



Measuring What Matters
Consultation process

Response to the Australian Treasury

**Melbourne Climate Futures and Melbourne School of Population and Global
Health, University of Melbourne**

January 2023

The Australian Treasury is consulting on measuring what matters to improve the lives of all Australians.

Australia does not have a national framework or central set of indicators to complement the existing reporting undertaken in sector-specific areas, or by state and territory governments. While the OECD *Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress* provides a useful foundation for identifying relevant indicators, it is important to ensure that an Australian national framework reflects the values, concerns, and aspirations of Australians.

The response below from members of the [Melbourne Climate Futures](#) (MCF) initiative and the [Melbourne School of Population and Global Health](#) (MSPGH) at the University of Melbourne offers some recommendations on how Australia might better measure what matters, with particular attention to environmental indicators.

At MCF, we connect and amplify the depth and breadth of University of Melbourne climate-related research, sharing ideas and collaborating on real action. We are empowering the next generation of researchers and students to strive for a positive climate future, and we are working alongside the University to ensure the institution is a world leader in decarbonisation. We are committed to leading our national, regional, and global communities to a sustainable, safe, fair, and equitable climate future. Similarly, MSPGH is committed to strong action on the health impacts of climate change and supporting the development of solutions from local to global levels. We are spearheading a collaboration of researchers in this field to strengthen our understanding of health and wellbeing in the context of a rapidly changing global environment.

While the authors of this submission work for MCF and MSPGH at the University of Melbourne, any mistakes are our own.

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Response

General comments

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on 'Measuring what matters'. We agree that a core set of indicators to measure and track Australia's progress on wellbeing is essential and we commend the Australian Government for their efforts to pursue the development of a national framework. The health and wellbeing of populations across Australia are already being greatly impacted by climate change, with cascading events compounding adverse health outcomes, especially for vulnerable populations¹. With climate-related events projected to increase in frequency and severity, impacts on Australians' wellbeing is inevitable, but can be reduced by a considered and proactive approach to policy development that sees health considerations integrated into policies in all health-determining sectors, including energy, industry, transport, agriculture, and the built environment.

Children and future generations will disproportionately bear the brunt of climate change and its impacts. As such, we urge you to consider a specific consultation process targeting young Australians to better understand what matters to them, and to incorporate relevant indicators into the national framework accordingly.

Additional indicators to capture Australia's unique context

Australia must systematically and holistically measure wellbeing given determinants of health and wellbeing comprise economic, social, and environmental factors. In particular, additional environmental indicators should be explicitly included in a national framework to measure and track Australian progress and wellbeing. This will provide Australian decision-makers with a clearer understanding of wellbeing now and into the future. Beyond incorporating aggregated results and/or indices from existing health and environmental progress frameworks (e.g. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and State of the Environment reports), the following environmental indicators should be considered for inclusion in a national framework:

1. An indicator on exposure to air pollution should be included in the national framework, as it is in the OECD Framework, however measuring and tracking particulate matter (PM) alone is inadequate. This indicator should be expanded to include nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) at the least given evidence of the human health impacts of NO₂ exposure, which includes premature death, childhood asthma and a range of heart and lung conditions². Further, it is important to highlight that the air quality monitoring network in Australia is insufficient to provide detailed,

¹ Cissé, G., et al. (2022). Health, Wellbeing, and the Changing Structure of Communities. In *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, M. Tignor et al. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

² Walter, C. M., Schneider-Futschik, E. K., Lansbury, N. L., Sly, P. D., Head, B. W., & Knibbs, L. D. (2021). The health impacts of ambient air pollution in Australia: a systematic literature review. *Internal medicine journal*, 51(10), 1567-1579.

accurate data on population exposure for the purposes of the national framework reporting and needs to be upgraded for this indicator to be meaningful³.

2. Indicators relating to energy supply (e.g. sources) and use should be included in the national framework. While the OECD Framework includes an indicator on GHG emissions per capita, this indicator does not provide any detail on the speed at which Australia's energy transition is taking place, or Australians' experience of energy security or poverty, which can substantially impact health outcomes. When considering potential indicators, as a starting point the Treasury may like to consider some of the relevant indicators listed in the energy indicators for sustainable development that were prepared by authors from the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2005⁴. An updated version of some indicators, which considers distributional and equity impacts, was proposed in 2017 and may be of interest⁵.
3. Two points for the green space indicator:
 - We suggest that an indicator to assess nature and human connection could be broadened to incorporate both green and blue spaces.
 - The current indicator on green space is focused solely on 'access', which is a narrow and limited approach to assessing connection to nature, and its physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits⁶. Given the diversity and range of potential barriers and facilitators to 'access' and the multifaceted nature of the 'accessibility' concept, a multidimensional approach to identifying access indicators could be utilised. Unidimensional interventions that only address one barrier are likely neglecting other important access barriers and potentially limiting the success of the intervention. Further research to develop appropriate indicator/s for green/blue space is needed, including to examine the barriers and facilitators which exist along routes and pathways to green and blue space and to explore and evaluate multi-dimensional and co-designed interventions that aim to improve access to green and blue space for low-SES and ethnically diverse communities.
4. The OECD indicators do not include an indicator for baseline assessment of vulnerability, capacity and adaptation (VCA) in relation to the health impacts of climate change. An indicator that assesses whether this has

³ Emmerson K.M., & Keywood, M. (2021). Air quality. In *Australia State of the Environment 2021*. Independent report to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Accessed 30 January 2023. Available from <https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/air-quality/introduction>

⁴ Vera, I., Langlois, L., & Rogner, H-H. (2005). Indicators for sustainable energy development. In *Energy Indicators for Sustainable Development: Countries Studies on Brazil, Cuba, Lithuania, Mexico, Russian Federation, Slovakia and Thailand*. UNDESA. Accessed 30 January 2023. Available from https://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/publications/energy_indicators/chapter2.pdf

⁵ Taylor, P. G., Abdalla, K., Quadrelli, R., & Vera, I. (2017). Better energy indicators for sustainable development. *Nature Energy*, 2(8), 1-4.

⁶ Rao Y, Zhong Y, He Q, Dai J. Assessing the Equity of Accessibility to Urban Green Space: A Study of 254 Cities in China. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2022 Apr 16;19(8):4855.

been conducted, implemented, evaluated and revised would be valuable in order to understand our response to the health and wellbeing impacts of climate change and whether we are developing appropriate solutions.⁷

Accounting

We agree with the Centre for Policy Development⁸ that a complementary set of objective and subjective indicators should be included in a national framework. Measuring the benefits to health and wellbeing can be difficult to quantify and are often estimated using methods such as the Value of Statistical Life (VSL) or Value of Statistical Life Year (VLY). As per guidance on estimating the benefits resulting from reduced physical harm in the Australian *Best Practice Regulation Guidance Note*⁹, we recommend where VSL and other methods are used to quantify policy benefits to health and wellbeing, discount rates that do not inappropriately disadvantage future generations should be used.

⁷ Cissé, G., et al. (2022). Health, Wellbeing, and the Changing Structure of Communities. In *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, M. Tignor et al. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

⁸ Gaukroger, C., Ampofo, A., Kitt, F., Phillips, T., & Smith, W. (2022). *Redefining progress: Global lessons for an Australian approach to wellbeing*. Centre for Policy Development. Accessed 30 January 2023. Available from <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/CPD-Redefining-Progress-FINAL.pdf>

⁹ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office of Best Practice Regulation (2022). *Best Practice Regulation Guidance Note: Value of statistical life*. Accessed 30 January 2023. Available from <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-09/value-statistical-life-guidance-note.pdf>