

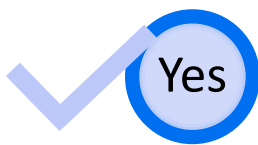
Beyond Blue's submission to the Measuring What Matters – second round consultation

Overview

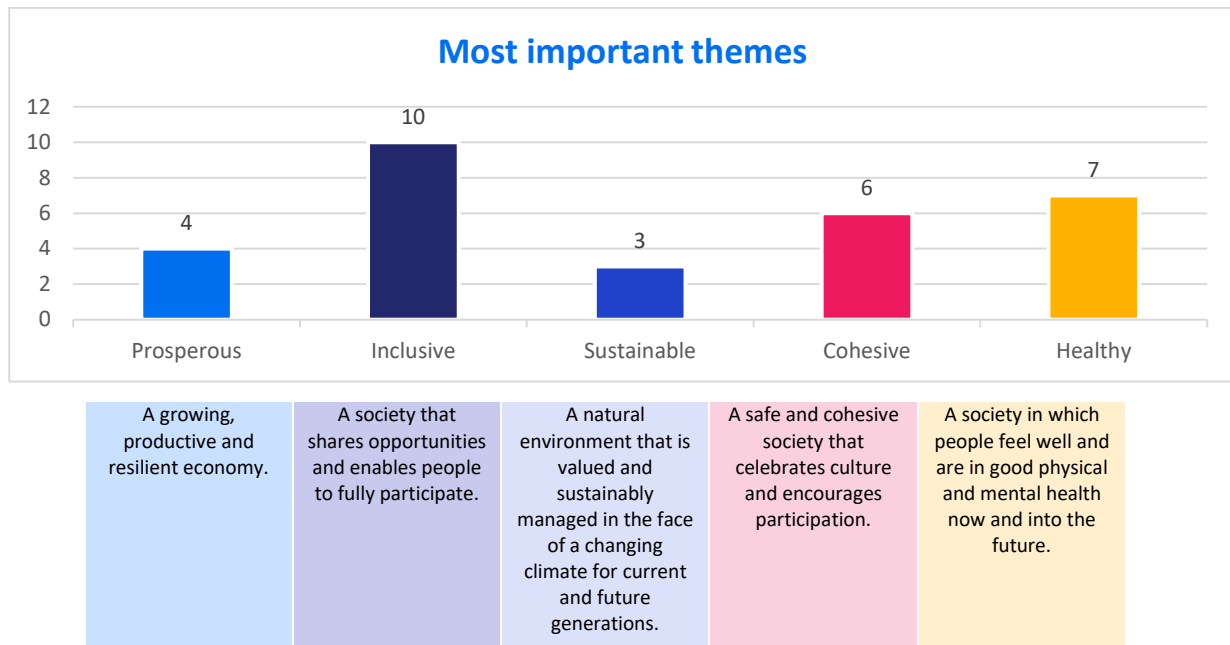
- Beyond Blue welcomes the government's progress towards implementing a Measuring What Matters statement in 2023 as a first step in developing a national framework to measure what matters to people living in Australia.
- An Australian Wellbeing Framework (framework) could help us better understand the state of wellbeing in Australia, whether efforts to enhance wellbeing are working and how we can better direct spending to improve lives. It could provide valuable information about how Australia's mental health and wellbeing are tracking, what is driving distress at a population level and what can be done to achieve better social, economic and community wellbeing outcomes, while promoting greater transparency and accountability.
- In January 2023, Beyond Blue made a [submission](#) to the first round of consultation, advocating that the framework:
 - be based on community consultation, including with people who have lived experience of mental ill-health and suicidality
 - be developed with First Nations Peoples so that it is informed by and complements First Nations wellbeing models and knowledge
 - include goals or aspirations
 - measure both mental ill-health (diagnosed conditions) and mental wellbeing (how a person feels, including emotions, functioning, life satisfaction and purpose) as distinct indicators of our population-level mental health
 - help us understand the connections between mental health and other areas of wellbeing so we can target investment to promote health equity and address the social determinants of health
 - be embedded into policy and budgetary decision-making to drive real, positive change.
- In response to a second round of consultation aimed at hearing directly from community members, Beyond Blue facilitated a focus group with 10 people from Beyond Blue's [Blue Voices community](#) on 22 May 2023. The group comprised people with a lived and/or living experience of mental ill-health or suicidality, either personally or as a support person. They brought diverse perspectives in terms of where they reside, their age, gender and cultural backgrounds.
- The emerging wellbeing themes (**attachment A**) from the government's consultation pack were provided to participants prior to the session. During the session, participants were invited to answer survey questions about what matters to their wellbeing and provide their views on the emerging themes using a digital collaboration tool and in small group discussions.
- We have also included relevant insights from Beyond Blue's extensive community research with representative national samples of the Australian population.
- Beyond Blue recommends that government continue to engage in co-design with communities across Australia as it develops and refines the framework and its measures.
- We express our gratitude to the people who volunteered their time to participate in the focus group and thank them for sharing their insights so generously and persuasively.

