, in: www.joshfrydenberg.com.au/guest/SpeechesDetails.aspx?id=356 (7/12/2016).
- 41** See Morrison, Scott: Australia. A strong and transitioning economy, p. 4–7, in: <http://sjm.ministers.treasury.gov.au/files/2016/04/2016-012.pdf> (7/12/2016).
- 42** See G20/OECD: G20/OECD Report on G20 Investment Strategies. Volume II, p.157ff. in: www.oecd.org/investment/G20-OECD-Report-on-Investment-Strategies-Vol-2.pdf (7/11/2016).
- 43** WWF: Delaying climate action would be costly for Australia and the world, p. 18, in: http://awsassets.wwf.org.au/downloads/fs093_delaying_climate_action_would_be_costly_for_australia_and_the_world_25may15.pdf (7/13/2016).
- 44** Bertram C., et al. (2015): Carbon lock-in through capital stock inertia associated with weak near-term climate policies, in: *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 90, p. 62–72, p. 71.
- 45** See Climate Action Tracker: Australia set to overshoot its 2030 target by large margin, p. 2, in: http://climateactiontracker.org/assets/publications/briefing_papers/Australia.pdf (7/13/2016).
- 46** Ibid.

tax in 2014 and stopped most of the funding for Carbon Capture and Storage projects.^{[47][48]} The Climate Transparency Initiative evaluated the performance of all G20 countries and reached a similar conclusion for Australia.^[49] The gap between current policy projections and the INDCs is a major obstacle for Australia's progress, while new measures may be implemented in the aftermath of the 2016 elections.^[50]

Australia is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Exceeding the 2°C goal would hit the country on different levels and also affect the life below water.^{[51][52]} The endangered Great Barrier Reef is not only one of the seven wonders of the natural world and a vital ecosystem for the region, but also of economic importance for Australia. Its economic contribution was A\$5.7 billion in 2012 and it secures around 69,000 jobs.^[53] Therefore, Australia's tourism industry is facing hard times if the coral bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef continues.^[54] The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, introduced by the Coalition, is a step in the right direction but is not sufficient as highlighted in a report of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Australian Marine Conservation Society.^[55] Moreover, Australia's support for the Abbot Point coal terminal expansion and the planned Carmichael mine project poses a further risk to the Great Barrier Reef, which is already at a tipping point.^[56] In general, one could say that Australia's measures are half-hearted and unbalanced. A recent report reveals Australia's controversial intervention to revise an

- 47** See Alexander, Cathy (2015): Peers and Partners. How Australia compares on climate policy, p. 2, in: Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute, http://sustainable.unimelb.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/MSSI-Briefing-Paper1_Alexander2015.pdf (7/13/2016).
- 48** See Australian Government: Repealing the Carbon Tax, in: www.environment.gov.au/climate-change/repealing-carbon-tax (7/13/2016).
- 49** See Climate Transparency: Assessing Climate Protection Performance. G20 Country Profile. Australia, in: www.climate-transparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CP_AUSTRALIA_2015.pdf (7/14/2016).
- 50** See Climate Action Tracker: Australia set to overshoot its 2030 target by large margin, p.2, in: http://climateactiontracker.org/assets/publications/briefing_papers/Australia.pdf (7/14/2016).
- 51** See Stern, Nicholas (2007): The economics of climate change. The Stern review. Part II – Costs of Climate Change in Developed Countries, p. 8, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- 52** See Australian Government: Australia's Biodiversity and Climate Change, in: www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/eab369d6-76f9-46c8-beb4-aaae8ece112e/files/vulnerability-overview.pdf (7/14/2016).
- 53** See Deloitte Access Economics (2013): Economic Contribution of the Great Barrier Reef, p.i, in: www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/a3ef2e3f-37fc-4c6f-ab1b-3b54ffc3f449/files/gbr-economic-contribution.pdf (7/14/2016).
- 54** See Stern, Nicholas (2007): The economics of climate change. The Stern review. Part II – Costs of Climate Change in Developed Countries, p. 5, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- 55** See Evaluation of Australia's Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. Advice to the World Heritage Committee, in: http://awsassets.wwf.org.au/downloads/mo037_evaluation_of_australias_reef_2050_long_term_sustainability_plan_7may15.pdf (7/14/2016).
- 56** See Greenpeace: Top 10 reasons why Carmichael mega mine is a really bad idea, in: www.greenpeace.org/australia/en/news/climate/Top-10-reasons-why-Carmichael-mega-mine-is-a-REALLY-bad-idea/ (7/14/2016).

