



# Measuring what matters

## Australia Council submission

7 February 2023

### Introduction

As the Australian Government's arts investment, development and advisory body, the Australia Council for the Arts champions and invests in arts and creativity to benefit all Australians.

The Australia Council welcomes the Australian Government's move to better inform policymaking by measuring what matters to Australians. The OECD Framework provides a solid starting point for the government to adapt to the Australian context; however, its limitations regarding culture and cultural wellbeing need to be addressed.

Culture is integral to wellbeing and must be included in any wellbeing framework to accurately measure and improve the wellbeing of the Australian people.

Culture creates a sense of security and safety, provides connection and a sense of belonging, builds cohesive communities and plays an integral part in shaping how we feel and live our everyday lives. While culture shapes what people value in their lives, it is often invisible or left out of broad consideration in wellbeing frameworks.

Culture, arts and creativity make critical contributions to education, health, technology, sciences and other government portfolios, and it is for this reason that wellbeing must be considered across all levels of government. Greater collaboration and investment with portfolios that have an interest in wellbeing will help drive these outcomes.

The Government's recently released National Cultural Policy, *Revive*, presents a critical opportunity, and provides a pathway, for arts and culture to contribute to whole-of-government outcomes. It is vital the impact of arts and culture to our daily lives is properly recognised, valued and included in goals, measures and practical policy implementation within the wellbeing framework.

To be effective, our wellbeing framework must be relevant to the Australian context, recognising the unique strengths and richness of First Nations culture as the source of wellbeing for First Nations Australians.

A whole of government strategy and commitment to improving wellbeing is needed to achieve a better quality of life for all Australians – ensuring we all can live meaningful, happy and healthy lives. Such a framework needs to align with the Australian Government's commitment, as indicated in *Revive*, to recognising the centrality of culture across government policy agendas.

### Acknowledgement

The Australia Council for the Arts proudly acknowledges all First Nations peoples and their rich culture of the country we now call Australia. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge First Nations peoples as Australia's First Peoples and as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to Australian life, and how this continuation of 75,000 years of unbroken storytelling enriches us. We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards ensuring an equal voice and the equality of outcomes in all aspects of our society.

## Key points

- **Culture must be included in any wellbeing framework to accurately measure and improve the wellbeing of the Australian people.** Culture, arts and creativity make Australians healthier and happier. Culture is a foundation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.
- **Including culture in wellbeing is particularly vital at this moment.** There is a critical need for action on mental health in Australia; the pandemic has emphasised the importance of culture to people's wellbeing; and we currently have a distinct opportunity to recognise the voice of First Nations people in Australian policy and decision-making.
- **Culture is integral to our everyday life. However the current [OECD Wellbeing Framework](#) used as a reference for *Measuring What Matters* does not include culture** in its dimension of current wellbeing, nor does it include cultural capital in resources for future wellbeing except when discussing intellectual property assets.
- **Following its recent work on COVID-19 impacts, the OECD now recommends that culture needs to be mainstreamed as an integral part of wider policy agendas**, including social cohesion, innovation, health and wellbeing, the environment and sustainable local development.<sup>1</sup> By looking beyond GDP, and taking a capability approach to measuring success, governments can develop evidence-based policies that are responsive to the needs and values of the nation.
- **The Australian Government's new National Cultural Policy, [Revive](#), recognises the critical contributions of culture.** It sets out a whole-of-government approach to policy and cultural measures to reset the trajectory of the cultural and creative industries. It provides a framework for the contribution of arts and culture to our wellbeing to be fully harnessed and realised.
- **Culture must be included from the very beginning of the wellbeing framework design.** Our wellbeing framework must be relevant to the Australian context with culture informing the wellbeing goals, measures and indicators.
- **A wellbeing framework that is self-determined – recognising the voice of First Nations people in Australian policy and decision-making and recognising the strengths of our diverse people – must drive and shape measurement, investment and progress for First Nations peoples.**
- **Expertise in cultural wellbeing and measurement will be vital to ensuring effective design of the framework, indicators and implementation**, such as through an advisory panel or taskforce.
- **An effective wellbeing framework must sit within the machinery of government.** Existing frameworks are currently operating separately. There is an opportunity to draw on these existing frameworks and fully embed wellbeing outcomes across government.
- **Portfolios across government must share responsibility for wellbeing outcomes.** The process and mechanisms for the wellbeing framework will need to be set up in a way that recognises expertise in wellbeing across departments and mitigates the risk of wellbeing outcomes being economically driven.
- **Current gaps in cultural data will need to be addressed in order to truly capitalise on the potential positive impact of culture on wellbeing.**

<sup>1</sup> In its recent work on COVID-19 impacts. OECD 2022, [The Culture Fix: Creative People, Places and Industries](#). Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED). Australia Council for the Arts

