



Obesity Policy Coalition – February 2023

Submission on Measuring What Matters Framework

The Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC) is a partnership between Cancer Council Victoria, VicHealth and the Global Centre for Preventive Health and Nutrition at Deakin University; a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention. The OPC advocates for evidence-based policy and regulatory change to address overweight, obesity and unhealthy diets in Australia, particularly among children.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on a Measuring What Matters framework (the Framework) for Australia. We strongly support the development of a wellbeing framework to measure key indicators that reflect the wellbeing of the Australian population, and of groups within the population. The Framework is an important foundation that must then inform the government agenda and be supported by broader changes to ensure the Framework shapes the development of government policy and the allocation of government resources.

We strongly endorse the submission provided by our partner, VicHealth, and the recommendations it has made and the indicators it has proposed.

We highlight the following issues in particular:

- It is critically important that the Framework is focused on measuring equity, that is to assess wellbeing indicators not only across the population as a whole, but within particular population groups. This is essential to ensure the Framework can be used as an important tool to assess inequity and inform policy and funding decisions to reduce it. Further work should be done to determine the appropriate population groups to be included, however we support the proposed minimum requirements put forward by VicHealth.
- The Framework must also be focused on ensuring the health and wellbeing of future generations, as well as the current population, and must also focus on planetary health.
- As well as measuring factors related to individual wellbeing, the Framework must measure the broader structures and environments that influence individual wellbeing.
- The Framework must be supported by an appropriately funded data collection, monitoring and reporting structure and must include collection of new data sets, not only relying on existing data collection.
- The Framework is only a first step and must be followed by significant change to the systems and processes of government to ensure policy and funding decisions are made with reference to improving wellbeing and reducing inequity. Further consultation should be undertaken to assess how this can best be achieved, including with communities.

As the OPC, our focus is on how the Framework can best measure indicators related to diet, overweight and obesity. A comprehensive approach is needed to assess not only the percentage of the population affected by overweight and obesity, but to capture key behaviours such as diet and physical activity, to measure the environment that influences those behaviours and to measure wider determinants of health. This should also capture government investment in preventive health. Together these elements can paint a meaningful picture, both across the population and within population subgroups, and highlight where intervention is required, and track changes over time.

To embed preventive health and wellbeing measures within government decision making processes, the Framework should incorporate all indicators that are included in the National Obesity Strategy and the National Preventive Health Strategy, as these strategies have been formally developed in consultation with the community and endorsed by the Australian government to guide action on obesity prevention, improving diets and wider preventive health in Australia. It should also reflect further indicators proposed under the National Preventive Health Strategy once these are agreed, including a set of nationally agreed prevention and wellbeing indicators, definitions and measures of the wider determinants of health, a national prevention monitoring and reporting framework to be utilised by all levels of government and data indicators for social and environmental determinants of health.

We support the health-related indicators proposed by VicHealth, noting the particular importance of including the following indicators in the Framework:

- Percentage of population above a healthy weight
- Population diet, including consumption of fruit and vegetables, sugary drink consumption, discretionary food consumption
- Burden of non-communicable disease related to overweight and obesity and diet
- Access to affordable, healthy food
- Exposure to unhealthy food marketing, including on digital media
- The composition of the food supply, including levels of key nutrients, level of processing and health star rating
- Density of unhealthy food outlets

We also strongly support the inclusion of measures that assess wider determinants of health as proposed by VicHealth.

All indicators must be assessed at a population level as well as within different subgroups, where appropriate. We acknowledge that in many cases existing data is not available to measure these factors. Further work and consultation will be needed to determine the detail of data collection and analysis.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. We strongly support an increased focus on wellbeing within government decision making processes and within the wider community. A strong framework to measure wellbeing indicators that matter to Australians is an important step in achieving this outcome.