



Research Report

Local Government Metrics of Wellbeing

February 2021

About WALGA

The WA Local Government Association (WALGA) is working for Local Government in Western Australia. As the peak industry body, WALGA advocates on behalf of WA's 139 Local Governments. As the united voice of Local Government in Western Australia, WALGA is an independent, membership-based organisation representing and supporting the work and interests of Local Governments in Western Australia. WALGA provides an essential voice for 1,222 Elected Members, approximately 22,000 Local Government employees (16,500 FTE) as well as over 2.5 million constituents of Local Governments in Western Australia.

Contacts

This research report was prepared by **Lauryn Lu** as a research intern through the University of Western Australia's McCusker Centre for Citizenship.

Lauryn's internship supervisor:

Tim Lane

Manager Strategy and Association Governance

WALGA

(08) 9213 2029

tlane@walga.asn.au

Contents

About WALGA	2
Contacts	2
Background	4
Introduction	4
Limitations of conventional metrics	4
Wellbeing Indices	5
Purpose of Wellbeing Indices	6
Types of systems measuring national progress	6
National Metrics of Wellbeing	7
Australia	7
Canada.....	7
New Zealand	8
Comparison of metrics.....	10
Sub-National Metrics of Wellbeing	11
City of Frankston, Victoria.....	11
Toronto, Ontario	14
Canterbury, New Zealand.....	14
Future Opportunities	19
WADI Proposal.....	19
Decision making applications	20
Integrated Planning Framework.....	20
Conclusion	21
References	23

Background

Introduction

Conventionally, approaches used by governments around the world to measure community wellbeing and prosperity include economic growth, income, education, employment and crime rates. Consequently, these measures are used to guide policy and budgeting decisions, however, in recent years studies show that community anxiousness, depression, loneliness, homelessness and social inequality in Australia is growing despite economic growth.¹ As a result, governments internationally have begun adopting new and improved wellbeing indices encompassing a broad range of indicators of wellbeing such as health, education, civic engagement and cultural identity. In place of traditional indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), wellbeing indices are used as metrics to guide decision making at the national, regional and community level.

These concerns will be addressed first through reviewing wellbeing indices adopted at a national level in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Also of interest is the role of local government in community wellbeing. This is especially important when considering that people's lives are most influenced at the local level, whether that may be at home, school, place of work or in their neighbourhood. This is where they are most likely to access the services and support needed to improve their lives and is where there is vast potential for Local Government to influence the wellbeing of the local population. To this end, this report aims to outline the range of metrics being used or trialled by Local Governments internationally to measure community wellbeing and prosperity, to guide decision-making processes.

This is done by evaluating metrics used by Local Governments in a number of countries, including the Frankston City Health and Wellbeing Plan, the Canterbury Wellbeing Index and the Toronto Canadian Index of Wellbeing, which will be outlined in the context of the applications of these metrics and the extent to which national indicators transcend to the local government level. In this way the range of metrics used by local governments to measure community wellbeing and prosperity will be outlined to inform and provide suggestions for local governments of alternative approaches that more accurately and more holistically reflect community wellbeing.

Limitations of conventional metrics

As a central measure of productivity, and used as a metric of societal progress and wellbeing, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) often guides economic and social policies, but GDP growth does not necessarily mean that a nation that is better off overall. GDP is a calculation of the

¹ (Mackay, 2018)

value of all goods and services produced in a country in a year, and has emerged as a surrogate measurement of wellbeing.² However, GDP is an indicator of a country's economic productivity but is not an indicator of how people are actually doing. With economic activities like spending on crime, building jails, smoking and over-harvesting natural resources launching GDP upwards while failing to include valuable activities such as unpaid housework, volunteer work and childcare.

As Robert Kennedy famously said:

*"[GDP] does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to country. It measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."*³

Kennedy argued that the wealth of the nation cannot be defined by its economic output alone as GDP does not provide insight into the actual quality of life of the community, the environment or other important factors of wellbeing such as health, working conditions, equity and time use. As a result of the inadequacies of traditional metrics, alternate approaches that have been adopted by governments of various levels internationally will be discussed.

Wellbeing Indices

A wellbeing index is an aggregate measure of all aspects of a person's life at a national, regional or community level.⁴ Wellbeing indices incorporate a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. Every element of a person's life can influence their wellbeing, from their health and education to the environment that surrounds them, as well as access to sport and cultural facilities.

