

7 February 2023

Attention: VicHealth response to the Measuring What Matters Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Measuring What Matters Consultation. The Budget Statement 4: Measuring What Matters is a significant opportunity to set a transformative agenda and have an integrated approach to wellbeing to develop a national framework to achieve better wellbeing outcomes for the Australian population now and into the future.

As you may be aware, the Victoria Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) is an independent government authority established under the Victorian *Tobacco Act 1987* with a mandate to promote good health for all Victorians and provide evidence-based policy advice. We are a pioneer in health promotion, working with partners to discover, implement and share solutions to the health problems facing Victorians and Australians. We seek a community where everyone enjoys better health and wellbeing. VicHealth works to keep people healthy, happy and well – preventing chronic disease and reducing the burden of poor health on everyday Australians.

It has been clear for a long time to many of us that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and other economic indicators are not an accurate measure of how we're fairing as a society and this was further exacerbated during the last few years as Australia was hit by multiple extreme events including severe bushfires, flooding, drought and the coronavirus pandemic.

Further it is clear that economic indicators often fail to take into account what life will be like for future Australians.

VicHealth has always looked to research long term trends and threats to public health, which is why, as this focus on economic accounting continued to fail the broader society, VicHealth has been working with partners to develop a vision of an Australia that operates in a wellbeing governance and economy system.

To support the creation of this vision, VicHealth:

- Commissioned a [2020 report](#)ⁱ on the feasibility of integrating wellbeing into the business of government in Australia, drawing on international case studies
- Co-hosted a roundtable in 2021 with the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) and The George Institute for Global Health (TGI) which resulted in this [communique](#)ⁱⁱ outlining the principles for moving a wellbeing governance agenda forward.

- Commissioned TGI to develop a [toolkitⁱⁱⁱ](#) for governments which outlines the steps to progress a wellbeing governance system in Australia.

Creating a Measuring what matters framework presents a significant opportunity to progress a wellbeing economy in Australia but should only be seen as the first step to do so.

Importantly, the measures and indicators that are adopted must centre the environment and people over economic outputs and must capture indicators of long-term health, such as rates of chronic disease, to ensure wellbeing for generations to come.

Summary of Recommendations:

Alongside the individual indicator recommendations outlined later in the submission, VicHealth would like to highlight the following high-level recommendations for progressing a wellbeing agenda which are applicable both to this consultation and the steps that must follow it:

1. A **consultation process** must be undertaken that enables the views and needs of all Australians to be included in the design of the Measuring what matters framework and in particular that culturally safe consultations are undertaken with First Nations communities to embed their knowledge and priorities in the framework.
2. **Establishing meaningful objectives** that include measuring the extent to which there is (a) health of the environment and climate, recognising the centrality of planetary health to human wellbeing, (b) equitable access to healthy levels of wellbeing for all residents of Australia, (c) healthy wellbeing for both current and future generations.
3. **Include additional domains** of wellbeing beyond those captured by the OECD framework's wellbeing domain. This framework must utilize the opportunity to capture emerging domains identified as important in both existing Australian frameworks and international frameworks. This should include domains examining (a) planetary and environmental health (b) cultural aspects of wellbeing; (c) governance and institutions; (d) long term health enablers including prevention expenditure and the way communities are built to promote or obstruct health. Domains should then be further iterated based on regular consultation to identify and monitor what matters to Australians.
4. **Measure what matters to all Australians** recognising Australia is full of diverse cohorts of people with diverse needs. Understanding differences in wellbeing between groups and regions is critical to meaningfully targeting policy design to support wellbeing. The Government must commit and provide adequate funding for data collection, including social surveys, that enable disaggregation by selected priority populations to track equity targets. At a minimum, it is critical to capture the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those living in remote and rural areas and in regional cities, different age groups including children, youth, and the elderly; different genders; those with disabilities, carers, low socioeconomic status, people with a mental illness and those identifying as LGBTIQ+.

5. **That the Australian Government legislates** the requirement to deliver a wellbeing framework, that it applies to all future the federal budgets and continues to create a holistic intergenerational wellbeing approach to governing.

Should you wish to discuss this submission further, please contact Stephanie Kilpatrick, Manager of Policy and Government Relations via skilpatrick@vichealth.vic.gov.au.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandro Demaio".

