



Save the Children
Australia



Our Voice

**Save the Children
Youth Ambassadors**

Acknowledgements

Save the Children Australia 2015 Youth Ambassadors

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Save the Children's 2015 Youth Ambassadors
Hayden Burns, Elliott Gray, Danikka Calyon & Caitlyn Baljak.
Photo: Tim Norton/Save the Children Australia

Foreword

On September 25th 2015, 193 world leaders will commit to 17 Global Goals to achieve 3 extraordinary things in the next 15 years. End extreme poverty. Fight inequality & injustice. Fix climate change. The Global Goals for sustainable development could get these things done. In all countries. For all people.

If Australia is to commit to these goals, there will need to be very real progress on a number of key issues - especially if our generation are to take on the responsibility of delivering on these global promises. We must see action now in order to achieve this.

This document outlines what we believe to be the most pressing areas of change for the current and progressive Governments of Australia. We urge today's political leaders to act to support Australia's youth and ensure that these issues are addressed.

Caitlyn Baljak
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2015 Youth Ambassadors
Save the Children Australia



Photo: Rob McKechnie/Save the Children Australia

1. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues

There are a broad number of issues that relate to the inequality felt by Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. This is not just a matter for individuals – there exists a deep racism that is perpetuated by institutions, Government and schools. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people aren't given a strong voice to have their experiences heard.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people see discrimination in a number of areas: in the justice system, in foster care, in access to healthcare and medical services and in the job market.

There is a lack of cultural understanding amongst non-Indigenous Australians for the impact, value and importance of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people. This should be addressed through our education system as well as within the community.

What is the issue?

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people continue to feel the impacts of discrimination in a number of policy areas.

What are the facts?

- There is a 17 year difference in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have less access to essential health services than other Australians.
- In the past 10 years we have seen a 88% increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ending up in prison, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people now 13 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people.



Global Goal 10

Reduce inequality within and among countries

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Support and fund programs that encourage Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander juvenile offenders to go into education or the workforce after release.
- Provide a national speaking and mentor program involving prior Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander juvenile offenders.
- Support cultural awareness training for foster care families to educate them about Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture.
- Work to prioritise Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children being placed in foster care within their own communities.
- Implement the Close the Gap initiatives to tackle the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians.



Photo: Flickr/ Francisco Martins



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals

2. Environment

Acting on climate change may not seem like an immediate issue – in many ways it will take decades before we begin to see impacts. But we need to immediately decrease our emissions before it is too late.

We need a change to our energy production model. Currently we use so much coal and yet Australia has the benefit of huge solar potential that is largely untapped. We should harness this opportunity.

We have also seen the devastating impacts of coal seam gas mining on prime agricultural land, including cracks appeared under heritage listed environment areas.

Food waste is another key concern. So much energy goes into producing food and yet we throw away about 40% of what we produce. We need programs that allow for food to be donated to those in need when it would otherwise be wasted.

What is the issue?

Protecting the environment is an integral issue that requires action by the Australian Government now, but also for decades to come.

What are the facts?

- Current commitments are unlikely sufficient to holding the increase in global average temperature below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, which is the globally agreed acceptable temperature increase.
- Children are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts including heat waves, droughts and floods, which are increasing in incidence and frequency.
- 40% of South Australia's power came from renewable energy during 2014, while about 95% of the electricity used by Tasmanians came from renewables.

