

## MEASURING WHAT MATTERS SUBMISSION - Mr Barry Anderson and Dr Colin Benjamin OAM

Like any organisation, the Australian society needs a vision, which reflects what matters to that society and contextualises and explains the goals “we” need to achieve to sustain that vision. Then it needs strategies to ensure that what the society says “matters” is the actual focus of government and the agencies employed by government. Then those agencies need the capability to fulfill their role in supporting what matters to society – delivering the benefits of being a member of the Australian community. One of those roles in delivering is to determine with the community what matters, what will be sustained (eg laws), supported (eg health) and delivered (eg education, social services) by all the parties to that society - government, academia, corporates, institutions - and how the achievement of the goals to deliver the vision will be described and **success measured**. For Australia, what will success look like across each of the multi-faceted aspects of society? What will support our democracy, our laws, our lifestyle, our individual and collective health and wellness, our arts and culture and our learning and earning environments

As the 2017 Review of the PGPA pointed out very few government agencies meet minimum performance criteria in regard to aligning their goals to the wider societal agenda. There is no cohesive integrated set of strategic goals for Australia – just ad-hoc policy initiatives. The political environment of the past decade did not provide any support for those that sought to develop them. Sadly, that political environment has created a division within society which is recorded daily in the media. There are those for whom the current socio-economic environment works brilliantly and a growing number of people, who due to economic or health issues feel left behind and are lacking a sense of hope for the future. This is reflected in the current levels of distrust in governments of all political persuasions across Australia, as governments are not perceived to be addressing the issues that “matter” to the citizenry.

A review of Royal Commissions, Inquiries and Productivity Commission Reports shows that Australia has continued to rely too much on being a QFT economy (quarry, farm and trade) and failed to invest in workforce training and development, supply chain optimisation and a renewed focus on innovation. Policy changes that have been consistently proposed sought to invoke a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach, involving governments, businesses, educational institutions, and civil society organisations. Rarely has this occurred or been allowed to occur due to lack of political will and division.

To focus upon what “matters” and to re-engage this growing number of people who feel left behind, there are several significant and immediate changes that can be considered to address economic inequality, provide access to opportunities, and foster inclusive growth. Progressing these changes should be driven by community stakeholder engagement to define by societal element, what matters, why it matters and how “we” as a community would define success in terms of the functionality of support for each element.

We believe that for the benefit of all Australians, it is critical to measure performance on the issues of concern to mattering. The focus should be upon:

1. **Invest in Education, Skills Development and Acquisition:** Prioritise education and skills development initiatives to equip individuals with the necessary capabilities for the changing job market. It is crucial to enable all citizens and businesses to bridge the digital divide and have equitable access to education. Enhance vocational training programs, promote lifelong learning, and provide accessible and affordable education opportunities for all segments of society. This will help mitigate the impact of job displacement caused by automation and AI technologies. Governments and organisations can support these individuals by offering financial assistance, mentorship programs, and career guidance to facilitate their transition into new roles. The notion of Australia as “Innovation Nation” is farcical without individual competence building organisational capability to enable progression beyond continuous improvement to actual innovation. The challenges being addressed by the National Reconstruction Fund are testament to the validity of this approach. The short-sighted lunacy of closing the Automotive Industry in Australia is now evident in the levels of despair in the Defence Industry Sector, which in the last decade has seen 500,000 apprenticeships fail to occur and the consequential deficit in national sovereign capability.
2. **Address Income Inequality:** Implement policies to address income inequality and wealth concentration. This may involve progressive taxation, closing tax loopholes, and ensuring that corporations pay their fair share of taxes. Reinvest the generated revenue into social programs, education, infrastructure, and job creation initiatives.

3. **Support Job Transition Programs:** Implement comprehensive job transition programs that assist workers who are displaced due to automation, globalisation, or economic shifts. Offer retraining programs, job placement services, and financial support during the transition period to enable individuals to acquire new skills and secure alternative employment.
4. **Strengthen Social Safety Nets:** Enhance social safety nets to provide a strong support system for individuals facing economic challenges. This can include expanding unemployment benefits, improving healthcare coverage, increasing access to affordable housing, and implementing targeted assistance programs for vulnerable populations.
5. **Foster Collaboration and Dialogue:** Encourage collaboration between governments, businesses, academia, and civil society to develop inclusive policies and initiatives. Involve communities in decision-making processes and create platforms for dialogue to address concerns, gather feedback, and foster a sense of trust and ownership among citizens.
6. **Foster Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Create an environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship. Support start-ups, small and medium-sized enterprises, and local businesses through access to funding, mentorship programs, and regulatory frameworks that promote competition and growth. This can help generate new job opportunities and economic revitalisation.
7. **Promote Regional Development:** Foster regional development strategies to ensure that economic growth is not concentrated in specific urban areas but is spread across different regions. This can involve targeted investment in infrastructure, attracting businesses to underdeveloped areas, and providing incentives for companies to create jobs outside major cities.
8. **Encourage Responsible Corporate Practices:** Encourage high-tech companies to adopt responsible corporate practices that prioritize fair wages, worker rights, and ethical business conduct. Foster partnerships between governments and companies to promote inclusive economic growth and ensure that technological advancements benefit society.
9. **Improve Digital Inclusion:** Bridge the digital divide by improving access to affordable and reliable internet connectivity in rural and under-served areas. Provide digital literacy programs to ensure that individuals have the skills to leverage technology for education, employment, and entrepreneurship.
10. **Build International Regional alliances:** Recognising the interplay between productivity and environmental considerations, these organisations stress the need to adopt sustainable practices. Balancing economic growth with environmental protection and addressing climate change challenges is seen as crucial for long-term productivity and performance.

