



Design and implementation of the Measuring What Matters Framework – ANAO Performance Audit

Brotherhood of St. Laurence

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) is a social justice organisation working towards an Australia free of poverty. Consistent with our vision and ambition, BSL supports the creation, and further development, of a framework to better measure and understand wellbeing, advantage and disadvantage, and poverty in Australia.

Accordingly, BSL welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Performance Audit – Design and Implementation of the Measuring What Matters (MWM) Framework (the Framework).

BSL notes that important features of the MWM framework include the following:¹

- Intent and design of MWM – the MWM framework ‘is a national wellbeing framework that will track our progress towards a more healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous Australia.’
- Use of MWM – ‘We will be looking for opportunities to embed the framework into government decision making. This will involve guidance for agencies to inform policy development and evaluation. The Framework could also be used in areas of policy that require different levels of government to work together.’

This submission presents brief comments related to the features of the Framework noted above, and against each of the ANAO audit criteria²:

Criterion 1 – Did Treasury effectively design and develop Measuring What Matters

Criterion 2 – Are arrangements to support the implementation of Measuring What Matters effective?

Intent and design of MWM

BSL considers the current design of the MWM framework does not provide any direct – or official – measures of poverty in Australia (criterion 1).

This is a significant omission given the Productivity Commission (PC) recently found that around 1 in 7 Australians experienced poverty in 2022 – the highest level since 2001.³ Poverty (and inequality)

¹ [Measuring what matters | Treasury.gov.au](https://www.treasury.gov.au/what-matters)

² [Design and implementation of the Measuring What Matters Framework | Australian National Audit Office \(ANAO\)](#)

³ [Fairly equal? Economic mobility in Australia - Commission Research Paper - Productivity Commission](#)

directly impact wellbeing, as people cannot meet their basic needs, experience stress associated with economic insecurity and face limitations on future opportunities.⁴ This knowledge is derived from BSL's experience of working with people experiencing poverty for over 90 years – poverty creates stress, hardship and scarring on individuals, families and households, and communities that can extend across generations.

The absence of explicit official poverty measures in the MWM framework limits the insight the Framework can provide to 'track our progress towards a more healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive and prosperous Australia'.

Recommendation 1 – that the MWM framework be updated to include explicit official poverty measures.

Importantly, BSL's experience confirms that poverty is experienced in both monetary and non-monetary ways. Income-based measures, though essential for capturing financial aspects of poverty, do not reflect other non-monetary facets of poverty and therefore do not adequately measure poverty in its entirety – non-monetary measures are needed to capture these multidimensional elements of poverty.

Both dimensions of poverty have been recognised, for example, in recommendations from the Australian Government's Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee (EIAC) to develop legislated poverty measures (both monetary and multidimensional), and to include poverty measures in the MWM framework.⁵

International peers – including Canada and New Zealand – have also developed both monetary and multidimensional poverty indicators that have been embedded in poverty and wellbeing-type frameworks⁶ and can inform their development in Australia. Globally, multidimensional measures are currently used by 84 countries, 43 of which have a National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).⁷ Australia lags behind international best practice.

Modification of the MWM framework to include more comprehensive poverty measures would also be consistent with the proposal that MWM be 'a living framework that will continue to evolve and improve over time to reflect ongoing feedback from the community, new research, improved data availability and changing community views.'⁸

Recommendation 2 – that the MWM framework include both official monetary and multidimensional measures of poverty.

Use of MWM

As noted above, the introduction of MWM included an ambition to 'embed the framework into government decision making'. However, it is not clear whether, or how, this has taken place

⁴ [Fairly equal? Economic mobility in Australia](#)

⁵ [Interim Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee - 2023–24 Report to the Australian Government and eiac_report_8.06.23.docx](#)

⁶ [eiac_report_8.06.23.docx](#)

⁷ [Poverty in All its Dimensions according to National Definitions: A briefing on SDG Indicator 1.2.2](#)

⁸ [measuring-what-matters-statement.docx](#)

(criterion 2). As a result, BSL believes there is scope for government to provide advice and clarity to both departments and agencies, and the wider community, concerning the use of MWM to inform government decision making in relation to both policy design and budget decisions.

BSL also notes the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) has proposed a ‘national conversation on wellbeing’ to further embed wellbeing into national decision making. This proposal recognises that the release of the MWM statement and framework was a first step in embedding wellbeing in policy and decision making.⁹

Recommendation 3 – that the Australian Government provide advice and guidance to departments and agencies to enable the embedding of MWM into government decision-making process related to both policy and budgets.

Recommendation 4 – that the Australian Government publicise advice on how the Framework is being used to shape policy and budget decision making.

For further information or to discuss this submission, please contact:

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⁹ [A national conversation on Measuring What Matters in Australia](#)