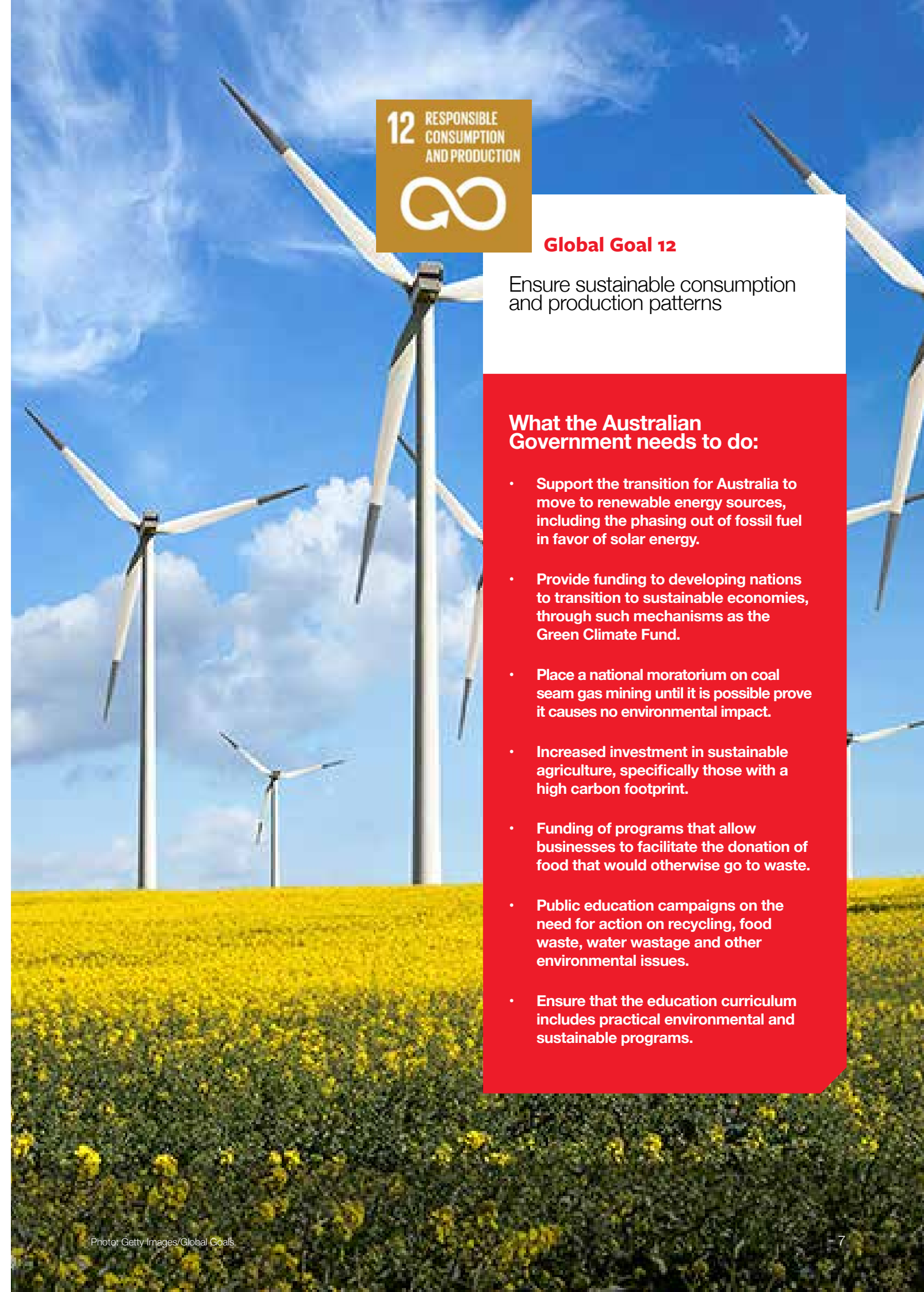


Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals



Global Goal 12

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Support the transition for Australia to move to renewable energy sources, including the phasing out of fossil fuel in favor of solar energy.
- Provide funding to developing nations to transition to sustainable economies, through such mechanisms as the Green Climate Fund.
- Place a national moratorium on coal seam gas mining until it is possible prove it causes no environmental impact.
- Increased investment in sustainable agriculture, specifically those with a high carbon footprint.
- Funding of programs that allow businesses to facilitate the donation of food that would otherwise go to waste.
- Public education campaigns on the need for action on recycling, food waste, water wastage and other environmental issues.
- Ensure that the education curriculum includes practical environmental and sustainable programs.



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals

3. Education

Education is such a fundamental right and we are lucky that Australian society puts such a strong emphasis on the value of education. However, more could be done to ensure that education is best targeted towards the needs of young people.

We must ensure that education is structured with the needs of the individual child at the forefront. Some children will find schooling environments are not the best way for them to learn or progress their lives – we should allow students to decide their future at year 10, not force them into completing secondary school.

Sexual and reproductive health needs to be a part of our education system – in a more approachable, human way so it is a positive learning experience.

Elsewhere around the world, we need to play our part in ensuring children have access to an education, especially in areas where conflict forces children to leave their schools.

What is the issue?

Education is a right for all children. We must support all children to access this right.

What are the facts?