Dr Sandro Demaio

Chief Executive Officer

Executive Summary

Governments often act in siloed approaches while focusing on building a short-term, strong economy but this often comes at the expense of societal, human and planetary wellbeing both for the people of today and future Australians. Social, environmental and economic imbalances pose a threat to all, but particularly those that are already the most vulnerable such as people living on low incomes or cohorts that experience greater disadvantage. An intergenerational Wellbeing governance approach seeks to move a community beyond the focus on economic growth as the primary marker of progress and shifts towards a focus on prioritises health, social and environmental outcomes. A successful intergenerational wellbeing approach transforms economic and political systems to serve a more holistic understanding of quality of life and collective wellbeing that benefits both people and the planet.

In addition to the broader recommendations outlined in the opening letter, the principles that underline this submission and the possible indicators listed in the appendices are that:

- primarily, environmental sustainability and security must be at the heart of a wellbeing governance model as no-one can live well on a dead planet;
- secondly, people should be centred in a wellbeing governance model and the impacts on their daily life, health and wellbeing is the focus;
- people who are most vulnerable to extreme events, are appropriately consulted, listened to and the indicators they recommend are given a notable place of significance in the wellbeing model;
- First nations populations are also appropriately consulted for their unique perspective on wellbeing and relationship to country and their recommendations prioritised;
- the indicators must forecast and place significance on ensuring the security of the health and wellbeing of future generations;
- economic productivity should be used as a tool to support the previous 4 principles but not have primacy over them;
- a wellbeing treasury framework can only be the first step in truly realising holistic wellbeing for all Australians today and in the future.

Further, VicHealth would like to highlight that while there are current health domain measures included, such as life expectancy, these do not sufficiently reflect the state of health and wellbeing for many Australians. Life expectancy is trending upwards, but more people are living with a chronic disease than ever before^{iv}. Research shows that:

- 1 in 2 Australians have a chronic disease (47%)
- 1 in 5 Australians have 2 or more chronic conditions (20%)
- 1 in 2 hospitalisations involve 1 or more chronic condition (51%)
- Nearly 9 out of 10 deaths are associated with chronic conditions (89%)^v
- Over one third (35%) of people with chronic disease report they experience high or very high levels of psychological distress (compared with 4.3% of those without a chronic disease)^{vi}

Further exacerbating this is the two in three Australians that are living with overweight or obesity^{vii} and the one in four Australian children that are also identified as overweight or

obese.^{viii} Overweight and obesity can have significant long term wellbeing effects. For example, it can affect education attainment, social connection and mental wellbeing in addition to the physical and long-term health impacts. These statistics are only likely to have been exacerbated during the coronavirus pandemic and some research is already showing that life expectancy is now trending downwards due to rising obesity rates.

The framework should aim to address our quality of life, create a community environment and service accessibility that ensures Australians are living in good health for as long as possible. To do so, there must be a reorientation to measuring the promoters and detractors of health. Australians' quality of life and good health are impacted by the wider determinants of health. Investment in social determinants must be integrated into the framework. Safe and affordable housing, our community's health literacy, affordable food, communities that promote good active transport and green space for physical and mental health are some of the determinants that underpin our community's good health. A strong first step to achieving this would be incorporating the targets of the National Obesity Strategy and the National Preventive Health Strategy into this Measuring what matters framework. If these national strategies were properly resourced, funded and monitored they would go a long way to developing an environment that enables the health and wellbeing of Australians. Australians should be able to live, learn, work, play and age in supportive, sustainable and healthy environments. This framework should include indicators that help move investment upstream into building healthy communities and implementing health promotion policies to ensure it is easier for Australians to lead healthy and fulfilled lives.

In addition to extra health indicators and social determinant indicators, the framework should encompass indicators that measure and promote the health of human populations and the state of the natural systems on which it depends. This in turn will benefit individuals. Climate change threatens many of the basic needs and fundamental determinants of health such as clean air, safe drinking water, a nutritious, affordable and safe food supply, and secure shelter.^{ix} This must be addressed urgently as Australians are already feeling the impacts of climate change on their health and wellbeing.

