

Measuring what matters – Submission

7 February 2023



This submission has been led by Prof. Jacki Schirmer of the University of Canberra, based on discussions and input from a range of stakeholders across Australia with interest and experience in wellbeing frameworks, measurement, policy and action. It is based in large part on four online discussions held in January 2023, with 24 participants who discussed their views on *Measuring what matters*. It is also informed by the discussions at the 2022 *Building Wellbeing into Policy and Action in Australia* workshop held at the University of Canberra¹.

The submission is endorsed by the individuals and organisations listed on page 14.

¹ Workshop presentations, recordings and discussions are available at <https://www.regionalwellbeing.org.au/current-and-past-projects/2022wellbeingintopolicyandaction/>

Recommendations

We have six key recommendations. Each is explained in more detail in the body of the submission.

- 1. Consultation process:** The Australian Government commit to investing in ongoing consultation processes that enable the views and needs of all Australians to be included in the Measuring what matters framework and indicators. We recommend that *Measuring what matters* commit to an initial set of indicators, and to an ongoing process in which expert and stakeholder consultation is used to identify appropriate additions or changes to the framework and the indicators measured in it.
- 2. Establishing meaningful objectives:** The objectives of *Measuring what matters* should include measuring the extent to which there is (i) equitable access to high levels of wellbeing for all residents of Australia, (ii) wellbeing for both current and future generations, and (iii) health of the environment and climate, recognising the centrality of planetary health to human wellbeing.
- 3. Include additional domains of wellbeing:** *Measuring what matters* should include not only the OECD framework's wellbeing domains, but also emerging domains identified as important in both existing Australian frameworks and international frameworks. This should include domains examining (i) cultural aspects of wellbeing; (ii) time use e.g. recreation, leisure, volunteering and caring; (iii) governance and institutions; (iv) rights and responsibilities; and (v) individual, community and societal resilience to challenging times. Domains should then be further developed based on longer term consultation to identify what matters to Australians.
- 4. Measure what matters to different Australians:** Commit to measuring the wellbeing of the full diversity of Australians. Understanding differences in wellbeing between groups and those living in different places is critical to meaningfully targeting policy design to support wellbeing. This requires collecting data with sufficient sample sizes of different groups of Australians, and of those living in different places, to be able to meaningfully examine their wellbeing. At a minimum, it is critical to ensure meaningful measurement of wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those living in remote and rural areas and in regional cities, different age groups including children, youth, and the elderly; different genders; those with disabilities, carers, and those identifying as LGBTIQ+.
- 5. Indicator design:** Commit to measuring a central set of indicators that are comparable both across groups/regions within Australia, and internationally. In addition to this, implement processes that enable evolution of indicators over time. Ensure indicators are able to be implemented not only by the Australian Government, but also by other organisations, from local to national scale, who want to measure wellbeing.
- 6. Data collection:** Commit to (i) expanding existing data collection and (ii) investing in new data collection where it is needed to enable measurement of what matters. This may include expanding coverage of existing surveys to ensure sufficient sample of all priority groups and inclusion of additional measures, and/or establishment of new data collection processes.

Consultation process

Recommendation: The Australian Government commit to investing in ongoing consultation processes that enable the views and needs of all Australians to be included in the Measuring what matters framework and indicators. We recommend that Measuring what matters commit to an initial set of indicators, and to an ongoing process in which expert and stakeholder consultation is used to identify appropriate additions or changes to the framework and the indicators measured in it.

Wellbeing frameworks are most successful when they clearly reflect what is important to a nation or region and have strong 'buy in' from the broader public. To achieve this, it is critical to have an appropriate consultation process. The current submission process is not adequate to identify how to measure what matters to all Australians. The process of making a formal submission is something not all people are comfortable or able to do. Thus submissions to this process are likely to at best underrepresent, and at worst omit, the perspectives of some groups. The submission process conducted over late 2022/early 2023 should therefore be considered a starting point for consultations on *Measuring what matters*.