UNESCO report that points out the poor and deteriorating conditions of the Great Barrier Reef.^[57] Considering the above, it is questionable if Australia is serious about its pledge to save the life below water.

While Australia is committed to gender equality since the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984, it is still facing inequality and discrimination for women and girls. The gender pay gap remains between 15 and 18 per cent for the past decades, which equals an average of A\$ 283.20 per week.^[58] Furthermore, «Australian women account for 92 per cent of primary carers for children with disabilities, 70 per cent of primary carers for parents and 52 per cent of primary carers for partners»^[59]. In terms of leadership positions the inequality persists on large scale, even though the number of women on the boards of directors of ASX200 listed companies has increased from 8.3 per cent (2010) to 18.6 per cent (2014).^{[60][61]} It is also striking that «1 in 3 women aged 15 years & over have experienced physical violence in the last five years»^[62], while «1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15»^[63]. The government tries to address these issues with gender strategies and within the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). Nevertheless, the progress is slow, as the WGEA pointed out in a recent report.^[64]

- 57** See Markham, Adam et al. (2016): Revealed. Report for Unesco on the Great Barrier Reef that Australia didn't want world to see, in: www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/may/27/revealed-the-report-on-the-great-barrier-reef-that-australia-didnt-want-the-world-to-see (7/14/2016).
- 58** See Australian Human Rights Commission: Face the facts: Gender Equality, in: www.humanrights.gov.au/education/face-facts/face-facts-gender-equality (7/14/2016).
- 59** Ibid.
- 60** Ibid.
- 61** See Australian Government: Gender workplace statistics at a glance, in: www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Stats_at_a_Glance.pdf (7/14/2016).
- 62** See Australian Human Rights Commission: Face the facts: Gender Equality, in: www.humanrights.gov.au/education/face-facts/face-facts-gender-equality (7/14/2016).
- 63** Ibid.
- 64** See Australian Government: Australia's gender equality scorecard, in: www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2014-15-WGEA_SCORECARD.pdf (7/15/2016).

Conclusion

This brief essay highlighted Australia's current approaches and overall tendencies. To put it in a nutshell, it can be said that Australia has a long way to go if it wants to meet its global commitments. It also became clear that the SDGs and climate goals are often interconnected and depend on each other. Therefore, it is necessary that national policies are aligned and do not contradict each other.

As a member of the G20, Australia is supposed to take on its responsibility and act as forerunner to implement the global agreements. A single focus on economic growth, and dependence on revenues from the commodity sector, might work for the next decades but could switch completely and end up being very costly – not only for Australia. Sustainable policies have to take future developments into account and cannot rely on short-term decisions. Even though a transition cannot be achieved from overnight, the Australian government needs to put itself on track and adjust its policies in the near future. In comparison to other G20 members, Australia's performance on climate action is at the lower end of the scale (among Canada, Turkey and Saudi Arabia), although it will be disproportionately affected by the consequences.^[65] Australia's performance on the other SDGs is also rather poor, while a more elaborated assessment cannot be given with the scope of this paper. For a comprehensive and in depth analysis of this topic, it would be necessary to focus on the specific targets under each SDG and on Australia's international development assistance. Nevertheless, it was possible to reveal major shortcomings and give an outline of Australia's current stance.

Finally, it remains to be seen if the new government is able to adapt the existing challenges and if Australia can carry out its commitments to the SDGs and Climate Goals in the long-term.

65 See Climate Transparency: G20 Climate Policy and Targets, in: www.climate-transparency.org/g20-climatepolicy (7/15/2016).

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