

**Submission
No 7**

**A FRAMEWORK FOR PERFORMANCE REPORTING AND DRIVING
WELLBEING OUTCOMES IN NSW**

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Date Received: 25 July 2024

Submission: A framework for performance reporting and driving wellbeing outcomes in NSW

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About the author

I am a social researcher with over ten years of experience in a range of areas including wellbeing measurement, wellbeing policy frameworks, child wellbeing, community engagement, longitudinal analysis, and program evaluation. I am currently a Research Fellow at the University of Tasmania, a social research consultant, and a committee member for the Bega Valley Data Collective.

I hold a PhD in Public Policy, a MSc in Public Policy & Human Development, and a BSc in Statistics. I have previously held research positions at the ANU, ARACY (The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth), and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. I currently live on Yuin Country on the far south coast of NSW.

The views expressed in this submission are my own and should not be attributed to the University of Tasmania.

About this submission

Public consultation in the development of wellbeing frameworks has been shown to be highly valuable in ensuring that frameworks are relevant to the population they seek to represent, and that they go on to have meaningful policy impact. I was pleased to see that the NSW Government has a plan to undertake further consultation throughout 2024, beyond this submission process and a survey. It is important that the NSW Government engages widely with residents to ensure that individuals and communities have a say on how their wellbeing is considered. This submission puts forward some recommendations and suggestions to enhance this consultation process and help ensure that the benefits of the process are maximised.

This submission contains three key recommendations:

1. Engage widely and deeply with communities, ensuring diverse voices are heard. The six-month timeframe is likely to short to facilitate this.
2. Look beyond existing data in developing indicators
3. Carefully consider how the framework will support decision-making. A framework can be impactful only when we take steps to ensure it is effectively embedded in policy.

Recommendation 1: Engage widely and deeply with communities, ensuring diverse voices are heard

The benefits of consultation

The NSW Government's plans to consult with individuals and communities across NSW on the Performance and Wellbeing Framework will be highly beneficial for both the government and the community. By prioritising community consultation, the NSW Government can not only enhance the effectiveness of the wellbeing framework but also strengthen democratic participation and governance.

A comprehensive consultation process would have numerous benefits. Firstly, community consultation helps to identify community priorities, ensuring that the framework reflects the needs and concerns specific to different population groups. While certain aspects of wellbeing are universally relevant, nuances exist within every community. Consultation is a valuable way of identifying theseⁱ.

Secondly, involving communities can help ensure greater legitimacy and credibility of the wellbeing frameworkⁱⁱ. Direct community input will shape the framework to resonate more with NSW residents, enhancing its accessibility and relevanceⁱⁱⁱ. Moreover, community engagement can help raise awareness about social issues^{iv}, contributing to a depoliticised and enduring framework^v.

Thirdly, community consultation can help empower residents by giving them a voice on how their wellbeing is considered. Research indicates that genuine consultation processes empower community members, facilitate access to services and information, and promote active community engagement^{vi}.

Finally, a robust consultation process enhances public understanding of policy and decision-making processes. This can help to cultivate broader support for Governmental decisions by fostering appreciation for diverse viewpoints, supporting residents to recognise inherent policy trade-offs, and nurturing informal community networks^{vii}.

Suggestions for enhancing the consultation process

For these benefits to be realised, the consultation needs to be conducted in the right way. I make four key suggestions to help enhance the potential benefits from the consultation process.

Firstly, an authentic consultation process provides residents the opportunity for meaningful, in-depth engagement. This can be achieved through processes such as community discussions, workshops, focus-groups, and interviews. Furthermore, particular care should be taken to ensure that diverse voices are heard. This includes, but is not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, those living in regional and rural areas of NSW, children and young people, culturally and linguistically diverse population groups, those living in poverty, and people with disabilities.

This process needs to go beyond this current policy submission exercise and survey. Standard policy submission processes typically involve those who are already engaged with policy processes. This process therefore fails to hear from those who are less engaged in policy, and those who may feel more marginalised by policy processes.

Secondly, the proposed timeframe for completing the consultation by the end of 2024 is too short. To ensure in-depth engagement, the Government will need to develop relationships with communities across NSW and plan appropriate consultation formats. Successful consultations on wellbeing frameworks are typically run over many months. For example, the ABS Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP)^{viii} took almost two years, while the national conversation in Wales was held over one year.

