

Measuring well-being and the role of Work, Health and Safety
Safe Work Australia's submission to *Measuring what matters*

1. Safe Work Australia (SWA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in response to *Measuring what matters*, the Treasury consultation on a framework for assessing well-being in the context of the Federal Budget.
2. SWA leads the development of national policy and strategies to improve work health and safety (WHS) and workers' compensation across Australia. Safe Work Australia is a tripartite body representing the interests of the Commonwealth, states and territories, as well as those of workers and employers. SWA's functions include developing and evaluating national policy, strategies and the model WHS legislative framework, undertaking research, and collecting, analysing and reporting data.
3. The supporting material for this consultation identifies the need for a conversation on how Australia might better 'measure what matters', towards the adoption of a national framework to complement existing Budget economic reporting and track overall progress in our national well-being.
4. This submission from the SWA Agency provides information about:
 - the role WHS plays in the conceptualisation and measurement approaches for well-being used in international settings
 - the role and purpose of the forthcoming *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033*, and
 - WHS data available to support the measurement of progress in well-being.

Measuring well-being and the role of WHS

5. SWA notes that WHS does not feature in the OECD *Framework for Measuring Well-being and Progress*, or the preliminary discussion supporting this consultation around adopting this approach in the Australian context.
6. SWA recognises that measuring well-being is difficult, particularly given the multi-dimensional nature of the concept and how it impacts on individuals, families and communities in complex ways. However, a core pillar of attempts at measuring well-being in the international community and research literature is safe and healthy work for all.
7. The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) *Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*¹ was amended in June 2022 to specify that a safe and healthy working environment is a fifth principle and right. The preface to this declaration notes that 'the loss of life, accidents, and diseases caused by inadequate safety and protection of the working environment remain a dire reality in every country' and that 'measures for occupational

¹ ILO *Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up* (2022), https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_716594.pdf

safety and health are a crucial ingredient in any policy mix aimed at preserving a liveable planet', underscoring the importance of WHS in this context.

8. Health and safety at work is necessary for well-being. This is directly related to economic prosperity and productivity, hence why any measurement or economic accounting of personal well-being would benefit from considering WHS and the need to prevent or eliminate physical and/or psychological injuries and illnesses². Workplaces that are safe and free of injury and illness provide benefits to all Australians, including more jobs and better pay. Research² undertaken by SWA with Deloitte Access Economics shows that reducing work-related injuries and illnesses would deliver to the Australian economy, on average each year, growth of \$28.6 billion, 185,500 additional jobs and wage rises of 1.3%.
9. The fundamental relationship between a safe workplace and well-being has also been acknowledged by New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework³. The individual and collective well-being domain of this Framework features a measure focussed on reducing workplace accidents.

The Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033

10. The forthcoming *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033* sets an ambitious vision for WHS outcomes in Australia. Our national vision —Safe and healthy work for all — sets the agenda for our response to key WHS challenges over the next ten years. With a goal of reduced worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses, SWA has identified a number of actions and enablers that will support us to achieve our vision and goal by producing significant shifts in the WHS system over the next ten years.
11. Underpinning the measurement of progress against this strategy are a set of targets, including reduced worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses. Monitoring progress against these targets will also help with assessing developments in Australia's well-being.

Safe Work Australia's data for measuring WHS

12. SWA collects, analyses and publishes data and information on WHS and workers' compensation to understand issues and trends affecting working Australians. A range of stakeholders such as Governments, researchers, industry, businesses and the community use our data. It helps them explore current and future WHS and workers' compensation challenges, enabling safer, healthier and more productive workplaces.
13. The two primary datasets compiled by SWA are the work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities (TIF) dataset and the National dataset for compensation-based statistics (NDS).

² Safe Work Australia (2022), *Safer, healthier, wealthier: the economic value of reducing work-related injuries and illnesses*, <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/safer-healthier-wealthier-economic-value-reducing-work-related-injuries-and-illnesses-summary-report>

³ The Living Standards Framework draws on the OECD *How's Life* Initiative and aims to reflect what matters to New Zealanders; <https://lsfdashboard.treasury.govt.nz/wellbeing/>

14. The TIF dataset has details on work-related traumatic injury deaths in Australia. We collect this information from workers' compensation claims data, fatality notifications to Australian WHS authorities and information in the National Coronial Information System.
15. The NDS dataset comprises national workers' compensation statistics on work-related injuries and illnesses using data obtained from Australian workers' compensation authorities.
16. Both datasets are well-placed to capture changes to WHS for Australians and are used widely for this purpose. These data sources provide an important evidence base for the national policy work of SWA and inform the development and evaluation of WHS and workers' compensation policies and strategies, including the *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033* and the *National Return to Work Strategy 2020-2030*. They are also used to report statistics on work-related fatalities, injuries and illnesses to the ILO.
17. SWA recommends including two indicators in the approach to *Measuring what matters*, capturing work-related traumatic injury fatalities and work-related injuries and illnesses resulting in a serious worker's compensation claim⁴. Reductions in both indicators are a strong reflection on improvements to well-being and clearly describe progress being made.
18. These indicators are consistent with the factors that make a good progress and well-being indicator⁵, because they are relevant to how to assess well-being, have a well-established and supported approach to measurement including a long time series for monitoring trends, are nationally and international comparable, have a high degree of reliability and fitness-for-purpose, and are readily interpretable by a range of audiences.
19. Reducing the frequency of work-related traumatic-injury fatalities, injuries and illnesses is fundamental to delivering good quality work to more Australians and supporting improved well-being.
20. SWA welcomes the opportunity to discuss its data, analysis and research into the role of WHS in well-being frameworks further.

Yours sincerely



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⁴ Serious claims include all accepted workers' compensation claims for an incapacity that results in a total absence from work of one working week or more, excluding fatalities and journey claims.

⁵ OECD (2011), '[Compendium of OECD Well-being indicators](#)'; Civitas (2020), '[CIVITAS 2020 process and impact evaluation framework](#)'.