**Party policies indicate stark choice on sustainable future as measured by UN goals**

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New research into Australia’s political party policies during the 2022 election indicates the increasing difference between the major political parties based on their alignment with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The recent report on political party policies based on SDG alignment revealed the gap between the Liberal Party and Labor Party/Greens has increased as a result of the Liberal Party aligning fewer policies with SDGs.

Led by [Dr Robert Hales](https://www.griffith.edu.au/griffith-business-school/departments/tourism-sport-hotel-management/contact-us/rob-hales), the study examined the policies of Australia’s three major parties and rated them on a numerical scale from 1 (minimal evidence of alignment with SDGs) to 3 (significant evidence of alignment with SDGs).

The rating system also included a score of 0, for policies that showed no evidence of alignment with the SDGs, and a ‘negative’ score, which indicated opposition to the SDG in question.

The scoring system was designed to favour any party that had a policy on the topic of the SDGs.

“Our aim in the analysis was to determine if the policy was on topic and not to determine if it would be achieved by the policy,” Dr Hales said.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a UN agreement – of which Australia is a signatory – which measures progress on economic, social and environmental performance.

There are 17 goals (see table), which have been broken down into a further 169 specific targets. Australia is presently [ranked No. 35](https://www.sdgindex.org/reports/sustainable-development-report-2021/) in the world for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

“Support across all political parties for the Sustainable Development Goals would be an important step if Australia were to improve its ranking,” Dr Hales said.

As it stands, the Australian Greens and Australian Labor Party are the most closely aligned with the SDGs, ranking ‘significantly’ with the remainder of the goals ranking moderate.

The Liberal Party, conversely, ranked ‘significant’ for just one goal – Goal 3 – to ‘Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages’. For the remaining goals, 5 ranked moderate, 7 ranked minimal, and 3 ranked zero.

“The Labor Party and the Greens party policies both have mostly significant alignment with all the SDG targets, but there is still room for improvement in the quality of the policies to achieve greater outcomes,” Dr Hales said.

**Rating of political party policies aligned with SDG targets.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sustainable Development Goals** | **Liberal Party** | **Labor****Party** | **Green****Party** |
| **Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere**  | 1 | 2 (-1) | 3 |
| **Goal 2. End hunger achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**  | 1 | 2 | 3(+1) |
| **Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages**  | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**  | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**  | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**  | 0(-1) | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**  | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**  | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| **Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**  | 1 (-1) | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries**  | 0 (-1) | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**  | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**  | 0 (-1) | 2 | 3 |
| **Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**  | 1  | 2(-1) | 3 |
| **Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**  | 2 | 2 |   |
| **Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**  | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**  | 1(-1) | 3 | 3 |
| **Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**  | 1(+1) |  2 | 3 |

Key: light green minimal contribution; green – moderate contribution; dark green significant contribution; A score + or - indicates movement from 2019 election analysis.

The study also compared the 2019 results using a similar method with the 2022 results. The negative or positive scores indicated changes since the last election. The Liberal Party decreased in alignment with five SDGs.

The main reason for this was most likely explained by the Liberal Party predominantly focusing on economic initiatives with large funding amounts promoting economic development. The lack of a corruption commission also saw a decrease in alignment for the Liberal Party for SDG #16.

Labor decreased in poverty alleviation as there were fewer specific initiatives and policies that aligned with the SDGs targets within that goal. Another decrease for Labor was in the area of climate change which appeared to be linked with a decrease in the espoused policies ranging across the climate change policy area for this election.

“The smaller parties were not included in the analysis as they did not have comprehensive policy platforms like the major parties. Additionally, some parties like One Nation actively opposed the SDGs in their policy platform,” Dr Hales said.

“In the case of Independents, they may have some comprehensive policies that align quite well with some SDGs but they tend not to have complete policy platforms that can cover all SDGs. The focus areas tend to include gender, climate change, inequality, peace justice and strong institutions.

“More broadly, it is evident that there is a significant variance in commitment to the SDGs, and the UN itself, among Australia’s parties, and it’s unlikely that we’ll see any genuine progress in these areas unless we’re able to achieve greater unity of vision in terms of the things that matter to us – and these goals *should* matter to us.

“The continued focus on economic development as the dominant measure and mode of progress in Australia needs to be broadened to include other aspects of progress. The SDGs are an important measure of ‘progress’ in Australia.”

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