In this way, wellbeing indices can distinguish between beneficial activities and those that harm overall wellbeing providing a more accurate account of wellbeing in a way that GDP cannot. For example, wellbeing indices account for volunteer work and unpaid childcare as an asset, while treating overwork and stress as deficits to wellbeing.

² (Salvaris, 2013)

³ (Rogers, 2012)

⁴ (Department of Health and Human Services, 2020)

Purpose of Wellbeing Indices

There are several benefits of developing clear measures of societal wellbeing and progress, including:

- To shift from a focus on increasing economic production to increasing equitable and sustainable wellbeing
- Use of indexes as a positive evaluation and planning tool – clearer policy and planning goals, better evaluation of success, provide a concrete starting point of policy development with a shared goal to work towards
- Involvement of citizens – using indicators to improve democratic engagement
- These measures of progress consider qualitative dimensions of progress rather than solely relying on quantitative measures

Types of systems measuring national progress

Generally, the systems measuring national progress can be summarised into three categories; GDP adjusted systems, subjective wellbeing systems and progress domain frameworks, as follows:

1. **GDP adjusted systems** are based on the adjustment to GDP by adding in a value for factors that GDP leaves out such as the value of human capital and the unpaid contribution of women to the economy while subtracting the value of economic activities that have a negative impact such as the cost of crime and pollution.
2. **Subjective wellbeing systems** are based on subjective responses to survey questions about their satisfaction with a different aspect of their lives or with society.
3. Lastly, the **progress domain frameworks system** is a comprehensive framework of key elements of wellbeing, these domains including both subjective and objective measurements of wellbeing. This is believed to be the most efficient and is the system that is beginning to be widely adopted internationally. Examples of this include the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), New Zealand's Living Standards Framework (LSF) and the Australian National Development Index (ANDI).⁵

⁵ (Australian National Development Index, 2010)

National Metrics of Wellbeing

Australia

The Australian National Development Index (ANDI) is a holistic measure of national progress and wellbeing which encompasses a broad variety of domains of life, beyond conventional economic measures like GDP. In May 2010, this major citizens' initiative was launched by a group of fifty Australian non-government organisations including businesses, faith-based organisations, local governments, as well as environmental, social welfare, human rights, and youth organisations.

This national progress index encompasses twelve key domains of progress:

1. Children and young people's wellbeing
2. Community and regional life
3. Culture, recreation, and leisure
4. Governance and democracy
5. Economic life and prosperity
6. Education, knowledge, and creativity
7. Environment and sustainability
8. Justice, fairness, and human rights
9. Health
10. Indigenous wellbeing
11. Work and work-life balance
12. Subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction.

Measuring these domains over time will provide an accurate portrayal of Australia's overall wellbeing, giving the government a way to better understand the impact of their policy and budgeting decisions. However, it is also important to note that given ANDI is still under development, there is currently limited information available regarding the domains and their indicators. Nevertheless, further metrics may still be used at a local government level to better inform policy and budget-making processes as the success of local use of this data depends on the availability of national data at a local level. As some data may only be collected or be available at a national or state-level and not at the city or local government level.

Canada

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) is a composite index, comprised of 64 indicators representing eight domains that measure the change in the wellbeing of Canadians over time.⁶

⁶ (Canadian Index of Wellbeing, 2016)

These domains include:

1. Healthy populations
2. Democratic engagement
3. Community vitality
4. Environment
5. Leisure and culture
6. Time use
7. Education
8. Living standards

Launched in 2011, the CIW Framework is an independent and non-partisan group established by the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo. The first CIW report showed that increases in the wellbeing of Canadians were poor in comparison to the strong economic growth reported between 1994 and 2008, similar to the trend in other comparable countries. Since this time the index has been used to track the significant effect the recession of 2008 has had on the quality of life of the people of Canada. Created with the primary purpose of understanding how a range of factors affecting wellbeing interact to make improved policies and programs that serve to better overall community wellbeing rather than using the conventional approach that has traditionally shaped public policy.

