Towards a shared understanding and articulation of a common population outcomes framework

SUMMARY REPORT TO THE TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

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Acknowledgment of Country

The University of Tasmania pays its respects to elders past and present and to the many Aboriginal people that did not make elder status and to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community that continues to care for Country. We acknowledge the profound effect of climate change on this Country and seek to work alongside Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, with their deep wisdom and knowledge, to address climate change and its impacts.

The Palawa people belong to one of the world’s oldest living cultures, continually resident on this Country for over 65,000 years. They have survived and adapted to significant climate changes over this time, such as sea-level rise and extreme rainfall variability, and as such embody thousands of generations of intimate place-based knowledge.

We acknowledge with deep respect that this knowledge represents a range of cultural practices, wisdom, traditions, and ways of knowing the world that provide accurate and useful climate change information, observations, and solutions.

The University of Tasmania likewise recognises a history of truth that acknowledges the impacts of invasion and colonisation upon Aboriginal people, resulting in forcible removal from their lands.

Our island is deeply unique, with cities and towns surrounded by spectacular landscapes of bushland, waterways, mountain ranges, and beaches.

The University of Tasmania stands for a future that profoundly respects and acknowledges Aboriginal perspectives, culture, language, and history, and a continued effort to fight for Aboriginal justice and rights paving the way for a strong future.
BACKGROUND

This report, produced by the University of Tasmania Institute for Social Change, was commissioned by the Tasmanian Department of Premier and Cabinet. Through analysis of extant frameworks and the aims and rationales underlying their development, the report sheds light on issues and common practice in the development and implementation of wellbeing frameworks.

The overarching aim of this report is to inform a prospective population outcomes framework for the Tasmanian State Service (TSS). A key point to emphasise is that frameworks (or parts of frameworks) that have been developed for different jurisdictions cannot be inserted into the Tasmanian context and be fit-for-purpose. The economic, environmental, social, and political contexts of a place affect what wellbeing is for a population and the levers that are available and effective for facilitating wellbeing. Therefore, this report and analysis should be considered only a first step in the development of a population outcomes framework and wellbeing framework for Tasmania.

CONTEXT

Several interrelated policies and strategies are under consideration in Tasmania, namely the population outcomes framework, Premier’s Wellbeing Framework, and a sustainability strategy. It is our understanding that a population outcomes framework for the TSS would complement the Premier’s planned Wellbeing Framework by providing a high-level architecture of the domains of life that are generally agreed across extant frameworks to encompass and/or affect wellbeing, upon which the Premier’s Wellbeing Framework can build in response to insights from engagement with Tasmanians.

With reference to the sustainability strategy, while care should be taken not to conflate wellbeing and sustainability, use of common language and shared domains across the frameworks could facilitate a cohesive, comprehensive and innovative approach to wellbeing and sustainability in Tasmania.

Figure 1 depicts the relationships between the population outcomes framework, wellbeing framework and sustainability strategy. There is a great degree of overlap between the population outcomes framework and wellbeing framework, such that they can both share the core ‘frame’ of domains. The population outcomes framework provides an architecture for common articulation of the activities that different departments and organisations undertake to facilitate good lives. For example, by recognising health as a domain, government and other stakeholders can map the activities they undertake relevant to health and organise and define the outcomes they seek to achieve with those activities. Such a framework is useful because of the breadth of activity that occurs in each domain. For instance, the Health Department may provide direct health services, but an employment program can indirectly affect health (as employment is a social determinant of health). It works both ways – a nurse retention initiative may improve patient care and therefore health outcomes in the population, but primarily targets outcomes in the work domain of wellbeing. Therefore, the population outcomes framework allows for these efforts and desired outcomes to be articulated and understood in a common language, which facilitates coordinated approaches, should reduce siloes, and enables leveraging and mitigates against duplication of efforts across sectors and organisations.
A key distinction between a population outcomes framework and a wellbeing framework is that the latter takes a normative view, making a value judgement about what makes a good life and specifying how that good life can be measured. Obviously, if government is championing both frameworks, there should be significant alignment, such that the activities and person-oriented outcomes\(^1\) of those activities specified in the population outcomes framework should contribute to the good life articulated in the wellbeing framework. Indeed, several outcomes should be common across both.