The Australian Government should commit to investing in a longer-term consultation process that uses a range of culturally appropriate methods to reach out to and support participation from all sectors of Australian society. This may include:

- Consulting with peak groups to identify culturally appropriate approaches to consultation;
- Funding those with existing expertise and trust to undertake consultations e.g. funding experienced First Nations groups to undertake consultation across First Nations
- Implementing consultation methods that ensure those without good internet access and those with literacy or English language limitations are able to contribute.

A number of examples of high quality consultation processes used to develop wellbeing frameworks can be found in the Wellbeing Economy Toolkit produced by the George Institute for Global Health for Vic Health (Jones and Hunnisett 2022). Schirmer et al. (2023 in press) also identify a number of examples of good consultation processes used to develop other wellbeing frameworks. These processes have typically included explicit discussions with experts in data collection, indicator design and interpretation, as well as consultation processes specifically designed to enable the full range of voices across a society to be heard from.

The consultation process used by the ACT Government in developing their wellbeing framework provides a useful example of methods that can be used to actively engage with a wide range of groups who may not otherwise have their views reflected in a framework (ACT Government 2020). The ACT Government should be consulted as they succeeded in a comprehensive consultation that used a wide range of engagement techniques and support to reach groups, that included actively reaching out to and providing support for participation to key groups who otherwise would be unlikely to participate.

Consultation on *Measuring what matters* should be considered an ongoing process, with explicit points built in at which *Measuring what matters* will be revisited. This is consistent with best practice internationally where embedding ongoing participatory practice is being done to enable and ensure wellbeing frameworks reflect community values and needs – and are used by communities (see for example Gaukroger et al. 2022). Planning for active revision and updating of the framework in consultation with Australians will ensure that *Measuring what matters* remains relevant as Australian society changes. Examples of this approach being used successfully include the 10 yearly review of the Scottish National Outcomes framework, which enables updating of the framework. Implementing processes of ongoing development means it is possible to implement an initial *Measuring what matters* framework rapidly, while ensuring that it can be further developed in collaboration with the Australian public to better reflect their wellbeing needs and priorities.

Objectives of *Measuring what matters*

Recommendation: The objectives of Measuring what matters should include measuring the extent to which there is (i) equitable access to healthy levels of wellbeing for all residents of Australia, (ii) healthy wellbeing for both current and future generations, and (iii) health of the environment and climate, recognising the centrality of planetary health to human wellbeing.

Budget Statement 4 (p. 124) provides three examples of the objectives of wellbeing frameworks. These examples are all focused on wellbeing of individuals, and are better described as reflecting definitions of wellbeing of individuals than objectives of a framework seeking to measure what matters. The objective of *Measuring what matters* should be developed to reflect the aims of implementing the framework.

We believe that objectives of *Measuring what matters* should be further developed in consultation with a wide range of Australians, as per our recommendation regarding consultative processes. However, we support establishing an initial set of objectives that can then evolve through consultation to better reflect the values of all Australians.

We believe this initial set of objectives should focus on (i) equitable access to wellbeing for all Australians, (ii) supporting health and wellbeing of current and future generations and (iii) supporting planetary health as central to long-term human wellbeing. These three areas of focus are important for a range of reasons. Firstly, they begin to ensure that *Measuring what matters* reflects cultural understandings of wellbeing that are well documented in Australian communities. In particular, they:

- Are consistent with the common understanding that health of humans cannot be separated from health of country
- Recognise the right to wellbeing for all and of ensuring equity of access to that right, consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which Australia is a signatory
- Recognise the importance of supporting long-term wellbeing rather than enabling short-term wellbeing at the expense of future generations.

Embedding a distributive focus is a well accepted principle of many wellbeing frameworks. These include the Australian Treasury's earlier wellbeing framework, which specifically focused on opportunities available to people and 'the distribution of those opportunities across the Australian people' (Gorecki and Kelly 2012). The OECD framework also has an explicit distributive focus in its implementation (see for example Martin 2019).