Cumulative extreme events such as floods, droughts and fires have put lives and livelihoods at risk. It has exacerbated pressure on our food systems- making healthy food more unaffordable. Polluted air has contributed to lung disease and increases the rate of chronic disease and cancers. Cumulative events are also significantly impacting the mental wellbeing of Australians but particularly rural and regional and youth cohorts. Over three quarters of Young Australians aged 16-25 are frightened about their future and the impacts of climate change.^x Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people report that eco-anxiety is exacerbated and continues to contribute to intergenerational trauma.^{xi,xii} Without action, this will continue to lead to loss of life and ill health. Environmental sustainability and security must be at the heart of any wellbeing framework.

Wellbeing frameworks are most successful when they clearly reflect what is important to a nation or region and have strong 'buy in' from the broader public. A wellbeing governance approach is critically needed in Australia however the Government should also recognise that

to develop a framework that is fit for purpose rigorous consultation is needed to ensure all groups' needs are represented.

To succeed in this an equity approach must be embedded into the Measuring what matters framework and indicators should be created and iterated that recognise the differences and barriers some Australians face which are not the same for all population groups. Cultural considerations should also be prioritised, particularly for our first nations populations which have a unique perspective on wellbeing and relationship to our country. A number of examples of high-quality consultation processes used to develop wellbeing frameworks can be found in the VicHealth [Wellbeing Economy Toolkit](#) produced by the George Institute for Global Health. The consultation process used by the ACT Government in developing their wellbeing framework provides a useful example of methods that can be used to actively engage with a wide range of groups who may not otherwise have their views reflected in a framework. Consultation on Measuring what matters should be considered an ongoing process, with explicit points built in at which Measuring what matters will be revisited. This is consistent with best practice internationally where embedding ongoing participatory practice is being done to enable and ensure wellbeing frameworks reflect community values and needs – and are used by communities. This will be particularly important to ensure equity and cohort indicators continue to reflect community needs and priorities for measuring their wellbeing.

The Measuring what matters consultation is the first step in setting up a framework to progress towards a wellbeing economy in Australia. A wellbeing framework should be legislatively applied to the federal budget, as the New Zealand Living Standards Framework is, to ensure that it is an enduring framework. The Measuring what matters framework should then be supported by further governance changes that promote holistic, long-term decision making focused on delivering wellbeing for the planet, current and future Australians.

Response to the Objectives

The objectives outlined in The Budget Statement 4 focus on individual human wellbeing. Budget Statement 4 (p. 124) provides examples which are all focused on wellbeing of individuals and are too narrow to fully realize a framework seeking to measure what matters. The objectives of the Measuring what matters framework must capture the prioritization of the (a) health of the environment and, (b) equitable access to healthy levels of wellbeing for all residents of Australia, (C) healthy wellbeing for both current and future generations.

These three areas of focus are important for a range of reasons including that they recognise:

- that human wellbeing cannot be realised in the absence of planetary wellbeing. Environmental sustainability and security must be at the heart of this framework.
- the right to wellbeing for all and of ensuring equity of access to that right, consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which Australia is a signatory
- the importance of supporting long-term wellbeing rather than enabling short-term wellbeing at the expense of future generations.

Including an explicit intergenerational focus in the objectives of Measuring what matters is also important. This enables a focus on understanding not just the wellbeing of current individuals, but a focus on sustainable wellbeing over generations. This again is an explicit part of many wellbeing frameworks, with the OECD frameworks, NZ Living Standards Framework, and others explicitly building in measurement of what is available for future generations in addition to the wellbeing of the current generation. This intergenerational focus also highlights the importance of measuring what matters to communities and society as a whole, rather than focusing largely on the individual human. This in turn suggests a need for indicators that examine whether the systems that support wellbeing – including community services and infrastructure, social networks, planetary systems, and governance systems – are fit for purpose to support the wellbeing of current and future generations.

Culture is well established to be foundational to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples however the objectives outlined do not seem to reflect this. While the New Zealand Living Standards Framework captures the importance of culture for Māori people in its domains, the Measuring what matters should appropriately elevate the importance of culture to be in the objectives of the Australian framework. This objective should recognise that for First Nations people human wellbeing is intrinsically linked to the health of country and wellbeing is based on fulfilling obligations to community, culture, and to health of country. These objectives, however, should be developed based on genuine consultation with First Nations communities to ensure their needs are reflected appropriately in the framework and indicators.