While a sustainability strategy differs from a population outcomes framework and wellbeing framework in terms of scope as its focus is ensuring intergenerational equity of outcomes and thus may include activities and domains that do not directly relate to present wellbeing, there remains an opportunity to align across the shared domains, utilise shared language and coordinate goals and activities of the strategy and frameworks.

The table below expands on the figure above by outlining the rationale for the population outcomes framework, wellbeing framework and sustainability strategy, as well as actions involved in their respective development processes.

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1 As opposed to operational outcomes, which are important but outside the purview of a population outcomes framework. For example, reduced emergency department wait times would be an operational outcome in the health domain (albeit with flow-on outcomes related to patients’ health).
It is useful to define and distinguish key terms in relation to outcomes frameworks and indices. While the terms framework and index are often used interchangeably in practice, and many modern frameworks are accompanied by an index, they are distinct tools:

- **Frameworks** are high-level tools used to guide policy development/response. They often articulate outcomes (desired states) but, by themselves, frameworks do not include a measurement and reporting component.

- **Indices** are tools for measuring and reporting wellbeing of different types of populations, usually comprising indicators and measures.

The table below defines and provides examples key terms used in population outcomes frameworks and indices. Note that the examples are illustrative only; in practice, there will be multiple indicators and measures of a given outcome.

### Table 2 Definitions and examples of key outcomes framework terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indicator</strong></td>
<td><strong>Measure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad component of wellbeing</td>
<td>Articulation of a desired state within a domain</td>
<td>Information that shows progress towards an outcome</td>
<td>More direct, fine-grained information about an indicator (and therefore outcome)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example</strong></td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>All Tasmanians are healthy</td>
<td>Rate of chronic disease</td>
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DEFINING WELLBEING

In order to conceptualise and measure wellbeing, it is important to understand what is meant by wellbeing. At its simplest, wellbeing can be defined as what makes a life go well for a person. There are three broad schools of thought as to what it looks like for a life to ‘go well’:

- **Preference satisfaction** posits that wellbeing occurs when people have more of what they want (i.e., their preferences are satisfied).
- **Objective list** accounts of wellbeing believe that there are prerequisites to wellbeing for every human (e.g., clean water, the right to vote), and wellbeing is achieved when these prerequisites are present and robust for a person.
- **Mental state** accounts state that wellbeing occurs when people feel good, and thus rely on individuals’ subjective assessments of their lives.

THE PURPOSE, BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF OUTCOMES FRAMEWORKS

Population outcomes frameworks and wellbeing frameworks seek to conceptualise and measure outcomes that reflect how people are faring (i.e., their wellbeing). For government, there are broad benefits as well as shortcomings to consider in development and implementation of such frameworks. There are briefly summarised in the table below.

Table 3 Purpose, benefits and shortcomings of outcomes frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose and benefits of wellbeing frameworks</th>
<th>Shortcomings of wellbeing frameworks</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination across government:</strong> wellbeing frameworks can organise and systematise policy objectives, outcome metrics, data and evaluations across government.</td>
<td><strong>The danger of one-size-fits-all:</strong> because of their high-level nature, wellbeing frameworks are unable to capture the complexity of people’s wellbeing, nor the complexity of many government policy areas.</td>
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<td><strong>Analytical tool:</strong> wellbeing frameworks can facilitate a ‘whole of government’ perspective by situating diverse governmental functions under a unifying umbrella.</td>
<td><strong>The weighting problem:</strong> when implementing a wellbeing framework, assumptions must be made about the relative importance (weighting) of factors to wellbeing. The basis of these assumptions is questionable.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rhetorical and commitment device:</strong> wellbeing frameworks can be an effective means through which to emphasise and articulate a focus on wellbeing.</td>
<td><strong>Spurious or misleading statistics:</strong> as wellbeing domains and indicators within each domain are inherently interrelated, it is very easy for spurious and even misleading statistics to be produced.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Limited ability to inform policy on the ground:</strong> context and nuance are required to adapt a population wellbeing framework and implement it in practice.</td>
<td></td>
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A BRIEF HISTORY OF POPULATION OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Many frameworks have been developed over the years that seek to conceptualise population outcomes albeit from different perspectives (e.g., human development, quality of life, wellbeing). The figure below outlines a timeline and brief descriptions of key events in the development and thinking around population outcomes framework.

