

Attachment A: Measuring What Matters: Consultation Feedback form

To be completed by meeting host after each meeting and returned to measuringwhatmatters@treasury.gov.au by 26 May 2023.

Meeting details

Meeting host name/ organisation: Next25

Meeting host contact details [phone or email]: Ralph Ashton, Ralph@next25.org.au

Meeting host

- ☐ Member of Parliament
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ Non-government organisation
- ☐ Business
- ☐ Academic
- ☐ Community group
- ☐ Individual
- ☒ Other Independent think-and-do tank (NFP)

Meeting date: 22/05/2023

Meeting location: Online

Participants attending:

- ☐ Member of a community organisation
- ☐ Businesses
- ☐ Academics
- ☐ Union members
- ☒ Individuals
- ☐ Other Click or tap here to enter text.

Number of participants: 10

What matters to Australians?

1. Did the five emerging policy themes Prosperous, Inclusive, Sustainable, Cohesive and Healthy resonate with meeting participants?

☒ Yes ☐ No if not, why not [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

2. Which of the following themes are most important to you? (Select three)

☐ **Prosperous:**

A growing, productive and resilient economy

☒ **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

☐ **Healthy:**

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

3. Which themes or descriptions were most frequently discussed? (Select three)

☐ **Prosperous:**

A growing, productive and resilient economy

☒ **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

☐ **Healthy:**

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the most important issues surrounding future wellbeing, and your broader focus in the *Measuring What Matters* Statement, which is a vital and encouraging step for Australia.

Next25 has conducted extensive research that is relevant to wellbeing, non-economic measures of progress, and representations of what matters to the future of Australia.

This research includes a quantitative study, *Navigator*, that involved a nationally representative sample (N= 2,825). It uncovered the most important aspirations to our nation in 2021, and how well we performed on them.

We also conducted a qualitative study, *Recoded*, that involved 50 of Australia's established and emerging leaders from current and former politicians and high-ranking public servants; business leaders (including CEOs, industry representatives, investors); experts from across science, economics, and academia; community leaders (including teachers, activists, social workers, non-profit leaders); and more. *Recoded* discusses the details of the most important aspirations for the nation in 2021, and the root causes of underperformance in Australia's future-making system.

Like *Measuring What Matters*, our *Navigator* and *Recoded* research demonstrates there are many issues that affect the future wellbeing and longer-term prosperity of Australia. Our consultations found that Australians' top 10 aspirations are:

1. All Australians having access to quality healthcare: 81.06%
2. Having a fair, honest, and capable legal system: 80.33%
3. Australians should take responsibility for their own mistakes: 79.05%
4. Caring for our natural environment, plants, and animals: 78.25%
5. All Australians having access to good education: 77.75%
6. The government prioritising the needs of Australia first when making decisions: 77.41%
7. Honouring, respecting, and maintaining the rule of law: 76.29%
8. Providing opportunities for everyone – the, "fair go": 76.27%
9. Australia being self-sufficient and able to stand on its own two feet as a country: 76.10%
10. Considering all Australians to be equal: 75.20%

The above aspirations are partially captured by your emerging policy themes. However, perspectives surrounding access, public engagement, constructive discussion, accountability, and public interest are highly relevant but not explored in the proposed wellbeing framework.

We also conducted a further round of consultation on 21 May 2023 to consider the themes of the proposed Wellbeing Framework and the findings of our research.

See question five for our suggestions, especially regarding the policy themes of *Cohesion* and *Inclusion*.

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

Our *Navigator* study undertook an extensive review to identify the aspirations most important for people in general. We found 39. Our study then surveyed Australians to determine the importance, and performance, of these 39 aspirations. As per question four above, our study found the three most important aspirations for all Australians are:

- All Australians having access to quality healthcare: 81.06%
- Having a fair, honest, and capable legal system: 80.33%
- Australians should take responsibility for their own mistakes: 79.05%

Based on this, we have recommendations for your *Healthy, Cohesive, Prosperous, and Inclusive* policy themes:

Healthy

While healthcare is considered in the *Healthy* policy theme, we recommend the descriptions are updated to address the angle of access. An example description is, “a society where all have access to quality healthcare”.

Cohesive

1. Focus on personal accountability

Our *Navigator* study discovered that Australians taking responsibility for their own mistakes was the 3rd most important aspiration, but in terms of performance, tracked 4th poorest.

This shows that while Australians think personal accountability is very important, in terms of people’s lived experience, it needs improvement.

There is a strong link between personal accountability and the proposed theme, *Cohesive*. Therefore, a description for *Cohesive* should consider personal accountability through the lens of evolution and adaptation, and be expressed as, “a society where people can learn and grow from their experiences”.