## Summary recommendations

1. **Include culture in the wellbeing framework with its own domain for measurement, aligned with measures monitoring the National Cultural Policy.**
2. **Consider cultural perspectives throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of the wellbeing framework.**
3. **Support the self-determination of goals that drive policy to support First Nations wellbeing.**
4. **Ensure design and development of a wellbeing framework is integrated into government decision-making and sets up co-responsibility across portfolios.** This work would need to draw on expertise, including in culture, such as through an advisory panel or taskforce.
5. **Include cultural indicators that track:**
  - First Nations wellbeing.
  - Cultural participation.
  - Access to cultural infrastructure.
  - Trust and inclusion in society.
  - Economic contribution of the arts and cultural sector.
  - Value of cultural investment.
6. **Address knowledge gaps and data needs of the cultural and creative industries.**

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## Key terms

<b>Wellbeing:</b>	<b>Wellbeing is having the highest possible quality of life in its full breadth of expression</b> , including good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation and access to and participation in leisure and culture. <sup>2</sup>
<b>Culture:</b>	<b>Culture is about who we are, how we define ourselves and how we make meaning of the world around us.</b> It is ‘the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and it encompasses art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.’ <sup>3</sup>
<b>Cultural wellbeing:</b>	<b>Cultural wellbeing is the ability to practice your own and celebrate others’ experiences, beliefs, traditions and values.</b> It is the vitality that communities and individuals enjoy through participation in recreation, creative and cultural activities; and the freedom to retain, interpret and express their arts, history, heritage and traditions. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Cultural indicator:</b>	<b>A cultural indicator is a measure, or set of measures, regarding cultural wellbeing that informs policymaking.</b>

<sup>2</sup> University of Waterloo 2016, [Canadian Index of Wellbeing National Index Report: How are Canadians Really Doing?](#)

<sup>3</sup> United Nations 2001, [Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity](#).

<sup>4</sup> Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, [Cultural Well-Being](#). Accessed 16 January 2023.

## Culture matters to Australians

### Culture is integral to our wellbeing, both individually and collectively

- **Culture, arts and creativity make Australians healthier and happier.** The arts have been shown to improve quality of life in myriad ways, including increasing mental wellbeing;<sup>5</sup> addressing loneliness, mental health and ageing;<sup>6</sup> decreasing anxiety and depression and increasing wellbeing and social inclusion;<sup>7</sup> producing positive wellbeing impacts for young people;<sup>8</sup> and treating posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and helping communities recover from trauma.<sup>9</sup>
- **Culture is a foundation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.** It is essential to people's everyday lives – helping to shape views on the world and supporting the creation of a meaningful life. Culture is a protective factor – it decreases the likelihood of negative health outcomes – and can positively influence other social aspects of our health. First Nations arts and cultural participation can support the development of strong and resilient First Nations children; improved school attendance and engagement; higher levels of educational attainment; improved physical and mental health and wellbeing; greater social inclusion and cohesion; more employment, economic opportunities and meaningful work; safer communities with reductions in crime and improved rehabilitation; as well as the prevention of suicide.<sup>10</sup>
- **The arts connect us, can create a feeling of community and can play a powerful role in building social cohesion.** We know that as we age, isolation can occur through a loss of social connections – be it family, friends, workplaces. Australians increasingly agree the arts enable us to connect with others, and help us understand different perspectives, people and cultures.<sup>8</sup>
- **Arts and creativity shape and communicate our shared values and national identity.** They have a powerful role to play in shaping the collective imagination of what it means to be Australian. An increasing proportion of Australians now agree that the arts shape and express Australian identity.<sup>11</sup>
- **Cultural participation is linked to a number of areas of social and economic impact:** social inclusion, education, innovation, wellbeing and health, and civic engagement.<sup>12</sup>
- **Creative skills built by the arts are key to the future of work.**<sup>13</sup> As well as fuelling our talent pipeline and job growth, investment in arts and creativity can cultivate new ideas, technologies and cutting-edge innovation. Creative skills will help us shape and adapt to the rapid transformation of traditional industries and to new forms of productivity. They have been integral to the fast-growing industries in Australia over the past decade.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Davies et al 2015, 'The Art of Being Mentally Healthy: A study to quantify the relationship between recreational arts engagement and mental well-being in the general population,' *BMC Public Health* 16:15.

<sup>6</sup> All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts 2017, *Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*.

<sup>7</sup> First reported in: Slawson N 2017, 'It's Time to Recognise the Contribution Arts Can Make to Health and Wellbeing,' *The Guardian*, 11 October.

<sup>8</sup> Patternmakers 2017, *A TYP Impact Evaluation*.

<sup>9</sup> Baker et al 2017, 'A Systematic Review of the Efficacy of Creative Arts Therapies in the Treatment of Adults with PTSD,' *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 10:6.

<sup>10</sup> Office for the Arts 2012, *Culture and Closing the Gap*. Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport.

<sup>11</sup> Australia Council 2020, *Creating Our Future: Spotlight on social cohesion*. Australia Council 2019, *Submission to the Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy Inquiry*. Australia Council 2020, *Inquiry submission: Australia's Creative and Cultural Industries and Institutions*.