Including an explicit intergenerational focus in the objectives of *Measuring what matters* is also important. This enables a focus on understanding not just the wellbeing of current individuals, but a focus on sustainable wellbeing over generations. This again is an explicit part of many wellbeing frameworks, with the OECD frameworks, NZ Living Standards Framework, and others explicitly building in measurement of what is available for future generations in addition to the wellbeing of the current generation. This intergenerational focus also highlights the importance of measuring what matters to communities and society as a whole, rather than focusing largely on the individual human. This in turn suggests a need for indicators that examine whether the systems that support wellbeing – including community services and infrastructure, social networks, planetary systems, and governance systems – are fit for purpose to support the wellbeing of current and future generations.

Domains measured

Recommendation: Measuring what matters should include not only the OECD framework's wellbeing domains, but also emerging domains identified as important in both existing Australian frameworks and international frameworks. This should include domains examining (i) cultural aspects of wellbeing; (ii) time use e.g. recreation, leisure, volunteering and caring; (iii) governance and institutions; (iv) rights and responsibilities; and (v) resilience to challenging times. Domains should then be further developed based on longer term consultation to identify what matters to Australians.

Budget Statement 4 briefly identifies domains of wellbeing in the OECD's framework, and cross-references these with other frameworks. However, it does not examine whether other international or Australian frameworks include domains of wellbeing that go beyond those forming the core of the OECD's framework.

An initial set of domains should be used that better reflects practice in measurement of wellbeing in Australia currently, as well as internationally. In particular, domains should reflect not only the factors that impact the wellbeing of the individual, but enable inclusion of indicators that measure the capacity of community, regional and national institutions and systems to support wellbeing.

A significant body of work is available that has examined what is important to the wellbeing of Australians, including the wellbeing of many specific groups of Australians. The following are just a small subset of this body of work, which has variously examined how to understand and measure wellbeing of people living in specific jurisdictions (ACT, Tasmania, Victoria), groups (First Nations, Carers), and lessons for Australia from international wellbeing measurement: ACT Government (2020), Cox et al. (2010), Schirmer et al. (2016), Cairney et al. (2017), Jones

et al. (2018), The Tasmania Project (2021), Schirmer et al. (2022). This existing work, together with current international best practice in wellbeing frameworks (based on the review conducted by Schirmer et al. 2023, in press) suggests that at a minimum, the following domains should be included:

- Culture/cultural identity: culture is well established to be foundational to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (see, amongst many other references, Bourke et al. 2022), has been included as a domain in the New Zealand Living Standards Framework (NZ LSF²) after consultation identified that it was a missing element not adequately reflecting what is important, particularly to Maori people, in the OECD's framework, and has been identified as important in Australian wellbeing frameworks based on consultation with residents, including the ACT Wellbeing Framework (ACT Government 2020), the Australian National Development Index (ANDI³) and the Australian Youth Development Index⁴.
- Leisure and recreation: Both internationally and in Australia, it is increasingly common for access to leisure and recreation to be included as an explicit domain of a wellbeing framework. This reflects that it is increasingly recognised that focusing on 'work-life' balance is insufficient to understand factors impacting wellbeing, with a need to understand broader time use related factors including work, care, volunteering, leisure and play. In Australia, there is strong evidence that wellbeing is particularly low amongst those with very high levels of unpaid caring responsibility, for example, highlighting the importance of measuring more than paid work when considering how a person's time use may affect their wellbeing (see for example Schirmer et al. 2022).
- Governance and institutions: Domains examining effectiveness of governance and institutions in supporting wellbeing are included in a majority of 25 wellbeing frameworks examined by Schirmer et al. (2023, in press), and go beyond the OECD frameworks focus on civic engagement. For example, the NZ LSF has an explicit focus on 'our institutions and governance' including the state of Whanau, hapu and iwi; families and households; civil society; firms and markets; government at all levels; and international connections⁵. While labelled in various ways, this type of domain ensures a focus on understanding whether systems are fit for purpose.
- Rights and responsibilities: Increasingly, wellbeing frameworks are including indicators examining access to rights/justice/equity for all, and enactment of societal responsibilities, in recognition of the central importance of human rights and mutual responsibility to wellbeing (Schirmer et al. 2023, in press).