As it captures a broad range of interrelated indicators, multiple aspects of wellbeing can be considered when forming public policy. For example, the index shows that despite the availability of universal health care services, health gaps still exist among specific social groups. This highlights the need for public policy initiatives that target these health gaps, as well as poverty reduction measures such as affordable housing, food security and early learning initiatives. As a result, the CIW can guide progressive public policies needed to improve overall wellbeing.

Although this index is not principally used to guide public policy, it creates a platform for the engagement in the wellbeing of the Canadian people as well as providing suggestions for future directions. However, one criticism of this index is that it is unweighted, meaning that all of the component indicators and domains are presented as having an equal contribution to wellbeing despite it being clear that some factors play a larger role than others.

New Zealand

The Living Standards Framework (LSF) Dashboard is a measurement tool that provides indicators that the Treasury uses to inform its advice to Ministers on priorities for improving wellbeing. This Dashboard, first released in December 2018, informs long-term and strategic

publications such as the four-yearly Wellbeing report and informs the development of the five priorities of the Government's 2019 Wellbeing Budget.⁷

This framework is organised into three main sections:

- Our Country
- Our Future
- Our People.

Our Country provides indicators for each of the 12 current wellbeing domains including:

1. Civic engagement and governance
2. Cultural identity
3. Environment
4. Health
5. Housing
6. Income and consumption
7. Jobs and earnings
8. Knowledge and skills
9. Safety
10. Social connections
11. Subjective wellbeing
12. Time use

Our future provides indicators for the capitals – natural, social, human, financial and physical – that underpin living standards.

Our people is an analysis of the wellbeing of New Zealanders across the LSF domains. Where each person is categorised as having a low, medium, or high wellbeing for each domain according to responses to questions asked in the New Zealand General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is run by Statistics New Zealand every two years and surveys around 8,000 New Zealanders aged 15 and over. This analysis presents a way to understand the relationships between the LSF domains so that the government can make more informed policies and budget decisions to improve societal wellbeing. However, the Dashboard does not provide the depth of quantitative and qualitative wellbeing data needed for sector policy analysis and is limited by questions asked in the GSS.

⁷ (The Treasury, 2018)

Comparison of metrics

There is considerable overlap in terms of the metrics used in each index in the countries discussed above. For example, all three indexes include domains and indicators that measure outcomes such as health, governance, the environment, education, and culture. This is quite significant, as it reflects their shared values and highlights how important each of these factors are in their contribution to wellbeing.

However, unique to the Australian National Development Index are the domains children and young people's wellbeing, indigenous wellbeing and justice, fairness and human rights. Although it is unclear what indicators will be used to measure these factors, it remains a notable step in the development of a more comprehensive wellbeing index.

Sub-National Metrics of Wellbeing

While wellbeing indicators at a national level are important, the applications of wellbeing indices at a sub-national level can inform state, regional and local government decision making. As such, wellbeing indices developed in the City of Frankston (Victoria), the Canterbury district (New Zealand), and Toronto (Canada) will be discussed in terms of their applications to local government policy and budgeting decisions as well as the extent to which national wellbeing indicators transcend to the sub-national level.

City of Frankston, Victoria

In Victoria, under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 local governments are required to prepare and adopt a Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan every four years. In particular, the City of Frankston has developed a Frankston City Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021 that outlines the health and wellbeing priorities for the area.⁸ This plan used an evaluation framework consisting of seven main priorities:

1. Healthy and active living
2. Respectful relationships and gender equity
3. Diverse and affordable housing and safe behaviours
4. Vibrant, inclusive and engaged communities
5. Sustainable use of resources
6. A skilled workforce
7. Literacy across all life stages

As a result, the data has shown that although the majority of people in the community are of good health, some key issues are having a greater impact on wellbeing than others.

Research has also shown that certain issues affect some groups of people more than others, encouraging the Local Government to devote \$14.62 million to support the health and wellbeing of families, children and young people. In this way, the framework has guided Council budgeting decisions such as the investment of \$7.96 million to support social, recreational, cultural and economic life through innovative planning and development initiatives to address these community wellbeing concerns. In particular, leveraging their strong understanding of community needs, the council has also launched initiatives targeting each health and wellbeing outcome to improve each aspect.

⁸ (Frankston City Council, 2017)

Healthy communities

Although Frankston residents report having similar wellbeing to all Victorians, data shows that only two in five adults are engaging in sufficient levels of physical activity. Engaging in regular physical activity reduces the risk of chronic disease and improves mental wellbeing, prompting the council to allocate \$13.2 million to the provision of indoor and outdoor recreation centres to encourage community health and wellbeing.

