

Measuring what matters

Attachment A: Measuring What Matters: Consultation Feedback form

Consult hub

Response received at:

14 May 2023, 12:14pm

Response ID:

sbm26b047c85be262e90e780

1 Meeting Host Name

Emerita Professor Chilla Bulbeck

2 Organisation (if individual please enter N/A)

N/A

3 Email

chilla.bulbeck@adelaide.edu.au

4 Phone

[REDACTED]

5 Meeting host

Individual

6 Other

Not answered

7 Meeting date

15 May 2023

8 Meeting location

In-person

- 9 Location/City/Town
Cottesloe
- 10 State
WA
- 11 Participants attending
Individuals
- 12 Other
Not answered
- 13 Number of participants
1
- 14 1. Did the five emerging policy themes Prosperous, Inclusive, Sustainable, Cohesive and Healthy resonate with meeting participants?
Yes
- 15 If not, why not (200 words)
Not answered
- 16 2. Which of the following themes are most important to you? (Select 3)
Sustainable: A natural environment that is valued and sustainably managed in the face of a changing climate for current and future generations
Inclusive: A society that shares opportunities and enables people to fully participate
Cohesive: A safe and cohesive society that celebrates culture and encourages participation
- 17 3. Which themes or descriptions were most frequently discussed? (Select 3)
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

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

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

Kate Chaney, my member, invited us to make individual submissions if we were unable to attend her community briefing.

Please read the following comments as a single essay. arguing that 'economy' is over-privileged in a commitment to measuring those elements of well-being least amenable to the 'measuring rod of money'.

Given the National Accounts' focus on what we can readily measure with money, the supplementary approach to understanding wellbeing in 'Measuring what Matters' should put great emphasis on those things that make us, our society and our environment healthy, happy, satisfied and nourished, and resilient, acknowledging that these values often conflict with maximising income and profit.

Reorder the criteria as Inclusive, Sustainable, Cohesive, Healthy and Sufficiency (rather than prosperous)

Below I explain my proposal for re-ordering and my reasons for renaming

A significant purpose of 'Measuring what matters' should be prioritising the things we value which are beyond the 'measuring rod of money'. The limitations of our national accounts are tellingly explored by Marilyn Waring (1999) Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women Are Worth. Waring identified how much of women's work counted for nothing as it was unpaid (e.g. childrearing and housework) or unmeasured (e.g. women's work in the informal economy in many developing countries). Waring exposed the contradictions of the national accounts: gross national product rises the more car accidents we have, the more wars we fight or the more trees we turn into wood chips. Thus 'prosperity' in the five strand proposal stands in contradiction with the other four strands.

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

Critique of: Prosperous: A growing, productive and resilient economy

I recommend: Sufficiency: A redistributive, productive, sustainable economy focussed on

equality of opportunity

Up until a comfortable level of income, the most important thing for individual happiness is a sufficient and secure income. Beyond this comfortable income, there is little improvement in happiness. And further up the income scale, some studies report an inverse correlation. Extremely wealthy people like Gina Rinehart and Andrew Forrest do not appear to be very happy.

To counter the enormous impact of unequal income and wealth on social unhappiness in our neoliberal society, 'prosperous' should be heavily caveated as something like 'a sufficiently comfortable income for all, and obscene wealth for no-one'. 'Necessary' and 'equality of opportunity for all members to realise their potential' should also be included.

The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett lays out the evidence, at a societal level, for claims that in more equal societies with strong welfare states as contrasted with individualistic unequal societies (predominantly Scandinavia and Japan when compared with the United States, and less so U.K and Australia), there is better mental health, less obesity, lower crime rates, improved women's status and so on. However see a critique in this review Population and Development Review, Vol. 36, No. 2 (JUNE 2010), pp. 395-397: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25699067>).

For the above reasons, Inclusive should be the first goal.

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

'A society and economy that is resilient and adapting to a changing climate' should be located in the category of economy/sufficiency to emphasise the natural limits on economic growth.

Acknowledging the contradiction between our natural environment and economic growth, I suggest the following elaboration:

Sustainable: a natural environment that is valued and sustainably managed in the face of climate disruption for intergenerational enjoyment.

Change one of the sub-headings to: 'A society that values the social, cultural, health and climate mitigation significance of our natural environment'.

The list of objectives under 'sustainable' mentions 'economic' and 'economy' twice. The first mention should be located under the 'economy/sufficiency' category, to focus attention on creating a 'sustainable economy' (see above).

If we strive for the 'social, cultural' and 'economic' significance of our natural environment, these will almost always compete against each other, as Marilyn Waring pointed out. A standing forest gives joy, peace, health, carbon abatement, clean air, etc, etc, most of which is extremely important, but almost impossible to measure. A felled forest adds economic value to GNP.

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

As well as giving pre-eminence to the intangibles and difficult to measure values in our lives, an acknowledgement of those values which make us happier and those that tend to make us less happy could be used to prioritise the elements of well-being. This is a variation on my analysis above that inequality makes for anxiety and 'upward envy', while a society that values everyone and strives for equality to realise our potential individually and in combination will be made up of happier, more secure, better-functioning and more generous citizens.

Extensive research undertaken by Common Cause demonstrates that intrinsic values, such as universalism (connection with others, commitment to causes such as the environment or social justice) and benevolence (spiritual, friendship and love) give people more satisfaction than extrinsic values such as hedonism, stimulation, power or preservation of a public image. In general, the esteem of others or pursuit of material goods seem to be unreliable sources of satisfaction in life. Other, more inherently rewarding pursuits—such as those found in intrinsic motivations and self-direction values—seem to provide a firmer foundation.

<https://commonslibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Common-Cause-Handbook.pdf>