



Public Service Association of SA

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The Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer

Re: Australian Wellbeing Budget Framework

The Public Service Association of South Australia (PSA) is the principal public sector union in South Australia with coverage of more than 41,000 employees in the South Australian public sector.

Our members work across every area of the state public sector and in the context of this submission are engaged in every aspect of what are included in most definitions of “wellbeing”, including but not limited to; health, education, environment, justice, safety, transport, child protection, and housing.

The PSA advocates for a well-resourced and high quality public sector which provides public services for the whole South Australian community, with a strong focus on equity and reducing inequality, and on social justice.

The PSA acknowledges your government's decision to establish a wellbeing budget framework for Australia, and recognises the history of the broad concepts dating back to the progressive years of the 1970s.

We welcome your government's budget focus on wellbeing and the government's commitment to *“measuring what matters to improve the lives of all Australians”*.

We also acknowledge the Centre for Policy Development's report *“Redefining progress - Global lessons for an Australian approach to wellbeing”* as a strong and concise analysis of the key elements for consideration of a government's approach to wellbeing.

Government leadership is critical to directing focus to the values that must underpin a wellbeing budget. Values supporting equity and social justice are fundamental in any consideration of a wellbeing budget framework. These values must be embedded in every consideration of every element of a wellbeing budget, and must be recognised as being central to all aspects of the public service, essential to the very nature and purpose of the public service. We see your government's focus on a wellbeing budget framework as signalling recognition that first and foremost we are a community – not just an economy – that the needs and aspirations of the people must be pre-eminent over the demands of a for-profit economy.



Much of the work PSA members do every day is, fundamentally, aimed at addressing inequality and improving wellbeing. As a key public sector union we are dedicated to supporting our members in the work they do for the communities they serve.

Wellbeing is undeniably a broad and varied concept. It is much broader than can be summed up by simple metrics related to physical or mental health status. Serious consideration must be given to social determinants of health, including key factors such as housing quality, accessibility and affordability; environment; education; socioeconomic status; safety; living standards; social inclusion; quality and access to formal health care (both physical and mental); all of which have profound impacts on health and wellbeing outcomes. Underpinning all of these factors is the need to genuinely and systematically identify and address the impacts of inequality (arising from differences in class, income, location, gender, ethnicity, age and disability to name only a few) and build the necessary infrastructure of opportunity. The decisions of government have extraordinary direct and indirect impacts on population wellbeing, as public policy, structure and resourcing of the public sector determine the quality and accessibility of both the fundamental services themselves as well as this infrastructure of opportunity.

It is abundantly clear that if the government is serious about improving the wellbeing of Australians, it will primarily be relying on the public sectors – both state and federal - to co-ordinate and deliver on this commitment.

The values underpinning wellbeing must be embedded in the respective public sectors, as must government recognition of the critical importance of supporting and resourcing the public sector. The principal purpose of the public sectors must be to reduce inequality, improve social justice, and to lead, co-ordinate and provide services with equity as the driving motivation.

We recognise, of course, that the federal government will not be able to rely on the federal public sector alone for the implementation and measurement of a wellbeing approach to a budget. We also acknowledge that many aspects of wellbeing (including many of the examples listed above) fall principally under the responsibility of state governments. Certain elements will require a high level of co-operation and co-ordination between state governments and the federal government. It is critical that the respective governments lead the commitment to values underpinning a wellbeing budget approach and do what they can to ensure that the people they respectively represent understand and appreciate the approach. Openness, accountability and transparency from governments are critical to this, as is the ability to take a holistic and long-term view of Australians' wellbeing.

The PSA is in a strong position as the principal public sector union in SA, and a state public sector union with very broad coverage, to support, encourage and promote a wellbeing approach to government budgets. In addition, the PSA, and our members have extensive experience across virtually every area directly responsible for, and relevant to, wellbeing. As a union we have visibility across not only a broad spectrum of public services but also the ways in which the respective government departments connect with, complement and interact with each other, as well as the experience of people (particularly the most vulnerable in our society) who may receive substantial support/ intervention from one or multiple government departments and agencies.

The PSA offers our ongoing engagement with the federal government in consultation around establishment, implementation, monitoring and review of the proposed wellbeing indicators, particularly as they involve and affect our members and the communities they serve. We understand it is important to bring a broad and sophisticated approach to assessing and measuring wellbeing, and not be limited to an approach characterised by narrow simple metrics. This will include significant consideration of subjective assessments as well as objective measures. Assessing and measuring wellbeing is a means - not an end.

The PSA believes the public sector is central and critical to supporting and implementing a wellbeing approach to budgets. From policy development, analysis, implementation and delivery of wellbeing initiatives, communication, assessment and measurement, the public sector – our members – are absolutely fundamental to this approach. The public sector is essential to improving the lives of all Australians and improving and protecting their wellbeing.

We welcome your government's decision to bring a wellbeing approach to the development of the government's budget.

Our union stands ready and looks forward to engaging in, and supporting a wellbeing approach to government budgets, both for the benefit of our members, who will largely be responsible for carrying out the critical aspects of this work and ensuring it is successful, and for the public they serve.

Yours sincerely



Natasha Brown
PSA General Secretary
CPSU SPSF Group SA Branch SA Branch Secretary