Figure 2 A timeline of key developments in population outcomes frameworks

- **1960s - present: Social indicators movement**
  - The social indicators movement arose out of the belief of the importance of monitoring changes over time in social rather than economic indicators of ‘quality of life’. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing, developed in the mid-2000s is a prominent example of a quality of life index arising out of the social indicators movement.

- **1990: Human Development Index**
  - The UN Human Development Index, championed by economist Amartya Sen introduced a set of indicators intended to measure human development more robustly than traditional measures e.g., GDP.

- **2000: Millennium Development Goals**
  - Building on the Human Development Index, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) moved away from the creation of an index in recognition of the multidimensionality of wellbeing and the different contexts among UN countries. The MDGs comprise high-level outcomes (goals) that constitute ‘development’.

- **2008: Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness**
  - The Bhutanese government enshrined Gross National Happiness in the country’s constitution and developed a nine-dimension index to measure economic, social and psychological aspects of wellbeing.

- **2011: OECD Better Life Index**
  - The OECD Better Life Index measures nations’ wellbeing across 11 domains beyond GDP. Visitors to the website can apply weights to the various domains and compare how countries perform in line with user-weighted domains.

- **2015: Sustainable Development Goals**
  - The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an update to the MDGs. The key updates include a large expansion of the goal to ensure environmental sustainability, and an increased focus on institutions in ensuring peace, justice and political enfranchisement.

- **2018: NZ Living Standards Framework**
  - New Zealand’s Living Standards Framework comprises three levels of nested domains – individual and collective wellbeing, institutions and governance, and the wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand – to capture the overall wellbeing of the nation.

THE FRAMEWORKS IN SCOPE FOR THIS ANALYSIS

At the commissioning of this project, the following frameworks were identified for inclusion in the analysis; the first four were identified as frameworks at various stages of development or use in...
the Tasmanian context, and the second four were understood to have aims overlapping with those of DPAC:

- **UTAS Good Life Initiative**
- **TasCOSS good life domains**
- **Tasmanian Government’s Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy**
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals**
- **New Zealand Living Standards Framework**
- **OECD Better Life Index**
- **ACT Government Wellbeing Framework**
- **VicHealth Public Health and Wellbeing Framework**

A further 27 frameworks were identified through a literature search and were included in the analysis (see Table 3 of the main report for the complete list of 35 frameworks and indices analysed for this report).

**ANALYSIS APPROACH AND RESULTS**

The analysis was undertaken for the purpose of providing insight on common practice in the content and measurement of population wellbeing frameworks, rather than to assess the quality of any particular framework or index. As such, the frameworks and indices were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed with regard to their:

- **Type** (i.e., framework and/or index)
- **Geographic scope** (regional, state, national, international)
- **Main purpose** (e.g., international comparison, policy development, monitoring citizens’ wellbeing)
- **Researched population** (i.e., general population or subpopulation)
- **Data sources and associated types of indices** (e.g., survey, administrative data; composite, self-reported index)
- **Type of wellbeing measured** (i.e., subjective, objective, both)
- **Measurement intervals** (e.g., annual, semi-annual)
- **Ranges of top-level domain categories, domains, and indicators** (i.e., numbers of each)
- **Broad wellbeing domain categories** (described below)
- **Wellbeing domains and indicators** (described below)

The analysis reveals that, among the frames analysed, the most common geographic scope is international, typically comparing 100 or more countries. Accordingly, the most common main purpose is identified as cross-national comparison with relatively small numbers of frames focused on monitoring and/or improving people’s wellbeing and even fewer intended to inform policymaking.
The most common type of data drawn on in the wellbeing frames analysed are administrative data, though pulling together data from different surveys (developed for various purposes) was also quite common. Most wellbeing indices are composite indices, meaning they combine different data sources, for example survey data and administrative data. In terms of the type of wellbeing measured, objective wellbeing (measured with indicators such as income) is measured slightly more frequently than subjective wellbeing (measured with indicators such as life satisfaction), though many wellbeing frames incorporate both objective and subjective wellbeing.

Among frames that measure and report wellbeing, annual measurement is the most common measurement interval. With regard to content, most frames include 10 or fewer domains and 20-49 was the most common range of numbers of indicators; however, 13 frames feature 50 or more indicators, reflecting the complexity and scale that some wellbeing frames can encompass.

