



31 January 2023

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Measuring What Matters Submission

Everybody's Home welcomes the Government's commitment to developing a Wellbeing Framework to measure what matters for future Federal Budgets. As a campaign focused on fixing the housing crisis, we believe that homes are central to our health and wellbeing. Homes are the foundation for stable families and strong communities. Yet too many people are missing out on the dream of home. Housing in Australia has never been less affordable or more volatile. Australians are spending record amounts on housing, and more and more people in every age group and demographic are living in housing stress.

Ensuring everyone has a safe and decent place to call home should be among the highest priorities for any government, and a key indicator for ensuring the prosperity of all Australians. The creation of a Wellbeing Framework offers the opportunity to showcase this aim as a key Government priority. It also allows the Government to measure the impact that its housing policies have on people's lives.

This submission focuses on how the Wellbeing Framework can be used to measure people's experiences of housing stress, understand the true impact of Government policies on housing affordability, and drive the changes that are needed to end Australia's housing crisis.

Recommendation 1: Principles for a Wellbeing Framework

The success of the Wellbeing Framework will depend on whether it is designed to measure the most important aspects of wellbeing in people's lives - a secure and affordable home, a decent income, and access to support for those in need. With this in mind, Everybody's Home recommends that the Framework be underpinned by the following principles:

- 1. Driving progress, not just measuring it.** The Framework should adopt goals which reflect the priorities and values of the community. The achievement of these goals should be the primary focus of the Wellbeing Framework and inform Budget policy decisions. The measurement of wellbeing through useful indicators then provides a mechanism to track progress, rather than being an end in and of itself.

2. **Taking a holistic approach, focusing on results.** As the composition of Australia's housing market changes and more people are renting for longer, it is critical that goals are focused on safe, affordable and decent homes for all, regardless of tenure. To this end, we caution against relying on indicators focused on homeownership as a measure of health and wellbeing. The focus should instead be on measuring the security and affordability of homes.
3. **Measuring the impact of policies.** There is no shortage of Government bodies and agencies measuring wellbeing. The Wellbeing Framework should take this further, measuring how Government policies contribute to the results in each area. For example, the Government forgoes billions of dollars each year on negative gearing and Capital Gains Tax concessions, and supports first home buyers through grants and guarantees. The Framework should measure the impact of these programs on affordability.
4. **Measuring and managing intergenerational wealth inequality.** Intergenerational wealth inequality has widened dramatically in the last two decades. This has been driven [in large part](#) to housing and transfer of assets from one generation to the next. The only way to effectively manage this policy challenge is to develop indicators that measure and are responsive to policy interventions.

Recommendation 2: Proposed Indicators

If the Wellbeing Framework is to have an impact on the lives of Australians, it will need to focus on indicators that truly capture their experiences. These include housing stress, insecurity, and the suitability of the housing people can access. For example, the ACT Wellbeing Framework includes indicators on housing affordability, availability, and suitability; rental stress; and homelessness. Everybody's Home recommends adopting similar indicators as follows.

- a. **Affordable and available housing.** Housing is affordable when costs are equal to less than 30% of total household income. This measure can be used to help understand three key aspects of affordability across Australia.
 - i. **Rental stress.** This indicator should measure the proportion of households paying more than 30% of their income on rent. This is already measured through existing ABS datasets.
 - ii. **Supply of affordable housing.** This indicator should use [established methodology](#) to measure the shortfall of social housing across Australia. It could be combined with building data to measure the proportion of new homes being constructed as affordable housing.
 - iii. **Unmet housing need.** Using data on rental stress and affordability, this indicator should measure the total number of households with unmet housing needs. This can be measured using [established methodology](#).
- b. **Adequate housing.** Housing should be of decent quality and condition to meet health and wellbeing needs. For example, this includes accessibility, safety, presence of working essential facilities. Two key measures can be used to help understand the adequacy of housing.

- i. **Suitable housing.** This indicator should focus on whether homes have enough bedrooms for the size of households. This is measured through existing ABS datasets.
 - ii. **Secure housing.** This indicator should focus on the number of homes offering physical and psychological security of tenure. To assist in collecting this data, when a tenancy ends, the bond return could ask why the tenancy is ending, including the grounds for termination and which party initiated it.
- c. **Experiences of homelessness.** Homelessness has been rising across Australia for years, across different cohorts. The Framework should aim to understand who is experiencing homelessness and the support available to them.
 - i. **Prevalence.** This indicator should focus on the number of people experiencing homelessness on any given night, as well as key demographic data and trends. This is measured through existing ABS datasets.
 - ii. **Duration.** This indicator should measure the length of time and frequency of experiences of homelessness. This is measured through existing AIHW datasets.
 - iii. **Response.** This should focus on the accommodation or support needs of people seeking assistance, including how frequently they are turned away and whether those needs are met. This is measured through existing AIHW datasets.
- d. **Impact of Government intervention.** It is critical to understand the impact of Government policies and interventions in each of these areas. The Framework should include a short analysis of how Budget measures and other Government policies affect each of these areas. If key measures are worsening over time or Government policies are worsening outcomes, the Budget's Measuring What Matters Statement should include a response from Government on how it plans to improve outcomes over time.

Everybody's Home looks forward to working with Treasury on the development of the Wellbeing Framework. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to working with the Government to ensure every Australian has access to a safe, affordable and decent home.

Yours sincerely,



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About Everybody's Home

Everybody's Home is a national campaign to fix the housing crisis. It was launched in 2018 by a coalition of housing, homelessness and welfare organisations to ensure everyone has a safe and decent place to live. The campaign has over 400 organisational members and 40,000 individual supporters across the country.