The objectives that will guide the Measuring what matters framework that is created from this consultation should highlight the importance of the environment to wellbeing and aim to produce a high quality of life and fairness for all of today's Australians while ensuring that same quality of life can be guaranteed for future generations.

Expanding the OECD Domains for the Australian Context

The OECD Domains are set at a cross country level that does not always appropriately respond to local contexts and challenges. The OECD domains have some potential to be adapted to the Australian context, but the domains should also be expanded upon to reflect the Australian context and best practice understanding of the promoters and detractors of wellbeing. In particular, as aforementioned, this should include domains examining (a) planetary and environmental health (b) cultural aspects of wellbeing; (c) governance and institutions; (d) long term health enablers including prevention expenditure and the way communities are built to promote or obstruct health. Domains should then be further iterated based on longer term consultation to identify what matters to Australians.

As noted, planetary health is inextricably linked to human health. An example of this was evident in Australia when hospital admissions and emergency department presentations for respiratory illness increased with poor air quality during the 2019-20 bushfires. The

importance of planetary health must be highlighted in objectives of the Measuring what matters framework and flow through to other levels through the domains and indicators.

Additionally, the importance of cultural aspects of wellbeing for First Nations communities was highlighted in the previous section focused on objectives. While a culture objective relevant to First Nations Australians must be included, this should then flow through to further domains and indicators in the rest of the Measuring what matters framework.

The Measuring what matters framework must utilize the opportunity to capture emerging domains identified as important in both existing Australian frameworks and international frameworks. For example domains examining effectiveness of governance and institutions in supporting wellbeing are now included in a majority of 25 wellbeing frameworks examined by Schirmer et al^{xiii}. and go beyond the OECD frameworks focus on civic engagement. While labelled in various ways, this type of domain ensures a focus on understanding whether systems are fit for purpose. Additionally, they critically underpin trust in government that then can support health and wellbeing for a populace. Many communities suffered from a lack of trust in authority and government figures, often leading to adverse individual and community outcomes during the coronavirus pandemic. Governance domains should be focused on ensuring community trust in order to secure their health and wellbeing. Healthy, resilient, cohesive and equal communities should be prioritised when establishing domains as well as being future focused. Domains should reflect not only the factors that impact the wellbeing of the individual but enable inclusion of indicators that measure the capacity of community, regional and national institutions and systems to support wellbeing.

Critical to anyone individual's wellbeing is of course their physical and mental health. If people are suffering from chronic physical or mental ill-health they are unable to fully participate in society or be well. Measuring population health traditionally relies on outcome measurements and disease tracking, however it should no longer be quantified in such limited terms. A domain that only focuses on life expectancy, or similar measures, does not question how healthy a person may be across their life or what disease barriers are preventing them from participating in community. The Measuring what matters framework must utilize this opportunity to add domains and indicators that focus on upstream monitoring and investment. This should include a domain that focuses on health promotion and prevention investment in order to fully focus on preventing ill-health and ensuring Australians can live happy, healthy, well lives. A domain that focuses on prevention investment would ensure population health problems are stopped before they are entrenched and irreversible.

Further to truly have an impact on the wellbeing of Australians, this framework needs to address the structural systems and community environments that create those health outcomes- for example having a domain that focuses on the health of neighbourhoods and communities will be critical to tracking health issues. Australians must have communities that are built to support their health and wellbeing. Neighbourhoods and cities should be planned so they promote walking and active transport, have access to green space, access to healthy, affordable, fresh food and safeguard against the negative influences of harmful industry outlets including gambling, alcohol, tobacco and vape products, and unhealthy food and

drink products. A domain that focuses on the built environment that Australians live in will be critical to ensuring the immediate and long-term wellbeing of the nation.

Creating domains, for the Australian context including planetary and environment health, cultural aspects of wellbeing, governance and long term health enablers, whilst focusing on the long term outcomes on preventative health will enable a wellbeing framework to truly have an impact on the wellbeing of all Australians now and for generations to come.

