

**Submission  
No 21**

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

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# Legislative Assembly - the Public Accounts Committee

July 2024

## **Inquiry into an effective framework for reporting on the performance of NSW Government services and driving wellbeing outcomes for NSW residents.**

### **Submission – Ally Dench – resident**

#### ***My recognition and commitment:***

In the spirit of reconciliation, I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

#### ***Introduction:***

I extend my gratitude to the Public Accounts Committee for this inquiry into establishing an effective framework for reporting on the performance of NSW Government services and enhancing wellbeing outcomes for residents. I appreciate the opportunity to contribute through this submission.

As a dedicated advocate for disadvantaged communities in Western Sydney, with over 30 years of experience spanning government and the not-for-profit sector, I possess a deep understanding of the region's dynamics and challenges. My approach is human-centered, aiming to bolster local community capacity and foster inclusive growth.

Fundamentally, a just society upholds human rights, ensures no one is left behind, and actively promotes the wellbeing of all its members. Central to this vision is equitable representation, especially for marginalised voices often overshadowed by wealth, influence, and power. My submission seeks to amplify these voices, advocating for fairer societal practices and policies.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of socio-economic disparities on Western Sydney residents. I am particularly concerned with addressing the pressing needs of disadvantaged groups, ensuring their voices are heard in shaping policies that affect their lives.

The development of an effective framework for reporting on the performance of NSW Government services and driving wellbeing outcomes for NSW residents presents both opportunities and challenges. It is crucial the framework considers factors such as economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. This inquiry offers a vital platform to explore how a performance and wellbeing reporting framework that reflects upon outcomes and service levels can positively contribute to the identification of wellbeing initiatives for NSW residents, especially those currently underserved.

#### **The priority areas this submission is advocating the Committee to consider, and address, are:**

- Outcomes and service measures that focus on people's inclusion and how current service provision inequities impact upon their everyday lives,
- The escalating growth impacts and equitable resource allocation to enable access to public services that lead to wellbeing outcomes,
- Acknowledgement that wellbeing outcomes are reliant upon an increase in social service provision at the same time new capital works expenditure is rolled out,

- Collaborate across government sectors and use the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) framework across government sectors. IPR was intended to provide the primary pathway to determining and addressing community needs, while at the same time ensuring responsible financial management. Consider and integrate current performance reporting frameworks that emphasise wellbeing - leveraging existing knowledge
- The need to factor social impacts and wellbeing outcomes into a cost-benefit analysis of government service provision and infrastructure projects,
- Evidence based resource allocations that deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes and create a more inclusive society,
- Collaborative partnerships and inclusive policy frameworks crucial for prioritising the needs of disadvantaged communities and maximising the benefits of wellbeing measures and data collection. By fostering partnerships between government agencies, non-profit organisations, the private sector, community groups, and residents, we can leverage collective expertise and resources to achieve greater impact and sustainable wellbeing outcomes.
- Ensure that the voices of marginalised and vulnerable populations are heard and valued, in the provision of NSW Government Services, particularly those who are often overlooked or silenced due to systemic barriers

I would welcome and appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the above priority areas and following evidence to the specific areas the inquiry is focusing on and can be contacted at



***Focus areas of the Inquiry:***

***a) The process in the Budget that allows Government to examine the outcomes achieved through its resource allocations, and the extent to which it allows Government to observe:***

***i) Outcomes and service levels***

**Evaluating Outcomes and Service Levels**

Currently, inequities persist in the outcomes, service levels, and resource allocation of NSW Government services. An effective framework for reporting on performance will illuminate these inequities and provide insights into how they can be rectified.

For instance, consider the transport disadvantaged suburbs in Western Sydney. The implementation of small-scale public transport projects and improving public transport access in these areas will not only yield financial benefits but also have a societal benefit through lower crime rates, increased employment, improved health outcomes, and enhanced social inclusion. However, the effectiveness of small-scale interventions often go unacknowledged in government cost-benefit analyses of public service provision and infrastructure projects.

Demographic considerations are crucial in public service planning and expenditure. This includes the aging population, evolving lifestyles, socio-economic disparities, the Aboriginal community, diverse cultural backgrounds, and the prevalence of mental health issues and chronic illnesses associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

Achieving quality public outcomes and wellbeing outcomes is pivotal for fostering inclusion and accessibility for all NSW residents. Unfortunately, current government services frequently exhibit

disparities in their delivery, particularly affecting underserved areas in public transport<sup>1 2</sup>, health, and education sectors. The recent report from the Legislative Council. Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and The Arts. Report no. 21. Current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney - April 2024<sup>3</sup>, underscores the need for comprehensive cost-benefit analyses that encompass social, economic, and health outcomes in all government projects.

To drive wellbeing outcomes effectively, government budget processes must prioritise measurable improvements that enhance resident wellbeing. This approach ensures accountability, transparency, and efficient resource allocation tailored to community needs and priorities.

It's essential to expand beyond traditional health indicators and include broader measures such as social connectedness, quality of life, and environmental factors. This holistic approach provides a comprehensive view of community health, wellbeing and happiness.

Local government plays a vital role as an economic steward and provider of essential infrastructure and services<sup>4</sup>. Collaborating with local councils ensures equitable access to services and infrastructure across diverse demographics, including rural areas, culturally diverse communities, and disadvantaged groups.

Policies and programs must address access barriers such as affordability, physical accessibility, and digital literacy. They should also foster social cohesion by supporting culturally diverse communities in fully participating in society.

Given the aging population, there's an increasing need for age-friendly infrastructure and services that support independent living and social connectedness, that lead to good wellbeing outcomes. This includes accessible housing, healthcare services, and transportation options tailored to older adults' needs.

Following are outcomes and service levels that should be considered in any Framework for reporting on performance of NSW Government services and driving wellbeing outcomes for NSW residents:

- **Equity and accessibility –**

*Outcome:* Achievement of equitable and accessible services across diverse community demographics, ensuring fair distribution of resources and opportunities

*Service Level:* Ensure that services are accessible to all community demographics without discrimination. Monitor and report on the percentage of the population served relative to demographic diversity. Track accessibility metrics such as geographic coverage, service availability in different languages, and accommodations for disabilities.

- **Long-term Sustainability –**

*Outcome:* Promotion of sustainable practices and infrastructure investments that support environmental, social, and economic wellbeing over the long term

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<sup>1</sup> Dench Alison, 2023 September, submission to the Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and the Arts, Inquiry into and report on the current and future public transport needs for Western Sydney

<sup>2</sup> New South Wales. Parliament. Legislative Council. Portfolio Committee No. 6 – Transport and The Arts. Report no. 21. Current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney - April 2024

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/tp/files/188484/Report%20No.%2021%20-%20PC%206%20-%20Current%20and%20future%20public%20transport%20needs%20in%20Western%20Sydney.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> LGNSW Draft Submission | Inquiry into the ability of councils to fund infrastructure and services, May 2024

*Service Level:* Develop sustainability indicators related to environmental, social, and economic factors. Measure the adoption of sustainable practices and infrastructure investments across government operations and community development projects. Report on reductions in carbon footprint, improvements in social equity indicators, and economic benefits from sustainable initiatives.