Stronger families

Frankston City has experienced the highest rate of family violence within Metropolitan Melbourne for multiple years and is a factor that results in lasting detrimental effects on community wellbeing. With the aim of reducing family violence, the council has launched initiatives such as *Choose Respect*, a smartphone app giving young people access to healthy relationship advice and support.

Safe community

The safety of residents in the community is another important factor of health and wellbeing. Reports show that a significantly lower proportion of people in Frankston City report feeling safe walking in their street in comparison to all Victorians. As a result, Frankston City Council invested \$7.34 million in 2017-2018 alone to ensure the safety of the community through programs addressing alcohol, gambling and drug abuse.

Strong community

A strong community is a community that makes everyone feel welcomed, valued and respected, however, many people in Frankston City say they do not feel socially connected to their neighbours. As social isolation and exclusion have been found to have significant impacts on physical and mental health, the council has assigned \$7.96 million to stimulate activity in the community through events, festivals, arts and libraries. They have also made plans to construct a Langwarrin Library and Integrated Hub cultural facility for the Langwarrin community.

Sustainable environment

The sustainable use of resources is of particular importance regarding the increasing concern of climate change and its associated effects on health and wellbeing. To achieve this the Frankston City Council has made the TAKE2 pledge, a Victorian Government initiative to reach zero emissions by 2050. It is also supporting the community with education and initiatives to encourage the adoption of energy-efficient measures.

Sustainable economy

Since 2011 Frankston City's economy has grown with a Gross Regional Product Growth of 11.1%, however, the unemployment rate is still higher than the Victorian average with a rate of up to 13.3% in some local communities. Following recent findings that half of the local residents travel outside of the municipality for work, in 2017 the council awarded \$60,000 to five local businesses through the Small Business Grants Program resulting in the creation of 148 new jobs and accelerating the growth of local businesses.

A learning community

The ability to access lifelong learning in society is a factor known to enhance wellbeing through greater economic and social prosperity, particularly in older people. Statistics show that there is a higher proportion of people with low educational attainments in comparison to all Victorians, especially from areas experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Therefore, the council has plans to promote learning opportunities in both community and educational settings.

City of Frankston domains compared to the national Index

These domains are quite similar to those used in the Australian National Development Index, and although with slightly different names these domains are measures of the same indicator. For example, the 'health' domain in ANDI is translated into the domain 'healthy and active living', the domain 'community and regional life' is translated into the domain 'vibrant, inclusive and engaged communities', the domain 'environment and sustainability' is called 'sustainable use of resources' and 'education, knowledge and creativity' is called 'literacy across all life stages'. Consistency of wellbeing measures at the national and sub-national levels emphasises the importance of the domains to the community at both a national and Local Government level. These indicators are also measures of issues that the Local Government can provide policies to improve wellbeing in the community.

However, there are also a number of differences between the national and sub-national indices. The domains 'respectful relationships and gender equity', a 'skilled workforce', as well as 'affordable housing and safe behaviours', are indicators used in the Victoria Wellbeing Index that are not used in ANDI. This is because these are issues that Local Government is concerned with, as Local Government is better able to deal with these concerns through policies and budgeting decisions than state or federal government. As outlined above, the City of Frankston put forth multiple policies and programs to support their community in a way that is customised to the needs of the residents of the City of Frankston informed by insight gained from well-developed wellbeing indicators. As each community across Victoria may differ in each respective indicator, whether that may be a higher rate of crime or a lower

ability to access education and learning it is important that Local Governments can assess the wellbeing of their community within each domain and address these concerns accordingly.

Toronto, Ontario

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) was first released at a national level but is now also developing progress and wellbeing measurement frameworks for provincial and city-level governments. These indices also use the same domains as used in the national CIW, which would allow direct comparisons to be made between the wellbeing of residents in the region to the wellbeing of all Canadians. This would also allow the wellbeing of residents in different cities and regions across Canada to be compared to each other. With the overall wellbeing of Canadians set as a benchmark, local governments can track how well their residents are doing in comparison. In this way, if the wellbeing of people in their region is below the national average, they can see this discrepancy in the indicators and form policies to address the area of concern to improve their overall wellbeing.

