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STATISTICS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AUSTRALIA
Submitted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics¹

This meeting is organised jointly with Eurostat and OECD
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Statistics for Sustainable Development in Australia

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This paper presents a brief summary of the development and implementation of sustainability policy in Australia and the information used to monitor and review progress.

Australia has had a *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* since 1992. This was prepared by the Ecologically Sustainable Development Steering Committee and was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments. The strategy defines ecologically sustainable development as:

“using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.”

Monitoring and review were explicitly addressed in the strategy and covered by Objective 33.2 which is:

“to develop appropriate performance measures for the actions and initiatives outlined in this Strategy, and as a means of indicating overall progress towards ESD.”

To support the strategy indicators were developed and published in the *Are We Sustaining Australia? Report Against Headline Sustainability Indicators* (Environment Australia 2002). The report had 24 indicators, grouped under 21 values. These are listed in Attachment 1.

In parallel with the development and population of sustainability indicators was the development of environmental indicators for State of the Environment Reporting. This resulted in the publication of the *Core Environmental Indicators for Reporting on the State of the Environment* by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council State of the Environment Reporting Task Force. This produced a set of 75 indicators.

The ABS has not specifically addressed sustainable development, but has developed Measures of Australia's Progress (ABS 2004) which contains indicators designed to measure progress in environmental, economic and social dimensions. This publication has 13 headline indicators and plus supplementary indicators.

A range of other work aimed at assessing or informing sustainability issues has occurred in Australia.

- **The Intergenerational Report** (Commonwealth of Australia 2002) report was published with the Budget Papers of 2002-03. Its aim was:

“ to assess the long term sustainability of current Government policies over the 40 years following the release of the report, including by taking account of the financial implications of demographic change.”

- **Balancing Act** (Foran et al. 2005) provides an overview of the Australian economy using a set of ten environmental, social, and financial indicators.
- **National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA)** was established in 1997 to *“Provide a baseline for the purposes of carrying out assessments of the effectiveness of land and water degradation policies and programs.... [and].... to improve Australian Government, State and regional decision making on natural resource management.”* (www.nlwra.gov.au).
- **Ecological Footprints** are used by some of Australia’s state and local governments. For example the local governments of Mosman, Port Phillip and Wollongong and the State Government of Victoria.
- **Sustainable development - to what end?** (Commonwealth Treasury of Australia 2002) highlighted the need for a clear understanding and definition of sustainable development and the need to more thoroughly integrate information from a variety of disciplines.

References

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Ecological footprints

Mosman <http://www.mosman.nsw.gov.au/environment/footprint.html>

Port Phillip <http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/ecologica.html>

Wollongong

<http://www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/Downloads/Documents/WollongongTBL.pdf>

Victoria <http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/eco-footprint/default.asp>