- **Education, Lifelong learning and Equitable Economic Development –**

*Outcome:* Promotion of inclusive economic growth and job creation, ensuring opportunities for all residents to prosper, through accessible, high-quality education and lifelong learning opportunities that empower individuals and contribute to community development.

*Service Level:* Monitor educational attainment levels, access to vocational training, and participation in lifelong learning opportunities. Track employment rates and income levels across demographic groups. Measure the availability and utilisation of educational and training programs that promote economic mobility and community development.

- **Community engagement, participation and social cohesion –**

*Outcome:* Increased community involvement in decision-making processes, fostering active participation and empowerment of residents, while enhancing cultural diversity, social cohesion, and community resilience to foster a sense of belonging and unity.

*Service Level:* Establish metrics for community involvement in decision-making processes, such as participation rates in public consultations or volunteerism. Measure indicators of social cohesion and cultural diversity, such as community event attendance, diversity in leadership roles, and levels of trust among community members.

- **Affordability, Cost-effectiveness and debt management –**

*Outcome:* Ensuring affordability of essential services and programs while maximising cost-effectiveness in resource allocation, and maintaining sustainable levels of public debt and financial stability to support long-term fiscal health and resilience

*Service Level:* Define affordability metrics for essential services, such as utility costs relative to household income levels or access to affordable housing. Monitor cost-effectiveness in resource allocation through efficiency measures and comparative analysis with peer jurisdictions. Report on debt levels and fiscal health indicators to ensure sustainability.

- **Health, Wellbeing and quality of life-**

*Outcome:* Improvement of public health outcomes and promotion of overall wellbeing through targeted health services and initiatives, while enhancing residents' overall quality of life by addressing factors such as safety, housing quality, and recreational opportunities.

*Service Level:* Track public health outcomes such as vaccination rates, disease prevention measures, and access to healthcare services. Monitor improvements in safety, housing quality, and recreational facilities. Measure overall life satisfaction and quality of life indicators across different demographic groups.

- **Data quality and integration –**

*Outcome:* Enhanced data quality and integration across government departments, enabling informed decision-making and improved service delivery

*Service Level:* Implement standards for data quality across government departments. Measure improvements in data accuracy, completeness, and timeliness. Track integration efforts to

ensure seamless data sharing and interoperability, enhancing informed decision-making and service delivery efficiency.

- **Innovation, technology and digital inclusion –**

*Outcome:* Integration of innovative technologies and practices to enhance service efficiency, effectiveness, and accessibility for residents, while ensuring equitable access to digital infrastructure, skills, and opportunities to promote digital inclusion and connectivity for all residents.

*Service Level:* Monitor the adoption of innovative technologies to improve service delivery and accessibility. Measure digital inclusion through metrics such as broadband access rates, digital skills training participation, and utilisation of online government services. Report on the impact of technology initiatives on service efficiency and citizen engagement.

- **Evidence based policy making, transparency and accountability –**

*Outcome:* Implementation of policies and initiatives based on rigorous research, analysis, and evaluation to ensure effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes, while enhancing transparency in budgetary processes and accountability in the use of public funds to foster trust and confidence among residents.

*Service Level:* Implement policies for transparent budget processes and accountability mechanisms. Track adherence to evidence-based policy-making practices using research and evaluation findings. Measure public trust and confidence in government institutions based on transparency measures and accountability outcomes.

- **Cross Sector Collaboration and good governance –**

*Outcome:* Promotion of effective collaboration between government agencies, community organisations, and private sector partners to improve governance and service delivery.

*Service Level:* Establish indicators for effective collaboration among government agencies, community organisations, and private sector partners. Measure outcomes of collaborative initiatives, such as joint service delivery projects or policy innovations. Track improvements in governance practices and public service effectiveness.

- **Resilience and preparedness –**

*Outcome:* Development of resilient communities and infrastructure, ensuring preparedness for natural disasters, economic shocks, and other challenges

*Service Level:* Develop resilience indicators for communities and infrastructure. Monitor preparedness levels through disaster response exercises, emergency response times, and infrastructure maintenance programs. Measure community resilience based on recovery and adaptation to natural disasters, economic shocks, and other challenges.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation –**

*Outcome:* Establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to assess the impact of policies and initiatives on resident wellbeing, enabling continuous improvement

*Service Level:* Establish frameworks for monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies and initiatives on resident wellbeing. Measure the effectiveness of programs through performance metrics and evaluation results. Report on findings to support evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement efforts.

## **ii) Evidence of the effectiveness of programs**

### **Evaluating the Effectiveness of Government Programs**

To ensure that government programs effectively address community needs and make the best use of resources, rigorous evidence-based evaluations are essential. This process involves comprehensive data collection and analysis to measure program impact accurately. For regions like Western Sydney, where rapid urbanisation has strained essential services such as public transport, education, health, and social services, effective evaluation is particularly crucial. Issues such as longer commute times and limited access to critical services often lead to reliance on costly private cars, negatively impacting health and wellbeing.

### **Key Strategies for Effective Program Evaluation**

1. **Evidence-Based Evaluation:** Prioritising robust, evidence-based evaluations allows for accurate measurement of program impacts. Longitudinal studies are crucial for tracking changes in wellbeing over time and assessing the effects of government policies and interventions. There are limited studies that are NSW specific. The Federal Department of Social Services have developed a program *Longitudinal Studies*<sup>5</sup> to demonstrate the value of longitudinal data, particularly how it can support decision makers to address critical questions. The mission of this initiative is to improve the lifetime wellbeing of people and families in Australia and to provide data necessary for informed decision-making and adapting to evolving community needs. Data Sets have been established and the department encourage collaboration between survey developers, researchers and policy makers. NSW collects data in relation to well-being and child development and this could be expanded through the development of the NSW Well-being Framework.
2. **Localised Outcome Measurement:** Developing localised Wellbeing outcome measurement frameworks tailored to NSW and specific regions like Western Sydney is vital. These frameworks should define indicators of success related to public transport accessibility, education outcomes, health services utilisation, and social service provision. Consistent data collection and reporting practices across agencies will ensure reliable evaluations of program outcomes.
3. **Community-Centric Evaluation Methodologies:** Employing community-driven evaluations and participatory action research ensures that evaluations reflect local perspectives and priorities. Engaging residents through surveys, public consultations, and community forums provides valuable feedback<sup>6</sup>. For example, the Greater Western Sydney Community Wellbeing Survey, which engaged over 600 residents, identified healthcare access and personal security as top priorities, highlighting the importance of addressing these needs in wellbeing program evaluations<sup>7</sup>.
4. **Integration of Wellbeing Indicators:** There is an increasing trend towards incorporating wellbeing indicators in program evaluations, as seen in approaches like South Australia's "Health in All Policies" (HiAP)<sup>8</sup>. Incorporating indicators such as domestic violence rates, access to affordable housing, and educational facility accessibility will provide a more comprehensive assessment of community health and wellbeing outcomes.
5. **Expanding Performance Metrics:** The current framework for reporting on NSW Government and Local Government services focuses predominantly on quantitative measurements. To

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<sup>5</sup><https://www.dss.gov.au/longitudinal-studies>

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/thri/research/outputs/health\\_and\\_wellbeing\\_research\\_theme\\_white\\_papers](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/thri/research/outputs/health_and_wellbeing_research_theme_white_papers)

<sup>7</sup> [https://westernsydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/202405\\_CIS-Report\\_summary.pdf](https://westernsydney.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/202405_CIS-Report_summary.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://sdgs.org.au/project/south-australias-health-in-all-policies-initiative/>

enhance understanding and effectiveness, it is recommended to expand performance metrics to include qualitative tools and health indicators. Indicators such as the Social Infrastructure Index, Walkability Index, Heat Vulnerability Index, Air Quality Index, Urban Vegetation Cover, and Digital Inclusion Index will offer a more nuanced view of community needs and environmental challenges. The focus on quantitative measurements is evident in the development of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework, which aims to enhance transparency and inform government decisions.

