

Measuring what matters submission

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60 Leicester Street,
Carlton Vic. 3053
0422 974 857
admin@dea.org.au
www.dea.org.au

DEA Scientific Committee:

Prof Colin Butler
Prof David de Kretser AC
Prof Robyn McDermott
Prof Emeritus Sir Gustav Nossal AC
Prof Fiona Stanley AC

Prof Stephen Boyden AM
Prof Peter Doherty AC
Prof Stephen Leeder AO
Prof Lidia Morawska
Prof Hugh Possingham
Dr Rosemary Stanton OAM

Prof Emeritus Chris Burrell AO
Prof Michael Kidd AM
Prof Ian Lowe AO
Prof Peter Newman AO
Prof Lawrie Powell AC
Dr Norman Swan

Doctors for the Environment Australia (DEA) is an independent, self-funded, non-government organisation of medical doctors in all Australian states and territories.

DEA's work is based on the premise that humans need a future with clean air and water, healthy soils capable of producing nutritious food, a stable climate, and a complex, diverse and interconnected humanity whose needs are met in a sustainable way. We are therefore interested in environmental protection and restoration to promote human health and social stability.

DEA's work is supported by a distinguished Advisory Committee of scientific experts whose knowledge of medical and public health issues is fully contemporary. Our members work across all specialties in community, hospital, and private practices.

DEA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the *Measuring what matters* second consultation process. The proposed indicators show a welcome move away from narrow economic indicators such as GDP that have prioritised exploitation of our natural resources with little thought or planning for the mental and physical health benefits we gain from natural amenity nor a liveable future for the generations that follow.

While DEA has not been able to consult with our members in the prescribed format for this round of feedback, DEA supports the wide range of emerging policy themes and descriptors that have been developed so far, especially those that relate to sustainability and health. We particularly welcome the inclusion of 'future generations' as part of 'a natural environment that is valued and sustainably managed in the face of a changing climate'.

We note that the traditional economic practice of discounting future benefits has poorly served this and coming generations. Conventional economic analyses use discounting when assessing the value of events that will happen in 20 or 50 years time so that they have little to no value in current dollars. It contradicts the fundamental principle of sustainability, that future generations should have as good opportunities from their environment as current generations. This gives flawed conclusions and is not a good basis for decision-making both in Australia and globally. It has encouraged profligate use of natural resources and ongoing environmental destruction that threatens the most basic necessities of health and wellbeing – a liveable climate, food and water safety and security, clean air and much more.

DEA wishes to emphasise the importance of the terms 'sustainability' and 'future generations' in further development of policy themes, descriptors and their indicators. As a community we must not miss the opportunity to repair some of the damage caused by using only narrow economic indicators and short-sighted accounting practices, before it is too late.