



Global Compact Network Australia



St James Ethics Centre has established a Focal Point for the UN Global Compact in Australia

Made possible through funding from the Federal Government as a part of the broader Responsible Business Practice Project, the Australian Focal Point will join a number of key initiatives at the Centre including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the Corporate Responsibility Index (CRI) to form a national hub from which to expand responsible business practice in Australia.

The Centre will also establish a vibrant inclusive Australian Network of UN Global Compact Signatories which will reflect an Australian perspective and context on the ten principles of the Compact and provide Australian business the opportunity to engage collectively on the international platform of sustainable, responsible business practice dialogue and activity.

Rosemary Sainty, Head, Responsible Business Practice, St James Ethics Centre

What is the UN Global Compact (UNGC)?

- the world's largest voluntary corporate citizenship initiative
- a commitment to an underlying universal set of principles to guide responsible business practice and connect with a global community

Launched in 2000, the UN Global Compact represents a Compact between business and United Nations agencies, labour, civil society and governments to advance ten universal principles in the areas of:

1. human rights
2. labour
3. environment
4. anti-corruption

Through the power of collective action, the Global Compact has two key purposes:

- to encourage the integration of its ten principles into responsible business practice - corporate responsibility.
- to garner collective action of the UNGC and its related UN initiatives, especially the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI), the Caring for Climate Initiative and the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) – that is, the convergence of the key international multi-stakeholder initiatives.

With over 5000 participating companies and hundreds of other stakeholders from more than 120 countries, it is the world's largest voluntary corporate citizenship initiative.

What does it involve?

The UNGC is a purely voluntary initiative which relies on public accountability, transparency and the enlightened self-interest of all the relevant social actors: governments, who defined the principles on which the initiative is based; companies, whose actions it seeks to influence; labour, in whose hands the concrete process of global production takes place; civil society organisations, representing the wider community of stakeholders.

Businesses sign up to the ten universally accepted principles of the UNGC which form a framework from which to align operations and strategies with responsible and sustainable business practice. The **Communication on Progress (COP)** is the mechanism through which businesses that are signatories to the UNGC demonstrate progress towards attainment of the ten UNGC principles, on an annual basis.

Why become a signatory?

Benefits to participating in the UN Global Compact include:

- leveraging the UN's global reach and convening power with government, business, civil society and other stakeholders
- sharing good practices and learnings
- accessing the UN's broad knowledge in development, environmental, human rights and labour issues
- improving corporate/brand management, employee morale and productivity, and operational efficiencies

- linkages with the UN initiatives including the Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Principles for Responsible Business Management Education and the Business for Millennium Development Goals.
- resources for SMEs to become signatories to the UNGC with the opportunity to demonstrate leadership by advancing responsible corporate citizenship.

What's happening in Australia?

To achieve the objectives, the UNGC offers facilitation and engagement through Local Networks (LN), clusters of participants who come together to advance the UN Global Compact and its principles within a country context, creating opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement and collective action. Members of the Network will comprise Australian-based signatories to the UNGC and Australian subsidiaries of global signatories to the UNGC. St James Ethics Centre has established a Focal Point from which to establish a vibrant local Australian Network of signatories to join the many other local UNGC networks from around the world.

Australian Focal Point to the UN Global Compact:

Rosemary Saintry
Head, Responsible Business Practice
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As the Australian Network of signatories grows, Australian experiences will be drawn together to create country specific guidance to the UNGC principles including resources and events to assist members in integrating the principles into their business operations and to take part in collective UN Initiatives. In addition, expertise in areas such as environmental and human rights issues in Australia will be provided from within the membership. Resourcing will include showcasing of Australian case studies and COP reports, training and networking events and initiatives. The Centre is building a database of UNGC interest – we can be contacted at: ungc@ethics.org.au

Our 5 year plan:

- establishment of governance structure, fees, membership criteria for the Australian Network
- growing the number of Australian signatories to the UNGC
- strong and synergistic links with UNEP FI, UNPRI and the MDGs in Australia
- active participation in other UN led initiatives eg: Caring for Climate, especially those that relate to Australian challenges
- the reporting process for signatory companies supported directly by the GRI Focal Point training
- regionally connected, regional issues
- vibrant inclusive Australian Network comprising businesses of all sizes – acknowledging the interconnected and interdependent nature of business
- establishment of the Honorary Council comprising business leaders with a Chair to champion the UNGC
- establishment of Steering Committee with representation from business, government and civil society reflecting the Australian cultural and business context
- provide feedback to UNGC head office on the way forward

Timelines 2008/09

