

8

PRME CHAPTER AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

*Mehran Nejati, Belinda Gibbons, Harsh Suri,
Fara Azmat, Anna Young-Ferris, Suzanne Young
and Swati Nagpal*

Acknowledgement of Country - We acknowledge that the beautiful lands on which the Australia and New Zealand signatories reside is Indigenous land. As we share our knowledges may we always remember the knowledges held forever within the traditional custodianship of country. We pay respect to elders; past, present and future; and extend that respect to all Indigenous peoples reading this chapter.

What is our why and what motivates us to be here? These questions keep the Australia and New Zealand (AUSNZ) PRME Chapter conversations and actions grounded and relevant. This chapter presents our collaborations locally and internationally.

8.1 Background

The Australia and New Zealand region is a very active PRME Signatory base comprising a group of schools that are not only active within the global PRME network, but also actively engaged in pushing the agenda

for responsible management education forward with a range of innovative approaches to support the realisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The AUSNZ representation began with the initiation of the PRME in New York in 2008 with two business schools' attendance and commitment to PRME signatory – LaTrobe (Victoria) and Griffith (Queensland). Since 2008 both of these business schools have promoted the PRME by being involved in the PRME global forums, being members of key advisory groups for the PRME Champions structures, developing international collaborations with other PRME business schools and promoting the PRME both domestically and internationally through conferences, events and speaking engagements. The AUSNZ PRME Chapter was endorsed as an Emerging Chapter by participants at the 2nd AUSNZ PRME Forum, hosted by Griffith Business School (Australia) in 2012. We transitioned to an established Chapter in 2017 with a strong network signing the Memorandum of Understanding at the 5th AUSNZ PRME Forum held at Deakin University, Melbourne. Our annual forums have always proved to be a time for celebration, sharing, learning and networking with event themes that enable rich discussions. From 'inspire, motivate, engage & act (IMEA)' in 2017, 'Beyond Business as Usual' in 2018 and 'Students as Partners' in 2019, we always strive for inclusivity with attendance from students and industry partners. Currently the AUSNZ Chapter Chair, Dr Belinda Gibbons, sits on the Board acknowledging the key role our Chapter has played in responsible management education.

The AUSNZ Chapter has grown in 2020 to a network of 29 Australian and 5 New Zealand Higher Education Institutions. It is worth noting that 73% of all Australian universities and 63% of all New Zealand universities are PRME signatories. Enabling university graduates to become effective citizens and active change agents is a key driver of this region's higher education sector. The recognition that business schools play a major role in cross-sector collaboration to ensure we leave our world in a better place than what we found it drives our regions' PRME passions and amplifies our commitment to responsible management education and values of sustainability and global responsibility.

Students studying in Australia and New Zealand come from across the globe. Large numbers of diverse cultures offer us rich exploration for teaching and learning but also numerous challenges in the way to tackle all 17 SDGs in the curriculum, research and partnerships. The AUSNZ PRME

Chapter comes together as a community to share knowledge and ways. In the following section, we summarise some of these key collaborative efforts and partnerships at the local, national and international level.

8.2 Actions and achievements

Partnerships are the foundation of the AUSNZ PRME Chapter actions and achievements. Our local actions are driving global achievements. Some key examples are presented in this section.

8.2.1 Local partnerships

Australia and New Zealand signatories are separated by vast land distances. For us, this means local signatory connection is essential to strong network collaborations. One state in particular actions this beautifully. Western Australia (WA), covering the entire western third of our country, has four public PRME universities and takes a state-based approach to responsible management education. An example of this is the WA collaborative project on SDG and PRME Pitch Challenge for HDR students.

The ‘PRME Pitch Challenge 2020’ was a collaborative initiative undertaken by the four public universities in Western Australia, namely, Edith Cowan University, Curtin University, Murdoch University and University of Western Australia. This initiative challenges all higher degree research students in the business discipline to explain how their research matches or contributes to the SDGs. HDR students were invited to submit a 1,000-word extended abstract that had i) cover sheet with their name, contact details, thesis title, stage of research and ii) the abstract that covers research aims, method and preliminary findings (if applicable) that also discusses how their research addresses the SDGs and the implications of their research in relation to the SDGs.