Indicators

Understanding of what matters to wellbeing is currently evolving rapidly worldwide. Associated with this, indicators of wellbeing commonly included in wellbeing frameworks are also changing rapidly. We recommend that Measuring what matters commit to an initial set of indicators, and also to an ongoing process in which expert and stakeholder consultation is used to identify appropriate additions or changes to the indicators measured. Additionally, when identifying and measuring indicators, a balance needs to be struck between ensuring consistency and comparability – meaning committing to measuring the same indicators, in the same way, over time – and enabling flexibility to incorporate new or amended measures as needed. While it is important to start by identifying indicators of what matters that are well recognised and accepted as valid internationally, this is not sufficient to inform a good framework.

To have the greatest value for Australians, measuring what matters should enable not just the Australian government to measure wellbeing, but should develop indicators and measures that others across Australia can incorporate in their own wellbeing measurement. This means that indicators should be scalable so other organisations can implement the same measures in their own data collection initiatives.

Indicators should be developed that examine levels of individual and community resilience as a key indicator of likely long-term wellbeing. This is an important part of understanding how events such as large-scale extreme weather events and the effects of human induced climate change, as well as population-wide events such as COVID-19 or economic downturn, impact long-term prospects for wellbeing.

Currently, indicators largely focus on those that measure the wellbeing of an individual. It is also critical to measure the extent to which communities, built environments and households are able to provide the conditions that support this wellbeing – such as access to services, access to infrastructure, the promotion of healthy activities, the density of harmful industries, good governance, safety and security.

Environment Indicators

The Measuring what matters framework must include indicators that seek to capture and ultimately mitigate the impact climate change is having on our natural environment, communities and security for future generations. Climate change poses a major risk to this – both in an immediate sense and for future generations. Many Australian and global health bodies, including the Australian Medical Association and the World Health Organisation have

declared climate change as a health emergency. There is clear evidence that climate change is a global health emergency and a threat to human and planetary health.

All Australians should live in safe, resilient and vibrant communities where they have equitable access to the necessary goods and services that underpin their health and wellbeing. This includes secure housing, fresh, affordable food, clean water and air and access to green spaces amongst others.

The impact of climate change is already being felt across the globe. Within Australia, we can forecast an increase in death from heatwaves and an increase in mosquito-borne disease from floods. In future years, Australia is projected to face:

- higher year-round temperatures – with impacts including increased bushfire and drought risk which can lead to food insecurity;
- more hot days and heat waves – with impacts including extreme heat, leading to illness and loss of life;
- less rain– with impacts including lower water reserves and drought whose associated the economic impacts cause increased mental stress in rural and regional areas;
- more frequent and more intense storms – with impacts including physical injury, poor water quality, increased vector-borne illness and crop damage that threatens healthy, affordable food systems;
- longer fire seasons – with impacts including risks to physical safety and poorer air quality leading to respiratory health issues.

Additionally, the mental health impacts of living on a planet ravaged by climate disaster is vast. Between 20 – 50% of people who live through unpredictable and extreme weather events can develop immediate elevated rates of anxiety, depression, PTSD, sleep disruption and suicidal ideation. As aforementioned this is particularly pronounced for young Australians, rural and regional Australians and First Nations communities. It is again important to ensure the Measuring what matters framework and indicators are an iterative process and further consultation is undertaken to capture these voices and have indicators that reflect their knowledge, needs and priorities.

Within an environmental domain, indicators should be created to measure the resilience of individuals and communities to extreme events and the effects of climate change. It will be important to design indicators that are effective measures of exposure to the impacts of these events. These exposure measures may include exposure to impacts on infrastructure, housing, livelihoods, affordable food, mental anxiety, financial wellbeing, and personal safety, amongst others.

Indicators should aim to inform government about the dangers to the environment and therefore subsequent dangers to Australians' wellbeing. These indicators should be designed in a way that promotes climate change mitigation and ensures that current and future Australians do not face ill-health and lower levels of wellbeing because they live in a country ravaged by climate disaster. For a list of possible indicators regarding an environmental domain please see Appendix A on page 16.

Health Indicators

Measuring our populations health traditionally relies on outcome measurements and disease tracking, however, to truly have an impact on the health and wellbeing of Australians we need indicators that reflect on the structural systems and community environment as well as concentrating on the outcomes.