6. **Inter-Sectoral Collaboration:** The persistence of health inequities is reflected in repeated calls for intersectoral collaboration on the social determinants of health, specifically through public policy action such as the development of the NSW Wellbeing Framework. Effective evaluation requires collaboration across sectors, including transport, health, education, and housing. There is a need for more targeted strategies to strengthen current collaboration mechanisms. This holistic approach ensures that integrated programs address the multifaceted challenges of rapid urbanisation and align with local needs, maximising positive impacts across the community. Effective collaboration is crucial for improving health and wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable populations.

### **Ensuring Comprehensive and Effective Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluating social determinants of health can be complex, but incorporating qualitative measures can amplify the voices of vulnerable residents and place people at the forefront of decision-making processes. By adopting these expanded measurement tools and indicators, the reporting framework can demonstrate a steadfast commitment to prioritising and supporting community wellbeing. This approach will align policy decisions and resource allocations with the diverse needs and aspirations of NSW communities, fostering sustainable development and enhancing overall quality of life.

By focusing on these specific considerations, tailored to regions like Western Sydney, the government can more effectively assess and demonstrate the impact of its resource allocations. This comprehensive approach supports evidence-based decision-making and enhances wellbeing and liveability across NSW communities.

### ***iii) Transparency of performance***

#### **Transparency of Performance in Budgetary Processes**

Transparency in performance reporting is critical for maintaining accountability and fostering public trust, especially within the budgetary context. It ensures that comprehensive information about government activities, outcomes, and the use of public funds is readily accessible to all stakeholders, contributing to equitable access, which is a social determinant of health<sup>9 10 11</sup>.

#### **Key Elements of Transparency**

1. **Accessible Public Budget Documentation:** Central to transparency is the provision of clear and detailed budget documentation. This includes comprehensive explanations of expenditures, revenue sources, and allocation decisions, presented in formats and languages that facilitate broad understanding and scrutiny.

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<sup>9</sup> WHO. (2008). Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health. World Health Organisation. Available at: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1)

<sup>10</sup> Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Social determinants of health: Know what affects health. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/about/priorities/why-is-addressing-sdoh-important.html>

<sup>11</sup> Berkman, L. F., & Kawachi, I. (Eds.). (2000). Social epidemiology. Oxford University Press. This book discusses various social determinants of health, including access to services



2. **Alignment of Metrics and Goals:** Performance metrics, targets, and goals must be directly aligned with budget allocations. These metrics should be measurable and linked to desired outcomes, allowing for effective tracking of progress and evaluation of program effectiveness.
3. **Accountability through Role Assignment:** Clear assignment of roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis, and reporting promotes accountability throughout the budget process. Ensuring that each aspect of the budget is managed by designated individuals or teams enhances clarity and oversight.
4. **Public Consultation and Engagement:** Incorporating stakeholder feedback into budget priorities and performance expectations is crucial. Public consultation helps align budget decisions with community needs and enhances responsiveness, thereby strengthening the relationship between government and its constituents.
5. **Robust Reporting Mechanisms:** Governments should regularly disclose how public funds are utilised and demonstrate the impact of expenditures through performance reports, audits, and evaluations. These reports should highlight how budgetary allocations contribute to achieving intended outcomes.
6. **Independent Oversight:** Independent oversight mechanisms are essential for ensuring accountability in budget processes. Regular audits and evaluations by external bodies provide an additional layer of scrutiny and help maintain public trust.
7. **Open Data Initiatives:** Embracing open data initiatives by releasing budget and performance data in machine-readable formats enhances transparency. This allows stakeholders to analyse and scrutinise government actions and resource allocation decisions effectively.
8. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establishing channels for stakeholders to provide input on budget performance is vital. These feedback mechanisms foster trust and demonstrate a commitment to responsiveness and accountability.
9. **Comparative Benchmarking:** Comparing performance against national standards or international best practices helps assess performance objectively and identify areas for improvement. This promotes continuous learning and enhancement within government agencies.
10. **Training and Capacity Building:** Investing in staff training and capacity building enhances transparency practices and improves public understanding of budget decisions. Well-informed staff are better equipped to manage and communicate budgetary processes effectively.

By implementing these strategies in the Performance and Wellbeing Framework, the NSW government can enhance transparency in performance within the budget process. This approach not only fosters trust and accountability but also supports effective resource allocation, ensuring that budgetary decisions lead to meaningful outcomes for residents.

#### ***iv) how services are delivered and the outcomes achieved by Government***

##### **Assessing Service Delivery and Outcomes**

##### **Understanding the Broader Impacts of Service Delivery**

Evaluating the cost-benefit analysis of infrastructure and social projects requires a comprehensive approach that considers not only economic factors but also social impacts such as community cohesion and quality of life. Effective infrastructure planning should be informed by where people live, aiming to reduce disparities and enhance overall wellbeing across NSW.

## **Focusing on People-Centred Service Delivery**

To support the wellbeing of families and communities, particularly in regions like Western Sydney, it is crucial to place people's needs at the centre of service delivery and wellbeing outcome measurement. This approach helps address existing inequities and counteracts the social, economic, and planning challenges faced by these communities.

### **Transport and Access to Services**

In Western Sydney, transport and access to services are consistently highlighted as top issues in Local Government Community Strategic Planning processes. Poorly integrated public transport services contribute significantly to vehicle dependency and transport disadvantage. Residents often face difficulties accessing transport due to factors such as:

- **Cost:** High expenses related to private vehicles, including fuel, insurance, purchase, and maintenance, add financial stress.
- **Availability:** Limited public transport options reduce accessibility.
- **Physical Accessibility:** Inadequate infrastructure for people with mobility issues further limits transport access.

### **Data-Driven Decision Making**

Effective service delivery requires a data-driven approach. Collecting and analysing data on service usage, resident needs, and geographic disparities can provide valuable insights for planning and resource allocation to drive wellbeing outcomes. This approach ensures that investments are directed towards areas with the greatest need and potential for impact.

### **Community Engagement and Feedback**

Engaging with the community is essential for responsive service delivery and evaluation. Involving residents in planning and evaluation processes through surveys, public consultations, and feedback mechanisms helps ensure that services meet their needs and preferences. Regular engagement fosters trust and ensures that services are tailored to the community's evolving needs.

