

Measuring what matters

Attachment A: Measuring What Matters: Consultation Feedback form

Consult hub

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1 Meeting Host Name

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2 Organisation (if individual please enter N/A)

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[REDACTED]

5 Meeting host

Non-government organisation

6 Other

Not answered

7 Meeting date

25 May 2023

8 Meeting location

Virtual

- 9 Location/City/Town
Not answered
- 10 State
Not answered
- 11 Participants attending
Member of a community organisation
- 12 Other
Not answered
- 13 Number of participants
4
- 14 1. Did the five emerging policy themes Prosperous, Inclusive, Sustainable, Cohesive and Healthy resonate with meeting participants?
No
- 15 If not, why not (200 words)
The term 'sustainability' has a broader meaning than ecological sustainability. The theme should be renamed 'environmental'. 'Growth' is not a condition for prosperity and should be deleted.
- 16 2. Which of the following themes are most important to you? (Select 3)
Inclusive: A society that shares opportunities and enables people to fully participate
Sustainable: A natural environment that is valued and sustainably managed in the face of a changing climate for current and future generations
Cohesive: A safe and cohesive society that celebrates culture and encourages participation
- 17 3. Which themes or descriptions were most frequently discussed? (Select 3)
Prosperous: A growing, productive and resilient economy

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

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

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

A healthy, stable, functioning biosphere is the first prerequisite for all current and future wellbeing. Insufficient weight is accorded to the state of the environment that underpins a healthy society and the economy. The term 'growing' is also not relevant to 'prosperous' and should be deleted from that theme's description.

19 5. How might the descriptions be amended to best reflect our priorities?

The 'sustainability' theme should be renamed as a healthy environment, or the state of nature. Its description should acknowledge that society and the economy are wholly dependent on the biosphere. It should have as its objective a natural environment that is thriving, functional, protected and being restored towards full health. That is resilient and able to provide increasing benefits to support human society and all species and ecosystems.

The Inclusive theme should be strengthened, it should not only aspire that people can afford life's essentials. It should not aim for a bare minimum, it should aim for a far more equal society, where everyone can afford to live prosperously.

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

Under 'sustainability' (which should be re-titled to reflect the environmental focus):

1. Record the extent and changes to forest and woodland vegetation cover immediately; and prioritise the development of comprehensive ecosystem accounts using SEEA.

Australia has cleared more than half of its forest and woodland since colonisation.

Currently only Queensland collects and publishes accurate good data on tree cover via the statewide land cover and tree study (SLATS). This means we don't have an accurate snapshot of vegetation extent or damage across the country. According to the federal government's threatened species scientific committee "land clearance has been the most significant threatening process in Australia since European settlement." It not only drives

extinction through habitat removal, it affects local rainfall, temperature, increases sediment in fresh waterways and pollution in the ocean including the GBR, harms pollinators, and exacerbates the impacts of invasive predators like cats and foxes - in short, it threatens natural capital and the flow of numerous ecosystem services important to wellbeing. Land clearing is ongoing and causing harm. The rate of clearance, and of forest restoration, can be monitored and published at a national scale comprehensively and in a timely fashion using existing satellite data.

1.1 Australia should develop comprehensive ecosystem accounts using the SEEA framework – this would allow us to expand land accounts (like a national tree cover study) to go beyond woody vegetation extent, to include all terrestrial and marine ecosystem condition, and the flow of ecosystem services (physical and monetary) those ecosystems are currently providing to society and the economy and, projected to be able to supply.

2. Measure the economy's dependence on ecosystem services provided by nature (natural capital) and the potential for natural capital to contribute to the economy under foreseeable scenarios.

Australia could publish an annual nature dependency statement calculating the dependence of the economy and specific industry sectors on ecosystem services, in a similar fashion but with greater granularity to ACF's 2022 Nature Based Economy report. With the development of accurate natural capital accounting using SEEA the accuracy and scope of this analysis could be improved and expanded to account for indirect dependencies as well as impacts. This measurement would clearly link the state of nature to the economy

21 7. Is there any additional information you would like to see in the Measuring What Matters Statement? If so, please outline.

Connect environmental indicators with other wellbeing indicators:

The current approach of measuring a small number of independent environmental indicators is limited as while it may offer a snapshot of environmental health and trajectory, those indicators are not directly linked to wellbeing in any obvious way.

Environmental improvements as standalone goals are valuable, and we should keep measures of extinction risk and vegetation/ecosystem health, but that information may be more influential from a whole of society point of view if natural capital is linked to economic and human capital and we should aspire to that integration over time.

Improve threatened species/biodiversity measurement:

The number of Australian species appearing on the IUCN red list of threatened species gives only a limited snapshot of the health of Australian nature. It is incomplete because thousands of Australian species are not assessed on the red list and thousands are not even named by science. At the very least it needs to be augmented with national and state data on species status, key threats, and species abundance including the Threatened Species List and Atlas of Living Australia, Living Planet Index, and other state and federal indices.

Moreover we need to go beyond measuring species status to understand what activities in the economy are contributing to increases and reductions in extinction risk - the STAR metric for example can be used to identify what actions can be taken to reduce extinction risk by removing or minimising threats or engaging in restoration and recovery projects. It can also monitor the success of those actions and help to identify which economic activities are increasing or reducing their extinction risk over time.