This is important as research paints a concerning picture regarding the prevalence of overweight and obesity:

- 1 in 4 young children (2-4 years old)
- 1 in 4 children (5 – 17 years old)
- 1 in 2 young people (18–24-year-olds)
- 4 in 5 older people (65- 74 years old)^{xiv}.

Overweight and obesity will have a critical impact on population health and wellbeing including people's literal health, the increased risk of co-morbidities, increased risk of mental ill-health, and the increased burden on Australia's ambulance and hospital systems. While health data that is collected through The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in regard to disease burden, life expectancy and mortality this data isn't enough to identify and reverse this trend.

These measures look too far downstream. The Measuring what matters framework should utilize this opportunity to prioritise indicators that promote health prevention and promotion in order to stop problems before they are entrenched and irreversible.

The framework should also include measures that track individual access to health promotion and health services - particularly for cohorts who are most likely to face the poorest health outcomes. Indicators should measure the effects that investing in health prevention over time has on our population health.

The [National Preventative Health Strategy](#) and the National Obesity Strategy outline recommended targets which should be incorporated into a wellbeing framework. Measures should seek to ensure the health and wellbeing of Australians and their communities through the promotion of healthy behaviours and the prevention of exposure to unhealthy influences.

Further to this, the health and wellbeing of our nation can be captured by looking at both population physical and mental health but also needs to take into account the wider social and commercial determinants which influence Australians' health. For example, exposure to unhealthy food and drink marketing is having a detrimental effect on our population's health. All Australians, and particularly children, deserve to go about their daily lives in spaces free from the influence of unhealthy food and drink advertising and exposure to these harmful industry marketing tactics undermine healthy messaging. Further commercial factors that influence food choices in Australia include food availability and affordability^{xv}. Affordability of healthy food is worse in low-income areas and maintaining healthy eating patterns is becoming increasingly difficult for disadvantaged communities. Research has documented that lower-income communities are often flooded with fast-food outlets further exacerbating their disadvantage and increasing their ill-health.

The built environment of our communities has a critical influence on our communities' health and wellbeing. Australians deserve to live in environments that support their health and wellbeing—for example by promoting walkable communities and active transport options, with close access to green space and healthy, affordable, fresh food while safeguarding against the negative influences of harmful industries including gambling, tobacco, vaping and alcohol outlets and the advertising and provision of ultra-processed foods and fast-food outlets. Indicators that capture the ability to access affordable healthy food, access and time for physical activity, and if the built environment of the neighbourhoods that Australians live, learn and work in will be particularly pertinent.

Mental health is an indivisible part of public health and significantly affects human, social and economic capital. Mental health is not merely the absence of mental disorders or symptoms but also a resource supporting overall well-being and productivity. Good mental health allows for cognitive and emotional flexibility, which are the basis for social skills and resilience in the face of stress. This mental capital is vitally important for the healthy functioning of families, communities and society.

It is estimated that close to half (45.5%) of the Australian population between 16 and 85 years of age will experience a common mental illness, such as an anxiety or substance use disorder, at some stage in their lifetime. It is also estimated that 20% of the population experience a common mental illness each year^{xvi}. Indicators should be developed that both look at the preventable factors that protect against mental ill-health and that track the prevalence of mental ill-health.

The framework's aim should be that all Australians are empowered and skilled to stay as healthy as they can be by building knowledge, skills, strengths, and community connections to support healthy eating and physical activity, and enable health.

Indicators relevant to health should also be measurable, where appropriate, at a cohort level to reflect and capture health inequities that currently exist across groups, such as First Nations communities, rural and regional, LGBTIQ, women, refugee and migrant communities and others. The indicators should be agile in order to measure and track progress over time across the population groups.

Indicators should aim to inform government about the state of our nation's health and wellbeing and the inequities which exist. Additionally, indicators should be designed in a way that address the structural systems and community environment as well as health outcomes and prioritise indicators that promote health prevention and promotion.

For a list of possible indicators regarding a health domain please see Appendix B on page 17.

