



A spotlight review on the
Measuring What Matters Framework and
the submission by the
Australian Health Promotion Association

September 2023



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INTRODUCTION

The Australian Health Promotion Association Ltd (AHPA®) is the peak body for health promotion in Australia. AHPA advocates for the development of healthy living, working and recreational environments for all people. Through our work we support the participation of communities and groups in decisions that affect their health. Australia is one of the healthiest countries in the world. This is largely because of effective public health and its core services – protection, prevention **and health promotion** which includes action to create and support the social and environmental conditions that enable Australians to enjoy a healthy and happy life. We are now more aware than ever of just how complex the circumstances are by which human health is influenced – policies and actions shaped by the unfair distribution of wealth, power and resources, both locally and internationally. We are also more cognisant of the range of skills and practices required to enhance individual and community capacity and act to address those forces that lead to health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries. **Health promotion's role has never been so significant.**

ABOUT US

Incorporated in 1990, AHPA is the only professional association specifically for people interested or involved in the practice, policy, research and study of health promotion. Our member-driven national Association represents over 1000 members and subscribers and is governed by a Board at the national level with operational branches representing all states and territories. Membership of AHPA is diverse, and includes designated health promotion practitioners, researchers and students, as well as others involved in promoting physical, mental, social, cultural and environmental health, whose primary profession or area of study may be something different, but whose responsibilities include promoting health. Members represent a broad range of sectors including health, education, welfare, environment, transport, law enforcement, town planning, housing, and politics. They are drawn from government departments and agencies, universities, non-government organisations, community-based organisations and groups, private companies, and students.

Our activities include: national registration of health promotion practitioners for the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) in Australia; national health promotion university learning and teaching network; early career support; national and local conferences and events; a tri-yearly Population Health Congress (with partners: Public Health Association of Australia, Australasian Epidemiological Association and Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine); a website providing professional and membership information; a national listserv providing members with sector news, employment, advocacy and events information; stakeholder and member communication across a range of platforms; advocacy action; strong partnership working with a range of organisations; awards; traineeships; mentoring; scholarships and bursaries; and the Health Promotion Journal of Australia.

Our Vision

A healthy, equitable Australia.

Our Purpose

Leadership, advocacy and workforce development for health promotion practice, research, evaluation and policy.

Our Principles

- Ethical practice - Supporting culturally informed, participatory, respectful, and safe practice.
- Health equity - Addressing the sociocultural, economic, political, commercial and ecological determinants of health in order to build health equity.
- Innovative and evidence informed approaches - Promoting and supporting evidence informed research, policy and practice.
- Collaboration - Working in partnership with other organisations to improve health and wellbeing.

This spotlight was prepared on behalf of AHPA by:

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Wellbeing economies and measuring what matters.

A wellbeing economy has been defined as “an economic system operating within safe environmental limits, that serves the collective wellbeing of current and future generations first.” (Scottish Government, 2022). There has been significant interest in wellbeing economies as an alternative way to measure progress and the health of populations. According to this approach “well-being drives economic prosperity, stability and resilience, and vice versa” (Williams et al., 2023). The ideology underpinning wellbeing economies also differs from the more common neo-liberal perspective that privileges economic production and growth as the key to prosperity (Williams et al., 2023). However, Stiglitz and colleagues (2019) have argued that many politicians hope “that if we just didn’t measure inequality, no one would know the extent to which it was growing.” Therefore, continued action by those in health promotion to advocate for Australia’s transition to an economy prioritising health equity and wellbeing is critical.

The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) well-being framework](#) was developed in 2011 as a guideline for countries to accurately measure the wellbeing of their populations, by focusing on the production of wellbeing economies (Stiglitz et al., 2019). Factors include quality of life indicators such as work-life balance and social connectedness, and other sustainable wellbeing indicators such as human capital and social capital (OECD, 2013). Material indicators such as income and wealth, and work are included, in combination with a range of other social, political, and environmental factors (OECD, 2013). Wellbeing is viewed by the OECD as multidimensional and therefore to accurately measure it, the factors determining wellbeing need to be identified and tracked (World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2023).

Many countries have launched their own national initiatives, some more successfully than others, to measure the broad determinants influencing wellbeing (World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2023). For example, countries such as New Zealand, Scotland, Canada, and Wales have been paving the way towards a well-being economy (Robinson, 2023). The global evidence base and support for wellbeing economies is increasing (OECD, 2013; Robinson, 2023; World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2023), and Australia is the latest country attempting to harness this approach, with the Australian government announcing its new framework in July 2023.

