



Measuring What Matters Submission

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For further information, please contact:

Sarah Barker | Co-Chair | sarahb@ourcommunity.com.au

Simon Faivel | Co-Chair | sfaivel@socialventures.com.au

Laura Glynn | Executive Officer | laura@simna.com.au

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the conversation on how Australia “might better measure what matters”. As the budget paper describes, there is international momentum towards including non-economic measures in national budgets to “provide a picture of national progress and well-being”. We commend the Government in making steps towards a wellbeing budget, and we encourage further progress to ensure that this endeavour reflects the [Principles of Social Value](#) and results in meaningful, actionable information that advances the quality of life of all people living in Australia. We hope that this contribution is useful as you develop and finalise an approach to the Measuring What Matters statement in the 2023 budget.

About SIMNA

Social Impact Measurement Network Australia ([SIMNA](#)) exists to rapidly connect the ideas, people and resources that will drive positive social and environmental impact into the core of organisations and decisions. Our aim is to work with members to build a powerful community of practice that can lead and shape the development of social impact measurement both in Australia and around the world. SIMNA is a Joint Member Network of Social Value International.

About Social Value International

[Social Value International](#) is the global network focused on social impact and social value. Our members share a common goal: to change the way society accounts for value. For over 15 years, Social Value International has been working with our members, networks and partners to embed core principles for social value measurement and analysis, to refine and share practice, and to build a powerful movement of like-minded people to influence policy. This pioneering community contains members from over 60 countries, drawn from a huge range of different sectors and disciplines.

Acknowledgement of Country

SIMNA acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present, and emerging. We also accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

Key points

Overall, SIMNA supports the ambition of the Government to include a ‘Measuring What Matters’ statement as part of the annual budget. We also recognise the value of adopting the comprehensive, comparable OECD Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress as a starting point to developing a framework that more fully reflects our communities, challenges and priorities.

In line with the first Principle of Social Value, ‘Involve Stakeholders’, **we support the concept put forward in the budget paper of an ongoing conversation with the community on what is important to measure** - what matters. In particular, conversations with marginalised communities who may be identified in disaggregated reporting, or may be the focus of Government policies, such as our First Nations communities, diverse cultural communities, and people with disability. This should include not only what outcomes are important, but what kind (for example, strengths-based or highlighting challenges) and how they should best be prioritised, measured (appropriate indicators and methods) and communicated.

We encourage the Government to consider indicators of outcomes that reflect our diverse nation, including rural and urban communities, diverse cultural communities, and First Nations communities. For example, measures of connection to culture or acceptance of different cultures. Similarly we encourage the Government to consider community outcomes rather than only individual outcomes, such as social cohesion and community wellbeing and connectedness. Some of these indicators may be hard to measure immediately, but we should invest in the systems to collect this data because we need to “measure what matters”.

It is imperative that the proposed budget paper is not a stand alone reporting document, but that policy and funding decisions are responsive to its findings and priorities. This recognises that “measuring what matters” only makes a material difference if the information is used for learning and decision making. This is in line with the eighth Principle of Social Value: ‘Be Responsive’. This may involve incorporating the framework into budget and policy making decisions as in New Zealand and other countries, as well as ensuring reporting data is openly available, including disaggregated data for different target groups, to support other Government agencies, organisations and community learning.

Being responsive also means that **the Government should consider broader sector implications, and the investment and change management required for organisations who have client facing services and responsibilities.** This is essential for collecting meaningful data on wellbeing. It should be noted this requires co-ordination and navigating data ownership by the Australian, State and Territory, and Local Governments.

The Principles of Social Value

1		Involve Stakeholders Inform what gets measured and how this is measured and valued in an account of social value by involving stakeholders.
2		Understand What Changes Articulate how change is created and evaluate this through evidence gathered, recognising positive and negative changes as well as those that are intended and unintended.
3		Value the Things That Matter Making decisions about allocating resources between different options needs to recognise the values of stakeholders. Value refers to the relative importance of different outcomes...
4		Only Include What Is Material Establish the boundaries of what information and evidence must be included in an account of value to give a true and fair picture, and one that is based on the evidence from stakeholders...
5		Do Not Overclaim Only claim the value that activities are responsible for creating.
6		Be Transparent Demonstrate the basis on which the analysis may be considered accurate and honest, and show that it will be reported to and discussed with stakeholders.
7		Verify the Result Ensure appropriate verification of results in line with the decisions being supported...
8		Be Responsive Pursue optimum Social Value based on decision making that is timely and supported by appropriate accounting and reporting.

For more information, please see the [Principles of Social Value on the SVI website](#).