

6 February 2023

Ref: HWQLD/23/19

The Honourable Dr Jim Chalmers  
Treasurer  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: [MeasuringWhatMatters@Treasury.gov.au](mailto:MeasuringWhatMatters@Treasury.gov.au)

Dear Treasurer

**Re: Submission on Budget Statement 4: Measuring What Matters**

Congratulations on your commitment to measuring what matters to improve the lives of all Australians. This represents a significant opportunity to begin a new conversation about what matters to Australians, and inform the development of an economy which makes the wellbeing of Australians a priority.

The Queensland Government recognises that sustained investment in prevention and public health is needed to improve health and wellbeing, address the rates of chronic disease, ease growing health costs and disrupt cycles of disadvantage. In response, Health and Wellbeing Queensland (HWQld) was established on 1 July 2019 as an independent statutory body within the health portfolio of the Queensland Government with the objective to improve the health and wellbeing of the Queensland population, including by reducing the burden of chronic disease through targeting risk factors for those diseases, and reducing health inequity.

HWQld agrees that measuring what matters can provide an important foundation for Australia's efforts to lift living standards and create a fairer Australia. This is an opportunity to take the initial steps to shift Australia's economic system towards a "Wellbeing Economy"—one which places our people, our communities and the planet at its heart and strives to improve equity for all our citizens both now and for future generations. Achieving wellbeing means respecting and fulfilling human rights, ensuring dignity and fairness, and creating an inclusive society within the needs of the planet. We have an opportunity to go beyond traditional economic measures and reorient our society towards health, wellbeing, sustainability and equity.

This is a journey that requires meaningful participation and co-creation with citizens and communities. Opportunities for participatory and inclusive governance approaches are important to understand changing needs and values of Australians and enable our public sectors to be continuously responsive, resilient and relevant.

Ground Floor  
139 Coronation Drive, Milton Green  
PO Box 1419 Milton QLD 4064  
**Telephone** +61 467 830 979  
**Website** [www.hw.qld.gov.au](http://www.hw.qld.gov.au)  
ABN 95 443 756 818

There are many notable national and international approaches to understanding and measuring wellbeing which have been shared widely (see descriptions of national and international approaches in VicHealth's [A toolkit to progress wellbeing economy approaches](#) and the Centre for Policy Development's [Redefining Progress – global lessons for an Australian approach to wellbeing](#)).

HWQld asks that consideration be given to developing an approach that is tailored for Australia, is inclusive of all population groups and embraces First Nations wisdom and perspectives on wellbeing.

Success of this initiative is imperative for our nation. Recent research and modelling commissioned by HWQld (see [Impact of Obesity on Life Expectancy in Queensland](#)) indicates that the life expectancy of a child born in 2023 could be decreased up to 5.1 years. This indicates the need to take urgent action. HWQld supports the Australian Government in its intentions to continue this measuring progress conversation in a meaningful way.

Please find below our suggestions specifically relating to Budget Statement 4, including:

- a more comprehensive consultation process
- ensuring information informs policy decisions
- understanding the wellbeing of all population groups
- ensuring quality and comparability of data collected.

#### **Appropriately determining what matters to Australians through a more comprehensive consultation process**

What matters to Australians will vary based on many characteristics such as an individual's age, where they live, their socioeconomic status, their cultural background, and the level of disadvantage that they experience.

A central submission process does not provide a sufficient opportunity for all Australians to participate in a meaningful process to identify what matters to them.

HWQld encourages the Australian Government to consider this a long-term community collaboration promoting debate of a shared vision for Australia.

#### **Not only measuring what matters, but ensuring that the information informs government actions, policy and decision-making processes**

There are many ways that wellbeing has been embedded into policy and governance processes internationally. One example of a framework which comprehensively and successfully builds wellbeing into legislation, policy making, planning, budgeting and education processes is the model developed by Wales through its [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

HWQld supports the consideration of a comprehensive approach for the development of a national wellbeing framework to sit alongside a central list of indicators.

### **Ensuring data provides a comprehensive picture of wellbeing for all population groups**

As the Budget Statement indicates, international and national frameworks have chosen different approaches to identifying and quantifying policy areas / domains and indicators.

Existing work of Australian agencies highlights what is important to the community in relation to identifying domains and indicators. The [Australian National Development Index \(ANDI\)](#) has undertaken some valuable work around identifying potential domains with a national survey indicating the most important domains to the community were Children, Health, Education and Democracy. ANDI has since developed a framework covering [12 domains](#) to capture the essence of sustainable wellbeing. Likewise, the [Australian Capital Territory's Wellbeing Framework](#) introduces [12 domains](#) developed through a comprehensive community consultation process.

It is also important to note the importance of Australia's commitment to the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and ensuring reporting against the SDGs is amplified through this process.

Irrespective of which domains or indicators are selected, it is important they can represent and provide a comprehensive picture of the wellbeing of all Australians, from their perspectives. This is an opportunity to highlight the inequities experienced by specific population groups including:

- First Nations peoples
- People living in remote/rural/regional communities
- Children and young people
- People living with disability
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people
- People identifying as LGBTQ+.

In addition to highlighting inequities across population groups, it is critical that there is the ability to examine and address issues of intersectionality which can again be used to inform policy and decision-making of the government and sectors to address those inequities.

HWQId encourages the Australian Government to draw on existing Australian work to capture qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive picture of the wellbeing of all Australians including inequities and intersectionality.

### **Ensuring the quality and comparability of the data collected**

HWQId acknowledges the significant investment needed for the collection of nationwide wellbeing data which is timely, consistent, reliable, comparable and able to be disaggregated.

HWQId also recognises that while it is important to ensure a level of international comparability of data, this is once again an opportunity for Australia to set its own path and develop a contemporary set of indicators which reflect what is important to Australians.

There has been much debate over recent years about what makes a good indicator of wellbeing and progress (see examples of different approaches to measuring wellbeing in the Wellbeing Economy Alliance's [Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide](#)). For example, it is now well accepted that measuring wellbeing requires a combination of qualitative as well as quantitative data.

HWQld encourages the Australian Government to consider alternative approaches to determine what makes an appropriate indicator and consider how existing Australian data sources can be harnessed.

In relation to relevant HWQld initiatives to support the Australian Government, HWQld is partnering with state government and university sectors in the development of the GenQ Data Platform. The project aims to establish an evidence base and support its usage by a broad range of stakeholders to identify local solutions to local health and wellbeing related challenges in Queensland. In addition to the technology, infrastructure and processes needed to source, store and transform data, the Data Platform will have a key focus on developing appropriate and tailored analysis and visualisations, end user resources and support and end user capability building.

In addition, HWQld has developed a Health and Wellbeing Framework which provides a holistic view of health and wellbeing and highlights the multiple layers at which wellbeing interacts – individual, community, society and planetary. This helps to inform a selection of indicators that influence the enabling conditions for wellbeing and captures personal, community, country and environmental change over time.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute our thoughts and ideas to help elevate the conversation on a national approach to a Wellbeing Economy. My team is available for further discussion of relevant HWQld initiatives. Should you require further information in relation to this matter, the Health and Wellbeing contact is Ms Caroline Macaulay, Director, Strategy and Policy who can be contacted by telephone on 0460 007 552 or by email at [Caroline.Macaulay@hw.qld.gov.au](mailto:Caroline.Macaulay@hw.qld.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



Ms Gemma Hodgetts  
Executive Director  
**Health and Wellbeing Queensland**

*making healthy happen*