If we look only unto ourselves this is a monumental task. However, if we collectively regard ourselves as citizens of the world there is much to learn from others – it doesn't need to be invented here, just contextualised.

As an example, a thorough analysis of the current state of formal education, identification of pain points, and alignment with Australia's strategic goals will help to determine the most appropriate next moves to enhance the community dividend from our taxpayer investment in lifting community skills and sovereign capability. The measurable outcome would be an increase of factor productivity and a lowering of capital contribution to profitability in a specific business context.

International business, education and vocational training initiatives overseas, introduce automation and artificial intelligence, which needs regular evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented strategies and be open to learner and employer feedback, monitor market dynamics, and adapt to changing circumstances.

Just in the "knowledge enhancement" sector there is much Australia can learn from other nation states and their programs to enrich society. Examples are:

- **Canada's Co-operative Education and Internship Program** provides students with paid work experience related to their field of study, facilitating the integration of classroom learning with real-world work environments.
- **The American School Counsellor Association (ASCA)** provides resources, webinars, and conferences to support professional development for school counsellors, including training in career guidance and

college planning. The Pathways to Prosperity Network, connects employers, educators, and policymakers to create career pathways and work-based learning opportunities for students.

- **Japan's Rikunavi platform** offers comprehensive career information, job search support, and career guidance services for students and job seekers.
- **Singapore's Skills-Future initiative** promotes collaboration between educational institutions and industries to develop industry-relevant courses, provide internships, and offer career guidance based on emerging job trends. It integrates classroom learning with structured on-the-job training, allowing students to acquire industry-relevant skills and gain work experience.
- **South Korea's Centre for Future-oriented Career Development** provides training programs and certification for career counsellors, ensuring they possess the necessary competencies to guide students effectively.
- **Germany's Dual Vocational Training System:** Germany's vocational training system combines classroom education with practical on-the-job training. This system ensures that students acquire industry-relevant skills and helps bridge the gap between education and employment.
- **Finland's Integrated Career Services:** Finland has developed integrated career services that provide comprehensive guidance and support to individuals throughout their career journey. These services offer personalized guidance, promote lifelong learning, and facilitate smooth transitions between education and work.
- **India's National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC):** NSDC is a public-private partnership that aims to promote skill development across various sectors in India. It facilitates industry collaboration, sets competency standards, and funds training programs to bridge the skills gap.
- **Sri Lanka's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs:** Sri Lanka has implemented TVET programs that offer vocational education and training in partnership with industry stakeholders. These programs aim to equip students with practical skills and improve their employability.

To reiterate our key point – there is much to be learnt from ourselves and our nation state neighbours.

### Recommendations

1. The progressing of change initiatives should be driven by community stakeholder engagement to define by societal element, what matters, why it matters and how “we” as a community would define success in terms of the functionality of support for each element.
2. Integrate assessments of the impact of local and regional skills and training requirements into strategic resource allocations to break down education and training silos. This would strengthen improvements in performance, productivity and profitability based upon course completion and retention rates rather than course attendance.
3. Engage communities of interest in the management of innovation and performance advancement through the integration of education systems with employers to create managerial education at the enterprise level to establish strategic goals for enterprises, enhanced career progression and new enterprise formation.

We would welcome an opportunity to demonstrate a new measurement system developed by ‘Life.Be in IT’ with Roy Morgan Research to address instrumentation and service performance monitoring with the benefit of over one million household interviews that are readily available and compliant with international competency standards.

## **About the authors**

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Barry is a former senior executive in the APS who recently retired as CEO of a Canberra-based training and consulting organization specializing in the application in the APS and Defence of the UK Cabinet Office methods for programme and project management and the assessment of APS agency organizational capability maturity. He currently works as an independent strategist and is volunteer with Life. Be in IT.

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