Thirdly, the consultation exercise should ask participants open-ended questions about what encompasses their wellbeing, and how it should be measured. While it may be practical to ensure

alignment with the Commonwealth Treasury's Measuring What Matters (MWM) framework, it should be noted that there is little evidence to support the assertion that the MWM themes arose through consultation^{ix}. Furthermore, starting without pre-conceived notions will help ensure participants feel that their voice is valued. Thus, to be truly community-led, a consultation process should firstly ask open-ended questions about what matters to individuals for their wellbeing, rather than asking for validation of pre-defined dimensions.

Finally, an important aspect of consultation is individuals feeling like their voices have been listened to. One way of ensuring this is by publishing a report outlining the findings of the consultation process. This would help ensure transparency in the process and assure the community that their input has been taken into account in development of the framework.

Recommendation 2: Look beyond existing data in developing indicators

The proposed indicators appear to be based on existing data and surveys. This consultation process is a valuable opportunity to consider potential data gaps and identify indicators (for which data may not be currently available) that would best serve extensive evaluation of outcomes and services. I strongly suggest that the process to develop the framework initially look to what indicators the Government would *ideally* like to measure, before looking to existing data sources. In the long-term, the NSW Government can use this information to develop additional data sources.

Recommendation 3: Carefully consider how the framework will support decision-making.

To truly have impact, the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework should be more than just a measurement dashboard. The NSW Government should look to models in place elsewhere, such as Wales' Future Generations Act, Tasmania's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, and the Commonwealth Early Years strategy, which incorporate components such as principles for decision-making, governance structures, and reporting and accountability mechanisms. The NSW Government should also consider embedding the framework in budget allocations, conducting wellbeing assessments for policy proposals, setting targets for wellbeing indicators, and assigning accountability to a designated minister for achieving these targets. A measurement dashboard is important, but is only one piece of the puzzle.

Concluding remarks

As a NSW resident, and someone who has researched widely on the value of wellbeing frameworks, I am excited to see the development of the NSW performance and wellbeing framework. It is commendable that the NSW Government is willing to consult and engage on the framework. I have put forward some proposals to further enhance this process, as well as some additional suggestions on the approach used to identify indicators, and embedding the framework into decision-making. I am very open to further discussions with the NSW Government on the Performance and Wellbeing Framework.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Sollis, K., Yap, M., Campbell, P., & Biddle, N. (2022). Conceptualisations of wellbeing and quality of life: A systematic review of participatory studies. *World Development*, 160, 106073. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.106073>
- ⁱⁱ Hall, J., & Rickard, L. (2013). *People, progress and participation: How initiatives measuring social progress yield benefits beyond better metrics*. Global Choices. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283996367_People_progress_and_participation_How_initiatives_measuring_social_progress_yield_benefits_beyond_better_metrics; Wallace, J., & Schmuecker, K. (2012). *Shifting the dial: From wellbeing measures to policy practice*. Carnegie UK Trust. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/shifting-the-dial-from-wellbeing-measures-to-policy-practice/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Sollis, K. (2023). Participatory Wellbeing Frameworks and the Secret to Impact. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 24(2), 163-193.
- ^{iv} Kroll, C. (2011). *Measuring progress and well-being: Achievements and challenges of a new global movement*. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/08509.pdf>
- ^v Sollis et al. (in press). A national conversation on Measuring What Matters in Australia. *Centre for Policy Development*.
- ^{vi} Sollis, K. (2023). Participatory Wellbeing Frameworks and the Secret to Impact. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 24(2), 163-193; Hall, J., & Rickard, L. (2013). *People, progress and participation: How initiatives measuring social progress yield benefits beyond better metrics*. Global Choices.
- ^{vii} Hall, J., & Rickard, L. (2013). *People, progress and participation: How initiatives measuring social progress yield benefits beyond better metrics*. Global Choices.
- ^{viii} Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *1370.0.00.002 Measures of Australia's Progress - Aspirations for our Nation: A conversation with Australians about Progress, 2011-12*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0.00.002~2011-12~Main%20Features~Homepage~1>
- ^{ix} Sollis, K., Campbell, P., & Drake, N. (in draft). Australia's first wellbeing framework: Is it really measuring what matters?