### **Integration of Services**

Integrated service delivery models that coordinate across sectors—such as health, education, and transport—can provide holistic support to communities. For example, integrating health services with social support programs can address multiple needs simultaneously and improve overall wellbeing outcomes.

### **Innovation and Technology**

Leveraging innovations and technological advancements can enhance service delivery. Smart infrastructure, digital platforms, and mobile applications can improve access, efficiency, and user experience. Implementing these technologies can help streamline services and address access barriers.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Continuous monitoring and evaluation are vital for assessing service effectiveness, budget allocations and assessing wellbeing outcomes. Regular evaluations help identify issues, adjust strategies, and ensure that services are achieving their intended goals. By systematically reviewing performance, the NSW government can make informed decisions and enhance service delivery. This process needs to be resourced adequately and included in service specifications to ensure it is implemented.

## Equity and Inclusivity

Ensuring that services are equitable and inclusive, particularly for marginalised or underserved groups, is crucial. Service planning and delivery should incorporate equity considerations to address disparities and support all community members effectively.

A holistic evaluation of service delivery should integrate both economic and social factors, ensuring that infrastructure projects enhance community cohesion, quality of life and wellbeing. By prioritising people-centred approaches, data-driven decision-making, community engagement, and innovation, the NSW government can improve service delivery, address inequities, and achieve better wellbeing outcomes for residents.

### ***b) Opportunities, processes and governance arrangements to improve:***

#### ***i) the quality of performance information that align to targeted, meaningful outcomes for the people of NSW, to better inform government decision making***

The adage "what gets measured gets done" highlights the crucial role of performance metrics in guiding effective governance. However, it is increasingly recognised that traditional economic indicators alone are insufficient for capturing the full scope of societal wellbeing and quality of life<sup>12</sup>.

#### **Limitations of Conventional Metrics**

Current performance measurements predominantly emphasise economic efficiency, budget balancing, and quantitative metrics, such as service utilisation figures. While these indicators are valuable, they often overlook critical aspects of societal wellbeing. Conventional metrics:

1. **Focus Narrowly on Economic Efficiency:** Prioritising budgetary balance and service utilisation figures can overshadow other important factors affecting quality of life.
2. **Neglect Qualitative Measures:** These metrics frequently fail to capture the qualitative aspects of wellbeing, such as emotional health and community cohesion.
3. **Overlook Disparities:** They may disregard disparities in resource distribution, which can exacerbate social inequalities.
4. **Undervalue Unpaid Contributions:** Contributions like caregiving and household production are often undervalued in traditional economic measures.
5. **Ignore Environmental Impacts:** Environmental sustainability is frequently neglected, despite its critical role in long-term wellbeing.

#### **The Need for Comprehensive Performance Metrics**

To address these shortcomings, there is a pressing need for performance metrics that provide a holistic view of societal wellbeing. Adopting comprehensive measures can:

1. **Incorporate Social Equity:** Ensure that performance metrics account for disparities in resource distribution and promote equitable outcomes.
2. **Recognise Environmental Sustainability:** Integrate environmental indicators to assess and promote sustainable practices.

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<sup>12</sup> Henry M. Custodio, Michalis Hadjidakou, Brett A. Bryan, A review of socioeconomic indicators of sustainability and wellbeing building on the social foundations framework, *Ecological Economics*, Volume 203, 2023, 107608, ISSN 0921-8009, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2022.107608>

3. **Value Unpaid Contributions:** Include measures of caregiving and household production to reflect the full scope of societal contributions.
4. **Capture Broader Human Activities:** Consider non-economic factors, such as community engagement and quality of life, to provide a more complete picture.

### **Enhancing Decision-Making Processes**

Shifting towards comprehensive performance measures involves:

1. **Adopting Holistic Metrics:** Incorporate indicators that reflect social equity, environmental sustainability, and broader human activities.
2. **Promoting Inclusive Growth:** Ensure that policies support equitable and sustainable development, addressing both economic and non-economic dimensions of wellbeing.
3. **Ensuring Overall Societal Prosperity:** Use comprehensive metrics to guide policies that enhance the overall quality of life for all citizens.

By integrating these enhanced metrics, we can more accurately assess progress towards meaningful outcomes. This approach will enable better-informed policy strategies that promote the wellbeing of all citizens and ensure more effective governance.

### **Enhancing Cross-Sector Integration and Collaboration**

While the NSW Government employs various frameworks for infrastructure planning and service delivery, there is significant potential for improvement. Addressing existing flaws in these frameworks can lead to more effective governance and better alignment of performance information with targeted, meaningful outcomes for NSW residents.

#### **Current Challenges in Integration**

Effective integration across sectors is crucial for a comprehensive analysis and understanding of how different factors impact wellbeing and quality of life. However, the current landscape is often fragmented, with competing priorities, policies, and procedures across various sectors. This fragmentation hinders the effective use of information and obscures the true effectiveness of programs aimed at delivering wellbeing outcomes.

Siloed approaches persist, impeding holistic planning and the delivery of infrastructure projects that require multi-sectoral collaboration. Challenges such as limited resources, data compatibility issues, and privacy concerns further complicate these efforts. Establishing clear accountability and governance structures is essential to oversee cross-sector initiatives, yet this often strains already limited human and financial resources.

Collaboration doesn't just happen; it needs to be driven and resourced.

#### **Strategies for Enhanced Cross-Sector Collaboration**

To overcome these challenges and foster effective cross-sector collaboration, the following strategies should be considered:

1. **Data Sharing Initiatives:** Implement secure data-sharing platforms and standardise data collection methods to ensure compatibility and address privacy concerns. This will enable seamless integration of data across sectors.
2. **Clear Governance Structures:** Establish inter-agency committees, communities of practice, task forces, and working groups dedicated to specific issues requiring cross-sector collaboration. These structures will facilitate better coordination and oversight.

3. **Resource Allocation:** Support cross-sector initiatives with pooled funding and performance-based funding models that incentivise collaboration and shared outcomes. Allocating resources effectively will support integrated service delivery.
4. **Capacity Building:** Provide joint training programs and workshops across sectors to enhance collaborative skills and foster a culture of data-driven decision-making. Building capacity will improve the effectiveness of cross-sector efforts.
5. **Policy and Legislative Reforms:** Advocate for policy and legislative changes that remove barriers and support integrated service delivery across sectors. These reforms will create a more conducive environment for collaboration.
6. **Pilot Initiatives and Innovation Labs:** Launch pilot projects and innovation labs to experiment with and scale successful cross-sector collaboration models. Evaluate these initiatives based on outcomes to refine and expand effective approaches.
7. **Cross-Sector Funded Positions:** Create cross-sector funded positions dedicated to enhancing collaboration, facilitating communication, and integrating services. These roles will improve coordination and lead to more efficient and effective outcomes.