For example, the city of Toronto has the highest percentage of people in the province with low income and facing food insecurity, as well as the lowest participation in social leisure activities, physical activity and volunteering. As a result, only 81% of residents report satisfaction with their lives, with this being the lowest level by far in the province. Residents of Toronto also report levels of overall health and mental health similar to Ontario as a whole.⁹

However, there are limitations in the availability of data at the regional level. This may be because national data was not available at the regional level, or the sample was too small to allow valid reporting for the indicator. This challenge is addressed by using provincial sources of data that serve as proxy indicators.

Under the Police Services Act, the Province of Ontario has also legislated municipalities to develop and adopt a Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan by 2021 that addresses areas of concern within the community pertaining to their wellbeing.¹⁰ It is intended that regional and local wellbeing indicators will guide and inform Local Governments' Community Safety and Wellbeing plans.

Canterbury, New Zealand

The Canterbury Wellbeing Index is a tool used to measure the wellbeing of the local population in Christchurch City, Selwyn District and Waimakariri District.¹¹ This index was

⁹ (Smale, 2016)

¹⁰ (Fioze, 2020)

¹¹ (Community and Public Health, 2018)

originally developed to provide recovery-focused data on the wellbeing of residents of Christchurch after the earthquakes however as time has passed the emphasis has shifted to include a broader focus on wellbeing. The Canterbury Index is produced by the Community and Public Health division of the Canterbury District Health Board and is organised into three main sections: Our Wellbeing, He Tohu Ora and Our Population. He Tohu Ora focuses on Maori conceptualisations of wellbeing across 19 indicators. Our Population describes the population of greater Christchurch across ten indicators.

Our Wellbeing describes the wellbeing of the greater Christchurch population across 57 indicators, organised into ten domains:

1. Subjective wellbeing
2. Civic engagement
3. Education
4. Employment
5. Environment
6. Health
7. Housing
8. Income
9. Safety
10. Social capital.

These domains are very similar to those described in New Zealand's Living Standards Framework, with the omission of just two of the national metrics: cultural identity and time use. However although these metrics appear to be omitted, the same indicators used to measure these domains are still included in the Canterbury index, however, are allocated to different domains. For example, cultural identity is measured by the ability to express identity and the percentage of people who are Te Reo Māori¹² speakers, these indicators are categorised under the section of He Tohu Ora which is focused on indicators that reflect a Māori view of wellbeing. As He Tohu Ora measures 19 indicators as opposed to the two described in the national framework, it is clear that the local government index is significantly more detailed and can measure this aspect in much greater depth than what is measured from a national standpoint. This signifies that culture is of great importance to the local communities, and is a matter that could be better managed at the local level.

Time use is the other domain not included in the Canterbury Wellbeing Index and is measured by indicators such as leisure and personal care, paid work, satisfaction with work-life balance and unpaid work. Although time spent doing these activities are not measured in the Canterbury index, the index does measure whether or not residents actually engaged in these activities. For example, unpaid work is measured under the domain social capital and outlines the proportion of those aged 15 and over who had undertaken unpaid activities such as household work, cooking, gardening and looking after a child who is a member of their

¹² Te Reo Māori is the indigenous language of Aotearoa, New Zealand. The language is central to Māori culture, identity and heritage. (Higgins and Keane, 2015)

household. In this way, the Canterbury index can categorise the proportion of people undertaking each unpaid activity, rather than grouping all unpaid work into one category.

Subjective Wellbeing

Subjective wellbeing refers to people's emotional health, ability to live full lives and capacity to deal with life's challenges. This is understood through indicators such as quality of life, emotional wellbeing, stress and sense of purpose. In comparison, New Zealand's LSF measures subjective wellbeing through the indicators family wellbeing, general life satisfaction and sense of purpose. Measuring this is important as high levels of subjective wellbeing positively affect most dimensions of a person's life and thus is an important reflection of overall wellbeing.

Civic engagement

Civic engagement or participation in public decision-making is another metric that gives people a way of contributing to their communities and reflects a sense of being valued by their community leaders as well as others in their community. Civic engagement is measured by voter turnout in both local government and general elections as well as citizens' confidence in their ability to influence local and national decision making. Similarly, the LSF measures this domain through voter turnout, trust in government institutions and perceived corruption.