Responses to government's survey questions

1. Did the five emerging policy themes Prosperous, Inclusive, Sustainable, Cohesive and Healthy resonate with meeting participants?



2. Which of the following themes are most important to you? (Select 3)



3. Which themes or descriptions were most frequently discussed? (Select 3)

Most discussed: Healthy

- Participants felt that having the resources and services to take care of their mental and physical health was very important for wellbeing. Access to, and choice of, supports including peer support was the strongest workshop theme.

Second most discussed: Inclusive

- Participants want to live in a society that includes, values and is accessible to everyone.

Third most discussed: Prosperous

- Participants reflected the importance of financial security to maintaining good wellbeing.

4. What do you see as the most important issues for future wellbeing? Are these captured by the emerging policy themes?

The group identified several key themes they felt were important for their future wellbeing. The themes speak of:

- a future where people have the opportunities and resources to access person-centred options for mental health support, regardless of whether they are early in distress, need ongoing support, or are in crisis.
- a future where Government services take the time to genuinely hear and help people from all communities to contribute, regardless of which language they speak or how they identify.
- a fair, equal and safe Australia.
- an environment where everyone's views and experiences are valued and people have trust in government institutions.

Broadly speaking, most of these issues are captured in the emerging themes. However, the framework should also reflect the importance of safe, secure and affordable housing, justice, trust in institutions and each other, and the importance of belonging and connectedness as contributors to wellbeing.

In their own words, participants responded:



Findings from Beyond Blue's community research surveying a large representative national sample of the Australian population about their mental health and wellbeing¹ echo some of the themes raised by the participants. The research explored factors that are known to impact mental health, demonstrating the strong relationship between mental health and financial wellbeing, social connection and discrimination:

- 37 per cent reported that cost of living pressures had a negative impact on their mental health
- 26 per cent reported that climate change had a negative impact on their mental health
- 28 per cent reported that their sense of being part of a group or community was 'fair' or 'poor' and 17 per cent reported that their ability to get support from family or friends was 'fair' or 'poor'. These factors were strongly correlated with poor mental health

¹ Social Research Centre (2023) Australia's Mental Health and Wellbeing Check, Beyond Blue. Unpublished.

- 11 per cent reported that discrimination (including racism, homophobia and sexism) had a negative impact on their mental health.

5. How might the descriptions be amended to best reflect our priorities? AND 7. Is there any additional information you would like to see in the Measuring What Matters Statement?

The focus group was asked this question through survey questions and in small group discussion. Some participants felt that the emerging themes accurately describe what is important for wellbeing. Some felt the words used were vague or broad and suggested using simpler terminology. Other participants indicated that:

- the mental health descriptor should be more explicit about what good mental health looks like. For example, that people understand mental health, can access inclusive, affordable mental health services and supports, and can choose which supports best suit them. These views reflect findings from Beyond Blue's community research, which found the top two barriers to accessing professional mental health support were cost and long waiting lists².
- the following factors are important for wellbeing but not adequately represented in the themes/descriptors: hope and optimism, freedom of speech and religion, housing.

Participants spoke of the importance of broader factors that influence their wellbeing, including individual, community and social determinants of health. For example, the justice system should protect all people, the economy should be resilient enough to provide consistent and adequate levels of support, action is needed to combat climate change so young people have hope, and society needs to be inclusive of and safe for people regardless of race, cultural background, financial situation, sexuality and gender/gender identity. These are broadly covered in the existing themes and descriptors.

The responses highlight the impact that non-health wellbeing domains have on mental health and wellbeing, demonstrating the value in designing the framework to measure the strength of connections between wellbeing domains and deepen our understanding of how investing in one area (such as housing or income support) can create positive change in others (such as mental health and wellbeing).

In their own words, participants responded:

Wellbeing is about prevention as well as maintaining recovery.... preventative steps to ensure wellbeing are also important	They are the right things, nothing is missing.	Housing issues	Government should use simple language that everyone understands	Many adjectives too broad – good and necessary examples, can mean different things to different people
Access	There needs to be a focus on the cost and accessibility for mental health	We need more readily available health care, especially mental and emergency care and more availability in hospital beds	Understanding health (physical and mental) can be fluid for many people. And often doesn't exclude from being productive. Not black and white.	Choice to explore supports which are not part of the mainstream mental health industry. Effective information is not always found in a box in an organisation
There is so much variation in supports, and people's financial situation and financial support is based on not individual circumstances but broad assumptions	We need access to NDIS for chronic non-fatal conditions	Understanding access issues can be invisible	We need better health literacy and mental health aids	Religious freedom and freedom of speech
	The framework should have a separate category for justice. We need reform to the justice system. We need inclusivity in the justice system. Especially for non-binary people	Empowerment, hope or optimism	Refugees should be mentioned in the cohesive section	

² Ibid

6. Are there any indicators and existing data sources that will be critical to inform the emerging policy themes?

This question assumed a level of technical knowledge that many community members will not have.