The most common categories of wellbeing domains featured in the frameworks and indices analysed are (in descending order of frequency):

- **Health** (n=29): health-related aspects of wellbeing, such as access to healthcare, life expectancy, physical health, nutrition and mental health.
- **Institutional and external** (n=29): primarily institutional facilitators of individual wellbeing such as governance, infrastructure, safety, and services.
- **Financial** (n=27): economic and material wellbeing, including factors such as income and cost of living at the individual level and poverty and economic growth at the country level.
- **Inner** (n=25): individually determined aspects of wellbeing such as life satisfaction, belonging, and inclusion.
- **Education and achievement** (n=23): different aspects of people’s personal growth through education, training, and learning e.g., access to education, educational achievement, knowledge and skills.
- **Community and culture** (n=23): concepts associated with community life, civic participation, and cultural aspects of wellbeing, such as community connection and connection to culture.
- **Natural environment** (n=19): environmental and ecological aspects which have a direct impact on people’s wellbeing, such as air quality and the quality of the living environment.
- **Relationships** (n=14): number, type and quality of relationships and the impact that they have on wellbeing.
- **Work** (n=11): work factors that affect wellbeing, such as ability to participate in the economy, job security, and satisfaction.
- **Housing** (n=11): factors related to housing that impact on wellbeing, including quality and affordability of housing.
- **Hope and future** (n=7): a domain focused on future wellbeing and people’s perceptions of their future wellbeing (e.g., hope for the future).
- **Lifestyle** (n=7): Finally, lifestyle wellbeing comprises work, leisure and the balance between them with regard to both time spent and satisfaction with time spent.
CONSIDERATIONS MOVING FORWARD

Most modern wellbeing frameworks combine objective and subjective elements of wellbeing, comprise both a framework and index, and use common domains (albeit defined and operationalised in slightly different ways). By adopting common practice across extant frameworks (e.g., using the most commonly employed domains outlined above as a starting point), a population outcomes framework for the TSS could provide the structure of objective factors that encompass and affect wellbeing.

This could then be further adapted to the Tasmanian context through engagement with TSS stakeholders. Engagement with Tasmanians would further increase understanding of the “objective” elements of wellbeing in Tasmania and then allow for the incorporation of subjective elements of wellbeing. The latter is particularly relevant for the Premier’s Wellbeing Framework, both to ensure that the approach is in line with modern practice and that the framework has resonance and meaning for the people whose wellbeing it is seeking to measure and increase. As mentioned above, the language, domains and goals of the population outcomes framework and the Premier’s Wellbeing Framework could then be adopted in the sustainability strategy to create alignment as appropriate.

Through the analysis undertaken in this report, we identify some key considerations relevant to the development of a population outcomes framework for the TSS, and subsequently, the Premier’s Wellbeing Framework:

- **Purpose and intent**: The goals that the Tasmanian Government is trying to achieve with the population outcomes framework and/or Tasmanian Wellbeing Framework will determine the scope and content of the eventual framework(s).

- **Wellbeing approach**: the approach to wellbeing will determine what is measured. For example, a framework that conceptualises wellbeing as individuals feeling good will base its domains, outcomes and measures around people’s subjective experiences and feelings, while one that conceptualises wellbeing as having the conditions required to feel good will, accordingly, encompass different aspects of those conditions.

- **Domain selection versus domain content**: while there is value in collaboratively determining which domains to include in a wellbeing framework, there is likely enough information in extant frameworks and from research of the Tasmanian context that scarce resources would be better allocated to examining what each domain should comprise and its relative importance.

- **Place-based approaches**: a truly place-based approach offers opportunities to build goodwill, integrate services to create efficiencies and better outcomes, and for innovation. Most importantly, it ensures that the resultant framework reflects the wants, needs, and aspirations of the people it affects, and the role of institutions in meeting them.

- **Leverage planned and existing work**: As noted, there are significant projects underway that seek to better conceptualise, measure and monitor Tasmanians’ wellbeing. Adjacent to these, several cross-sector partnerships and relationships have been established for various purposes (e.g., Regional Jobs Hubs). These can all be leveraged to maximise efficiency and comprehensiveness, and avoid duplication, in the process of developing a population outcomes framework and the Tasmanian Wellbeing Framework.