In Australia, the [Measuring What Matters Framework](#) is the country’s first national attempt to understand, track and inform Australia’s progress “towards a more healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous Australia” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). [Consultations](#) with a range of individuals, organisations, and countries occurred during the government’s engagement process with over 280 submissions and 65 meetings (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). For example, the OECD well-being framework informed the framework along with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which has been suggested as an opportunity for Australia to track its commitment to and success in meeting the goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). From a health, wellbeing, and equity perspective, key organisations that were consulted including the [Wellbeing and Prevention Coalition in Mental Health](#), the [Centre for Policy Development](#), [VicHealth](#), [PHAA](#), [ACOSS](#), [Climate and Health Alliance](#), and [NACCHO](#). These organisations provided important evidence-informed recommendations to support the development of the Framework.

The framework has outlined 50 key indicators under the five themes of healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous, seeking to measure the overall wellbeing of the Australian population (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). Additionally, inclusion, fairness, and equity are highlighted as cross-cutting themes (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). These indicators aim to capture data that goes beyond economics, to instead encompass the broader range of social, political, and environmental factors that influence wellbeing (Robinson, 2023; World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, 2023). There is also a [dashboard](#) where content on the 50 indicators can be accessed, which will reportedly be updated annually. Stiglitz and colleagues (2009) state that as a society, it is vital to “change the focus of our statistics from measuring the size of economic production ... to measuring what shapes the well-being of people today and that of future generations.” The Commonwealth suggests that the aspiration of the Australian framework is to inform policy decisions at all levels, and to ensure decision-makers are improving the health and wellbeing of citizens, not just our economic prosperity (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023).

Broadly, organisations support the framework, but some remain unconvinced that the data will lead to measurable changes (Doggett & Sweet, 2023). It has been suggested that the indicators are not sufficient in isolation to progress Australia towards a wellbeing economy that prioritises health and equity (Robinson, 2023). Smith (2023) has argued that the framework is merely words with no real meaning or impact unless the framework is democratically mandated. Strong commitment by governments will be required to effectively integrate the framework into policies and structures (Smith, 2023). In the recent Health Promotion Journal of Australia special issue on Wellbeing Economy and Health in All Policies, Williams and colleagues (2023) have argued that the successful implementation of a wellbeing economy in Australia requires greater government commitment to Health in All Policies (HiAP). HiAP means the development of healthy public policy that is implemented across systems and structures to address the complex determinants of health and inequity (Williams et al., 2023). HiAP has been advocated for by international and national health promotion organisations and individuals for decades, and HiAP has recently been outlined by the World Health Organization to assist countries in progressing towards wellbeing economies (Williams et al., 2023).

The framework has also been critiqued as broad, and not encompassing the complex cultural differences present in Australia (Doggett & Sweet, 2023). However, the government has noted that the framework should complement existing frameworks that are more targeted to specific cultural groups such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). Another critique is the lack of recognition of climate change as an indicator due to its significant impact on environment and population health (Doggett & Sweet, 2023). The National Rural Health Alliance also criticised the limited focus on rural and regional health with no specific indicators to measure progress in these settings (Doggett & Sweet, 2023). A range of indicators have been identified as missing, according to leading health organisations such as the PHAA and the George Institute, with biomedical determinants prioritised over social and structural determinants of health (Doggett & Sweet, 2023). It has also been suggested that equity is still not adequately considered and the alignment of indicators to the SDGs requires improvement (Doggett & Sweet, 2023).

AHPA was one of the organisations to participate in the consultation on the Measuring What Matters Framework. [You can view the submission here](#). To achieve change that is effective, sustainable, and conducive to a healthy and equitable Australia, AHPA submitted a range of recommendations. The table below highlights AHPA's recommendations that the framework considered and included, as well as recommendations that were overlooked and not included.