Beyond Blue addressed this question in our first [submission](#) on Measuring What Matters, recommending that the framework should measure both mental ill-health and mental wellbeing as distinct indicators of our population-level mental health.

While mental wellbeing is essential to understanding the mental health of people living in Australia, it is not currently measured or reported on nationally. This is a significant gap compared with other countries, such as England and Scotland who publish longitudinal mental wellbeing data and incorporate this into their wellbeing frameworks.

Beyond Blue also recommends that the Commonwealth work closely with the States and Territories to identify opportunities to use harmonious indicators to promote consistency in policy-making, measurement, appraisal and evaluation.

Supplementary information

We collected information beyond the survey questions that may assist in developing the framework.

What kind of Australia should we work toward?

With a view to informing the purpose, goals or aspirations of the framework, we asked the focus group which words describe the kind of Australia we should be working toward. Participants responded:



What matters most to your wellbeing?

We also asked focus group participants to share insights about what matters most to their wellbeing, from their lived experience. Key themes that came up were being supported to be in good mental health, financial security, social connection and life satisfaction.

In their own words, participants responded:

A sound money situation and knowing support is there should I need it	Financial stability	Having access to the essentials I need
Financial wellbeing	Supportive people in my life	Community connection
Having happy and healthy relationships	Good mental health	Feeling mentally stable and happy
Knowing there I support if I need it	Being heard. Being believed.	Having faced experience of lack of diagnoses, support, bullying and discrimination, working on greater understanding of invisible health matters is critical to wellbeing
Listening to people with lived experience takes time	Feeling supported, cared for and valued by people, community and government	Supportive healthcare staff
I am chronically ill. I have come to accept that my physical health will never be 'normal', but my mental health is crucial to my perspective on my wellbeing	Chronic neurological conditions are treated as voluntary or not as important as more physical illnesses. Especially in minors	As someone with a chronic disability, my contributions and capabilities are constantly undermined in favour of the more able bodied
Being in fulfilling roles which provide me with meaning and purpose and in which I am valued	Time to focus on my hobbies and interests	Being able to make a difference to people's lives
Feeling productive, valued and respected and to have agency over my life's direction. I know with support, I can have all of these in greater abundance	In 2022, an investigation was launched into 40+ years of unsolved hate crimes against Sydney LGBTQIA+ members. We do not have equality yet	Free speech – detrimental effectives of being 'cancelled' (socially ostracized). Our self-worth and belonging are threatened
Having supportive, approachable and knowledgeable people in my life as well as a better understanding of mental health and trauma		Preventative steps to ensure wellbeing are also important and resources should also be directed towards this

Attachment A: pre-reading circulated to Beyond Blue focus group participants

Measuring What Matters – an Australian Wellbeing Framework

The Australian Government is considering how to measure what matters to Australians beyond traditional economic measures of success. **Measuring What Matters** is important for tracking and achieving progress, understanding our economy and society and making policy decisions.

The Government wants to hear from you about what matters most to your wellbeing.

Do the themes below resonate with you? Is anything missing?

Prosperous: A growing, productive and resilient economy

- An economy that provides opportunities for all Australians.
- An economy that is more resilient and less vulnerable to shocks.
- People are financially secure.
- People have access to education, knowledge and training so they have the skills to fully participate in society and the economy throughout their life.
- People have access to necessary services and amenities.
- A sustainable budget that can deliver the services Australians rely on and can buffer the economy against future shocks.
- A dynamic economy, which encourages and offers opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- An economy that seizes the opportunities from the net zero transition and digitisation.

Inclusive: A society that shares opportunities and enables people to fully participate

- A society that allows all people to afford life's essentials.
- A society that provides people access to secure, well-paying jobs.
- A society that supports social and economic accessibility and intergenerational mobility.
- Gender equality, including at work and in the community.
- A society that supports diversity and equity.
- Leadership in government and business that is representative of our diverse society.

Sustainable: A natural environment that is valued and sustainably managed in the face of a changing climate for current and future generations

- A healthy natural environment for current and future generations, protected from the damage being caused by climate change.
- A society and economy that is resilient and adapting to a changing climate.
- A society that sustainably uses our natural resources, on track to reach net zero emissions.
- A society that values the social, cultural and economic significance of our natural environment.

Cohesive: A safe and cohesive society that celebrates culture and encourages participation

- A society where people feel safe at home, online and in the community.
- A society that is Closing the Gap and values First Nations culture.
- A society where people have the time and opportunity to participate in the arts, culture and sporting activities.
- A society that has close relationships with family and friends.
- A government that is trusted by the public.
- People participate in the democratic process and engage in their community.
- A society that supports engagement in the community through volunteering or other means.

Healthy: A society in which people feel well and are in good physical and mental health now and into the future

- A society in which people are in good physical health.
- A society in which people are in good mental health.
- A society that ensures the health and development of its children.
- A society in which people are generally satisfied with their life.
- A society where people have enough time for family, friends, personal interests and their community.
- A society that values the contributions of all regardless of health or ability.