² See <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

³ See <https://www.andi.org.au/>

⁴ See <https://www.numbersandpeople.com/aydi2020>

⁵ See <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

All domains of wellbeing are interlinked, and some concepts may be better understood as cross-cutting, critically important dimensions of wellbeing to be examined across all domains. In particular, irrespective of whether an explicit domain examining equity/distribution of wellbeing is included, we recommend that a focus on distribution be included for all domains, and be embedded in the design of reporting, indicators and data collection. Subjective wellbeing could be considered not a specific domain, but as a cross-cutting measure that is inherently linked to all other domains, given that it is well established to be influenced by a wide range of factors.

Current domains do not include a clear area in which resilience to challenging events in general, and to extreme weather events and the effects of human induced climate change more specifically, can be explicitly examined. This is a critical consideration in the Australian context. Australia is a country of extremes, where living well often requires living well with extreme events including drought, bushfire, floods, and storms. Considerable evidence exists for the potential impacts of challenging events on wellbeing, and for the critical role of building resilience to enable people and communities to maintain their wellbeing through these events (e.g. Boylan et al. 2018). Consideration should be given to including either an explicit domain examining resilience to challenging events.

Commit to measuring what matters for different groups

Recommendation: Commit to measuring the wellbeing of the full diversity of Australians. Understanding differences in wellbeing between groups and regions is critical to meaningfully targeting policy design to support wellbeing. This requires collecting data with sufficient sample sizes of different groups of Australians to be able to meaningfully examine their wellbeing. At a minimum, it is critical to ensure meaningful measurement of wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those living in remote and rural areas and in regional cities, different age groups including children, youth, and the elderly; different genders; those with disabilities, carers, and those identifying as LGBTIQ+.

A wellbeing framework should aim to measure whether all people have the same opportunities to experience high levels of wellbeing, recognising the principle that ‘all human rights should be enjoyed by everyone regardless of factors such as race, sex or disability’ (<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/how-are-human-rights-protected-australian-law>). *Measuring what matters* should be required to examine the distribution of wellbeing in the population, and the differing factors that matters to the wellbeing of different groups of Australians – and this should be reflected in its objectives.

A commitment to measuring the extent to which different Australians have access to the conditions that support high levels of wellbeing in turn requires a commitment to measuring the wellbeing of different Australians. Measuring average conditions across all Australians is an important starting point, but is not sufficient to guide decisions about how to allocate scarce funding to support the wellbeing of those with greatest need, or to target investment to the areas of wellbeing that are lower for specific groups of Australians. Data showing averages only can readily act to hide inequities in wellbeing experienced by different Australians.

The Australian Government should follow the lead of the ACT Wellbeing Framework and others and commit to measuring what matters for a range of specific groups for whom it is known there are specific wellbeing considerations, and to reporting on inequalities and distribution of wellbeing as part of analysis and reporting in the *Measuring what matters* framework. This enables an approach that recognises that (i) access to the conditions that support wellbeing vary considerably across regions and between different groups of Australians, and (ii) the factors having the greatest influence on wellbeing will vary between groups and regions at different points in time.

This recommendation suggests a need to identify priority populations/regions whose wellbeing should be explicitly reported on as part of the *Measuring what matters framework*. Existing works suggested it is important to, at a minimum, commit to reporting for the following groups, as there is a large body of evidence demonstrating the presence of significant wellbeing inequities experienced by these groups, as well as a need to examine specific aspects of wellbeing uniquely important to these groups:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, drawing on the multiple existing frameworks developed in Australia
- Remote, rural and regional Australians
- Children and young people
- Older people
- Those living with disabilities
- Those with caring responsibilities
- Those of different genders
- Those identifying as LGBTIQ+
- Culturally and linguistically diverse groups other than First Nations

Ideally, a process should be established that enables regular revision of the priority groups in Australia for whom wellbeing should be explicitly analysed and reported, in collaboration with these groups. This enables the priority groups to change when appropriate, and enables responsiveness to specific events – for example, it may enable identifying regions that have experienced an extreme event such as bushfire, flood or a severe drought as priority regions for measuring wellbeing for a period of time. Identifying priority groups brings challenges with it, particularly a risk of inadvertently excluding some groups; establishing a consultative process that enables discussion and, where appropriate, change in priority groups.