- Globally, more than 124 million children and adolescents are out of school
- An estimated 250 million children in the world can not read, write or do basic math

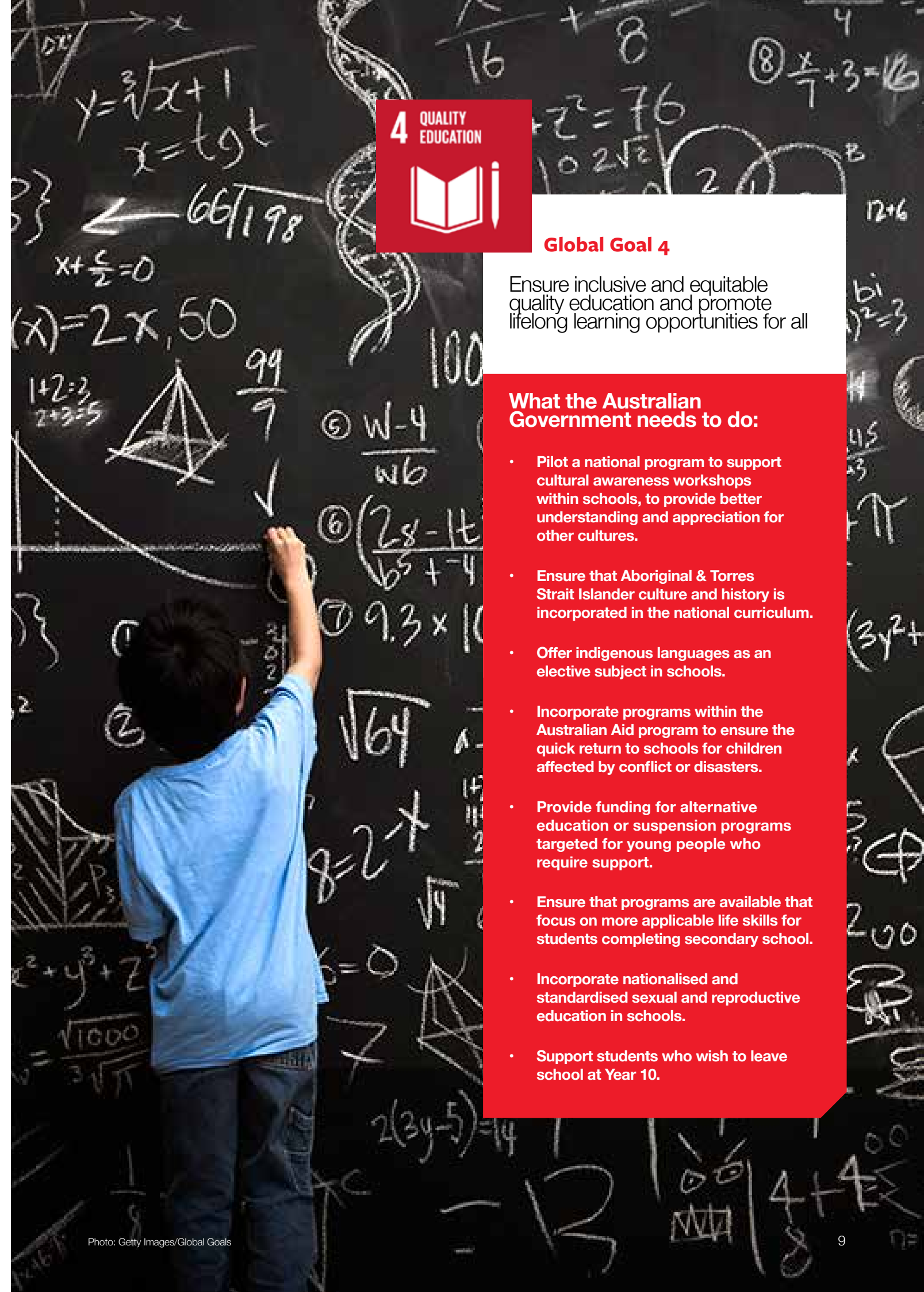


Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Global Goal 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Pilot a national program to support cultural awareness workshops within schools, to provide better understanding and appreciation for other cultures.
- Ensure that Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture and history is incorporated in the national curriculum.
- Offer indigenous languages as an elective subject in schools.
- Incorporate programs within the Australian Aid program to ensure the quick return to schools for children affected by conflict or disasters.
- Provide funding for alternative education or suspension programs targeted for young people who require support.
- Ensure that programs are available that focus on more applicable life skills for students completing secondary school.
- Incorporate nationalised and standardised sexual and reproductive education in schools.
- Support students who wish to leave school at Year 10.



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals

4. Supporting young people

Young people are often misunderstood about their ability to comprehend but they have a huge capacity to be aware about the issues that affect them.

