

**Submission
No 17**

**A FRAMEWORK FOR PERFORMANCE REPORTING AND DRIVING
WELLBEING OUTCOMES IN NSW**

Organisation: Centre for Western Sydney

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Inquiry into a framework for performance reporting and driving wellbeing outcomes in NSW

Submission by the Centre for Western Sydney, Western Sydney University

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The Centre for Western Sydney is dedicated to advancing the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of Western Sydney. Through rigorous research and community engagement, the Centre aims to highlight the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the region. Our submission is informed by this expertise and our commitment to fostering a holistic and place-based approach to wellbeing in Western Sydney. In the below submission, we address each point of the Terms of Reference for this inquiry.

Key Recommendations

- 1. Take a place-based approach in developing the framework:** Use data and indicators which can be broken down at the LGA level to address the unique needs of diverse communities, like Western Sydney.
- 2. The framework should inform M&E requirements of NSW funded programs:** The indicators and domains of change identified in the framework should also guide and inform evaluations of government funded programs and projects, providing consistent metrics for reporting on impact.
- 3. The framework should go beyond measurement to also set targets:** The NSW Framework must move beyond simply measuring change across different domains. It is imperative that benchmarks and targets are clearly defined for each wellbeing measure as well as strategies for how these targets will be achieved
- 4. Build upon and improve the existing indicators to capture important metrics:** Include indicators for:
 - (1) access to blue and green space and formal and informal sporting facilities as part of measuring active lifestyles
 - (2) urban heat exposure
 - (3) a metric for representation in parliament to include First Nations, ethnic diversity and women
 - (4) trust in media as part of trust in institutions
 - (5) attendance at cultural venues or events, as per the federal framework.

Terms of Reference

Part A:

a) The process in the Budget that allows Government to examine the outcomes achieved through its resource allocations, and the extent to which it allows Government to observe:

i) Outcomes and service levels

We recommend adopting a place-based approach to assessing outcomes and service levels. A place-based approach in policy making involves tailoring policies and programs to the specific needs, characteristics, and assets of distinct geographic areas or communities. This method acknowledges the unique challenges and opportunities within different regions, ensuring that interventions are relevant and effective for the local context.

A place-based approach to outcomes and service levels allows for a more accurate representation of regional differences and ensures that resource allocations are responsive to the specific needs of diverse communities. In the context of Western Sydney, a major urban area often misrepresented by its clustering with, or similarity to, regional statistics, it is crucial to tailor service delivery to reflect the true nature of the community's needs and thus better target investment in wellbeing for improved outcomes.

Recommendation 1

Take a place-based approach in developing the framework: A place-based approach to data collection, indicator development, and assessment of performance is needed. Such an approach requires datasets to be disaggregated at the LGA level, or finer, to attend to the specific and unique needs of diverse communities and places, such as Western Sydney.

ii) Evidence of the effectiveness of programs

A place-based approach facilitates the collection of localised evidence, which is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of programs. By focusing on granular data at the Local Government Area (LGA) level or even more specific subsets, the Government can obtain a clearer picture of how programs impact different communities, particularly in Western Sydney. Effectiveness measures should also draw from evidence found via impact evaluations, which should be a

requirement of all state funding mechanisms. These impact evaluations should include a focus on the socioeconomic impact of diverse projects and programs, including some qualitative measures to best gauge community response and social impact of investment. Social impact is not limited to social programming but can also be found in infrastructure projects.

Recommendation 2

The framework should inform M&E requirements of NSW funded programs: The indicators and domains of change identified in the framework should also guide and inform evaluations of government funded programs and projects, providing consistent metrics for reporting on impact.

iii) Transparency of performance

Localised data enhances transparency by providing detailed insights into the performance of programs and services at the community level. This transparency is vital for accountability and for building trust between the Government and the residents of Western Sydney. Data at the Greater Sydney regional level masks the variation in performance across different parts of the city, and similarly, data at the Western Sydney level also masks the significant disparities within the region.

iv) How services are delivered and the outcomes achieved by Government

A place-based approach to data collection and measurement helps to inform decisions about the design, delivery and assessment of government services. It ensures that the delivery of services is closely aligned with the unique characteristics and needs of each community. In Western Sydney, this approach can address specific urban challenges and leverage opportunities for improved outcomes.

Part B:

b) Opportunities, processes, and governance arrangements to improve:

i) The quality of performance information that aligns to targeted, meaningful outcomes for the people of NSW, to better inform government decision making

To ensure that performance information is truly aligned with targeted, meaningful outcomes for the people of NSW, it is essential to have data that can be broken down to the Local Government Area (LGA) level, or lower. This granularity allows for more precise and relevant insights into the specific needs and conditions of different communities. Additionally, wherever possible, data should be available on an annual basis to track progress, identify trends, and make timely adjustments to policies and programs. Furthermore, there is a need for improved industry and employment data nationally, particularly more accuracy and specificity within the ANZSIC codes of industrial classification. Better industry data will enhance our understanding of economic activities and their impacts, allowing for more informed decision making that supports targeted interventions and promotes regional economic development.

ii) Data collection and reporting to inform government decision making, enhance inter-Departmental collaboration and ensure accountability for cross-sector outcomes

It is critical that data on wellbeing outcomes is used to inform decision making. The measurement of wellbeing is only useful if there is a framework for how to incorporate these findings into decision making by government. As per the NSW government's Foundation paper 'A wellbeing budget for NSW',¹ the purpose of a wellbeing economy is to move away from GDP as the sole measure of progress, in order to account for more holistic measures of societal health and wellbeing. To achieve better ecological and human outcomes, wellbeing data must be used to guide decision making. Therefore, the Centre recommends that targets are set across the metrics used in the wellbeing framework.