<sup>12</sup> OECD 2022, *The Culture Fix: Creative People, Places and Industries*. Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED).

<sup>13</sup> See: NESTA 2018, *Creativity and the Future of Skills*. Australia Council 2017, *Making Art Work: A Summary and Response by the Australia Council for the Arts*. World Economic Forum 2016, *The future of jobs: Employment, skills and workforce strategy for the fourth industrial revolution*. Bakshi H, Downing J, Osborne M and Scheider P 2017, *The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030*, Pearson and Nesta, UK. Pratchett L, Hu R, Walsh M and Tuli S 2017, *The Knowledge City Index: A tale of 25 cities in Australia*, University of Canberra. Foundation for Young Australians 2017, *The new work smarts: Thriving in the new work order*.

<sup>14</sup> Including Professional, Scientific and Technical services. Australian Bureau of Communications and Arts Research (BCAR)

2019, *Creative Skills for the Future Economy*.

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## It is vital we recognise culture at this moment

### There is a critical need for action on mental health

- **Australia's mental wellbeing is suffering.** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and wellbeing has been substantial, with associated measures to prevent the spread of the virus causing disruption to our everyday lives. In 2020–21 more than 3.4 million Australians sought help from a health care professional for their mental health.<sup>15</sup>
- **It is estimated that mental ill-health and suicide in Australia directly costs the country up to \$70 billion per year.** Disability and early death due to mental ill-health is estimated to cost a further \$151 billion a year.<sup>16</sup>
- **Our young people are at risk and there will be long-term implications if there is no action.** The National Mental Health Survey, the nation's first comprehensive mental health survey in 15 years, found the prevalence of mental ill health in young people had increased by more than 50% from 26 percent in 2007 to 39 percent in 2020–21.<sup>17</sup>
- **Prevention, early intervention and an integrated policy response is needed to curb the rise of mental ill-health of young.**<sup>18</sup> The future prosperity of the nation depends on it.

### Recognising culture in wellbeing is a First Nations-led approach

- **First Nations-led approaches that centre culture within wellbeing and health are well-progressed.** The cultural determinants of health and wellbeing are anchored in First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing. Culture is central to understanding health and wellbeing and shapes relationship between self to Country, kin, community and spirituality.<sup>19</sup>
- **We are at a critical moment and currently have a distinct opportunity to recognise voice of First Nations people in Australian policy and decision-making.** For decades, First Nations peoples have advocated for the critical role of culture – as a necessary part of the solution to Indigenous disadvantage, and for the healing and strengthening of individuals and communities.

### The pandemic showed us the importance of cultural engagement to our wellbeing

- **The pandemic emphasised the importance of culture to people's wellbeing.** Participation in cultural and creative life was particularly vital for Australians during COVID-19 lockdowns.<sup>20</sup> Most Australians (73%) said that the arts improved their mood and quality of life during the early stages of the pandemic.<sup>21</sup>
- **A strong arts and cultural sector contributes positively to our nation's wellbeing.** Our artists and arts and cultural organisations play a vital role in education, supporting the development of skills, and driving innovation and technology.

<sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022, [National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)

<sup>16</sup> Productivity Commission 2020, [Mental Health Inquiry Report](#).

<sup>17</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics [National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing](#).

<sup>18</sup> OECD 2021, [Supporting young people's mental health through the COVID-19 crisis](#).

<sup>19</sup> Lowitja Institute 2020, [Culture is Key: Towards cultural determinants-driven health policy Final Report](#).

<sup>20</sup> Australia Council 2020, [Arts Engagement During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), based on Loneragan Research's Omnibus Survey, April 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Pattermakers 2020, [Audience Outlook Monitor: Australia snapshot report, May 2020](#).

<sup>21</sup> The Australia Institute 2020, [Polling – Lockdown and the Arts May 2020](#).

## The Government's National Cultural Policy positions culture as an essential response to current and future challenges

- **The new National Cultural Policy, *Revive*, recognises the vital contribution of culture to Australia's resilience, wellbeing, recovery and renewal.** It recognises culture as a crucial ingredient to future capabilities that are essential to our future economic and social wellbeing:
  - creating places and spaces for connection and reconnection to rebuild shared values, strong institutions and common purpose
  - empowering and building capabilities of emerging industries that create meaningful, sustainable jobs and bolster our adaptability
  - creating pathways of connection across divisions, barriers and systemic inequities that have been amplified due to the pandemic and threaten our social cohesion and democracy.
- ***Revive* seeks to harness culture's impact on Australia's resilience and wellbeing by providing a pathway for arts and culture to contribute to whole-of-government outcomes:**
  - The policy harnesses the vital contributions of culture to First Nations advancement, economic development and trade; innovation and intellectual property; employment, skills and job security; foreign affairs and cultural diplomacy; infrastructure and regional development; energy transition, adaptability and resilience; social cohesion and community revitalisation.
- ***Revive* guides the government's plan to reset the arts, entrainment and cultural sectors.** Elevating the critical role of culture to our wellbeing will ensure we emerge a more resilient, cohesive and purposeful country.

