

26 May 2023

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Dear Secretary,

Re: Measuring What Matters — second consultation process

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the consultation regarding a new standalone Measuring What Matters Statement.

We note that the Consultation Pack emphasises organisations should hold consultation meetings to inform their responses to this stage of the consultation. Due to resource and time constraints, we have been unable to conduct any consultations specifically for this purpose. However, we regularly hold co-design meetings and focus groups with people living with disability, as well as hosting several peer networks, where matters that are highly relevant to this consultation are discussed at length. We believe that based on this ongoing engagement we can make a valuable contribution to this process. We are further prompted to do so by what appears, based on the list of organisations that contributed to the first phase of the consultation (per Treasury's website), to be a low level of input from the disability community so far.

We welcome the Federal Government's commitment to releasing an annual Measuring What Matters Statement that is designed for the Australian context. We concur that traditional economic indicators do not tell the full story, and this is especially true for the experiences of the 4.4 million Australians who live with disability. However, we believe that the draft Framework can be improved to ensure that the Statement reflects the full diversity of experiences and outcomes for all Australians. Below, we set out specific feedback aimed at strengthening the draft Framework.

Importance of co-design

In developing the Framework for the new standalone Measuring What Matters Statement, Treasury has a significant opportunity to implement a co-design process that ensures all Australians, including those living with disability, are not only heard, but also directly involved in shaping and making decisions about the Statement. Indeed, governments and government departments should proactively consider how genuine co-design processes can enhance policy development across all areas of their work. We are concerned that many of the processes that governments are currently referring to as

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Choice and inclusion for people living with disability

co-design fall well short of best practice and do not include active involvement in decision-making that is informed by group expertise. Although the development of the Framework for the Statement is being informed by consultations and submissions, we believe there is still an opportunity to implement co-design to strengthen the final document. Further, regular reviews of the Framework should be implemented and these should also utilise a co-design methodology. We encourage the Treasury to access our Guide to Co-Design with People Living with Disability, which was itself co-designed, via our [website](#).

Recommendation 1: Treasury should adopt a genuine co-design process including diverse representation from across Australia's disability communities to develop the Framework for the Measuring What Matters Statement.

Recommendation 2: Treasury should undertake regular reviews of the Framework for the Measuring What Matters Statement and these should utilise a genuine co-design approach.

Importance of the Social Model of Disability

The draft Framework includes one reference to 'ability' (and, therefore, disability). It appears in a draft descriptor under the theme 'Healthy': 'A society that values the contributions of all regardless of health or ability.' Disability should not be positioned under the 'Healthy' theme, particularly where this is the only specific recognition of Australians living with disability. Disability is not, in and of itself, a health or medical matter; nor is it related in any way to the measurement of how 'healthy' Australians are as a whole. People living with disability collectively experience the same range of 'healthiness' or 'unhealthiness' as all Australians do.

This positioning is also not in keeping with modern understandings of disability. In the past, it was widely considered that people living with disability were disabled by impairments or differences that should, as far as possible, be 'fixed' by medical treatments or interventions. This understanding is now referred to as the Medical Model of Disability and is rejected. Making the only reference to 'ability' (and, therefore, disability) within a descriptor under the 'Healthy' theme could be understood as a regression to this outdated approach. This should be avoided.

Instead, the Social Model of Disability recognises that people are disabled by an environment filled with physical, communication, attitudinal, and social barriers. It focuses on the way that our society has been designed, organised, and socialised to exclude a significant number of its citizens. The Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should reflect the contemporary Social Model of Disability through a comprehensive consideration of the experiences of Australians living with disability, who make up 17.7 per cent of the population, in relation to each of the themes.

Recommendation 3: Treasury should remove reference to 'ability' (and, therefore, disability) from the descriptor under the 'Healthy' theme. Instead, the Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should reflect the Social Model of Disability through a comprehensive consideration of disability within all the themes.

Importance of inclusion and accessibility

The theme of 'Inclusive' is of particular importance to people living with disability. Although some progress has been made since the landmark ['Shut Out'](#) report of 2009, Australians living with disability still experience poorer outcomes across all the themes in the Framework compared to other Australians. Many remain 'shut out' from ordinary housing, work, education, essential services, recreation, civic and community life, and other opportunities that most Australians enjoy. Much of the public realm remains inaccessible to people with mobility needs.

Currently, the draft Framework includes a descriptor for achieving 'gender equality' under the theme 'Inclusive'. We support this inclusion but note the absence of any mention of the many other cohorts that currently experience high levels of inequality in Australia, including, but not limited to, people living with disability and First Nations Australians.

Recommendation 4: The Framework for the Measuring What Matters Statement should include descriptors regarding equality for Australians living with disability and for First Nations people, among others, under the 'Inclusive' theme.

Recommendation 5: The Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should recognise the importance of the accessibility of the built and natural environment, as well as systems, services, programs, and similar. For example, the fifth descriptor under the 'Prosperous' theme should be amended to state: **'People All Australians have access to necessary services and amenities that are accessible for their needs.'**

Importance of ending segregation and discrimination

The experience of being 'shut out' is particularly pervasive for Australians living with disability who continue to be subject to practices of segregation, including in housing, employment, education, and many other aspects of life. Australia must take decisive steps toward ending all practices of segregation and discrimination including in disability group houses and other institutional living arrangements, Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and supported employment services, segregated 'special' schools and programs within schools, day programs, and similar. We are not suggesting that these be stopped overnight; rather that governments actively work on a transition to alternative models that are anchored to authentic inclusion and equality.