Education

Education is another important determinant of wellbeing, affecting income, employment and health. Overall education indicators include Early Childhood Education participation, National Certificate of Educational Achievement level 2 achievement, highest qualification achieved and proportion of young people not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET). In contrast, the LSF Dashboard indicators include cognitive skills at age 15 as well as tertiary and secondary educational attainment of the adult population. Although these indicators show that the educational achievement of greater Christchurch residents is strong and consistent, total population data can disguise differences between population groups such as those seen by socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

Employment

Whether an individual has employment is a significant factor in determining their standard of living and has a strong influence on both their social and emotional wellbeing. Employment is also an important way for individuals to participate in the community and is determined by the unemployment rate, employment rate, labour force participation rate, underemployment

rate and job satisfaction. Likewise, the LSF's domain 'Jobs and earnings' measures indicators such as employment rate, hourly earnings, unemployment rate and the youth NEET rate.

Environment

The environmental domain comprises the natural environment as well as the built environment. This can serve to influence the health and wellbeing of the community in direct and indirect ways. For example, the levels of air pollution, noise and access to natural environments are indicators that directly influence health and wellbeing. Indirect effects can also occur as a result of the availability of community, sport and recreational facilities as well as access to transport that influence the community's level of physical activity. Lower alcohol licenses and gambling machines in Christchurch also had positive implication for wellbeing. In contrast, the environmental domain in the LSF is measured through access to the natural environment, air quality, perceived environment quality and water quality. As a result, the effect of the built environment on the wellbeing of New Zealanders is not considered on a national level.

Health

Health is greatly influenced by a wide variety of factors and is paramount to the wellbeing of the community, measured by factors such as self-rated health, smoking, physical activity and mental health service access. Healthier people are also better able to contribute to their community and participate in social activities. In comparison, the LSF uses health status, healthy life expectancy, mental health and suicide rate as indicators of the nation's health.

Housing

Housing affordability, availability, and quality make up the key elements of the housing domain. Affordability and availability of housing are closely linked and is characterised by an inverse relationship meaning that people with lower incomes may find it more difficult to find quality housing. The quality of housing also has a strong influence on the health and wellbeing of the community, where good quality housing reduces the risk of poor physical and mental health, reducing the number of school days lost to illness and protecting the occupants from environmental exposures. So although the availability of quality affordable housing has generally improved, it is evident that some populations are still at risk of poor quality housing. For this reason, the City of Christchurch provides social housing services so that people on low incomes such as the elderly and those with disabilities can access affordable housing. Additionally, housing-related spending, rental property supply and household crowding are also factors contributing to the housing domain. Likewise, the LSF indicators include household crowding, housing cost and housing quality.

Income

Receiving an adequate income is a substantial factor of wellbeing. With a sufficient income, individuals and families can have better access to health services, transport, education and quality housing. Measured through household income, household income after housing costs, the proportion of people with low household income as well as income satisfaction, over the past few years data has shown increased equivalised gross weekly income, however, these improvements are not seen across all population groups. These income inequalities can have stark effects on wellbeing, increasing the likelihood of social isolation and marginalisation. Contrastingly, the LSF Dashboard measures a broader perspective of income and consumption including the percentage of child poverty, average consumption, disposable income, financial wellbeing and household net worth.

Safety

Both community perception and experience of safety is another important domain which has a strong influence on community wellbeing. As those who hold strong concerns for their personal safety and security are likely to have a lower sense of wellbeing, indicators measure community perception of safety, property-related victimisations, child investigations, child abuse and family violence victimisations. Communities with low levels of crime also attract greater investment, which results in greater employment opportunities and a higher quality of life. In comparison, the LSF Dashboard measures domestic violence, perceptions of safety, intentional homicide rate and workplace accident rate.

Social capital

Social capital involves features of society such as trust, norms and networks that can improve society by enabling coordinated actions. Social capital is important as it is linked to individual and community health and wellbeing outcomes such as education, crime and child welfare. With eleven indicators for this domain, the most commonly used indicators for this domain being participation in local organisations such as volunteering, discrimination, sense of community, sports participation and isolation. Whereas the LSF uses indicators such as discrimination, loneliness, Māori connection to marae¹³ and their social network support.