## Enhancing the OECD Framework to include culture

### The OECD recommends culture needs to be integral to policy agendas

- **The current *OECD Wellbeing Framework* used as a reference for *Measuring What Matters* does not include culture in its dimension of current wellbeing,** nor does it include cultural capital in resources for future wellbeing except when discussing intellectual property assets.<sup>22</sup>
  - Within the OECD, measurement of culture is distinct from the significant body of work on Measuring Wellbeing (within the Centre on Wellbeing, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity – WISE), and the WISE indicators do not have a direct cultural measure within the framework.
  - The OECD acknowledges the challenges and reasons why culture is not included, including that better evidence is needed for culture to inform policy and investment, and cross-country comparisons are particularly difficult due to a lack of sufficiently disaggregated and timely data to inform policy and measure impact.<sup>23</sup>
- **However, in its recent work on COVID-19 impacts, the OECD also recommends that culture needs to be mainstreamed as an integral part of wider policy agendas,** including social

<sup>22</sup> OECD 2022, *The Culture Fix: Creative People, Places and Industries*. Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED).

<sup>23</sup> As above. Note the Australia Council has provided recommendations that support the delivery of better cultural data in our submission to the National Cultural Policy – see our recommendations in this submission for more detail.

cohesion, innovation, health and wellbeing, the environment and sustainable local development.<sup>24</sup> During COVID-19, the OECD separately tracked and published pandemic impacts and indicators and measurement in culture and the creative industries. The OECD:

- recognises the need for more holistic policy responses from governments
- recommends that culture should be viewed as an economic and social investment, not a cost
- recommends there is a need to ensure access for creative professionals and firms to key areas of economic and social support.<sup>25</sup>
- **The government's National Cultural Policy applies the OECD rationale to mainstream policy agendas by integrating culture into a whole-of-government approach.**<sup>26</sup>
- **The ultimate goal of a wellbeing framework is to provide a better quality of life for Australians - culture is vital for understanding what people value in their lives.**
- **By looking beyond GDP, and taking a capability approach to measuring what matters to Australians, governments can develop evidence-based policies that are responsive to the needs and values of the nation.** Measuring wellbeing adds important information and context about how citizens are truly faring, ensuring the government can support its citizens to meet their needs.
  - **A capability approach measures wellbeing as 'the freedom people have to enjoy the activities and states of being that they value'.<sup>27</sup>** It is important for wellbeing approaches to ensure that people have the necessary resources and skills to live a life that is meaningful to them.

## Designing a national wellbeing framework that includes culture

### We have an opportunity to learn from local and international frameworks

- **Australia has progressed a range of wellbeing policy and measurement frameworks in local, state and federal government.** However, these frameworks are currently operating separately. There is an opportunity to draw on these existing frameworks and fully embed wellbeing outcomes across government.<sup>28</sup>
- **Governments around the world are increasingly developing wellbeing indicators as a tool for more accountable policymaking.** See examples on pages 9, 11 and 12.
- **However, many wellbeing measurement frameworks haven't been successful when translating into practical policy.**<sup>29</sup> It is the Australia Council's view that a key reason for this failure is due to the omission of culture – or limited recognition of culture – in these frameworks.

<sup>24</sup> As above.

<sup>25</sup> As above.

<sup>26</sup> See 'The Government's National Cultural Policy positions culture as an essential response to current and future challenges' on page 7.

<sup>27</sup> The Capability Approach was conceived by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum in the late 1980s as an alternative to approach to welfare economics.

<sup>28</sup> See 'The need for a whole-of-government, shared decision-making approach' on page 15 for detail.

<sup>29</sup> Gaukroger C, Ampofo A, Kitt F et al 2022, *Redefining Progress: Global lessons for an Australian approach to wellbeing*, Centre for Policy Development.



- **Culture has been omitted in a range of policy frameworks regarding the education and wellbeing of children and young people.** There is a critical need to recognise and include the role of culture in policy measures for our next generation:
  - The OECD's [Program for International Student Assessment framework \(PISA\)](#) includes reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills but does not include measures relating to arts and culture.
  - The [ACARA Measurement Framework](#) does not include specific measures for proficiency in arts and cultural disciplines.
- **A wide range of statistical frameworks, both local and global, do not properly account for, or recognise, culture.** These frameworks are often limited in what is recognised or tracked:
  - Often, culture is buried (eg liveability, attractiveness) or a proxy is used (eg social participation). Some examples include:
    - Labour statistics (ABS, Census) do not easily enable reporting of the scale and extent of participation in cultural or creative work, or for the work arrangements of many cultural and creative workers
    - The [Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia \(HILDA\) Survey](#) on life satisfaction doesn't capture cultural participation or engagement.
  - In some cases, the 'culture' indicator is focused only on identity or language (eg ethnicity/cultural background or languages spoken). For example:
    - [Closing the Gap](#) recognises the importance of culture in Socioeconomic Outcome Area 16: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing. This indicator has a target and measurement of languages spoken; however there are currently no targets or measures relating to participation in or connection to culture.
- **When designing a wellbeing framework culture must be included from the very beginning.** Culture must inform the wellbeing goals, measures and indicators. It must be considered when engaging with community.
- **Some countries are recognising the importance of culture and beginning to feature culture more prominently in their frameworks,** for example:

*Case study: Wales – culture makes an important contribution to reducing poverty*

**Wales is the first country in the world to legislate for the wellbeing of current and future generations in a way that ties in with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.** The Wellbeing Future Generation Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It outlines seven wellbeing goals which aim to build a more equal, prosperous, healthier, resilient, and globally responsible Wales with more cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and Welsh language.

