

Submission to Stage 2 Consultations: Measure What Matters

This submission is prepared by the Social Solutions Group at the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR), University of Queensland. The submission follows the format of the online submission form.

Five Emerging Policy Themes

We submit that the five themes be extended to include two additional themes: Participation and Safety.

Participation is partially represented in the other themes (particularly under cohesion), though it should stand alone. We believe that participation is a pillar of democracy and a cohesive society. This new theme of participation includes participation in education, economic activity, democracy, services and community life. Safety refers to personal safety and feeling safe. This is important and should be elevated as a theme as safety underpins individual and family decisions about where to live, how to travel and whether and when to participate in community life.

Priority Themes

We submit that the priority themes and associated descriptors are goal statements that each Government Department should work towards. As such, no single theme has more weight than another theme.

Frequently Discussed

We discussed each of the themes equally and spent most time discussing the aspirations (dot points) for each theme. We found some duplication and ambiguity in the aspirations under the themes. For example, is *access to secure, well-paying jobs* also an aspiration for a 'prosperous' Australia? That aspiration currently sits with the Inclusive theme. We leave it with the drafting team to resolve these ambiguities.

Issues for Future Wellbeing

We feel that health equity, ageing, participation, genuine reconciliation with First Nations Australians, and the future of democracy, personal safety/feeling safe and human rights are important and these are not emphasised in the current themes.

Descriptions

We submit that the theme names be expressed as nouns and not as outcomes (adjectives). This will minimise ambiguity and confusion. For example, 'prosperous' could be economy or standard of living, 'cohesive' could be culture or participation, 'inclusive' could be community, 'sustainable' could be environment, 'healthy' could be health. The theme descriptions should be in the first person and expressed as aspirational National goals (like the Scottish model).

Indicators

We reviewed the first stage submissions to Measure What Matters, and we don't have indicators to add to those submissions. There are multiple indicators to measure what matters and many existing initiatives bring these indicators together to measure change, for example Dropping off the Edge does this well.

We submit that it is important to disaggregate the resultant data to population groups and (at least) the scales of State and Local Government jurisdictions. We also strongly support the inclusion of

qualitative indicators to complement the quantitative indicators. Too many indicators can be confusing so, the headline reporting of the main indicators is recommended with an ability to 'drill down' to sub-indicators.

Additional Information

The Measure What Matters is a potentially unifying and potent policy and governance mechanism. As such, we strongly support a community engagement strategy for the further development and implementation of Measure What Matters. The submission by the Centre for Policy Development in the first phase of consultation sets out several useful approaches to this engagement.

The wording of 'sustainable budget' should be replaced with 'sustainable investment' to depoliticise that aspiration and enable the investments of other sectors (outside of the Commonwealth Government) to be included in the measurement.

We know that indicators are slow to change and reporting on the measurement results is crucial. The selection and prioritisation of indicators is key to the success of the measure what matters program.

We believe the reporting should be public, though, there is an issue of trust. What is the source of truth for the Australian community and policy actors? Given growing levels of distrust in media and Government, the reporting should be distributed through trusted organisations. Reporting should be online, and highly visual such as a dashboard style with 'signals' and that the data can be disaggregated to investigate population groups and locations.