2. Focus on constructive discussion

Another finding from our *Navigator* research relevant to *Cohesive* concerns Australians under 30. This demographic (24% of our survey responses) rated Australia’s ability to be, “willing to talk things out when we disagree” as the nation’s 4th poorest tracking aspiration.

This demonstrates that a key priority for the younger generation (the upcoming stewards and beneficiaries of future wellbeing) is to improve how we discuss complex and contested issues. This finding was supported by our *Recoded* research, which, across all demographics, identified *constructive discussion* as an essential leverage point to improve Australia’s future.

Cohesive, and its corresponding proxy measurements of national unity, do not conceptually acknowledge the breadth of experiences, backgrounds and values that people hold across Australia, nor any attention to their interaction.

This is more problematic when coupled with the *Inclusive* theme's static emphasis on diversity. Our data shows that Australians have higher aspirations than to merely *have* diverse viewpoints and cultures, which emphasise a fixity of identity amongst different cultural groups and viewpoints. Rather, we need to constructively discuss, negotiate, and at times, evolve, based on our differences, as well as shared values and culture.

We recommend that *Cohesive* is redeveloped, with the aim of measuring how well as a nation we can adapt and respond to changing circumstances and challenges. We suggest the description, "a society where people can talk out ideas and consider disagreements".

3. New title for *Cohesive* policy theme

As an alternative to *Cohesive*, we suggest *Responsive* which explores wellbeing through how the needs of the nation and people are met, and how democracy and government evolves, and responds to, uncertainties of the future. Furthermore, being responsive encompasses constructive discussion across the nation and how, as Australians, we might become better at taking responsibility for our own mistakes.

At a conceptual level, our proposed title, *Responsive*, means that wellbeing is less focused on the measurement of cohesive alignment, and more geared towards leveraging the complexities of our unique population, and how we might draw upon different knowledge cultures to improve how we track, and achieve progress, as a nation.

Inclusive

1. Reframe the theme *Inclusive* by balancing the descriptions to focus less on individualistic and economic indicators, and reduce *Prosperous* descriptions.

This first half of descriptions in the *Inclusive* theme are rooted in an individualistic view of Australia, where wellbeing success is based on accrual (and subsequent measurement) of human and economic capital, and mobility.

The first three descriptions refer to affordability, jobs, and intergenerational-mobility, implying that if these inputs are present, an individual is, "included" in society. However, these descriptions are proxies for economic inclusion, and equate to measures of subsistence, employment opportunity/workforce participation, access to social services, and upward mobility.

Being an economically productive member of society does not equate to social inclusion, yet it makes up 50% of this theme which is described as, "a society that shares opportunities and enables people to fully participate". This is at odds with the proposed Wellbeing Framework's aim to develop a more holistic view of progress, and Next25's key finding from *Recoded*: to embrace Success Beyond GDP.

If they are retained, the first three descriptions from *Inclusive* belong under the theme *Prosperous*. Yet, compared to the other themes, *Prosperous* is already over-populated. This suggests that despite the intention, the framework remains overly reliant on economic criteria.

We suggest further work is done on the descriptions in *Prosperous* to encompass the economic-based descriptions from *Inclusive*, and to balance the number of descriptions overall to be consistent with the other themes. Additional descriptions for *Inclusive* are outlined below. These changes to *Prosperous* and *Inclusive* will achieve a better balance of wellbeing priorities.

2. Focus on justice and legal system

Add a description that references justice and the legal system, which is the second most important aspiration to all Australians, as found in our *Navigator* study. Our suggested description is, “a society where all can access a fair, honest, and capable legal system”.

3. Balance the description priorities in *Inclusive* to focus on public engagement

Our *Navigator* research found that only 30% of Australians believe they can positively influence Australia’s future, and only 34% are confident that Australia is doing a good job of enabling the public to have a say. However, 66% of Australians believe it is important to have a say beyond voting.

Therefore, this data demonstrates an engagement deficit where two-thirds of Australians believe it important for the public to be involved in having a say, but only a third believe Australia is doing a good job of enabling the public to actually have a say. This is further supported by our *Recoded* research which found that while there are pockets of public engagement across Australia, there is enthusiasm for greater and more diverse avenues for public participation in decision-making processes.

Public engagement as a measure of inclusion supports *Inclusive*’s definition of, “a society that shares opportunities and enables people to fully participate”. We suggest the description, “a society with strong public engagement opportunities” and, “leaders that draw upon diverse perspectives and public wisdom in decision making” or, “a society that enables people to have a say”.

4. Balance the description priorities in *Inclusive* to focus on public interest

Linked to the topic of public engagement is public interest, which is another relevant area for *Inclusive*. Next25’s research on public interest uncovered interconnected findings that *Measuring What Matters* should consider, which are:

- Only 27% of Australia thinks that the government puts the public before vested interests. Across other institutions (the media, business, experts, academia, and NGOs), none scored over 40% when asked, “how often do different groups consider what Australians want?”
- Four out of five Australians believe that politicians have the most say in setting the priorities of Australia, but only one in four believe politicians and the public service act on the needs and desires of the public.