**Culture has been identified as making an important contribution towards helping individuals and communities out of poverty.<sup>30</sup>**

In assessing the country's progress on culture, the Future Generations Commissioner recommended that the government should: 'Put long-term funding commitments in place to support cultural

<sup>30</sup> Welsh Government 2022, [Wellbeing of Wales: 2022](#).  
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development and the creative industries across Wales... Demonstrate that investment in culture is considered important; social return on investment is understood and money is invested in the prevention agenda to support this.<sup>31</sup>

### Cultural perspectives on wellbeing must be included

- **The national wellbeing framework must be relevant to the Australian context.**
- **The design of cultural wellbeing indicators and reporting frameworks needs to consider varying perspectives of quality of life.** Cultural differences and inequities impact how an individual responds to questions on wellbeing. For example:
  - some communities may not understand and not respond to questions about individual wellbeing (eg life expectancy). Rather, their perception of wellbeing may be relational and associated with community connections (eg family happiness).
- **Aboriginal health means not just the physical wellbeing of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community.**<sup>32</sup>

### We need strength-based indicators that measure ability to express and engage in First Nations culture

- **A wellbeing framework that is self-determined – recognising the voice of First Nations people in Australian policy and decision-making and recognising the strengths of our diverse people – will drive and shape measurement, investment and progress for First Nations peoples.** Such an approach will create demonstrable change for First Nations people.
- **Measurements are needed which recognise the strengths of our diverse people.** Strengths-based approaches seek to move away from problem-based paradigms and offer a different approach to measurement. A strengths-based approach would enable a wellbeing framework that could draw on, but be distinguished from, [Closing the Gap](#).<sup>33</sup>
- **There is an opportunity to build cultural determinants into the wellbeing framework.** Cultural determinant domains are well-established in the literature — including connection to Country; family, kinship and community; Indigenous beliefs and knowledge; intergenerational transfer of knowledge, capabilities in language and cultural practices; cultural expression and continuity; Indigenous language, and self-determination and leadership. However, indicators used in the national framework will need to be self-determined.
- **These principles must be reinforced by policy mechanisms and approaches and strategies for action** such as strengths-based community development and empowerment approaches, participatory research and evaluation, and shared decision-making.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Commissioner for Wales, [A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language](#). Accessed 16 January 2023.

<sup>32</sup> This is an evolving definition. Lowitja Institute 2020, [Culture is Key: Towards cultural determinants-driven health policy Final Report](#).

<sup>33</sup> Lowitja Institute 2018, [Deficit Discourse and Indigenous Health: How narrative framings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reproduced in policy](#).

<sup>34</sup> Lowitja Institute, 2020, [Culture is Key: Towards cultural determinants-driven health policy Final Report](#).

- **Incorporating cultural indicators that demonstrate First Nations peoples' connection to culture and community will assist the government to deliver on its commitment to Article 11 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).<sup>35</sup>**
- **Internationally, strengths-based frameworks that demonstrate capability to express culture and engage in ceremonial, traditional and cultural practices drive progress for First Nations people.** For example:

*Case study: Vanuatu measures wellbeing through the values of its people*

**The Government of Vanuatu began collecting data on individual and community wellbeing in 2010 as part of its initiative to develop and integrate alternative indicators of wellbeing that reflect Melanesian values.**

The Peoples Plan (The Plan) is the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) for the period 2016 to 2030, and serves as the **Vanuatu's highest-level policy framework**. It is based on the needs of the people for purposes of sustainability enhancing and maintaining wellbeing and happiness.

Vanuatu's wellbeing measures include:

- Indigenous land – access/number of households with access to Indigenous lands for food production and housing
- Indigenous languages – proportion of Indigenous people's first language learned; language spoken every day; ability to read and write in an Indigenous language
- Traditional knowledge – knowledge of traditional stories, dances, songs and games; and proportion of people who are unable to tell one custom story or perform a traditional dance/song
- Traditional knowledge – knowledge of one's family history, place and natural environment
- Traditional production skills – capability to produce traditional goods and services
- Food security – access to/production of traditional agricultural products
- Ceremonial participation – percentage of households participating in at least one traditional ceremony every year.