Young people should have direct involvement in decision making processes. This should include allowing young people between the ages of 16-18 to engage in noncompulsory voting in federal elections.

Mental health issues are a big part of life for many young people. Bullying within schools, workplaces and homes affects can cause depression, suicide and other community issues. There are some programs but not enough is being done to support young people in these situations.

We need to see inclusive education workshops that allow people to be able to help each other through these issues.

What is the issue?

We need to empower young people to make decisions about the issues that matter to them, and get support for mental health wellbeing.

What are the facts?

- Approximately one in four Australian students report being bullied.
- One in 16 young Australians is currently experiencing depression.
- Suicide is the biggest killer of young Australians and accounts for the deaths of more young people than car accidents.
- A quarter of young Australians say they are unhappy with their lives.



Photo: Save the Children Australia



Global 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

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Allow young people between the ages of 16-18 to engage in non-compulsory voting in federal elections.
- Fully fund anti-bullying programs within schools and communities.
- Promote and support peer-based programs to allow young people to support each other with mental health issues.
- Fund youth centres that allow young people to have a safe environment.



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals

5. Child mortality

Hidden from the newspaper headlines, millions of children are fighting to survive on a daily basis. But this isn't a fair fight. Children born into poverty are almost twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday.

Proven, low-tech and inexpensive solutions exist to stop children dying. But they're simply not being deployed on the scale needed to tackle the problem. Most importantly, these deaths are not random events beyond our control. They are the outcome of policy and political choices taken by governments.

We must address these underlying causes of newborn and child mortality – poverty, discrimination, conflict, the denial of rights and barriers to equitable access to high quality health systems.

What is the issue?

Millions of children do not survive past their fifth birthday. If we act to stop preventable child deaths, these children will have the life they deserve. Families will see their children live and thrive.

What are the facts?

- Every day, 18,000 children under the age of five die.
- Malnutrition contributes to at least half of these deaths.
- 99% of the annual toll of 6.6 million child deaths happen in developing countries.
- Every year, 40 million women give birth without the support of a birth attendant.
- Total child deaths having almost halved since 1990.



Global Goal 3

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Play a leading role in mobilising political and financial support to ending preventable under-5 child deaths by 2030.
- Invest in better data to ensure accurate tracking of child mortality across the different dimensions of equity, including wealth and income, gender, geography and ethnicity.
- Promote universal coverage of quality essential healthcare.
- Ensure a strong focus of health systems is on maternal health care.
- Reinforce the value and worth of vaccinations for all children and their families.
- Fund and distribute medicines & vaccines for developing nations.

Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals

6. Australian Aid

We have a responsibility for helping those living in poverty overseas. Australia needs to ensure that we take on these problems and provide financial and resource assistance to improve living conditions in foreign countries.

We have seen an overall increase of quality of life in regions in which aid is spent, including a reduction in infant mortality, as well as improvements in health, water, education and many other factors.

We should ensure that our aid is spent where it is needed based on what people tell us they need, as community-based solutions have the best impact.

We have a responsibility to helping in those zones where we have operated military forces on the ground and rebuild through our Australian Aid budget.

We need to increase our Australian Aid budget. Currently we spend 0.22% of Gross National Income on aid - this should be increased to the previous bipartisan commitment of 0.5% of GNI.

What is the issue?

We have a responsibility to ensure that Australian Aid goes to those most in need.

What are the facts?

- 840 million people are still living in extreme poverty.
- Australia's aid program is less than 1% of the overall federal budget.
- We are now at our lowest ever level of Australian aid in its 60-year history.



Global Goal 1

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Ensure that Australian Aid is based on community-led solutions, and that our aid is spent on what people say they need, not what we decide.
- Focus our aid spend in areas where Australia has had direct military operations that have contributed to destabilising the region, to ensure we are rebuilding these areas.
- Continue our aid programmatic focus on the Asia-Pacific region but also ensure we have the capacity to respond to crises elsewhere around the globe.
- Support fairer taxation in countries, transparency of financial flows and closing of tax avoidance and loopholes, so that developing countries are better able to mobilise the domestic resources they need to invest.
- Commit to increase long-term, predictable aid to conflict affected and fragile states.
- Ensure we respond to the most vulnerable people as a priority within humanitarian response.
- Recommit to the bipartisan agreement to Australian Aid of 0.5% of Gross Domestic Income.