To incentivise participation in the challenge, the winning submission would receive funding to cover the registration fee at the Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM) Conference in Perth in 2021. The winning student will be required to submit a full paper to the ANZAM Conference for peer-review. The conference, hosted by Edith Cowan University, was scheduled to be held in December 2020 in Perth, but has been postponed to 2021 due to Covid-19. The judging panel for the PRME Pitch Challenge included one academic from each of the institutions,

Dr Donella Caspersz (University of Western Australia), Dr Martin Brueckner (Murdoch University), Dr Mehran Nejati (Edith Cowan University) and Dr Robyn Ouschan (Curtin University).

Overall, 14 entries from HDR students across Western Australia were received for the challenge, including 6 from Curtin University, 5 from ECU, 2 from UWA, and 1 from Murdoch University. Each submission was judged by 3 independent judges. The judging panel were not allowed to judge submissions from their own university. Submissions were assessed based on 4 main criteria, namely, quality of research approach (20%), clarity of research approach (20%), relevance of the research to SDGs being clearly outlined (30%) and implications of the research to the SDGs being strongly demonstrated (30%) on a 1 to 5 scale (1 = doesn't meet expectations; 2 = needs work; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = excellent). The judging panel unanimously selected a submission from UWA as the winner of 2020 PRME Pitch Challenge. All participants were subsequently informed about the challenge outcome and invited to write a paper based on their research for ANZAM 2021 Conference in Perth.

Based on students' perceptions of their research contributions to SDGs, the most embraced goal among submissions was SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), followed by SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The following diagram shows a summary of perceived contributions to SDGs across the 14 submissions received for the pitch challenge (Figure 8.1).

Professor Tim Bentley (Associate Dean of Research at ECU School of Business and Law) congratulated the organising team for the PRME Pitch Challenge and regarded the initiative as being 'very worthwhile and good engagement' across the WA universities.

Here's a comment from one of the participants in the challenge:

Many thanks for your support. I didn't win it – But the main point was that I found out my thesis has got contributions to the SDGs.

Edith Cowan University PhD student

8.2.2 National partnerships

When Deakin Business School embarked on their journey for integrating SDGs into curricula, they invited the AUSNZ PRME Chapter coordinator, Dr Belinda Gibbons, to share experiences from her school and to engage

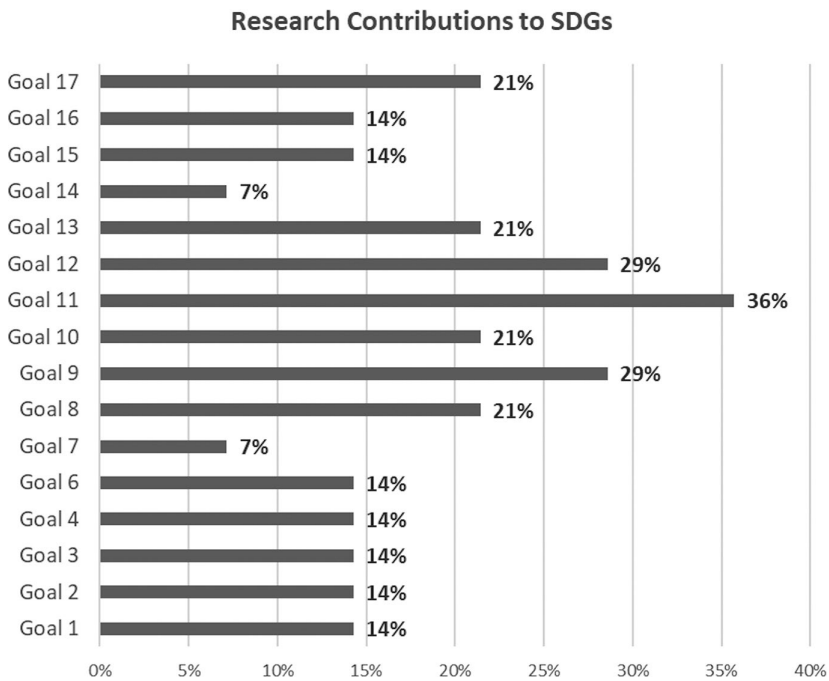


Figure 8.1 SDGs covered in students' submissions for PRME Pitch Challenge 2020.