*Case study: Bhutan preserves and promotes culture*

**Since 1971, Bhutan has rejected GDP as the only way to measure progress. Instead, the country has embraced the principles of gross national happiness (GNH).**

The GNH is a holistic approach to sustainable development and the spiritual, physical, social and environmental health of its citizens and natural environment.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> In 2017, Australia pledged to 'support the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in both word and deed, including the promotion of the declaration's principles through national engagement', which would 'draw connections between national activity and the principles of the declaration'. Australian Human Rights Commission 2021, [Incorporating UNDRIP into Australian law would kickstart important progress](#). Accessed 16 January 2023.

<sup>36</sup> GNH Centre Bhutan (GNHCB), [History of GNH](#). Accessed 16 January 2023.

**The GNH was formally introduced in 2008 and includes ‘preservation and promotion of culture’** as one of the four pillars. This pillar measures ‘the country’s capacity to maintain and develop cultural identity, knowledge and practices.’<sup>37</sup>

Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness Index is a holistic reflection of the general wellbeing of the population rather than a subjective psychological ranking of ‘happiness’ alone.<sup>54</sup>

The GNH provides an important reminder that real human wellbeing cannot only be measured by per-capita income.

#### *Case study: New Zealand’s Living Standard Framework and Māori wellbeing*

**In 2021, the New Zealand Government released the [Living Standards Framework \(LSF\)](#).** The LSF is a flexible framework, based on the OECD model, that looks at policy impacts across the different dimensions of wellbeing, as well as the long-term and distributional issues and implications of policy.

**New Zealand is currently looking at ways to include better** representation and indicators for culture within the [Living Standards Framework](#). The LSF does not seek to comprehensively incorporate everything that is important for children, or everything that is important from te ao Māori and Pacific perspectives. Rather, to avoid ‘overloading the LSF with too much complexity’, the LSF sits alongside in-depth frameworks such as:

- [He Ara Waiora](#) for a mātauranga Māori perspective on wellbeing
- Fonofale for a Pacific perspective on wellbeing
- The Children’s Commissioner’s Wellbeing Wheel for a perspective on children’s wellbeing.

In a submission to New Zealand Treasury, **cultural agencies strongly recommended the inclusion of an additional separate domain of cultural capital in the LSF.** Cultural capital was defined as a community embodying ‘...cultural skills and values, in all their community-defined forms, inherited from the community’s previous generation, undergoing adaptation and extension by current members of the community, and desired by the community to be passed on to its next generation.’<sup>38</sup> The submission also proposed an alternative to more explicit identification of the **cross-cutting cultural capital elements** across each of the four other domains.

**The inclusion of an additional separate domain of cultural capital was proposed to ‘reflect the Crown’s Treaty obligations to actively protect Māori culture,** to acknowledge the Treaty’s role to positively contribute to the wellbeing of all New Zealanders, and to demonstrate the principles of partnership and participation in engaging with Māori.’<sup>39</sup>

This paper also argued that the measurement and indicators for culture and wellbeing within the LSF are still limited, and identified a number of areas where culture operates in relation to wellbeing:<sup>40</sup>

- Embodied culture: personal and communal cultural practices absorbed from family and school, and developed over lifetime.
- Tangible culture: material artefacts and heritage that become part of a community’s cultural heritage, including some cultural infrastructure.

<sup>37</sup> GNH Centre Bhutan (GNHCB), [The 4 Pillars of GNH](#). Accessed 16 January 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Lincoln University 2019, [Culture, Wellbeing and the Living Standards Framework](#).

<sup>39</sup> Lincoln University 2019, [Culture, Wellbeing and the Living Standards Framework](#).

<sup>40</sup> As above.

- Cultural identity and vibrancy: a sense of belonging, self-expression – not just representation of background – should also consider capability to express cultural identity.
- Cultural safety and respect: beyond the expression of identity, relates to the social environment – acceptance and respect for that identity.
- Cultural asset: intangible cultural heritage.
- Cultural engagement and vitality: involvement in cultural activities – as active participant or audience.

### Cultural indicators will inform policy on wellbeing

- **A range of data on cultural indicators already exist and need to be drawn upon to guide policy that drives a better quality of life for Australians.**
- **The areas of cultural data that need to be included are:**
  - cultural participation
  - access to cultural infrastructure
  - trust and inclusion in society
  - First Nations wellbeing
  - economic contribution of the arts and cultural sector
  - contribution of cultural investment.
- **There are existing indicators and data sources for some of these areas of cultural data** (see page 14), **however significant data gaps need to be addressed.** Additional funding in cultural data collection is needed to address these gaps and to support timely data.
  - Australia's cultural data needs are further detailed in the Australia Council's recent [submission to the National Cultural Policy](#) and summarised in this submission's recommendations.
- **Measures and indicators within the wellbeing framework can align with, and data can be supported through, the upcoming State of Australian Culture report.**
  - The National Cultural Policy introduces a triennial State of Australian Culture report to measure the success of the National Cultural Policy and to see the ambitions of the sector grow
  - There are provisions within the policy for a national survey of Australians' attitudes and experiences with arts and culture, building on the existing framework of the Australia Council's National Arts Participation Survey.
  - A number of cultural measures and indicators that draw on existing data are outlined below. These will be amplified and expanded through the State of Australian Culture report.