Although the indicators used in the Canterbury Index are very similar to those used in New Zealand's LSF, there are generally more indicators of wellbeing for each domain in

¹³ A marae is a communal or sacred place that belongs to a particular iwi (tribe), hapū (sub-tribe) or whānau (family) and is used to carry out cultural practices, traditions and hui (meetings).

comparison to the LSF. Whereas the LSF presents indicators for a more general overview of the country, the Canterbury index examines each domain in much greater detail. This is important as the Federal Government is focussed on national issues, whereas it is the responsibility of the local governments to understand issues within the community and provide direction and local decision-making that will improve the wellbeing of the community. Having similar indicators as well as domains of wellbeing also allows for a closer comparison of the wellbeing of citizens of greater Christchurch to all New Zealanders. As a result, the local governments will be able to use the national wellbeing as a benchmark for their own community's wellbeing.

Future Opportunities

WADI Proposal

In the past, the only Western Australian frameworks to have been developed were for specific population sub-groups, for example the Children and Young People Monitoring Wellbeing Framework and the Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework. However, there has not yet been a jurisdiction-wide holistic wellbeing measurement framework such as the Western Australian Development Index (WADI) proposed by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC).¹⁴

A key challenge in creating wellbeing indices is ensuring indicators used to measure wellbeing reflect the values and priorities of society. As a result, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD's) Better Life Index was used as the basis for the pro-forma wellbeing measurement framework. However, the pro-forma framework has also added 'governance' to the civic engagement domain, a business community lens to the jobs and earnings domain as well as a built environment domain.

Many of the indicators suggested for each of the twelve domains align with Local Governments' Strategic Community Plans (SCP's) and are allocated to the most relevant domain. This is done as it is not the intent that in the development and implementation of WADI to add additional data collection or reporting demands on local government. There were also a number of generic indicators included in the SCP's that were not included as they were not particularly relevant to the wellbeing of the community.

The proposed WADI is a holistic wellbeing measurement framework encompassing twelve domains:

1. Community
2. Health
3. Safety

¹⁴ (Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, 2020)

4. Housing
5. Work-life balance
6. Life satisfaction
7. Education
8. Income and wealth
9. Jobs earnings
10. Built environment
11. Natural environment
12. Civic engagement/governance.

Once data is collected and aggregated, portraits of wellbeing across WA will emerge. These reports will offer a more comprehensive and interconnected understanding of the different factors contributing to wellbeing and how they vary for residents in different areas. In addition, the WADI will inform State and Local Government planning and decision-making.

Decision making applications

The Western Australian Development Index will be used to inform Local and State Government policy to enhance the wellbeing of Western Australians. Through the analysis of the proposed index, policymakers will be able to identify trends in each wellbeing domain and address areas of concern, namely factors that are contributing to the decline of the overall wellbeing of the community. Due to the interconnecting nature of indicators of wellbeing, improving wellbeing in one crucial area will have positive impacts in many others.

Additionally, Local Governments will also be able to use the wellbeing framework to establish policy priorities and initiatives to serve population sub-groups. As although the average wellbeing of Western Australians at the state or national level may be high, it is clear that this is not true for all Western Australians, and more often than not the collective strength of the state can mask those groups that may be struggling on the basis of their ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status or other factors.

Integrated Planning Framework

Although Local Governments already work with their communities to establish desired outcomes in their Strategic Community Plans, a core component of Western Australia's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IPR) Framework, critical to the success of the WADI will be to embed it within State and Local Government decision-making frameworks. Incorporating this proposed wellbeing index will provide a framework to establish local priorities and a standardised way of developing SCPs. This is important as currently there is variability in terms of measuring wellbeing from a Local Government perspective. It is also

proposed that the Integrated Planning and Reporting, and Strategic Community Plans become the mechanism for reporting on the WADI to State Government as well as to the community.

Conclusion

Wellbeing indices are much needed tools used at the national, regional and local government level to inform policy and budget making decisions. This can be seen by the development of the Australian National Development Index, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing and New Zealand's Living Standards Framework Dashboard. Accounting for domains of wellbeing such as health, education, the environment and civic engagement, these indices have developed metrics indicative of all aspects of life that contribute to overall wellbeing. Since these indices developed internationally share many of the same indicators, this reflects the importance these have in measuring the wellbeing of individuals and thus society as a whole.