### Examples of Successful Collaboration

Successful examples of cross-sector collaboration include:

- **Community Safety Partnership in Port Augusta<sup>13</sup>:** This initiative integrates efforts among police, local councils, and community organisations to focus on crime prevention and community safety, leading to healthier and more cohesive communities.
- **Health in Planning Initiative at Wollondilly<sup>14</sup>:** This project demonstrates effective integration of health and planning sectors to improve community health and wellbeing outcomes through coordinated efforts. The success of this initiative has led to the initiative replication in Fairfield, Liverpool and Campbelltown.
- **Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse Coordinator program<sup>15</sup>:** wellbeing nurse positions funded as pilot sites. An additional \$46.8 million over four years was allocated until June 2024 for an extra 100 wellbeing nurse positions. These nurse coordinators work in selected metropolitan, regional, and rural communities in NSW, collaborating with identified secondary and primary schools and is a partnership between NSW Health and the NSW Department of Education.
- **Resilient Lismore<sup>16</sup>:** is a volunteer-led disaster response network. It was created in response to the 2017 Lismore floods and took a lead role in recovery response during the 2022 floods. Facebook is used as a key communication tool with over 30,000 members supporting the community's resilience and recovery.
- **Maranguka community hub<sup>17</sup>:** aims to improve wellbeing outcomes and creating better coordinated support for vulnerable families and children through the true empowerment of the local Aboriginal community in Bourke, NSW.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://ministers.pmc.gov.au/burney/2024/new-community-partnership-safer-stronger-port-augusta>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/shire-projects/strategic-planning-and-land-use-policies/health-in-planning/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/youth/Pages/whin-coordinator-program.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.floodhelpnr.com.au/about>

<sup>17</sup> <https://maranguka.org.au/>

These examples illustrate the positive impact of collaboration on wellbeing outcomes and can serve as models for other initiatives.

Addressing the challenges of cross-sector integration with adequate resources is crucial for implementing a framework that drives wellbeing outcomes for the people of NSW. Continued investment in collaborative approaches and focused efforts will enhance the quality and efficiency of government services, leading to better outcomes for all residents.

### **Engaging Communities and Ensuring Meaningful Participation**

Despite ongoing efforts to engage communities, there remain significant gaps in meaningful participation, particularly among marginalised and diverse groups. Frameworks and strategies such as the development of the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework can sometimes be perceived as superficial or tokenistic if they do not prioritise genuine community involvement from the outset. To enhance the effectiveness of these frameworks and ensure they meet the needs of all residents, it is essential to focus on authentic community engagement.

### **Importance of Authentic Engagement**

Authentic engagement is critical for the success of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework. It is crucial to implement strategies that foster genuine dialogue and address community concerns early in the planning stages. This inquiry is a great example of this. Effective channels for soliciting community feedback on government services and outcomes are vital. Community input provides qualitative insights that complement quantitative indicators, ensuring that performance measures align with public priorities.

### **Strategies for Effective Community Engagement**

1. **Initiate Early and Inclusive Engagement:** Start engagement efforts from the beginning of the planning process. Conduct consultations in accessible locations and at convenient times, and use diverse channels such as online surveys and town hall meetings to gather input. This approach helps ensure broad participation and inclusivity.
2. **Culturally Competent Engagement:** Ensure that engagement leaders are culturally competent and understand the unique needs and perspectives of various communities. Providing training for staff or partnering with community leaders and organisations can enhance cultural sensitivity and effectiveness in engagement.
3. **Clear Communication:** Build trust by clearly communicating how community feedback will influence decisions. Provide regular updates on the progress of the Framework and other initiatives. Establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback to demonstrate responsiveness and sustain community involvement throughout the implementation process.
4. **Support Effective Participation:** Support communities in their engagement efforts by providing necessary resources. This might include consultation participation training, funding for community organisations to facilitate engagement activities, or other support to enhance participation.
5. **Address Gaps in Participation:** Identify and address gaps in participation among marginalised and diverse groups. Tailor engagement strategies to overcome barriers and ensure that all voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

### **Enhancing Resourcing and Implementation**

Implementing these strategies requires adequate resourcing to ensure that engagement efforts are effective and inclusive. By investing in meaningful community engagement, the Performance and Wellbeing Framework can better reflect the needs of diverse communities, leading to more informed and responsive decision-making.

Meaningful community participation ensures that performance measures align with public priorities and contributes to informed, equitable decision-making for the people of NSW.

### **Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework**

Local Government plays a crucial role as a constitutional partner with the State in advancing good governance and enhancing the wellbeing of residents in New South Wales. Beyond traditional responsibilities such as managing infrastructure and local services, councils are increasingly entrusted with roles that significantly impact community wellbeing and liveability, social enrichment, and environmental stewardship<sup>18</sup>. They are key providers and administrators of State-funded services, crucial for fostering community productivity and economic success.

### **The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework**

The NSW Local Government Act does not prescribe a specific list of services or priorities for councils. Instead, Section 8 of the Act outlines principles guiding councils in determining their service provisions to effectively meet local community needs. Introduced in 2009, the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework mandates a strategic approach to decision-making, ensuring councils are responsive to community aspirations while maintaining financial responsibility<sup>19</sup>.

### **Synergising the Wellbeing Framework with IP&R**

There is a clear opportunity to integrate the new NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework with the existing IP&R Framework. The IP&R Framework already emphasises long-term planning aligned with community aspirations<sup>20 21</sup>. By aligning it with the Performance and Wellbeing Framework, councils can enhance its effectiveness and ensure that it moves beyond tokenistic gestures to make a substantial impact on community wellbeing.

### **Enhancing Wellbeing Outcomes Through Integration**

1. **Alignment of Goals:** Ensure that the objectives of the Wellbeing Framework are seamlessly aligned with the strategic goals outlined in the IP&R Framework. This alignment promotes a cohesive approach to community wellbeing and service delivery, fostering consistency in local governance.
2. **Integrated Reporting:** Utilise the reporting mechanisms within the IP&R Framework to monitor and report on the progress of the Wellbeing Framework at a local level. This transparency enhances accountability and keeps stakeholders informed about the impact and effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives.
3. **Shared Resources:** Leverage the resources and expertise available through the IP&R Framework to support the implementation of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework. This includes utilising existing data collection, analysis tools, and community engagement strategies embedded in the IP&R processes.
4. **Collaborative Governance:** Establish inclusive governance structures that integrate representatives from both the Performance and Wellbeing and IP&R Frameworks. This

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<sup>18</sup> LGNSW Draft Submission | Inquiry into the ability of councils to fund infrastructure and services, May 2024

<sup>19</sup> LGNSW Draft Submission | Inquiry into the ability of councils to fund infrastructure and services, May 2024

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/integrated-planning-and-reporting/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/integrated-planning-and-reporting/framework/>

collaborative approach ensures that wellbeing initiatives are effectively integrated into broader planning and service delivery processes.

### **New Performance Measurement Framework**

Additionally, the Office of Local Government is considering the development of a new Performance Measurement Framework<sup>22</sup> and associated performance indicators. This initiative presents a strategic opportunity to further enhance the implementation of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework within local councils. Aligning with the new Performance Measurement Framework can help councils refine their focus on community wellbeing and systematically measure progress towards meaningful outcomes.

By implementing these strategies, the integration of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework with the IP&R Framework can achieve greater effectiveness, enhancing the genuine impact on community wellbeing. Adequate resourcing is crucial to ensure that the implementation is substantive and collaborative, avoiding any perception of cost-shifting between levels of government. This approach will help ensure that local governance is both effective and responsive to the needs of NSW residents, leading to more informed decision-making and improved quality of performance information.