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals

7. Gender equality

Women are disproportionately affected by poverty, opportunity, access to education, access to healthcare and basic living conditions. Both within Australia and overseas, we see that the glass ceiling still exists.

In this day and age, this is bad policy - both on a social and economic argument. We are holding back 50% of our population, thus halving the potential for our economy, community and society.

Gender equality is one of the key issues to solving global poverty. Changing attitudes is the key to tackling gender inequality.

We need to see female economic empowerment to overcome the gender pay gap. Women often take on part-time roles due to family commitments, which translates to less superannuation and holds women back overall. We should be educating the population on the value of non-paid work and factor this into the way we measure economics.

What is the issue?

Women remain behind their male counterparts in areas such as pay rates, as well as other economic and social measures.

What are the facts?

- The gender pay gap in Australia is currently at 18.2%.
- While women comprise roughly 46% of all employees in Australia, they take home on average \$283.20 less than men each week.
- In 2006, Australia was rated 15th on the global index for gender equality. In 2013 we had dropped to 24th.



Global Goal 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Ensure access to education for women and girls in developing nations.
- Commit to national economic measuring and reporting that factor in non-paid work, which is often done predominantly by women.
- Work with retailers and companies to stop the genderisation of toys, clothes and other products marketed towards kids.

Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals

8. Access to work

We need to ensure that Australians, in particular young people, can get into and maintain stable employment. Systematic unemployment impacts on people's ability to contribute to their local communities, as well as having a larger impact on the economy.

Stigma for certain demographics is still rife within the workforce. Young people, and Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in particular are stereotyped when it comes to getting jobs. Without overcoming these issues, these people will find it difficult to gain decent jobs.

Technology and scientific innovation sectors are lacking within Australia, with people often having to go overseas to find work. We should be promoting the value of scientific institutes like CSIRO, and in scientific industries such as marine biology that contribute to making Australia a better place to live.

What is the issue?

We need to ensure that Australians have access to, and can maintain, decent jobs.

What are the facts?

- In the age range of 15-19, up to 18% are unemployed.
- In July 2015, there were 800,000 Australians unemployed.



Global Goal 8

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Focus investment in Australian-based industries to produce renewable energy products, such as solar panels.
- Continue investment in the current youth employment strategy.
- Long-term investment in industries that contribute to science and technology.

Photo: Save the Children Australia



Photo: Flickr/Oslo Radhus

9. LGBTQI issues

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Transgender and Intersex issues are often very difficult for young people to find support for within their families and communities. It's often when you're young that you explore your sexuality, and it is a difficult time to go through such experiences.

We as a society need to support young people in these situations. In particular the Government needs to ensure that it is doing all that is possible to support young people in their sexual identity.

