

Measuring What Matters

Submission to second consultation round

About Cities People Love

Cities People Love is an organisation committed to informing and challenging decision-makers to deliver cities that are sustainable, healthy, culturally rich and equitable.

We do this by providing up-to-date evidence and practical pathways forward to policy-makers and practitioners, and engaging and empowering communities to influence policy and practice.

Cities People Love is a not-for-profit initiative established in 2020. It is financially supported by Hodyl & Co, a Melbourne-based consultancy dedicated to driving the creation of ethical cities, and the pro-bono time of our editorial board and our Australian and international contributors.

Creating a robust evidence base

Cities People Love publishes content from leading voices across academia, industry and government who have a demonstrated local or international reputation in their field. To date, Cities People Love has published content from leading academics, across a range of topics, from universities across Australia and in the UK, Egypt, Spain and Canada, as well as 16 industry organisations from Melbourne, Sydney and New York.

To ensure the rigour of the Cities People Love research platform, all Cities People Love content is subject to peer review by an editorial board of academic and industry professionals with specialist knowledge and extensive experience across the fields of architecture, urban design, urban planning, urban policy, community engagement, sociology, and sustainability.

Response to the Measuring What Matters: Emerging Policy Themes & Indicators

We applaud the Federal Government for engaging in this critical conversation. The creation of a measurement framework that proactively considers what truly makes us a great place to live, beyond economic performance, is much needed and will support a more sophisticated, harmonious and resilient country.

The city we all wish for

Cities People Love launched in July 2020 in the middle of national lockdowns, with an invitation to the public to share their thoughts on the 'City they wish for'. The community's aspirations centred on the themes of: housing and homelessness; environment & sustainability; creativity & culture; movement in the city; Indigenous culture; street & building design; designing for diverse needs;

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inclusivity & equity; connected communities; disrupting the status quo of urban design; and safety. These themes identify what it is that the community cares about, and therefore, what we should be measuring. Over the past three years, Cities People Love has published articles and held public events across these themes focused on the need to understand how we can most effectively deliver cities that people want.



'What city do you wish for?'

The diversity of aspirations from the community were captured in a shared illustration which can be viewed and explored at <https://engagement.citiespeoplelove.co/>.

The emerging themes shared in Measuring What Matters consultation process are largely aligned with what we heard people care about, and with what the evidence is saying is required to create a sustainable, healthy, culturally rich and equitable society.

Across the themes, however we consider that there are indicators that have been overlooked and which are critical to a successful country that supports a thriving, harmonious society. To address this, we strongly recommend that the themes and indicators are updated to address the following:

- Housing as essential infrastructure
- The importance of choice
- The importance of diverse cultural expression and belonging
- Understanding indigenous aspirations and cultural knowledge
- The importance of spatial equity
- Gender equality at home

Housing as essential infrastructure

Our society and economy is being weakened by the lack of secure, affordable housing that meets the diverse needs of our community members. Access to good housing is a fundamental right and the essential infrastructure we need. This is not adequately captured in the indicators which only refer to having a society 'that allows all people to afford life's essentials'. This collapses access to housing with all of life's other essentials – food, clothing, health services etc. We should not be shying away from directly measuring the most fundamental aspect of people's lives that

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enable them to live well – safe, secure, and affordable housing. We recommend adding an indicator such as ‘A society in which all people are adequately housed’.

The importance of choice

People thrive when they have a sense of autonomy over their lives. This is directly related to the extent to which they can make choices about their livelihoods, their families and their future. The current framework does not address this important aspect of what makes communities strong and resilient. A sense of autonomy can only be measured subjectively – people have to both have choices and feel that they have choices. An indicator could be expressed as ‘A society in which people feel that they can make choices that will benefit themselves, their families and their communities.’

The importance of diverse cultural expression and belonging

Australia is a diverse, multi-cultural community. We’re proud of this cultural diversity which, when embraced, seeds tolerance, stimulates creativity, creates greater meaning to our lives, and enriches our understanding and curiosity of others. This is about more than simply ‘celebrating culture’ (as included in the Theme description) and creating a society where ‘people have the time and opportunity to participate in the arts, culture and sporting activities’.

Our diversity makes us a stronger nation. We need to define ways to measure this incredibly valuable aspect of our society. This would include measuring cultural diversity and acceptance, for example through the number of languages spoken and the degree to which people feel like they belong here (regardless of their background or belief system).

Understanding and measuring indigenous aspirations and knowledge

The history of our First Peoples goes back tens of thousands of years. The emerging themes and indicators do include ‘A society that is Closing the Gap and values First Nations culture’, however this does not adequately engage with importance of maintaining Indigenous knowledge and connecting our practices with Indigenous knowledge and understanding of Country. An indicator that addressed is needed. This could be expressed, for example, as ‘A society that embraces the deep knowledge of our Country held by Indigenous communities’.

The importance of spatial equity

The inclusive theme would be further enhanced by recognising that a lack of equity in Australia is strongly related to the spatial distribution of housing, jobs, services and educational opportunities. We strongly recommend inclusion of an indicator such as ‘A society where your postcode does not define your chance for living a healthy, successful life’.

Gender equality at home

Within the inclusive theme gender equality is noted as important ‘at work and in the community’. Considering the scale of domestic violence in Australia, and the importance of supporting women in participating in the economy, we strongly recommend that this indicator measures gender equality at home as well.

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Conclusion

Overarching support

We are very supportive of the creation of a measurement framework for Australia. The emerging themes and indicators go a long way towards establishing a robust framework that reflects the diverse matters that Australians care about.

Updating indicators

We would strongly recommend updating the indicators as outlined above to ensure that they measure the full suite of factors that contribute to our country's success.

The importance of ongoing engagement and understanding of lived experience.

Many of the indicators are subjective in nature, for example 'A government is trusted by the public', 'A society in which people are generally satisfied with their life'. We would strongly encourage that the framework of measurement is directly connected to an expansive and comprehensive engagement program with the Australia public about their lives. A number of the additional indicators that we have recommended will also require engagement with people's experiences to understand if they are being met.

We look forward to the opportunity to continue to engage with the Federal Government in the establishment of the framework and in developing and updating the indicators over time.

Kind regards,



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