

Department of Treasury
Langton Cres
PARKES ACT. 2600

Dear Sir /Madam

MEASURING WHAT MATTER

I note from the Treasury's web site that you are inviting people to comment on what matters to improve the lives of all Australians. I have reviewed the list of indicators contained in the OECD Framework Indicators, and believe that there are two indicators that should be added to any Australian framework.

The first indicator that I recommend be added is the number of people living at or below the recognized poverty line. I note from a UNSW report titled "Poverty in Australia 2020" which reported on the proportion of all Australians, including children, living in poverty from 2017-18. The report noted that 3.24 million people (13.6% of the population, or over one in eight) were estimated to be living below the poverty line, and that 774,000 children under the age of 15 (17.7% of all children or over one in six) were living below the poverty line. Finally, the report noted that "poverty in Australia is just above the OECD average level, placing us among a group of wealthy nations with above-average poverty." I believe that poverty is a major factor in wellness and needs to be measured and reported on on a regular basis.

The second indicator that I recommend be reported on is the rate of homelessness. The web site for the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW) reported that: "On Census night in 2016, more than 116,000 people were estimated to be homeless in Australia." A later report by the Salvation Army stated that "Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, more than 278,000 Australians sought help from Specialist Homelessness Services in 2020-21. This number represents the homeless population in Australia, and the growing number of people who are at risk of homelessness and are seeking support to avoid becoming homeless". I am not certain how this compares to the OECD data for homelessness, but I suggest that such figures are not acceptable for a wealthy nation such as Australia. I believe that the measurement of homelessness is important in measuring the wellness of the Australian population.

I would be grateful if you would add poverty and homelessness to the list of indicators on wellness for Australia.

Yours sincerely,

David Spicer

26 November 2022