Recommendation 3

The framework should go beyond measurement to also set targets: The NSW Framework must move beyond simply measuring change across different domains. It is imperative that benchmarks and targets are clearly defined for each wellbeing measure as well as strategies for how these targets will be achieved

iii) Measurements of quality of life and wellbeing in New South Wales, with particular reference to the Commonwealth 'Measuring What Matters' national wellbeing framework and the OECD 'Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress'

¹ https://www.neweconomy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/A-wellbeing-budget-for-NSW-Foundation-paper_for-public-release.pdf

We commend the NSW government in building upon and furthering the Federal framework by developing a more comprehensive list of potential indicators.² We recommend that the NSW framework places a stronger emphasis on place-based indicators and data sets. This will better accommodate the specific needs and characteristics of diverse places and allow for more finely tuned place-based policy making.

In addition, we advocate for the inclusion of several additional indicators to those proposed in the current potential list, in order to target investment where it is most needed:

Active lifestyles – access to space and facilities

While we commend the inclusion of the indicator around active lifestyles (which is absent from the Federal framework), we know that access to spaces and facilities play a key role in whether people are “enabled to lead active lifestyles” and that this access is spatially uneven across the state. Our research has shown that residents of Western Sydney often have lower levels of access to both sporting and creative amenities compared to their counterparts in other areas of Sydney. We propose an additional indicator around access to blue and green spaces and facilities for sport and recreation (both formal and informal). Including this indicator would provide critical spatial data on who has access to opportunities for staying fit and healthy.

Urban heat exposure

While the current list of potential indicators includes “temperature anomalies” as a sustainability indicator, we recommend the inclusion of a specific metric around urban heat exposure. This is a key issue in Western Sydney and one that links to the environment, housing, and access to blue and green spaces.

Representation in parliament – First Nations, women, ethnic diversity

The current NSW proposed indicators includes a specific metric around First Nations representation in parliament, which we commend. The Federal framework metric is focused on women in parliament. We recommend that the NSW framework should measure the representation of both First Nations and women in parliament, as well as ethnic diversity. Western Sydney is the most diverse region in the country, and it is important that constituents feel represented, particularly by parliamentarians with non-European ancestry.

² <https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/2024-25/budget-papers/performance-and-wellbeing>

Trust in media

While the Federal framework has a number of indicators around trust in institutions, there is no indicator around trust in media. This is similarly absent in the list of proposed NSW indicators. Trust in media is an important part of a vibrant and healthy democracy. This is particularly important given the lack of diversity in Australian media, which often results in Western Sydney communities not seeing themselves represented. Developing an indicator around trust in media would allow government to measure the significance of media for social trust, political belonging, and community wellbeing.

Attendance at cultural venues or events

The Federal framework includes an indicator on 'Creative and cultural engagement,' which measures the proportion of people who have attended or participated in cultural events and activities. We support the inclusion of a similar indicator in the NSW framework, which currently only proposes measuring the proportion of live performance tickets sold. This would limit the data to only one kind of participation and attendance.

In addition, while we commend the proposed indicators around attendance at multicultural events and the provision of interpreting and translation by Multicultural NSW, it is important to note that diverse communities such as those of Western Sydney also want to attend “mainstream” cultural and creative events and venues. It is therefore important to capture the spatial data on attendance and participation in cultural and creative events and venues in general. Cultural and creative events play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion, enhancing community identity, and providing opportunities for personal and collective expression.

Including the above outcomes in the NSW framework will ensure that performance information is aligned with the lived experiences and aspirations of communities. It will also help inform government decision making to better address the place-based inequities across these important dimensions of wellbeing and liveability.

Recommendation 4

Build upon and improve the existing indicators to capture important metrics and guide investment: Add indicators for (1) access to blue and green space and formal and informal sporting facilities as part of measuring active lifestyles; (2) urban heat or heat exposure; (3) a metric for representation in parliament around ethnic diversity in addition to the federal metric on women in parliament; (4) trust in institutions to also include an indicator around trust in media; and (5) attendance at cultural venues or events, as per the federal framework.

Conclusion

The Centre for Western Sydney urges the NSW Government to adopt a place-based approach to the development of the wellbeing framework. This approach is essential for accurately reflecting the diverse needs and experiences of communities across NSW, particularly in Western Sydney. By incorporating localised data and key dimensions of liveability, the Government can ensure that the wellbeing framework is both comprehensive and responsive to the unique challenges and opportunities faced by different regions.