There is a need to strike a balance between feasibility and usefulness in identifying priority groups. On the one hand, it is critical to ensure that a wellbeing framework is able to identify inequities in wellbeing, in order to ensure a policy focus on these inequities. This highlights the importance of being able to move beyond national averages to understand differences in access to the things that matter for wellbeing. On the other, it is important to ensure measurement is feasible.

At a minimum, there should be comparison of a central set of indicators across a range of priority groups: this approach enables identification of differences in experiences without

requiring bespoke design of wellbeing indicators for different priority groups. Ideally, this would be extended to enable, where appropriate, examination of additional indicators of wellbeing that are uniquely important to different groups. This second action may be a longer term goal of *Measuring what matters* that is achieved through partnership with those already measuring a wider range of indicators, sometimes as part of existing initiatives examining the wellbeing of specific groups.

- For some – but not all – priority groups, a range of existing initiatives collect data on some aspects of wellbeing. For example, an annual nationwide survey of carers currently collects data that provide insights into the factors affecting the wellbeing of carers (Schirmer et al. 2022). The Mayi Kuwayu study has invested considerable time in identifying suitable measures of wellbeing and developing data collection processes that enable in-depth insight into the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia (see mkstudy.com.au). The Regional Wellbeing Survey has developed specific indicators of wellbeing in Australia’s regional, rural and remote communities and collected data for these annually since 2013 (see regionalwellbeing.org.au). Multiple initiatives examining the wellbeing of children and youth exist, and are measuring and reporting on indicators known to be critical to these age groups. These include, amongst others, the Australian Youth Development Index⁶, the [Speaking Out Survey](#) by the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People; the [Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing framework](#); and the AEDC [Australian Early Development Census](#).

These existing frameworks and processes should be not just recognised, but ideally specific collaborations and partnerships formed with these initiatives and linked to *Measuring what matters* to better understand the wellbeing of priority groups. This enables recognition that the most important indicators of wellbeing may vary depending on the group or region, and that measures of wellbeing are not universal across all groups and regions – although many measures of wellbeing are relevant to most or all.

The examples given above focus specifically on wellbeing. In addition, some indicators relevant to understanding wellbeing are measured as part of existing government strategies and actions focused on some of the priority groups listed above, although these typically are not focused specifically on wellbeing measurement (e.g. Closing the Gap). While these existing processes and measures should be linked to the *Measuring what matters* framework, they should not be relied on to provide insights into the wellbeing of the groups they focus on, as they are not explicitly designed to understand wellbeing. Investment is needed to identify how to link the many existing initiatives examining the wellbeing of specific groups of Australians to the *Measuring what matters* framework.

When considering priority populations, it is also important to analyse intersectionality across groups, and the differences in wellbeing associated with intersections of different groups and regions. Ability to examine intersectionality is critical to being able to identify policy priorities and where investment is needed.

⁶ <https://www.numbersandpeople.com/aydi2020>

Indicator design

Recommendation: Commit to measuring a central set of indicators that are comparable both across groups/regions within Australia, and internationally. In addition to this, implement processes that enable evolution of indicators over time. Ensure indicators are able to be implemented not only by the Australian Government, but by other organisations, from local to national scale, who want to measure wellbeing.

Understanding of what matters to wellbeing is currently evolving rapidly worldwide. Associated with this, indicators of wellbeing commonly included in wellbeing frameworks are also changing rapidly. We recommend that *Measuring what matters* commit to an initial set of indicators, and also to an ongoing process in which expert and stakeholder consultation is used to identify appropriate additions or changes to the indicators measured.

When identifying and measuring indicators, a balance needs to be struck between ensuring consistency and comparability – meaning committing to measuring the same indicators, in the same way, over time – and enabling flexibility to incorporate new or amended measures as needed. Similarly, an appropriate time period is needed to measure and monitor changes over time consistent with targets of Sustainable Development Goal 17 and both short term, medium term and long term indicators could be considered to account for data availability gaps.