academic and professional colleagues at all levels, including the faculty executive. Deakin Business School developed a conceptual framework for scaffolding SDG integration using a whole of program approach and harnessing synergies of this project with the other strategic curriculum enhancement projects particularly internationalisation of curriculum and employability skills development. Their approach to 'Bringing about a cultural shift for meaningfully integrating sustainability across mainstream curricula in Deakin Business School' was awarded with the 2018 Green Gown Awards Australasia in the 'Learning, Teaching and Skills' category. The Green Gown Awards Australasia is the first and only Award Scheme dedicated to recognising excellence in sustainability within the tertiary education sector in Australasia. The approach taken by Deakin Business School also informed further strategic initiatives on integrating SDGs into curriculum at other AUSNZ PRME signatory business schools.

Inviting and helping each other is important to our Chapter. Due to Covid-19 we are all teaching online and remotely. We recently started a

‘Not Teaching As Usual’, aiming to help each other in this environment. At this very turbulent time, we want to help each other create exciting and vibrant ‘remote’ teaching experiences for all our students. This program provides us with the opportunity to offer our time and expertise to teach into a class or activity being conducted by others. The program provides a platform to reach out and invite someone into our classrooms for either a guest speaking spot, content sharing or just a conversation.

8.2.3 International partnerships

Global partnerships are a key part of the AUSNZ Chapter vision. They are essential for us to share knowledge and practices. Some examples of such partnerships and collaborations are listed below.

8.2.3.1 WikiRate

An example of our international partnership success includes our participation in the WikiRate collaborative among seven international PRME signatories. The seven institutions that featured case studies in the final collaborative report include University of Wollongong, Australia; Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland, the UK; Universidad EAFIT, Colombia; Royal Holloway, University of London, England, the UK; Universidad ICESI, Colombia; IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems, Austria; and Ewha Womans University, South Korea.

Business school students are our future leaders. As such we expect business school graduates to closely engage with published academic research and theory, but also, and importantly, to be given empirical insight into the realities and challenges faced by businesses as they attempt to remediate the grand challenges of sustainability and climate change, and progress towards achieving the SDGs. As a response, the PRME Secretariat, together with WikiRate, have launched a project to facilitate student inquiry into these grand challenges, enabling close engagement with company annual and sustainability reporting and the SDGs. WikiRate is a technology-enabled open data platform for students to input data against selected criteria from reports to compare and analyse. The AUSNZ PRME Chapter is actively collaborating on the most effective ways of integrating WikiRate within its formal curricula.

WikiRate as a teaching tool ... serves multiple purposes for exploring concepts relating to sustainability, corporate social responsibility, corporate

reporting and transparency. Fundamentally, the WikiRate enables students to engage with the United Nations Global Compact through metrics aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this way, [it] provides a platform for activity for growing students' understanding of the SDGs which may serve them well as our world's future leaders.

Perkiss et al. (2018, p. 2)

For example, the University of Wollongong (Faculty of Business) was part of a year-long collaboration across seven countries to explore the diverse ways WikiRate was being utilised across the Schools around the world. The collaborative project aimed to garner the perspectives of students, as well as teachers, to learn more about WikiRate's impact, challenges and potential.

WikiRate was especially useful in that it allowed us to investigate real-world companies and how they are tracking when it comes to ESG issues. The most eye-opening part of this, along with various other class tasks which involved critically analysing company sustainability reports, is just how many gaps there still are when it comes to sustainability reporting.

The University of Sydney ACCT3016 student

As another example, the University of Sydney Business School sought the guidance of the University of Wollongong (Faculty of Business) and WikiRate to develop a special project for undergraduate accounting (ACCT3016) students focussed on issues and SDGs related to climate change, energy, waste, and gender. Students found this a highly engaging and relevant exercise that exposed them to sustainability reporting and accounting issues that are so pervasive in the field. It was a chance to cast a critical eye over the quality and shortcomings of the reporting.

Understanding was enhanced through our use of WikiRate, where we were able to investigate a specific entities' commitment to the SDGs in practice. This exercise allowed us to break down the barrier between theory and practice which often exists in university studies.

The University of Sydney ACCT3016 student

Engaging with and collaborating across our PRME chapter and the global network with WikiRate, along with the students' research input, has contributed to a valuable open information source for additional research, analysis, aggregation and sharing of learning and experiences towards understanding sustainability and how to progress the SDGs. As it stands,

there is no other open platform that allows a global student base to compare and contrast company performance and disclosure across the SDGs as an experiential learning experience (Perkiss et al., 2018).