As is often said, the first step toward change is acknowledging the problem exists and measuring its dimensions and impacts. Therefore, we believe that measures of the extent to which practices of segregation and discrimination continue in Australia is directly relevant to 'Measuring What Matters' to our communities.

Recommendation 6: The Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should recognise the importance of ending all forms of segregation and discrimination in Australia including, but not limited to, that occurring in housing, employment, and education. For example, the first and fourth descriptors under the 'Prosperous' theme should be amended to state, respectively: **'An economy that provides opportunities for all Australians *without segregation or***

discrimination’ and ‘People have access to education, knowledge and training **without segregation or discrimination**, so they have the skills to fully participate in society and the economy throughout their life.’

Recommendation 7: The Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should include an additional descriptor under the ‘Prosperous’ theme regarding access to secure accessible affordable housing without segregation or discrimination.

Recommendation 8: The Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should include an additional descriptor under the ‘Cohesive’ theme regarding the encouragement of participation and belonging for all members of our communities without segregated, separate, or ‘special’ provisions, services, facilities, or events that divide Australians from one another.

Importance of all relationships in creating natural safeguards

Freely given relationships of mutual support and benefit offer the greatest natural safeguards for our wellbeing as we move through life. Looking out for each other and noticing when something seems amiss should be a hallmark of our society, communities, and neighbourhoods. As set out in our [Model of Citizenship Support](#), this mutuality is termed ‘Social Capital’ and is critical to our life chances, as well as our opportunities to take up meaningful valued roles in community life. Importantly, meaningful relationships are not limited to ‘family and friends’ as currently stated in the draft Framework. Indeed, for some Australians these forms of relationships may be absent from their lives, but this does not mean that they cannot have other ‘close relationships’ that are just as significant and valuable. We strongly support the recognition of valued roles, meaningful relationships, and neighbourhood and community connections within the Framework and believe that the current narrow conceptualisation of ‘close relationships with family and friends’ should be broadened and made more inclusive.

Recommendation 9: The Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should recognise the importance of all forms of freely given meaningful relationships and of each person being connected to their neighbourhood and community through valued roles. As such, the fourth descriptor under the theme ‘Cohesive’ should be amended to reflect a broader range of meaningful social relationships so that it is not limited to an arbitrary notion of ‘family and friends’.

Importance of measurement and diverse data collection

The development of the Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement creates a vital opportunity to review and enhance data collection in Australia, including to ensure that the statistics collected continue to be relevant and to address existing data gaps. The current measurement of outcomes for Australians living with disability across a range of ordinary aspects of life are too infrequent and incomplete. For example, the best data available regarding employment outcomes for people living with disability is from 2018 even though this topic is measured monthly for the general Australian population. It is critical that the inequities in current data collection are addressed if the Statement is to provide a comprehensive picture of life in Australia.

Additionally, we strongly believe that the Statement should not focus on average or median outcomes across the population as a whole, but rather ensure that all Australian's are getting a fair go at what life has to offer and no person or group is left behind. To achieve this, we believe that the indicators that are mapped to the descriptors for each theme should be designed to provide a comprehensive set of information, not a single narrow measure. How each theme is measured and the quality of the data used will be critical to the overall success of the Statement.

Recommendation 10: The Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should ensure each of the themes is mapped to qualitative and quantitative indicators, with meaningful data collected regularly to track progress over time. Measures should be designed to provide a comprehensive picture of life in Australia without the distorting effects of only relying on averages or medians. Measurement should include data for the population as a whole and for priority cohorts that have long experienced inequality and poorer outcomes including, but not limited to, people living with disability.

Miscellaneous recommendations regarding the draft Framework

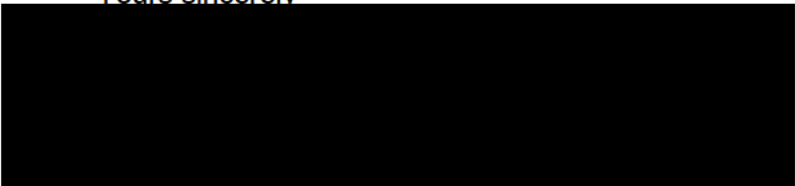
Recommendation 11: The descriptors in the Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should refer consistently to 'all Australians' and/or 'all people' because in the instances where 'all' is currently absent from descriptors it could be implied that it is not intended for this specific descriptor to apply to everyone.

Recommendation 12: The Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement should provide definitions of broad or vague terms, such as 'life's essentials' and 'satisfied with their life', to ensure that there is a clear understanding of what the descriptor is referring to and what Australians can expect as a result of improving outcomes.

Recommendation 13: Treasury should consider how descriptors for children, including for children living with disability, can feature more prominently in the Framework for the new Measuring What Matters Statement.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback to this important consultation. We are available to discuss the issues raised in this letter further. To arrange this, please contact Tracey Wallace, Strategy Leader, JFA Purple Orange, on (08) 8373 8333 or traceyw@purpleorange.org.au.

Yours sincerely



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