Cultural data area	Indicator	Sources
<b>First Nations wellbeing</b>	Indicators to be self-determined and co-designed	Refer to key findings from the Lowitja Institute's report <a href="#">Culture is Key</a>
<b>Cultural participation</b>	Attendance at arts and cultural events	<a href="#">National Arts Participation Survey</a> , Australia Council <a href="#">Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and Events</a> , ABS (last published 2018, refer to recommendations in this submission)
	Children and young people's participation at arts and cultural events	<a href="#">National Arts Participation Survey</a> , Australia Council
	Proportion of people who recognise the positive impacts of arts and creativity on our lives and communities	<a href="#">National Arts Participation Survey</a> , Australia Council
	Proportion of people who are motivated to attend live arts and cultural events to improve their wellbeing	<a href="#">National Arts Participation Survey</a> , Australia Council
<b>Access to cultural infrastructure</b>	Location (metro/regional/remote) of people attending the arts and cultural events	<a href="#">National Arts Participation Survey</a> , Australia Council
	Proportion of people who live within a commutable distance to arts and cultural infrastructure, institution or local asset	N/A – refer to <a href="#">Infrastructure Australia Audit 2019</a> on data gaps and opportunities to measure access to cultural infrastructure
	Proportion of Australians highly excluded from cultural digital access and creative engagement	<a href="#">Australian Digital Inclusion Index</a>
<b>Trust and inclusion in society</b>	Proportion of people with cost as the main barrier to attending arts and cultural events	<a href="#">National Arts Participation Survey</a> , Australia Council
	Proportion of people who agree the arts enable us to connect with others, and help us understand different perspectives, people and cultures	<a href="#">National Arts Participation Survey</a> , Australia Council
<b>Economic contribution of the arts and cultural sector</b>	Indicators relating to perceptions of social cohesion and belonging	<a href="#">Mapping Social Cohesion 2021</a> , Scanlon Foundation Research Institute
	Trade activity	<a href="#">Cultural and Creative Activity in Australia</a> , Bureau of Communications, Arts and Regional Research (BCARR)
<b>Value of cultural investment</b>	Employment in the creative industries	<a href="#">Census – Cultural and Creative Satellite Accounts</a> , Australian Bureau of Statistics
	Government cultural investment across all tiers of government	<a href="#">Cultural Funding by Government</a> , ABS
	Contribution of philanthropic and private sector support for the arts, including impact investment	<a href="#">Giving Attitude, Private Sector Support</a> , Creative Partnerships Australia In addition to data from the ACNC

## The need for a whole-of-government, shared decision-making approach

- **Achieving lasting change can only be achieved if there is true cooperation across government to develop, measure, assess and implement change.**
  - **An effective wellbeing framework must sit within the machinery of government.** Existing wellbeing frameworks in Australia have not had widespread success as they have not been integrated into government decision-making.
  - Including wellbeing as an integral part of public policy, with **shared responsibility and clear accountability** for wellbeing across departments, will maximise our human potential.
  - The new **National Cultural Policy** provides a number of policies and mechanisms to support whole-of-government implementation of culture within the wellbeing framework.
- **Processes for investment and policy decision-making must require assessment, reporting against the wellbeing measures in our national accounts:**
  - The [Commonwealth Evaluation Policy](#) presents a relevant and useful approach to evaluation that can be built into the wellbeing framework.
  - The National Cultural Policy presents a vital opportunity integrate and align key cultural measures into the wellbeing framework and national accounts, including through the design of goals and policies, and direct linkages to implementation and monitoring through the State of Australian Culture report.
  - The Centre for Policy Development's 'principles for an effective wellbeing budget' include the importance of setting clear goals and measurement indicators, legislating accountability, supporting agencies and redesigning administrative structures.<sup>41</sup>
  - The wellbeing framework needs to mitigate the risk of wellbeing outcomes being overshadowed by purely economic considerations. Although economic outcomes are a key component to delivering wellbeing outcomes, there is a risk that economic measures may be the sole driver of measuring success.
- **Expertise in cultural wellbeing and measurement will be vital to ensuring effective design of the framework, indicators and implementation**, such as through an advisory panel or taskforce. This will not only ensure the adoption of a whole-of-government approach that truly measures all aspects of Australian life, but will also set up the decision-making process to ensure an effective framework.

<sup>41</sup> Gaukroger C and Trebeck K 2022, [Principles for an Effective Wellbeing Budget](#), Centre for Policy Development. Australia Council for the Arts

## Recommendations

Based on the evidence outlined in this submission, the Australia Council provides the following recommendations:

### 1. Include culture in the wellbeing framework with its own domain for measurement, aligned with measures monitoring the National Cultural Policy.