It is important to include indicators that enable comparison of wellbeing across different regions and groups in Australia, and ideally enable comparison of Australia to international experience. However, indicators from existing frameworks (such as the OECD's) should only be included in *Measuring what matters* if they are relevant and useful to the Australian context.

While it is important to start by identifying indicators of what matters that are well recognised and accepted as valid internationally, this is not sufficient to inform a good framework. A large body of work within Australia has examined wellbeing measures and indicators, and should be explicitly reviewed to identify lessons about what is known to be important to the wellbeing of different groups of Australians, and how these important things are best measured across Australian cultures and regions. This is critical to ensuring the distribution of wellbeing, and equity gaps in wellbeing distribution, can be identified. Longer term, we strongly support the implementation of a process that enables new and modified indicators to be proposed and considered for inclusion, enabling *Measuring what matters* to respond to evolving understanding of what matters to wellbeing.

We recommend that the 2011 OECD definition of a 'good' indicator referred to in Budget paper 4 is updated to reflect a more current understanding of what constitutes a good indicator for measuring societal progress. This definition is outdated, as it refers to 'objective' data being necessary for a good indicator. Most organisations internationally – including the OECD – have moved away from claiming that only objective data can be considered relevant and appropriate to measure wellbeing, and most wellbeing frameworks now explicitly include measurement of subjective wellbeing indicators (see for example Schirmer et al. In press, Hawkins 2014). An

example of a more comprehensive and appropriate guide to what constitutes a good indicator can be found in Table 1 of Davern et al. (2017).

It is now well accepted that to measure wellbeing, we need to know how people experience their lives - which requires subjective measures. Identifying and measuring key subjective indicators that enable insight into how people are experiencing their objective conditions is critical. This has been recognised by the OECD in their wellbeing work, and *Measuring what matters* will only be measuring what is known to matter if subjective indicators are recognised as being important to understanding wellbeing.

Similarly, the reference in the definition to a good indicator having one interpretation is naïve, with most indicators (including many good indicators) having the potential to be interpreted more than one way. A better approach is to commit to identifying and clearly documenting the indicator interpretation being used by the Australian Government, to enable that interpretation to be consistently applied and replicated. This is different to assuming that an indicator can have only one interpretation.

To have the greatest value for Australians, *Measuring what matters* should enable not just the Australian government to measure wellbeing, but should develop indicators and measures that others across Australia can incorporate in their own wellbeing measurement. This means that indicators should be scalable so other organisations can implement the same measures in their own data collection initiatives.

We also recommend that:

- Indicators include measures for communities and households as well as individuals. Currently, indicators largely focus on those that measure the wellbeing of an individual. It is also critical to measure the extent to which communities and households are able to provide the conditions that support this wellbeing – such as access to services (e.g. health, education, policing, internet and mobile phone connectivity), access to infrastructure (roads, buildings, safe housing, community centres), good governance, safety and security. A wide range of indicators developed for the Australian context can be found in data available from sources including the [Australian Urban Observatory](#) (AUO) at RMIT University⁷, the Regional Wellbeing Survey (www.regionalwellbeing.org.au) and others.
- Indicators be developed that examine levels of individual, community and societal resilience as a key indicator of likely long-term wellbeing. This is an important part of understanding how events such as large-scale extreme weather events and the effects

⁷ The AUO currently provides a range of liveability indicators for 2018 and 2021 at municipal, suburb and neighbourhood levels including very relevant measures of social infrastructure related to these issues. Research underpinning the development of the Social Infrastructure Index included in the AUO found clear associations between proximity and mix of these services on individual subjective wellbeing. This research also demonstrated the value of subjective wellbeing as an important outcome measure in public policy decision-making and inclusion in the *Measuring what matters* framework. Indicators of access to public open space are also available in the AUO (Davern et al. in press).

of human induced climate change, as well as population-wide events such as COVID-19 or economic downturn, impact long-term prospects for wellbeing.