This is further demonstrated by the adoption of sub-national wellbeing indices including the City of Frankston Health and Wellbeing Plan, the Canterbury Wellbeing Index and the Toronto CIW. This shows that wellbeing indicators used at a national level have not only transcended to Local Government level but it was found that there are generally more indicators of wellbeing for each domain in comparison to the indicators at a national level suggesting a much more detailed view of the wellbeing of the local population. This is important as the Federal Government makes decisions concerning the entire nation, whereas it is the responsibility of Local Government to understand deeper issues within the community and provide local decision-making that will improve the wellbeing of the community. The similarity of wellbeing domains between the national and sub-national level also allows for a close comparison of the wellbeing of citizens of local communities to the wellbeing of the country as a whole. As a result, the Local Governments will be able to use the national wellbeing as a benchmark for their own community's wellbeing and address areas of inadequacies.

This emphasises important applications for Local Government and recognises Local Government as a key player in community wellbeing. For example, the ability of the framework to identify where the greatest needs for policy intervention is required the most in terms of vulnerable sub-populations. In this respect Local Government can create policies and prioritise budgeting decisions to increase employment opportunities, promote health and sustainability plans as well as building new cultural and recreational centres for the benefit of the community. This highlights the importance of collecting accurate data and information on all aspects of wellbeing in order to guide decision making and planning.

By recognising how these aspects of wellbeing interact and intersect to affect the lives of Western Australians in different ways, Western Australian Local Governments would be in a better position to make informed decisions that can lead to a better quality of life for residents in their local area, and ultimately the state overall. As such it is envisioned the proposed

Western Australian Development Index will empower locally led solutions, providing a communication and advocacy tool for Local Governments to engage with State Government to improve the wellbeing of the local community, state and nation as a whole.

References

Australian National Development Index. (2010). *What kind of Australia do we want to live in?* Retrieved from Australian National Development Index: <http://www.andi.org.au/>

Canadian Index of Wellbeing. (2016). *How are Canadians Really Doing? The 2016 CIW National Report*. Waterloo, ON: Canadian Index of Wellbeing and University of Waterloo. https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/sites/ca.canadian-index-wellbeing/files/uploads/files/c011676-nationalreport-ciw_final-s.pdf

Community and Public Health. (2018). *Our Wellbeing*. Retrieved from Canterbury Wellbeing Index: <https://www.canterburywellbeing.org.nz>

Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries . (2020). *Western Australia Local Government: Community Wellbeing Indicators*. Perth : Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

Department of Health and Human Services. (2020). *Wellbeing*. Retrieved from Better Health Channel: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/wellbeing>

Fioze, L. (2020). *Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan*. Retrieved from Region of Waterloo: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/community-safety-and-wellbeing-plan.aspx>

Frankston City Council. (2017). *Frankston City Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021*. Melbourne: Frankston City Council.

Higgins, R., & Keane, B. (2015). *Te reo Māori – the Māori language*. Retrieved from Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand: <https://teara.govt.nz/en/te-reo-maori-the-maori-language/print>

Mackay, H. (2018). *Australia Reimagined*. Canberra: Pan Macmillan Australia.

Rogers, S. (2012). *Bobby Kennedy on GDP: 'measures everything except that which is worthwhile'*. Retrieved from The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/may/24/robert-kennedy->

[gdp#:~:text=Datablog-
,Bobby%20Kennedy%20on%20GDP%3A%20'measures%20everything,except%20t
hat%20which%20is%20worthwhile'&text=Even%20if%20we%20act%20to,dignity%
20%2D%20that%20afflicts%20us%](#)

Salvaris, M. (2013). Measuring the Kind of Australia We Want: ANDI, the GDP, and the Global Movement to Redefine Progress. *Australian Economic Review*, 78-91.

Smale, B. (2016). *A Profile of Wellbeing Ontario: Toronto*. Waterloo, ON: Canadian Index of Wellbeing and University of Waterloo. <https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/sites/ca.canadian-index-wellbeing/files/uploads/files/ciw-ontariowellbeing-toronto-oct2016.pdf>

The Treasury. (2018). *Living Standards Framework Dashboard*. Retrieved from The Treasury: <https://lsfdashboard.treasury.govt.nz/wellbeing/>