- The OECD recommends that culture needs to be mainstreamed as an integral part of wider policy agendas, including social cohesion, innovation, health and wellbeing, the environment and sustainable local development.<sup>42</sup>
- Measuring 'quality of life' is important, and culture is vital for understanding what people value in their lives. Culture needs to be elevated and visible in subjective wellbeing measurement.
- Wellbeing and related policy frameworks often use a proxy for culture, or culture is subsumed into another intersecting area – eg leisure and recreation, community resilience, racial and language diversity, social cohesion. These are all important, but culture is distinct and needs its own recognised domain.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the wellbeing framework by aligning key measures and indicators with the State of Australian Culture report, a policy directive in the National Cultural Policy.

### 2. Consider cultural perspectives throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of the wellbeing framework. Include indicators that:

- recognise and account for cultural worldviews
  - The design of cultural wellbeing indicators and reporting frameworks needs to consider varying perspectives of quality of life. Cultural differences and inequities impact how an individual responds to questions on wellbeing.
- reflect the strengths of our people
  - Measurements are needed which recognise the strengths of our diverse people – rather than a deficit model that points to gaps between minorities and dominant groups.
  - There is an opportunity to build cultural determinants into the wellbeing framework. However, cultural indicators relating to First Nations people will need to be self-determined.
  - These principles must be reinforced by policy mechanisms and approaches and strategies for action such as strengths-based community development and empowerment approaches, participatory research and evaluation, and shared decision-making.<sup>43</sup>
- be supported by data that can be effectively disaggregated.
  - The OECD acknowledges the challenges and reasons why culture is not included in the OECD Framework, including that better evidence is needed for culture to inform policy and investment, and cross-country comparisons are particularly difficult due to a lack of sufficiently disaggregated and timely data to inform policy and measure impact.

<sup>42</sup> OECD 2022, *The Culture Fix: Creative People, Places and Industries*. Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED).

<sup>43</sup> Lowitja Institute, 2020 *Culture is Key: Towards cultural determinants-driven health policy Final Report*. Australia Council for the Arts



- Disaggregated data collection is vital to understanding and progressing wellbeing across different groups. Policy must be informed by consistent data that is broken down to track impact across the diversity of Australian society.

**3. Support the self-determination of goals that drive policy to support First Nations wellbeing.**

- We are at a critical moment and have a distinct opportunity to recognise voice of First Nations people in Australian policy and decision-making. For decades, First Nations peoples have advocated for the critical role of culture – as a necessary part of the solution to Indigenous disadvantage, and for the healing and strengthening of individuals and communities.
- Inclusion of First Nations culture in the wellbeing framework must be self-determined by First Nations peoples. Indicators need to be developed in a way that drives and shapes measurement, investment and progress for First Nations peoples.

**4. Ensure design and development of a wellbeing framework is integrated into government decision-making and sets up co-responsibility across portfolios.** This work would need to draw on expertise, including in culture, such as through an advisory panel or taskforce.

- An effective wellbeing framework must sit within the machinery of government. Achieving lasting change can only be achieved if there is true cooperation across government to develop, measure, assess and implement change.
- Existing wellbeing frameworks in Australia have not had widespread success as they have not been integrated into government decision-making. Including wellbeing as an integral part of public policy, with shared responsibility and clear accountability for wellbeing across departments, will maximise our human potential.
- Processes for investment and policy decision-making must require assessment, reporting against the wellbeing measures in our national accounts. The wellbeing framework needs to mitigate the risk of wellbeing outcomes being overshadowed by purely economic considerations.

**5. Include cultural indicators that track:**

- First Nations wellbeing.
- Cultural participation.
- Access to cultural infrastructure.
- Trust and inclusion in society.
- Economic contribution of the arts and cultural sector.
- Contribution of cultural investment.

Commented [GM1]: what do we mean by this?

**6. Address knowledge gaps and data needs of the cultural and creative industries.**

- There are significant gaps in data on the cultural and creative industries that make it difficult to fully assess their impact, including in relation to wellbeing. The data needs of the arts and cultural sector include:

- **provision of core data on the cultural and creative industries.** A core data collection for the cultural and creative industries would include data on (but not necessarily limited to): economic contribution; employment; institutional matters, including cultural funding by all levels of government; attendance and participation; household expenditure; and international trade.
  - **updating the Cultural and Creative Satellite Accounts.** We note the government recently committed to updating Australian Bureau of Statistics Cultural and Creative Activity Satellite Accounts in the National Cultural Policy.
  - **investment in exploration of untapped data sources.** Knowledge gaps remain around the substantial number of Australians generating economic activity through cultural and creative roles as secondary jobs and unpaid work. There is also limited data on working conditions for First Nations artists in metropolitan and regional areas, and on the increasing economic activity around First Nations textiles, fashion and homewares.
  - **centralised management of data on the cultural and creative industries.** There is need for coordinating, drawing together and providing access to ABS and other data sources.
- These data needs are further detailed in the Australia Council's recent [submission to the National Cultural Policy](#).
  - We also note the National Cultural Policy sets out a broad approach to measurement, but that further work is needed to develop and implement the performance measures and reporting framework, including through the triennial State of Australian Culture survey and report.