Wider Determinants of Health and Wellbeing

Differences in health and wellbeing outcomes between social groups are often defined according to socioeconomic status, or socioeconomic position, which is a composite measure of educational attainment, living conditions, income and occupational characteristics (such as whether a job involves manual or nonmanual labour), as well as the level of prestige, power,

control or social standing associated with these. Evidence tells us that health equity is best achieved by addressing the social and legal conditions that influence health, and the social processes that distribute them unequally in society. Actions to address the social determinants of health that do not tackle their distribution, or the structures and processes driving the unequal distribution of power, money and resources are unlikely to address persistent health and wellbeing inequities.

Further the development of safe, inclusive and supportive environments for all citizens is an integral aspect of a healthy, productive and well society. Women are more likely to not feel safe within their environments and are therefore unable to fully participate in society including in ways that affect their financial, mental and physical wellbeing. Lack of safety and gender inequality continue to contribute to the proliferation of family violence. Family violence is widely recognised as a global problem and is still rife in Australia. It has serious impacts on the health and wellbeing of those affected and exacts significant social and economic costs on communities and nations^{xvii}.

As aforementioned, civic engagement and strong, trusted governance institutions are also critical for the wellbeing of Australian society. Citizens need to trust its leaders to act in the best interest of the population and feel that they and their communities are represented. It is therefore important to measure how we participate in democracy, and how governance is performed at a national, state and local level.

In order to truly Measure what matters and achieve wellbeing for Australians, there must be a range of indicators that capture health and wellbeing measurements across these broader social determinants of health and wellbeing. For a list of possible indicators regarding a health domain please see Appendix C on page 18.

Measuring and Reporting on Progress

It will be critically important for the success of the Measuring what matters framework to properly fund regular data collection and progress reports. VicHealth recommends that the Australian Government commit to collecting the data needed to report on relevant wellbeing indicators as part of its investment in Measuring what matters. This means that beyond indicators and measures based on using only data that are already available, a commitment should be made to investing in ‘filling in the gaps’ in data collection on wellbeing.

Data and measurement should be designed to account for the inequities in wellbeing outcomes, and to allow us to measure progress in lifting up those population groups who are falling behind national average. Additionally, national social surveys which target self-reported (subjective) wellbeing should be conducted regularly, with levels of *disaggregation* that enable a refined analysis of inequities and can inform further investigation on deep drivers behind them for policy targeting.

Further there should be a balance between individual indicators and community indicators of wellbeing. This is critical to embed individual measures into the broader, social and economic contexts in which people develop a sense of life, and which as mentioned above, often determines their life quality and health and wellbeing outcomes.

VicHealth would like to recommend the following actions to support an appropriate progress report mechanism:

- A review of all existing time series data collection on wellbeing in Australia be conducted – even where that collection is not sufficiently large currently to enable reporting for all of Australia, and/or focuses on a specific group;
- Identify coverage of (i) wellbeing indicators and (ii) priority groups and regions by existing data sources, and where gaps exist, identify methods to address gaps;
- Invest in additional data collection that enables appropriate monitoring of all wellbeing indicators, including those recommended in the above sections, across all regions and groups. This may occur through collaborations across a number of existing data collection processes, to enable consistent collection of the same indicators; it could also involve development of new data collections;
- An expert review should be conducted into not only availability of data, but into the most appropriate ways to ensure long-term collection of data, particularly in the changing data landscape in which there is rapid change in survey methods as well as in use of a range of administrative and other data sets. This review should focus in particular on identifying what methods are needed to achieve robust measurement of wellbeing amongst all priority regions and groups whose wellbeing needs to be understood.

Implementing processes of iterative development means it is possible to implement an initial Measuring what matters framework rapidly, while ensuring that it can be further developed in collaboration with the Australian public, and in particular priority cohorts such as First nations communities, to better reflect their wellbeing needs and priorities.

Further the Government must plan for active revisions and updates, based on community consultation, to the framework in order to ensure the Measuring what matters framework remains relevant as Australian society changes. Examples of this approach being used successfully include the 10 yearly review of the Scottish National Outcomes framework, and the New Zealand Living Standards Framework which enables updating of their framework's

Summary

All Australians should live in safe, resilient and vibrant communities where they have equitable access to the things that improve their health and wellbeing. However, when envisioning wellbeing for Australians this vision must be more than economic productivity, job security and the absence of disease. Wellbeing must aim to create thriving individuals and communities, equity and social justice, environmental sustainability and planetary health, and support culturally diverse and enduring knowledges.