### **Leveraging Emerging Technologies and Data Analytics**

Harnessing emerging technologies and advanced data analytics presents a significant opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework. However, to ensure the integrity and success of these technologies, robust cybersecurity measures are essential. Implementing practices such as data encryption, regular audits, penetration testing, and stringent access controls is critical to safeguarding sensitive data and maintaining public trust.

### **Optimising the Wellbeing Framework with Technology**

To fully leverage the Performance and Wellbeing Framework, it is crucial to develop advanced data integration platforms. These platforms should adhere to interoperability standards and secure data-sharing protocols that comply with privacy regulations, ensuring data integrity. Key components include:

1. **Automated Data Collection Systems:** Streamlining data collection processes through automation reduces manual errors and increases efficiency.
2. **Real-Time Monitoring Dashboards:** Implementing dashboards that provide real-time insights into performance metrics helps identify trends and make timely adjustments.
3. **Predictive Analytics:** Utilising predictive analytics enables forecasting of future needs and optimises resource allocation based on data-driven assessments.

### **Enhancing Collaboration and Consistency**

Effective implementation of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework requires collaborative partnerships with data analytics and cybersecurity experts. Capacity-building initiatives are also vital to equip stakeholders with the skills necessary to utilise these technologies effectively. Addressing current inconsistencies in measuring and reporting outcomes across projects and sectors underscores the need for integrated data mechanisms across government agencies.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/programs-and-initiatives/local-government-performance-measurement-framework/>



1. **Standardising Metrics:** Developing standardised metrics and indicators enhances comparability, transparency, and consistency in reporting. This approach improves decision-making and accountability across sectors.
2. **Utilising AI and Machine Learning:** Exploring advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) can enhance predictive analytics and real-time performance monitoring, providing valuable insights to optimise resource allocation and anticipate future challenges.

### **Promoting Transparency and Accountability**

Establishing open data portals for public access to raw data and reports fosters transparency and enables independent analysis. Implementing a consistent reporting schedule, whether quarterly or annually, ensures regular updates on progress and outcomes, further promoting accountability.

### **Developing a Collaborative Framework**

To ensure the effectiveness of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework, it should be developed collaboratively with input from various stakeholders. This includes integrating both quantitative and qualitative indicators to capture comprehensive outputs and outcomes of government initiatives. Aligning the Performance and Wellbeing Framework with existing reporting structures, such as the Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework, will enhance consistency and comparability across projects and sectors.

1. **Sector-Specific Guidelines:** Providing detailed guidelines for each sector on measuring and reporting outcomes ensures clarity and uniformity in data collection and analysis.
2. **Streamlining Regulatory Frameworks:** Simplifying regulatory frameworks, policies, and infrastructure planning is crucial for efficient project implementation, minimising bureaucratic barriers and delays.

By incorporating advanced technologies and data analytics into the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework, the government can improve the quality of performance information and better inform decision-making processes. Ensuring robust cybersecurity, standardising metrics, and promoting transparency are essential steps toward achieving meaningful outcomes and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework.

### **Innovative Financing Mechanisms and Alignment with Strategic Priorities**

A robust system that integrates innovative financing mechanisms and ensures transparent resource allocation is essential for the success of the NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework. Adopting diverse financial strategies can enhance the effectiveness of the Framework and optimise the use of available resources. Key mechanisms to consider include:

1. **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Collaborations between the public and private sectors can leverage private investment and expertise to deliver public services and infrastructure projects efficiently.
2. **Value Capture Strategies:** These strategies allow governments to capture a portion of the increased value that public investments bring to private properties, ensuring that those benefiting from public projects contribute to their funding.
3. **Phased Grants Based on Milestones:** Providing grants in phases tied to project milestones can ensure accountability and align funding with tangible progress and results.

4. **Government Equity Stakes in Infrastructure Projects:** Taking equity stakes in significant infrastructure projects can align public interests with project success and facilitate long-term benefits.

#### **Alignment with Strategic Priorities and Policies**

To ensure that resources are effectively directed towards achieving key goals and addressing societal challenges, it is crucial to align performance measurement with the NSW Government's Strategic Priorities and Policies. Important frameworks to consider include:

1. **Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework:** This framework supports cohesive planning and reporting at the local level, aligning council activities with community needs and state priorities.
2. **State Infrastructure Strategy (SIS)<sup>23</sup>:** Provides strategic direction and recommendations for infrastructure development across NSW, guiding investments in critical sectors.
3. **Emerging Industry Infrastructure Fund (EIIF)<sup>24</sup>:** Supports infrastructure development in emerging industries where NSW has competitive advantages, fostering economic growth and innovation.
4. **Infrastructure Contributions<sup>25</sup>:** Funding from developers to support infrastructure needs in growing communities ensures sustainable development and improved quality of life and wellbeing.

#### **Enhancing Effectiveness through Integration**

To optimise the Performance and Wellbeing Framework's effectiveness, these strategic frameworks should be interconnected. This involves:

1. **Integrating Performance Metrics:** Develop performance metrics that measure outcomes aligned with strategic priorities. This ensures consistency in reporting and decision-making, promoting transparency and accountability.
2. **Optimising Resource Allocation:** By aligning financing mechanisms with strategic priorities, resources can be directed more effectively to support infrastructure quality, community growth, and innovation.

#### **Continuous Improvement and Accountability**

Establishing mechanisms for continuous improvement is critical for the success of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework. These mechanisms should:

1. **Facilitate Regular Evaluations:** Regular evaluations based on performance data help adapt programs and services to changing community needs and emerging trends.
2. **Promote a Culture of Accountability:** Ongoing assessments ensure programs remain relevant and effective, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for enhancement.
3. **Ensure Efficient Resource Allocation:** Performance data is crucial for reallocating or optimising resources to maximise outcomes and support long-term objectives.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.infrastructure.nsw.gov.au/media/onmb3hy5/state-infrastructure-strategy-2022-2042-full-report.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.nsw.gov.au/grants-and-funding/emerging-industry-infrastructure-fund>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/policy-and-legislation/infrastructure/infrastructure-funding-policies>

4. **Build Community Trust:** Regular reporting of evaluation results fosters transparency and demonstrates accountability, reinforcing the commitment to delivering meaningful outcomes for NSW residents.

By integrating innovative financing mechanisms with strategic priorities and implementing continuous improvement practices, the Performance and Wellbeing Framework can enhance its effectiveness, adapt to evolving circumstances, and drive positive outcomes for the people of NSW.

### **Robust Independent Oversight and Audit Mechanisms**

Effective implementation of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework in NSW necessitates robust independent oversight and audit mechanisms to ensure accountability, transparency, and credibility in performance reporting. These mechanisms are critical for aligning performance outcomes with targeted wellbeing goals for residents. Coordinated interactions among various oversight bodies, including the Auditor General, budget estimate committees, departmental oversight bodies, regulators, and local governments, are essential for comprehensive oversight and effective governance.