These findings represent a divergence of public interest: the Australian public perceives that the gatekeepers who have the most input into the public interest are failing to consider, and act, in the public interest.

To focus on public interest and government, if Australians believe that politicians have the highest responsibility to act and set priorities, a measure of wellbeing in a society should pay attention to how priorities are conceived, enacted, and represent the interests of the public or serve the common good. There is also value in measuring the degree to which representation equates to action. Therefore, we suggest the following descriptions: “a society that is effective at acting in the common good” or, “a society where the institutions represent and act in the public interest”.

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

<https://www.next25.org.au/navigator>

<https://www.next25.org.au/recoded>

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

We also suggest that the framework focuses on measuring the enabling conditions of delivering what matters. Based on our *Navigator* and *Recoded* research projects, these enabling conditions can be thought of as leverage points. The key leverage points that we identified to unlock progress to improve how Australia’s future is made, are:

A galvanising national identity: to articulate an honest, inclusive, and inspiring national identity that everyone can subscribe to despite their differences. This is not directly referenced in your policy themes and is a direction of travel to consider in later updates to the Wellbeing Framework, once the description indicators and benchmarks are established.

Benchmarks beyond GDP: to define national success on not only economic but also social and environmental factors. This is captured in the logic across your emerging policy themes.

Constructive discussion: to become better at constructively discussing complex and contested issues despite varied experience and perspectives. This is discussed in our recommendations in question five concerning *Cohesive*.

Engaged decision-making: to enable Australians to contribute to, and feel represented by, the decisions made on their behalf. This is discussed in our recommendations in question five concerning *Cohesive*.

Trust in Government: to restore Australians’ trust in politics and the public service. This leverage point is already captured in your *Cohesive* theme.

We do not provide these as alternative themes, rather, they serve as provocations for the realisation of the existing themes, which might build on these leverage points in their proposed descriptions or be used to reframe the logic of existing themes.

Our consultation on 21 May 2023 also considered the themes of the proposed Wellbeing Framework and the findings of our research.

We asked the participants who attended our online event to provide insight about the impact of our five leverage points across three contexts: personal, professional, and community life. This was done to draw on the lived experience of our community to determine, “what matters” to them, and then, to thematically consider how we might describe and measure this in the context of the Wellbeing Framework.

Our key findings are:

- A total of 100% participants identified Constructive Discussion as the leverage point with the most impact in their personal life
- A total of 67% participants identified Success Beyond GDP as the leverage point with the most impact in their professional life
- A total of 42% participants identified Constructive Discussion and 58% identified Engaged Decision-Making as the leverage points with the most impact in their community life

Participants also discussed the relevance of indicators in society more generally, noting that beyond the Wellbeing Framework, “better” benchmarks that use a wider variety of success metrics are needed to track societal progress. They also noted that while better benchmarks are essential for future progress, they need to be meaningful. Meaningful benchmarks should be established via evidence-based means, then measured, and updated over time.

Participants agreed that expanding the definitions of success beyond economic terms is necessary (and thus supportive of the motivation behind *Measuring What Matters*), but that the leverage points, Constructive Discussion and Engaged Decision-Making, should feature more prominently in any tools that are developed to measure success in a less economic terms.

The meeting also confirmed our suggestions relating to constructive discussion (see question five), and discussion centred on our participants’ experiences of the current climate of disengagement in Australia. Constructive discussion is essential, with many participants sharing perceptions that people's opinions are drifting further apart, coupled with the difficulty of people's tendency to, “speak their truth,” then, “shut down” opinions they disagree with – especially among friends and family.

Several participants debated the role of education in developing curious and inquisitive young minds. They discussed early years education as a crucial mechanism to develop well-rounded adults that can, “vote well,” and have a genuine understanding, and interest, of their civic responsibilities and roles in a democratic society. This links Wellbeing to the intrinsic value of educational infrastructure. We suggest the themes of *Healthy* or *Cohesive* develop a further description that measures the efficacy of educational enrichment. This is distinct from access to education that primarily develops the future workforce.

There was also discussion pertaining to our leverage point, Trust in Government, and the *Cohesive* theme description, “a government that is trusted by the public.” Participants discussed the difficult position that governments face where the public looks to leaders to, “fix everything,” yet, leaders themselves are not viewed as particularly trustworthy in general. *Measuring What Matters* might

consider measuring trust in a way that highlights honesty and integrity of action as well as the *perception* of trust to develop more robust indicators on this issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to *Measuring What Matters*, and we look forward to the results of this second consultation process.