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2022 Australian Community Research on Wellbeing

Understanding the sentiment and impacts
of a wellbeing budget for Australians.

Insights Paper Snapshot – October 2022

This wellbeing research was undertaken by 89 Degrees East and included a survey of 1,020 Australians aged 18-75 years, representative of the national population. The fieldwork was conducted in October 2022. This report was prepared by 89 Degrees East.

For more information and to view the full research report contact
research@89degreeseast.com

Introduction from Leanne Wells, Director, Policy and Advocacy

The overall goal of countries establishing wellbeing budgets or frameworks is to recognise that prosperity is measured by more than traditional economic metrics. Our research shows that the majority of Australians want a budget that prioritises people's wellbeing.

Global frameworks such as the OECD's *Better Living Index* offers guidance on the dimensions and indicators of wellbeing measurement. Common domains include civic engagement, work and job quality, health outcomes, housing status and environmental quality.

Redefining progress: global lessons for an Australian approach to wellbeing by the Centre for Policy Development revealed that Australians believe people's wellbeing should be the guiding purpose of government.

Some Australian jurisdictions have, or are, headed in the direction of wellbeing budgets. Federally, the government is looking to expand how the Australian community judges the policies and effectiveness of government beyond traditional economic indicators.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has said that the October 2022 Budget will, for the first time, include a chapter on wellbeing. It is expected to discuss how wellbeing should be measured in future budgets, ahead of likely consultations with key stakeholders.

The research, conducted by 89 Degrees East, was designed to inject a community perspective in the national conversation about wellbeing measures, objectives and how they can inform policy design, evaluation and priority setting.

- **Australians believe people's wellbeing should be the guiding purpose of the government.**
- **Present and future global trends are prompting governments to think differently about how prosperity is gauged, and COVID has been a game-changer around what people value.**
- **Several countries have introduced wellbeing budgets and now the Australian government is exploring the initiative.**

We are pleased to present this snapshot of the 2022 Australian Community Research on Wellbeing.

Key Findings at a glance

Wellbeing budgets are a relatively **new concept** and **public sentiment is favourable**.

69%

of Australians think that people's wellbeing should be a bigger priority in major governments' budgets.

80%

of Australians who rated their wellbeing as poor, support making wellbeing a bigger priority.

Improving the wellbeing of all Australians is just as important as keeping our economy strong in the Federal Budget, especially so for women.

The Federal Budget's primary aim should be to...

59%

Improve the wellbeing of all Australians

- Higher for females (65%)
- Higher amongst Labor party voters (67%)
- Higher for 30-39 year olds (67%)

41%

Keep our economy strong

- Higher for males (47%)
- Higher amongst Liberal party voters (66%)

There's an opportunity to **reshape the conversation** about the budget, the economy, how priorities are set, and what progress means.

73%

Australians agree that economic success should include measures like health, fairness and sustaining the environment.

70%

Believe a federal budget which focuses on what people need instead of pure economic measures would do a better job of improving life for all Australians.

69%

Australians believe we cannot be a successful nation if we only focus on economic growth.

Public confidence in the approach will require education, **engagement**, national conversations and **social licence**.

Wellbeing is **commonly framed as a physical and mental health issue**. Further conversation is needed to **define** the wellbeing domains most relevant to Australia.

When asked what does wellbeing mean to you,
23% of comments talked to physical and mental health as the first thing that comes to mind.

"Feeling good physically and mentally"

"Having a state of being well physically and mentally"

"Your physically and mental health, looking after yourself"

"State of mind being healthy and positive"

"Mentally and physically healthy and living your best life"

COVID-19 has been a game-changer around what people value, with relationships and health more important than ever.

75% Agree

"I value time with family and friends more"

74% Agree

"I value my health more"

65% Agree

"I value enjoying nature more"

There is **alignment between what matters to the community** and government priorities – cost of living alleviation, housing, aged care, climate change, strengthening Medicare.

Which measures of wellbeing are important for the Federal Government to focus on? (Rated out of 10, where 1= Not important at all and 10 = Very important). The following orders the most important measures that rated 8-10 for high importance.

1. Housing 73%	2. Mental and physical health 71%	3. Job, income security and rights at work 70%	4. Education, knowledge and skills 67%
5. Environmental quality 63%	6. Safety and social connection 62%	7. A balance between work and caring responsibilities 58%	8. Involvement in the community 32%

Wellbeing measures are not ends in themselves. Wellbeing budgets could be **triggers for better policy making.**

64% agree

“If the government had to report on Australians wellbeing as well as the country’s economic wellbeing, there would be better outcomes”

61% agree

“The traditional way of managing our economy fails to measure the things that really matter to people”

One size fits all policies and programs will not suffice.

Design principles should include **whole-of-government, lifecycle, personalised** and **placed-based** approaches.

Differences were evident by age groups and life stages, with 18-29s rating mental and physical health as most important, whereas for 30-74s housing is most important.

	18-29s	30-39s	40-49	50-59s	60-74s
1st	Mental and physical health 70%	Housing 74%	Housing 73%	Housing 75%	Housing 78%
2nd	Job and income security and rights at work 67%	Job and income security and rights at work 73%	Job and income security and rights at work 70%	Job and income security and rights at work 70%	Mental and physical health 75%
3rd	Education, knowledge and skills 65%	Mental and physical health 72%	Mental and physical health 67%	Mental and physical health 70%	Education, knowledge and skills 74%
4th	Housing 64%	Environmental quality 65%	Education, knowledge and skills 63%	Education, knowledge and skills 68%	Job and income security and rights at work 71%
5th	Safety and social connection 61%	Education, knowledge and skills 65%	A balance between work and caring responsibilities 59%	Environmental quality 65%	Safety and social connection 67%
Sample	Base n=220	Base n=220	Base n=175	Base n=179	Base n=226

Which measures of wellbeing would you say are important for the federal government to focus on by age groups? (8-10 rating – high importance)

Where to from here?

- **Cultural change** will be required to embed wellbeing approaches at every level of government, throughout the APS and in the corporate and 'for-purpose' sectors.
- The **health investment curve needs to shift** towards preventive health to fully implement the National Preventive Health Strategy.
- A heightened role for the Government's Youth Steering Committee to develop recommendations on wellbeing strategies for the **future generation**.
- A national conversation about wellbeing is an opportunity to bring **new voices** into policy making and rethink how we tackle the '**wicked problems**' across government.
- A wellbeing budget is an important measure to **build trust** in government.
- The trend towards **personal wellbeing** and **ESG measures** for business has laid fertile ground for a new way for governments to frame budgets.

"It is really important that we measure what matters in our economy in addition to the traditional measures. Not instead of, but in addition to. I do want to have better ways to measure progress, and to measure the intergenerational consequences of our policies."

Treasurer Jim Chalmers

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