



## ABOUT MINDEROO FOUNDATION

Established by Andrew and Nicola Forrest in 2001, Minderoo Foundation (Minderoo) is one of Australasia's largest philanthropies.

It supports a range of initiatives, including eliminating childhood cancer, improving early childhood education, creating Indigenous employment parity, supporting arts and culture, ending modern slavery, and driving accountability and responsibility for global overfishing, plastic pollution, gender equity, climate change, and the tech ecosystem.

Through a collaborative, evidence-based approach we strive to challenge the impossible.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traditional macroeconomic indicators hide inequality, intergenerational disadvantage and the destruction of our natural environment. We have a unique opportunity to rethink how we understand wellbeing and progress in Australia.

Minderoo supports the adoption of a holistic and integrated approach for measuring what matters to the wellbeing and prosperity of all Australians. Measuring what matters is a vital first step in a broader move to a wellbeing economy. This is particularly important for those who are most vulnerable or at risk, and for future generations whose experience is masked or absent from traditional macroeconomic indicators.

It is not a small undertaking to develop a holistic and integrated approach to place wellbeing at the centre of the national budget. Minderoo has the following recommendations for the development and delivery of the framework:

- Harness the collective power of communities, industry, government, philanthropy and the research sector;
- Embed First Nations ways of being, doing and knowing, including First Nations concepts of wellbeing;
- Engage in a participatory design process with diverse individuals and communities in developing new and evaluating existing measures of community and environmental wellbeing;
- Embrace flexibility in the design and delivery of the Australia Wellbeing Framework and commit to regular review;
- Invest heavily in the continued development of new data, especially at a demographic-disaggregated level;
- Commit to sharing data back to communities and service providers (in an appropriate and timely fashion) to build their evidence base of what works and to own their solutions; and
- Where sensitive data cannot be shared back, commit to providing centralised evaluation services to enable organisations to understand the outcomes of their work.



Minderoo is interested in how an Australian Wellbeing Framework might advance the following policy areas:

- Culture as the foundation for the wellbeing of individuals and communities;
- Facilitating equity and access to opportunities to reduce intergenerational disadvantage;
- A decisive shift toward community-led resilience and prevention;
- Improving the wellbeing of women, children and families as a key driver of future prosperity; and
- Environmental stewardship to ensure the wellbeing and prosperity of future generations.

## Arts and Culture

Minderoo is a strong advocate for a thriving arts and culture sector in Australia and believes that a vibrant, just society has creativity and connection at its heart. Social inclusion and cohesion are vital for wellbeing. Erosion of social cohesion and societal polarisation are some of the biggest threats we collectively face over the next ten years.<sup>1</sup> Culture, and particularly cultural heritage, can be vital in building social inclusion and cohesion across generations<sup>2</sup>. An Australian Wellbeing Framework should place Australian culture, including First Nations' culture, at its foundation.

Australia has a solid foundation for measuring culture and arts engagement. By including reliable metrics of engagement and sector health in the Australian Wellbeing Framework, policy outcomes and resourcing will be improved, and arts and culture will be better supported, particularly in communities that are regularly underserved.

The importance of the intangible benefits of arts and culture are recognised, but the means to measure them lags. An Australian Wellbeing Framework that considers these benefits would help frame arts policy development in a manner not ordinarily considered by governments. Decisions about how, what and where to deploy funding to the arts could then be made having regard to these indicators. This would enable the increased deployment of art and culture for a range of purposes, including preventive health and building cohesion across generations and diverse perspectives.

## Equity and Access to Opportunities

Wellbeing can include both subjective and objective elements. An Australian Wellbeing Framework should take into account both elements to ensure the perspectives and experiences of all Australians are considered in policymaking to shape wellbeing.

Tackling inequality and poverty are key to improving wellbeing. Minderoo believes that inclusive growth and full and productive employment are key to eliminating inequality. Traditional macro-economic indicators mask exclusion and inequality. Capturing demographically disaggregated data, particularly in relation to economic inclusion, is the first step to taking an intersectional approach to understanding how

---

<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum (2023), Global Risks Report 2023

<sup>2</sup> A New approach (2022), Lifelong: Perceptions of Arts and Culture among Baby Boomer Middle Australians



various aspects of a person's identity lead to different outcomes. This would then allow effective policy solutions to be developed.