- Consideration be given to measuring the importance of different indicators for different regions and communities. For example, affordability of living costs may be more significantly impacting wellbeing of renters compared to those who own their home outright; opportunities for meaningful employment may be more important contributors to wellbeing to those of working age and less important to those who have retired.
- Consider measuring basic psychological needs and how well these are being met as part of the framework. This approach would go beyond the typical inclusion of a broader measure of personal subjective wellbeing to better identifying which of the psychological needs now well documented to be central to personal and community wellbeing (e.g. autonomy, competence, relatedness; see Ryan and Deci 2017) are and are not being met amongst different Australian communities. Consider explicitly measuring aspects of social wellbeing including sense of belonging and inclusion, consistent with the ACT Wellbeing Framework (ACT Government 2020) and many other wellbeing frameworks.
- If a domain is included examining resilience to disasters and effects of climate change, it will be important to design indicators that are effective measures of exposure to the impacts of these events. These exposure measures may include exposure to impacts on infrastructure, housing, livelihoods, financial wellbeing, and personal safety, amongst others.

Data collection

Recommendation: *Commit to (i) expanding existing data collection and (ii) investing in new data collection where it is needed to enable measurement of what matters. This may include expanding coverage of existing surveys to ensure sufficient sample of all priority groups and inclusion of additional measures, and/or establishment of new data collection processes.*

We recommend that the Australian Government commit to collecting the data needed to report on relevant wellbeing indicators as part of its investment in *Measuring what matters*. This means that rather than constraining indicators and measures based on using only data that are already available, a commitment should be made to investing in ‘filling in the gaps’ in data collection on wellbeing.

Simple nationwide survey samples are not sufficient to achieve the richness of data needed to represent all Australians. This is for two reasons: (i) nationwide sampling often results in very small samples of groups that either represent a small proportion of the population (e.g. those living in remote and outer regional communities, First Nations), and (ii) differing indicators may be important for some groups. For example, for carers, understanding their caring obligations is critical to understand their wellbeing. For First Nations peoples, multiple studies and existing frameworks document a range of indicators related to being able to engage in and enact cultural obligations to wellbeing, as well as the impact of experience of systemic and multigenerational discrimination, and the ongoing effects of dispossession. This means that data collection methods should enable collection of larger samples of small population groups identified as priority groups, as well as flexibility to measure differing indicators where appropriate. This is

essential if inequities in wellbeing are to be identified and acted on: to focus on distributional outcomes and equity gaps requires measuring at scales and in sufficient detail to be able to understand wellbeing distribution across different regions and groups.

We recommend the following actions:

- A review of all existing time series data collection on wellbeing in Australia be conducted – even where that collection is not sufficiently large currently to enable reporting for all of Australia, and/or focuses on a specific group. Examples of existing data sources not referred to or utilised in initial indicators produced as part of *Measuring what matters* include the Mayi Kuwayu study, Regional Wellbeing Survey, and Carer Wellbeing Survey.
- Identify coverage of (i) wellbeing indicators and (ii) priority groups and regions by existing data sources, and where gaps exist, identify methods to address gaps
- Invest in additional data collection and improved access to data already collected by governments, to enable appropriate monitoring of all wellbeing indicators, across all regions and groups. This may occur through collaborations across a number of existing data collection processes, to enable consistent collection of the same indicators; it could also involve development of new data collections.
- An expert review should be conducted into not only availability of data, but into the most appropriate ways to ensure long-term collection of data, particularly in the changing data landscape in which there is rapid change in survey methods as well as in use of a range of administrative and other data sets. This review should focus in particular on identifying what methods are needed to achieve robust measurement of wellbeing amongst all priority regions and groups whose wellbeing needs to be understood if we genuinely want to measure what matters to all Australians.

Any wellbeing framework will need to address existing gaps in data availability and success will be significantly influenced by access to governmental/administrative data. It is recommended that the initiative investigates and encourages access to existing data sources held by government to assist with the development of new data sources that could support an expanded wellbeing framework and additional indicators domains recommended in this submission. Partnerships between industry and government, and new projects through the federally funded [National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy](#) should link and the support existing data gaps needed to develop a comprehensive national framework of wellbeing.

Endorsements

This submission is endorsed by the following:

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