8.2.3.2 CR3+ network

The CR3+ network is a partnership between four PRME Champion business schools, La Trobe Business School, Australia; Hanken School of Economics, Finland; ISAE, Brazil; and Audencia Business School, France. The network was established based on their shared values and collaborative approaches to building responsible management in business. Each of these business schools have signalled their commitment by being a UN PRME Champion since 2013, recognised as a thought or action leader and ambassador in the responsible management community, collaborating on projects to advance the SDGs. The network holds yearly conferences, works on teaching projects and research projects together, and engages with the Champions projects to build responsible management across many forms. The ongoing partnership is an example of how PRME signatories from across the world can effectively collaborate to further their individual institutions' and the collective PRME vision and agenda. The seventh annual CR3+ conference was held over two days in October 2019 at the La Trobe Business School (LBS) in Melbourne.

The theme of the conference was 'Using dialogue to build partnerships for sustainability' and explored how partnerships can bring about sustainable solutions as we work together on progressing the Sustainable Development Goals. Over 60 people from more than 15 countries attended the conference. The conference keynotes, paper presentations and social activities were focussed on three key areas.

1. The role of indigenous values and 'ways of knowing' in our approach to partnerships;
2. The benefits and challenges in developing and leveraging partnerships;
3. The wider academic community's recognition of the student voice in our thinking about sustainability.

Conference participants and students had the opportunity to engage with a global network of academics who research and teach in sustainability,

partnerships and CSR. Arising from the conference was a special issue in *Sustainability Accounting Management and Policy Journal* titled ‘Cross-sector dialogue for sustainability: To partner or not to partner?’

A recent outcome of the CR3+ partnership has been the development of a MOOC entitled ‘Organising for the Sustainable Development Goals’. The Future Learn platform hosts the seven week publicly available course where participants can learn about each of the SDGs in depth through real organisational case studies and interviews with thought leaders in the field. The content for the MOOC was developed by all partners, and draws on international research and evidence from a multitude of countries and sectors.

8.2.4 Network partnerships

The AUSNZ PRME Chapter work closely with local sustainable development networks including the United Nations Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA), Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), Australasian Campuses towards Sustainability (ACTS) and Principles of Responsible Investment (PRI). Recently AUSNZ PRME organised a forum title ‘A Climate Emergency for Business Schools: a social license to teach and learn’. Key speakers from the GCNA and WWF presented the latest information on climate change for corporation action including Science Based Targets.

8.2.5 Research partnerships

Deakin Business School (DBS) has contributed to the Blueprint (BP) for SDG as curriculum and research theme leads, respectively. This BP was developed in collaboration with the global PRME signatories and chapters, and provides a step-by-step guide for all Business Schools to implement SDGs across their curriculum, research and partnerships. The BP was launched officially in the UN global PRME forum in June 2020. Another example of DBS’s commitment to advance interdisciplinary, collaborative research on SDGs has been the editing of a special issue of *Social Business* (ABCD – B), ‘Opportunities and challenges of integrating SDGs across curriculum and research’. The special issue includes contributions from AUSNZ PRME signatories and selected presentations from the SDG colloquium.

DBS along with Latrobe Business School co-hosted the four-day long PRME Champions meeting in the 2018–2019 cycle held from 27–31

October 2019 under the theme of ‘SDGs and partnerships’. The meeting was attended by representatives of 39 PRME institutes globally (the US, the UK, Asia and Australia) where participants highlighted their projects and exchanged ideas and expertise on the advancement of SDGs through different partnerships.

8.2.6 Community partnerships

In the spirit of advancing the UN SDG agenda by sharing and disseminating knowledge, DBS held a colloquium on integrating SDGs across curriculum and research in December 2017. PRME signatories, early-career researchers and doctoral students as well as businesses participated in the event which provided participants the opportunity to discuss and share their research ideas, approaches and experiences of integrating SDGs across research, curriculum and within the broad field of business.