Minderoo works to foster healthy, strong communities by empowering community-led responses to vulnerability. We believe that community can determine a person's future, and Minderoo wants all communities to thrive. We need holistic, community-informed approaches to address the barriers and enablers to vulnerability. Evidence-based hope is critical to community empowerment and wellbeing. An Australian Wellbeing Framework that considers and measures hope will enable communities, industry, government and philanthropy to actively promote and leverage hope to create a future where all Australians thrive.

### **Prevention and Resilience**

Minderoo is passionate about helping communities strengthen their resilience. The economic, social and environmental dividends from building climate resilience are significant<sup>3</sup>. An Australian Wellbeing Framework that describes resilience in an accessible and holistic way, including climate and disaster resilience, will help align actors and direct resources towards resilience building.

Volunteering is critical to building the resilience of individuals and communities but participation in Australia is in long-term decline. The inclusion of measures that capture volunteering in its many forms will help inform opportunities across all sectors to strengthen it.

Prevention and early intervention can have a significant impact on outcomes over a lifetime. An Australian Wellbeing Framework that prioritises prevention and early intervention will ensure we are making the best use of our resources and positively shape the lives of Australians for generations to come. It is key to adopt a policy approach that leverages the strengths of communities and places measurable data in their hands to facilitate informed decision-making. Priority areas for prevention and early intervention include preventable cancer, family and domestic violence, youth justice, homelessness, and youth mental health.

### **Women, Children and Families**

Minderoo believes that high quality and affordable childcare will increase workforce participation and improve childhood wellbeing. We have an opportunity for the nation to grow if policy settings are robust and responsive to the needs of all citizens, especially women. We must look at all mechanisms available to assess the collective underutilisation of women's labour.

Women disproportionately shoulder the burden of unpaid care and labour. Research indicates the burden of care on women has grown<sup>4</sup> and this is impacting employment and labour participation. However, the macroeconomic indicators used to determine policy settings typically exclude any reference to unpaid work and caring – the engine of our economy. Because this work is not measured, it can significantly impact opportunities and living standards for women.

---

<sup>3</sup> Deloitte Access Economics (2022), Economic reality check: Adapting Australia for climate-resilient growth.

<sup>4</sup> Wood, D., Griffiths, K., and Crowley, T. (2021), Women's work: The impact of the COVID crisis on Australian women. Grattan Institute.



Ensuring that the wellbeing of women is measured, reported and intentionally considered across all indicators in the framework will help to drive greater gender equality. Measuring unpaid work and caring is particularly important given that Australia performs below the OECD average in areas of gender parity outcomes in politics, gender pay gap, the gender gap between men and women, who feels safe walking home at night and the number of hours in paid employment.

There is a solid foundation for national data collection and reporting of children's wellbeing in Australia<sup>5</sup>, but several data and information gaps limit our understanding of children's lives. Persistent gaps undermine service design and evaluation of health and wellbeing outcomes for children from birth to 12 years of age, as well as their families and the communities that nurture them.

Minderoo has identified some priority data gaps. These include parenting and education, intergenerational disadvantage, family and domestic violence, youth mental health and children's views and perspectives of their own wellbeing. A framework which not only addresses these gaps but also actively supports service design and evaluation will enable greater focus on creating the right conditions to allow children to thrive.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

The wellbeing of humanity and the wellbeing of the natural environment are inextricably linked. Traditional macroeconomic indicators fail to value nature, making it more vulnerable to degradation and unsustainable use. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse are viewed as two of the fastest deteriorating global risks over the next decade, and all six environmental risks (Failure to mitigate climate change, failure of climate adaptation, natural disasters and extreme weather events, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, natural resources crises and large-scale environmental damage incidents) feature in the top 10 risks over the next 10 years.<sup>6</sup>

Minderoo believes it is important to embrace a holistic approach to safeguarding our natural environment. We can do this by harnessing the collective power of communities, industry, government and philanthropy to ensure we have a thriving and sustainable planet for future generations. An Australian Wellbeing Framework should capture all aspects of the natural environment — land, soil, water, plants, animals, minerals and energy — to ensure the full value of natural capital is considered when making decisions.

Thank you for allowing us to participate in this process. Minderoo welcomes the opportunity to discuss any of these recommendations further. Please contact [gov.relations@minderoo.org](mailto:gov.relations@minderoo.org).

---

<sup>5</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019), Scoping enhanced measurement of child wellbeing in Australia, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 26 January 2023.

<sup>6</sup> World Economic Forum (2023), Global Risks Report 2023