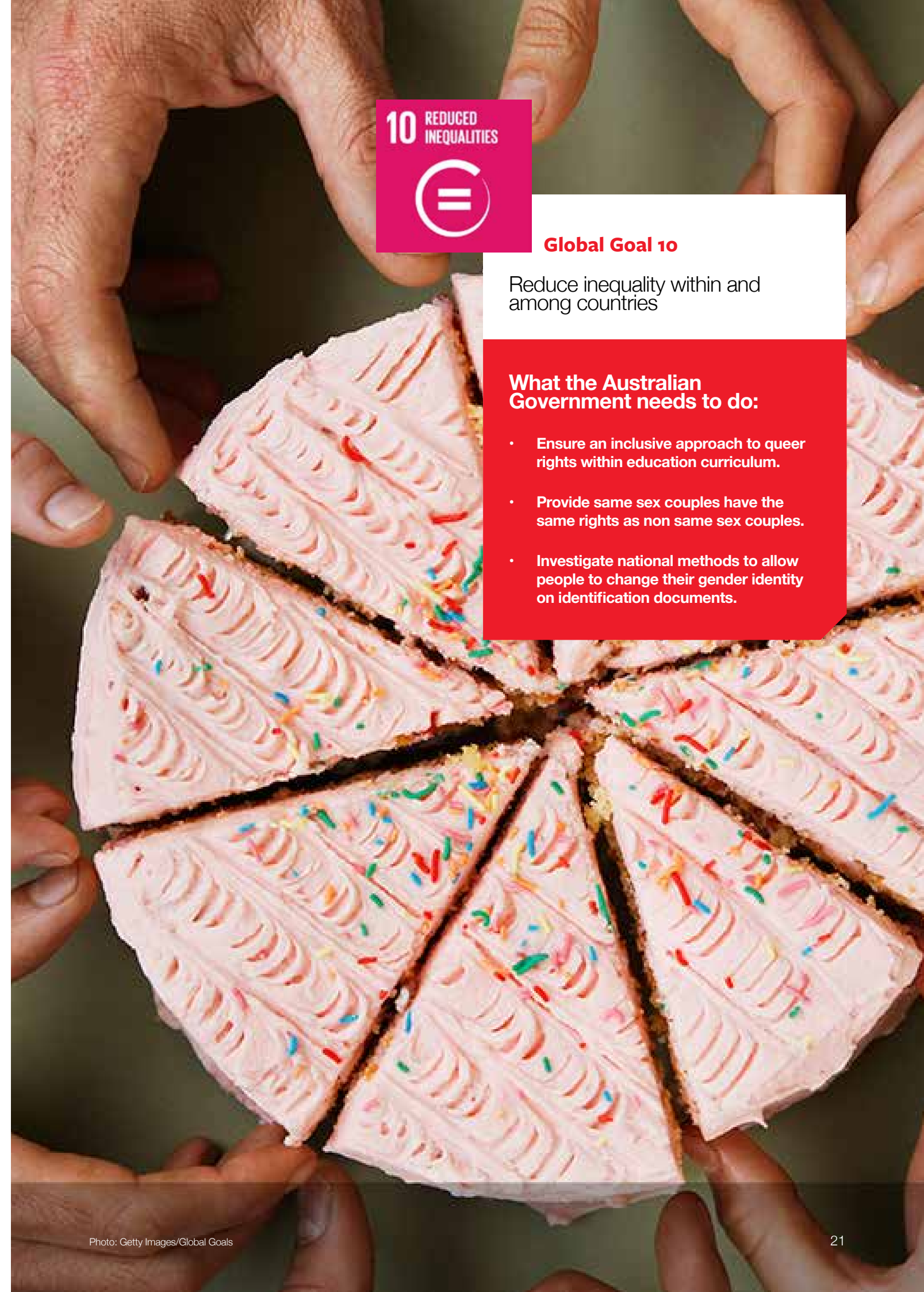
A lot of advocacy on queer rights is community level and the government doesn't step in where it could. We need a non-heteronormative approach to inclusivity within our education system.

What is the issue?

LGBTQI people within Australia still experience large amounts of discrimination.

What are the facts?

- A large number of LGBTI people hide their sexuality or gender identity when accessing services (34%), and at work (39%).
- Young people aged 16 to 24 years are most likely to hide their sexuality or gender identity.
- 80% of homophobic bullying involving LGBTQI young people occurs at school and has a profound impact on their well-being and education



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Global Goal 10

Reduce inequality within and among countries

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Ensure an inclusive approach to queer rights within education curriculum.
- Provide same sex couples have the same rights as non same sex couples.
- Investigate national methods to allow people to change their gender identity on identification documents.

Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals



Photo: Flickr/Patrick

9. Homelessness

Young people need homes - they deserve to have a safe, happy and secure place to live. For those young people who are homeless, they experience a lot of danger. Many homeless people suffer from drug and alcohol addiction - in many ways this starts a cycle of disadvantage – they end up not attending school or find themselves not able to find jobs, which in turn leads to systematic problems later in life.

Many people in Australia live in a bubble – they don't acknowledge homeless people even when they walk straight past them. We need to ensure we have a humanising approach to homelessness where we act to help people in need.

What is the issue?

Everyone has a right to a home, and a roof over their homes. We need to support people to get out of cycles of disadvantage.

What are the facts?

- Young people 0-25 make up 47% of homeless people in Australia
- Children aged 0-12 make up 17% of homeless people in Australia.
- Every night, around 100,000 people are homeless around Australia



Photo: Getty Images/Global Goals



Global Goal 10

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

What the Australian Government needs to do:

- Direct funds into building more housing for low-income Australians to make the transition from homelessness – particularly those that support young people.
- Increase funding to programs that are working to support homeless people and ensure they don't become homeless in the first place.
- Provide funding to allow homeless people to access drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs.

Save the Children Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to elders past and present.

Save the Children Australia is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and a signatory to its Code of Conduct. The Code requires members to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management.

We have a process for handling complaints. If you have a complaint, please call our Supporter Relations team on 1800 76 00 11 or email: info@savethechildren.org.au. Complaints relating to the breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct can be made to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee at acfid.asn.au.

Cover photo: Getty Images / Global Goals

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