8.3 Administration

Amidst vast land distances between signatories, AUSNZ PRME members communicate on bi-monthly conference calls (monthly during the Pandemic), virtual state-based gatherings and via more formal annual forums and regular emails. We have a Chapter Chair (Dr Belinda Gibbons, UOW) and a Steering Committee (Dr Mehran Nejati, ECU; Dr Harsh Suri, Deakin; Dr Christian Schott, VUW; Dr Simon Wright, CSU; and Dr Eva Dobozy, Curtin). We are an extremely inclusive community. For us, inclusivity means that we are a community with each of us having the opportunity to share knowledge, run with a desired project and over time we have developed a strong sense of trust with each other.

Each AUSNZ PRME signatory is committed to producing ‘Sharing Information on Progress (SIP)’ reports that are shared and read within the network, industry and local community. The quality of these reports is exemplified by Deakin Business School’s SIP report which won the UN PRME award for excellence in SIP reporting in 2020 attesting to its multi-faceted initiatives to advance the SDG Agenda.

The strength of our achievements and commitment to PRME have been officially recognised in the strength of our results in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. In the 2020 Times Higher Education (THE)

Impact Rankings, 16 of our AUSNZ PRME signatories were featured in the top 100 rankings. Outstanding results were achieved by University of Auckland (1st); University of Sydney (2nd); La Trobe University (4th); RMIT University (10th); Monash University (17th); Auckland University of Technology (27th); University of Wollongong (31st); Victoria University of Wellington (36th); University of Newcastle (45th); Deakin University (55th); Massey University (60th); Charles Sturt University (61st); UNSW Sydney (66th); Queensland University of Technology (70th); Edith Cowan University (77th); and University of South Australia (87th).

8.4 Future perspectives

The AUSNZ PRME Chapter participated in a word cloud poll as part of understanding the future perspectives, next steps and aspirations of the Chapter. Members were asked to respond to the following question:

Provide ONE word to describe what you feel is the role of the AUSNZ Chapter in advancing PRME and the SDG within the next 5–10 years?

It came as no surprise that ‘transformation’ and ‘educate/education’ are front of mind for our members. The Chapter’s commitment to PRME is a commitment to educating the next generation of business leaders with the knowledge and skills that are needed to effectively navigate the sustainable development challenges we face (Figure 8.2).

As part of this, the Chapter recognises that the SDGs will continue to play a vital role in transforming how businesses need to approach their strategies, operations and activities. More critically, the role they will play



Figure 8.2 Perception of AUSNZ chapter members about the role of chapter in advancing PRME and SDGs within the next five to ten years.

in transforming management education beyond the traditional focus on shareholder primacy.

The twin tasks of ‘transformation’ and ‘education’ will rely on ‘collaboration’, ‘demonstration’ and ‘support’ among the Chapter and the broader global PRME network as we aspire to ‘champion’, ‘influence’, ‘promote’, ‘convince’, ‘lead’, ‘empower’ and ‘inspire’ the urgent action required now and into the future.

It is essential that AUSNZ PRME continue to build communities of practices within Faculty and across universities, mapping SDGs across curriculum and research, and promote cross sector collaboration. As part of this cross-sector collaboration, we are encouraged that top businesses in Australia are also championing SDG integration and implementation as seen by an open letter to the Australian prime minister calling for the government to use the SDGs as a framework for policy design, particularly as we move towards planning for recovery since the global Covid-19 pandemic.

In terms of next steps, we see our role as vital in transforming management education beyond the traditional and narrow focus of shareholders towards inclusivity of all stakeholders necessary to attend to the grand challenges of climate change, environmental crises and social and economic inequalities. In particular, our hope for the future is to draw on the wisdom of our Indigenous custodians who do not place humans at the top of the pyramid. Instead, they understand their connection to the land, to nature, and to each other. This stewardship approach that favours inter-connectivity, harmony and community is something we as a Chapter will champion for the evolution of the responsible management education, and as part of achieving the PRME and the SDGs.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge all AUSNZ PRME signatories that walk along this journey together with us.

References

- Perkiss, S., Dean, B. Amelia., Gibbons, B., Heithaus, T., Wersun, A., Gonzalez-Perez, M. Alejandra., Anastasiadis, S., Acosta, P., Mesicek, R.H., Jun, H. and Mills, R. (2018) *WikiRate Student Engagement Report: International Case Studies*. Wollongong: University of Wollongong, WikiRate & PRME.