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Measuring What Matters Team

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SUBMISSION: MEASURING WHAT MATTERS CONSULTATION

I commend the Treasurer and Treasury for starting the conversation about transitioning to a wellbeing economy, with the publication of *Budget Statement 4: Measuring What Matters*.

I am not making a submission about the *content* of what we should be measuring, but rather the *process* of how we get there.

1. The purpose of the Measuring What Matters report should be to guide policy development towards the things that matter to Australians

A report with a new set of metrics is of limited value if it does not reflect a vision for the country built by our communities. We will never have complete agreement on the best set of metrics. But the part that is useful is that we are explicitly thinking about where we want to go and how we get there.

Great reforms of the past have been based on building a broadly-held view of where we need to go. This allows us to co-design policy that respects and meets the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders.

Future policy reforms that require difficult decisions will need the same consensus building around our goals. A Measuring What Matters report can be an important tool in transparency and accountability, and reflect a consensus about what is important to Australians.

2. Policy development will only change if there is wide buy-in to the process of deciding what matters – what our goals are

Australians want to be involved in setting the direction for the country. Genuine engagement of citizens in the task of defining and measuring progress strengthens their democratic capacity and their trust in democracy. We have a huge opportunity to improve the quality of our national debate through this process – acknowledging the legitimacy of competing interests and perspectives and building a common purpose.

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Without a broad community engagement process, I fear that Measuring What Matters could become a bureaucratic exercise.

3. There are multiple ways to involve citizens

Opening a consultation process for submissions is a good start. But the reality is that most citizens have no idea about making government submissions. It seems likely that the submissions process will only elicit responses from experts and interest groups.

Broader engagement with citizens will require different approaches.

There are plenty of examples of appropriate community engagement approaches from other countries¹, guides from the OECD on principles of community engagement² and innovative ways to conduct community engagement³, and organisations that specialise in innovative ways to involve citizens in democracy⁴.

Measuring What Matters provides an excellent opportunity to test some of these approaches in Australia. Multiple community engagement approaches should be taken, to maximise the number of people who can contribute to deciding what matters to us.

The Scottish government's Wellbeing Economy Toolkit states:

“Participation and co-creation are key to the wellbeing economy approach, with a focus on reaching out and involving and empowering citizens, communities, local enterprises and anchor organisations to take an active role in the development of local economic policy and strategy.”

I urge Treasury to experiment with some new ways to engage citizens, as illustrated in the publications referenced above.

¹ [National Standards for Community Engagement | SCDC - We believe communities matter](#)

² [OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes | en | OECD](#)

³ [Innovative Citizen Participation - OECD](#)

⁴ [Advancing democratic innovations toolkit | Nesta](#)



4. I would like to work with my community to test ways of engaging ordinary Australians in this process

I was elected to my MP role as a result of an emerging community movement – people who have mostly never been involved in politics before, who want to engage in a meaningful way and be heard.

My community wants to have a fresh discussion about the type of country we want to be and how we need to get there. This is an extraordinary opportunity to listen to what people care about.

I would like to work with Treasury and the Treasurer to design and test community engagement approaches in Curtin that could be used in communities all over Australia, beyond party lines. Some of this can be done before the first Measuring What Matters report is published in July, but there will need to be an ongoing approach beyond July, to build broad community buy-in.

I believe MPs have a role to play in this process, engaging with their communities to understand what matters to them. This is fundamentally at the heart of our representative democracy and presents an exciting opportunity to reconnect our communities to our democracy.

I look forward to working with the government to progress this important work.

Yours sincerely

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Member for Curtin