### **Strengthening Independent Oversight**

To enhance the effectiveness of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework, it is crucial to fortify independent oversight and audit processes. Key strategies include:

1. **External Validation:** Verifying the accuracy and reliability of performance data through independent audits strengthens confidence in reported outcomes and ensures the integrity of performance reports.
2. **Role of the NSW Auditor General:** The NSW Auditor General is instrumental in auditing government agencies' financial statements and evaluating the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of government programs. Rigorous audits by the Auditor General help identify mismanagement, inefficiencies, and non-compliance with legislative requirements and government policies. The Auditor General's recommendations are vital for improving government operations and enhancing wellbeing outcomes.
3. **Expanding Performance Audits:** To further bolster oversight, expanding performance audits to include assessments of program effectiveness in achieving wellbeing indicators is essential. This requires legislative support and securing adequate resources, including staffing and budget, to handle increased audit demands.

### **Enhancing Transparency and Public Engagement**

1. **Accessible Reporting:** Enhancing public engagement through accessible and transparent reporting formats is crucial. Proactively disseminating audit findings fosters public trust and supports evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation decisions across NSW.
2. **Comprehensive Reporting:** Incorporating data from multiple sectors into a comprehensive "State of Wellbeing" or "State of the State" report provides a holistic view of residents' overall wellbeing. This report could offer cross-sectional analysis, highlight areas of success, and identify opportunities for improvement in achieving cross-sectoral outcomes.

### **Adapting to Evolving Challenges**

1. **Continuous Improvement:** Adapting to evolving challenges and technological advancements is vital for maintaining the integrity of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework and for its reputation and role as a cornerstone framework of governance in NSW. Leveraging independent audit functions effectively will contribute significantly to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all NSW residents.

By reinforcing these oversight mechanisms and ensuring robust independent audits, the Performance and Wellbeing Framework can be implemented more effectively, fostering greater accountability and transparency in government operations and ultimately enhancing wellbeing outcomes for NSW residents.

***ii) data collection and reporting to inform government decision making, enhance inter-Departmental collaboration and ensure accountability for cross-sector outcomes***

Enhancing data collection and reporting processes is essential for informed decision-making and fostering inter-departmental collaboration across NSW Government sectors. By utilising comprehensive data analytics, the NSW Government can gain deeper insights into cross-sectoral outcomes and allocate resources more effectively to meet community needs.

**Leveraging the Performance and Wellbeing Framework**

The introduction of the Performance and Wellbeing Framework provides a significant opportunity to develop and implement a comprehensive wellbeing report for NSW. This initiative could:

1. **Strengthen Governance:** Establish robust governance arrangements that support transparent and accountable decision-making.
2. **Enhance Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Use data to guide policy formulation and resource allocation.
3. **Improve Resident Outcomes:** Focus on evidence-based approaches to enhance the quality of life for NSW residents.

A comprehensive performance and wellbeing report would foster transparency, promote accountability, and support evidence-based policy development, paving the way for more inclusive and sustainable governance.

**Engaging the Public and Ensuring Equity**

For the performance and wellbeing framework and associated report to be effective, mechanisms for meaningful public engagement and participation must be included and resourced. This involves:

1. **Public Consultations:** Gather input from diverse community members.
2. **Citizen Panels and Surveys:** Capture a wide range of perspectives and priorities from NSW residents.

Incorporating longitudinal data and trend analysis into the wellbeing frameworks report will allow for tracking progress over time, identifying emerging issues, and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and interventions. An equity lens should be applied, considering social determinants of health such as income inequality, educational and transport access, and housing stability. This ensures that policy recommendations address disparities and promote equitable outcomes across different populations.

**Data-Driven Policy Recommendations**

Evidence-based policy recommendations should be:

1. **Actionable and Realistic:** Supported by thorough research and evaluation findings.
2. **Facilitative for Implementation:** Designed to be practical and feasible for policymakers and stakeholders.

Additionally, integrating resilience-building strategies and future-proofing measures will prepare NSW for challenges such as climate change, demographic shifts, and economic disruptions. This proactive approach enhances adaptive capacity and ensures long-term sustainability.

### **Improving Timeliness and Accessibility of Data**

Timely data collection and reporting are crucial. Making wellbeing data easily accessible to the public through real-time or more frequent updates ensures that policymakers and stakeholders have current information for effective decision-making. This approach is vital for:

1. **Tailoring Services:** Addressing health disparities and improving access to mental health and wellbeing services.
2. **Understanding Diverse Needs:** Informing the development of targeted interventions for specific communities, such as ATSI, CALD and LGBTQ+ individuals who face unique mental health and wellbeing challenges<sup>26 27 28 29 30</sup>.

### **Addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness**

Social isolation and loneliness profoundly impact mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Data, measures and indicators should include:

1. **Fostering Social Connections:** Encouraging family, community, and social network engagement<sup>31</sup>.
2. **Supporting Vulnerable Groups:** Addressing the needs of First Nations people, the elderly, disabled, recent migrants, and LGBTQ+ communities<sup>32 33</sup>.

Efforts should focus on reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness, which are risk factors for depression, anxiety, and other mental health and wellbeing issues. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for equitable mental health and wellbeing service provision.

### **Presenting and Supplementing Data**

To ensure data is useful:

1. **User-Friendly Presentation:** Utilise clear visualisations and explanations to enhance understanding for policymakers, researchers, and the public.

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<sup>26</sup> Summerton, J., & Blunden, S. (2022). Cultural interventions that target mental health and wellbeing for First Nations Australians: a systematic review. *Australian Psychologist*, 57(6), 315–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00050067.2022.2130026>

<sup>27</sup> Jatrana S, Richardson K & Samba SRA 2017. Investigating the dynamics of migration and health in Australia: a longitudinal study. *European Journal of Population* 34:4. [cited 2022 May 26]. Available from: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10680-017-9439-z>

<sup>28</sup> NSW Ministry of Health. NSW Plan for Healthy Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities: 2019-203. NSW Ministry of Health; 2019. [cited 2022 May 26]. Available from: [https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2019\\_018.pdf](https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2019_018.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/lgbti/lesbian-gay-bisexual-trans-and-intersex-equality>

<sup>30</sup> Rizmal, Z., 'LGBTQI people under-reporting mental illness due to 'distrust and fear', royal commission told' (accessed online 13.7.20) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-17/lgbtqi-services-need-to-be-beter-mental-health-royal-commission/11318240>

<sup>31</sup> Hume Region. (2016). Guidelines and Toolkit for Social Connection Initiatives

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/social-isolation-and-loneliness-covid-pandemic>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/resources/Publications/wellbeing-in-later-life.pdf>

2. **Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Insights:** Supplement quantitative data with qualitative insights from community surveys and focus groups. This holistic approach enriches understanding and supports more responsive policy-making.

### **Addressing Data Gaps and Enhancing Collaboration**

Efforts should also focus on:

1. **Identifying Data Gaps:** Especially for marginalised or hard-to-reach populations. Ensure that reporting reflects diverse experiences across NSW.
2. **Coordinating and Sharing Data:** Collaboration in data-sharing and coordination is essential for success in innovative models, such as those in public transport and welfare service provision. Standardised data sets enable better planning, real-time management, and improved passenger experiences while ensuring data privacy and security.