AHPA's recommendations	Measuring What Matters Framework
Monitoring uptake and use of the evaluation guidance.	A new Australian Centre for Evaluation is being established to track the impact of the framework in informing government policy and the subsequent impacts on society. <i>There is no specified plan outlined regarding how the uptake of the framework and evaluation will occur.</i>
Supporting and upskilling entities to utilise this guidance and related principles concerning the ethical conduct of evaluation and other measurement activities (including knowledge translation and community enablement/empowerment).	The framework has stated it will be embedded into government decision making. The framework also suggests it is intended to be utilised by businesses, academics, and communities and that the government will provide guidance for agencies to inform their own policy and evaluation development. <i>There is no specified plan outlined regarding how this support will be provided. Knowledge translation and community enablement/empowerment are not concepts mentioned in the framework.</i>
Collating and making public the findings of interventions across Departments.	The government mentions that the frequency with which the framework statements should be released is still in consultation. The themes and indicators are expected to be reviewed and update yearly. It is stated that the framework should be utilised by different government levels through collaborative policy action. <i>There is no specified plan outlined regarding how the publication of findings from interventions will occur.</i>
A focus on measuring and tracking action, output and outcomes pertaining to social justice and inequity over time, possibly with a system wide focus.	The framework has highlighted five wellbeing themes: healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive, and prosperous. The concepts of inclusion, equity, and fairness are highlighted as cross-cutting concepts. These themes and concepts pertain to the AHPA's recommended focus on social justice and inequity. The framework strongly links the interconnected factors and underscores the importance of systems. <i>However, the measurements of inclusion, equity, and fairness and the progress made in relation to these concepts are not specified.</i>

AHPA's recommendations	Measuring What Matters Framework
<p>Including the following indicators in the framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural capital - health literacy - prerequisites to health (peace, food, security, democratic participation) - poverty - personhood - stigma - climate related mental health issues - intergenerational trauma - deprivation/social exclusion - measure to consider the scope, quantum, and quality of the health and non-health workforce 	<p>Indicators that were included in the framework that relate to the AHPA's recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>cultural capital</u>: acceptance of diversity, creative and cultural engagement, First Nations spoken languages - <u>peace and security</u>: access to justice, childhood experience of abuse, experience of violence, feeling of safety, ends meet, national safety, online safety, experience of discrimination - <u>poverty</u>: homelessness, housing serviceability, making income and wealth inequality, job opportunities - <u>climate related mental health issues</u>: climate resilience - <u>deprivation/social exclusion</u>: sense of belonging, social connections, time for recreation, social interaction <p>Indicators that broadly related to AHPA's recommendations but could have been more explicit were stigma (in relation to peace and to valuing diversity, belonging and culture), health literacy (in relation to equitable access to quality health and care services and to access to education, skills development and learning throughout life), democratic participation (in relation to trust in institutions).</p> <p><i>Indicators that were more difficult to see reflected in the framework that relate to the AHPA's recommendations were:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>food, intergenerational trauma, personhood, and a measure to consider the scope, quantum, and quality of the health and non-health workforce</i>

So where to from here? The framework has the potential to provide a practical policy-making tool to ensure program and policies are developed effectively, with prevention, sustainability, and community participation at the forefront. However, one critic of the framework noted that “creating such an economy requires more than a dashboard,” - Australia should learn from the successes and failures of other countries, to turn the framework into a useful tool, not one that merely ticks boxes (Smith, 2023). Political accountability and transparency are key in the progression of a well-being economy (Stiglitz et al., 2019). Further public health and health promotion concepts need to be adopted, such as a focus on HiAP, action on the social determinants of health, intersectoral collaboration and evidence-informed decisions (Robinson, 2023). Aligning these principles alongside the introduction of the Measuring What Matters Framework, will place Australia in the best possible position to equitably promote health and wellbeing.

The upcoming [National Health Promotion Symposium](#) will be focusing on these concepts of wellbeing, economic and political determinants of health, and working across sectors, underscoring the importance of “*working together to build an economy that is fit for the people and planet*”. You can find out more by reading the latest articles in the HPJA special issue [here](#).

The following resources may also be of interest.

- [World Health Organization – Health in the well-being economy](#)
- [Wellbeing Economy Alliance – For an economy in service of life](#)
- [VicHealth – How to create a wellbeing economy](#)
- [The George Institute – The power of a wellbeing economy for climate, health and equity](#)
- [Public health research & practice – How to measure progress towards a wellbeing economy: distinguishing genuine advances from ‘window dressing’](#)
- [Eurohealth – A wellbeing economy agenda to help shape the post-coronavirus economy](#)

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