To capture and measure what matters for Australians wellbeing we must focus on the systems and structures that underpin our health, environment and wellbeing systems. Measures and indicators that are adopted must centre the environment and the health of Australians over economic outputs and must capture indicators of long term health so we can see problems before they are entrenched. Indicators should also look to measure the build environments in order to understand if the Government is enabling safe neighbourhoods and housing, fresh and affordable food, clean water and air, access to green spaces, opportunities to be active, opportunities for social connection, secure employment, a good education and transport options. These opportunities, services and health promoting spaces should be equally available to all Australians. Every Australian, now and in the generations to come, no matter their age, background or location, should have the opportunity to live in fully realised wellbeing.

Producing a Measuring what matters wellbeing framework is a critical first step to incorporating wellbeing into the business of government. While we commend the Australian Government for embarking on this process, the Government must ensure strong, deep and appropriate consultation is undertaken with First Nations and other key demographic groups to ensure their knowledge and voices are captured in Measuring what matters. Finally, a Measuring what matters budget framework should be the first but cannot be the last step of establishing an Australia that promotes and enables everyone's wellbeing. A holistic wellbeing governance system that enables long-term decision making must be embedded across all of the systems and mechanisms afforded to the federal Government.

Appendix A – Possible Environmental Indicators

VicHealth suggests that indicators are developed around the following issues that affect health and wellbeing of Australians from an environmental perspective:

- Air quality
- CO2 emissions
- Water quality, safety and security
- Heat and the impact of heat on ability to engage in physical activity
- Indicators that track waste and aim to reduce waste across all industries for example Household recycling
- Micro-plastic proliferation
- Natural disasters in terms of frequency and impact
- Energy consumption per capita
- Mental Health and sentiment in regards to the impact of grief from the loss of physical capacity, trauma from impacted communities and landscapes and distress of major disasters.

Appendix B- Possible Health Indicators

VicHealth suggests that indicators are developed around the following issues that affect health and wellbeing of Australians from a health perspective:

- Annual preventive health spending
- Health literacy levels
- Access to green space (which promotes physical and mental health)
- Existence of and proximity to active transport infrastructure such as safe and shaded footpaths and bike tracks.
- Physical activity participation
- Population dietary intake- including consumption of fruit and vegetable, sugary drink consumption, discretionary food consumption
- Composition of food supply – including levels of keys nutrients, level of processing and health star rating
- Alcohol consumption
- Gambling engagement
- Tobacco and e-liquid/ vaping consumption
- Density of harmful industry outlets (alcohol, fast food, ultra-processed food, gambling, tobacco and vaping)
- Exposure to harmful industry advertising (both static and digital)
- Self-reporting of wellbeing (mental health)
- Self-harm rates
- Connection to country / planet/ culture
- Social support
- Percentage of population above a healthy weight
- Burden of non-communicable disease related to key risk factors.

Appendix C – Possible Wider Determinants Indicators

VicHealth suggests that indicators are developed, across a range of domains, around the following issues that affect health and wellbeing of Australians from a social determinants' perspective:

- Australians below the poverty line
- Children below the poverty line
- Consumption / household expenditure
- Financial literacy
- Household net worth
- Education attainment (secondary, tertiary)
- Numeracy and Literacy levels
- Housing affordability, quality and crowding
- Rental Cost, quality & crowding
- Childhood injuries
- Women in parliament
- Gender wage gap
- Family violence prevalence
- Employment rate
- Hourly earnings
- Hours spent on unpaid work and volunteering
- Frequency of access of harmful industry (fossil fuels, alcohol, fast food, ultra-processed food, gambling, tobacco and vaping) representatives and workers to government decision makers
- Community access to decision makers
- Voter turnout.

This is a list of indicators that would help create an understanding of the legal and social determinants contributing or detracting from the wellbeing of Australians. However, this is not a complete list and the Government should undertake further consultation with key priority cohorts to further understand the indicator that would be reflect what matters to them.

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