Developing a comprehensive performance and wellbeing report supported by robust data collection, transparent reporting practices, and collaborative data-sharing efforts can serve as a dynamic tool for evidence-based policymaking. By integrating these elements, NSW can enhance its ability to address complex challenges, improve quality of life, and ensure inclusive governance for all residents.

### ***iii) measurements of quality of life and wellbeing in New South Wales, with particular reference to the Commonwealth 'Measuring What Matters' national wellbeing framework and the OECD 'Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress'***

To effectively measure and improve the quality of life and wellbeing in New South Wales, it is crucial to consider and integrate current performance reporting frameworks that emphasise wellbeing. Leveraging existing knowledge and frameworks can provide a comprehensive understanding of how various factors influence health and wellbeing.

### **Understanding Wellbeing and Its Determinants**

The health and wellbeing of individuals are shaped by a range of social, environmental, genetic, and lifestyle-related factors, collectively known as determinants of health. According to the World Health Organisation, social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age<sup>34</sup>, influenced by the distribution of money, power, and resources at global, national, and local levels. These determinants are primarily responsible for health inequities—unfair and avoidable differences in health status within and between communities.

Key social determinants include employment status, educational attainment, working conditions, housing, social inclusion, and access to healthcare services. For instance, challenges faced by newly arrived culturally and linguistically diverse communities can negatively impact mental health<sup>35</sup>. Addressing these determinants is essential for improving equity of access to public services and overall wellbeing.

### **Global and National Frameworks for Measuring Wellbeing**

Many global organisations and nations have developed systems to measure societal wellbeing. Australia has been at the forefront, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics leading national

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<sup>34</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1)

<sup>35</sup> NSW Ministry of Health. NSW Plan for Healthy Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities: 2019-2023. NSW Ministry of Health; 2019. [cited 2022 May 26]. Available from: [https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2019\\_018.pdf](https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/ActivePDSDocuments/PD2019_018.pdf)

efforts in measuring wellbeing<sup>36</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified interest in wellbeing, highlighting issues such as mental health declines, increased work demands, and social isolation<sup>37 38 39 40</sup>. Conversely, some individuals experienced improved wellbeing due to reduced commuting and more time for healthier activities<sup>41</sup>. Understanding these diverse experiences can help government to examine the outcomes achieved through its resource allocations, and in turn organisations to enhance support systems in the future.

Economic factors alone do not encompass all aspects of wellbeing. While economic metrics are readily identifiable, wellbeing factors—such as personal happiness and life satisfaction—are more challenging to measure due to individual differences and needs. Thus, a multi-dimensional approach is necessary to capture the full spectrum of wellbeing.

### Key Areas for Measurement

1. **Material Living Conditions:** Assessing economic stability, housing quality, and access to transport and essential services.
2. **Quality of Life:** Evaluating life satisfaction, emotional well-being, and overall happiness.
3. **Health:** Monitoring physical and mental health indicators.
4. **Social Relationships:** Measuring social connectedness, support networks, and community involvement.
5. **Personal and Social Wellbeing:** Integrating measures of individual and collective wellbeing to provide a holistic view.

### Integrating Frameworks and Indicators

1. **Adopting Frameworks:** The Commonwealth's 'Measuring What Matters' national wellbeing framework and the OECD's 'Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress' provide valuable guidance. 'Measuring What Matters' includes 50 indicators across five themes: Healthy, Secure, Sustainable, Cohesive, and Prosperous<sup>42</sup>. This framework emphasises the importance of social determinants and provides a foundation for improving wellbeing outcomes. Aligning with these frameworks will enable NSW to report consistent and comparable data.
2. **Incorporating Blue Zones Insights:** Research into Blue Zones<sup>43</sup>— areas known for high concentrations of centenarians—reveals nine practices contributing to longevity and wellbeing<sup>44</sup>. These include natural movement, a sense of purpose, stress management, mindful eating, a plant-based diet, moderate alcohol consumption, community involvement,

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/first-insights-national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing-2020-21>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/2023/2023-september/report-card-on-the-wellbeing-of-australians-looks-at-what-s-changed-since-the-covid-pandemic-began>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2023/03/09/moving-on-from-covid-means-facing-its-impact-on-mental-health--s.html>

<sup>39</sup> <https://csrcm.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-covid-19-period-australia>

<sup>40</sup> Bell IH, Nicholas J, Broomhall A, Bailey E, Bendall S, Boland A, Robinson J, Adams S, McGorry P, Thompson A. The impact of COVID-19 on youth mental health: A mixed methods survey. *Psychiatry Res.* 2023 Mar;321:115082. doi: 10.1016/j.psychres.2023.115082. Epub 2023 Jan 28. PMID: 36738592; PMCID: PMC9883078.

<sup>41</sup> <https://hbr.org/2021/02/what-covid-19-has-done-to-our-well-being-in-12-charts>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/understanding-welfare-and-wellbeing>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.bluezones.com/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.bluezones.com/2016/11/power-9/>

strong family bonds, and supportive social networks. These indicators can be incorporated into NSW's Performance and Wellbeing Framework to enhance its effectiveness.

3. **Utilising Existing Metrics:** The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index<sup>45</sup>, which surveys Australian adults biannually, provides insights into personal and national wellbeing. Similarly, aligning and integrating data from the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework<sup>46</sup> used by local governments can aid in aligning wellbeing measures with strategic community plans.
4. **Expanding Measurement Approaches:** Consider implementing dashboards or multiple indicator approaches rather than relying on a single measure. Longitudinal data and spatial analysis will help understand regional variations and the impact of different initiatives<sup>47</sup>. This approach ensures that wellbeing measures capture diverse community experiences and needs.
5. **Learning from International Practices:** Examining frameworks from other countries, such as New Zealand's *Living Standards Framework*<sup>48</sup> and Canada's *Canadian Index of Wellbeing*<sup>49</sup>, can provide insights into effective strategies for measuring and improving wellbeing.

### Addressing Inequities and Policy Implications

To foster a just society, it is essential to focus on the most vulnerable populations and ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities. Economic measures should be complemented by wellbeing indicators to provide a comprehensive view of societal progress. Incorporating patient-centred care principles<sup>50</sup> and integrated service approaches will enhance the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives and address health and wellbeing inequities.

In summary, enhancing the measurement of quality of life and wellbeing in NSW involves integrating established frameworks, learning from global best practices, and adopting a multi-dimensional approach to capture the full range of factors influencing wellbeing. This comprehensive approach will support more informed decision-making, effective resource allocation, and improved wellbeing outcomes for all NSW residents.

I thank you for your consideration of this submission and welcome any further opportunity to work collaboratively with the Committee. Please connect with me at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED] if anything in this submission requires further clarification

Sincerely

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.australianunity.com.au/about-us/wellbeing-index>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/integrated-planning-and-reporting/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://sgsep.com.au/publications/insights/measuring-what-matters>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

<sup>49</sup> <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/what-we-do/domains-and-indicators>

<sup>50</sup> Levesque, J.F., Harris, M.F. & Russell, G. Patient-centred access to health care: conceptualising access at the interface of health systems and populations. *Int J Equity Health* 12, 18 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-9276-12-18>