



Submission to the City of Sydney on Community Wellbeing Indicators

February 2012

Catalyst Australia welcomes the initiative of the City of Sydney in developing Wellbeing Indicators. We applaud the endeavour, and recognize that the process of developing the Indicators will promote community awareness of factors that contribute to social wellbeing as well as provide information to guide future policy-making by the City of Sydney and potentially the NSW and federal Governments.

The potential range of indicators is broad. We have commented on those areas that are within our public policy experience, drawing on our work over the past four years, particularly our publication, *Equality Speaks: Challenges for a fair society*, published in 2009.

Many of our suggestions relate to expanding existing indicators to include measures of accessibility, or disaggregate data to capture trends relating to the wellbeing of particularly vulnerable or marginalised groups of people. In this way, we believe the indicators will provide a strong foundation to develop programs that tackle disadvantage and promote wellbeing amongst those who currently face obstacles.

Throughout our submission, we emphasise that to be meaningful, the data captured by these indicators must support new approaches to advocacy and participation that shapes public policy around the issues that are important to people's lives.

ABOUT CATALYST

Catalyst is a policy network established in 2007. We work with academics, NGOs and unions to promote progressive policy. Our simple vision is for Good Lives, Good Work and Good Communities.

One of the resources on which we draw in the submission, *Equality Speaks*, shows a good life requires little: to start with, a decent education, a secure and safe job, a stable home and access to affordable health and other services when we need them. Surprisingly these things are beyond the reach of many Australians.

We would be happy to discuss any aspect of this submission or to expand on any of the information that we have included.

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Summary of suggested additions/amendments

Catalyst Australia believes that the City of Sydney should consider the following expanded or additional indicators as part of their attempt to capture and track indicators of wellbeing.

HEALTHY, SAFE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Personal and community safety

- *Crime* expanded to include:
 - Women experiencing violence
- *Family violence*, expanded to include:
 - Households with children

Service availability

- *Health services* expanded to capture further measures of *availability* and also *accessibility*, including:
 - Availability of hospital beds
 - Ratio of nurses to patients
 - Integrated health services
 - Private health insurance rates
 - Targeted health care/prevention programs
- *Early childhood services* (new) to include:
 - Childcare vacancy rates
 - Accessibility of childcare
 - Ratios of care workers to children
- *Satisfaction with essential services* (new)

Housing

- *Housing availability* (new) to include:
 - Vacancy rates for private rentals
 - Waiting lists for public housing
 - Medium- and high- density residential
 - ‘Affordable’ housing developments
- *Homelessness* expanded to include:
 - Prevalence over time
 - Children and adolescent homeless
 - Availability, capacity and quality of homelessness services

Income and wealth

- *Income Distribution* expanded to include:
 - Relative poverty
 - Incidence of child poverty
 - Income by gender and age
 - Demographics

DYNAMIC, RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMIES

Employment and education of residents

- *Employment* expanded to include:
 - Women in leadership positions
- *Secure work* (new) to include:
 - Turnover rates for city businesses
 - City workers/residents in insecure work
 - Women/young people in insecure work
- *Safe work* (new) to include:
 - Fatality / Lost-time injury frequency rates
 - Businesses using OH&S lead indicators
- *Work/Life balance* (new) to include:
 - Average working hours
 - Long working hours
 - Accessibility of part-time work
- *Unemployment* expanded to include:
 - ‘Jobless’ households with children
 - Underemployment

Productivity and Innovation

- *Unpaid, productive work* (new) to include:
 - Hours of unpaid, domestic work
 - Proportion of business work volunteered

SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTS

Transport and access

- *Public and active transport*, expanded to include *access* and *availability*, including
 - Capacity of public transport
 - Availability of public transport
 - Accessibility of public transport
- *Traffic volume* (new), to include:
 - Total volume of traffic
 - Congestion of traffic

1. HEALTHY, SAFE AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Policy area: Personal and community safety

The epidemic of domestic violence is one that continues to evade policy makers, resulting in a growing number of remedial services to cope with its effects. Particularly vulnerable are the children who witness or are victims of domestic violence.

Living free from conflict, violence and abuse is fundamental to women's equality of health, opportunity and social participation.¹ As well as causing harm to individual women, the consequence of violence against women also exacts a social toll by undermining all women's sense of safety and security.

Below we make suggestions for additional measures for the existing indicators on Crime and Family violence.

Existing Indicator: Crime

According to the ABS, in 2006, 33% of Australian women aged over 15 have experienced physical violence at some stage, and 19% have experienced sexual violence at some stage. The World Health Organisation states, "women [who experience violence] may suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities and limited ability to care for themselves and their children"².

As well as measuring the incidence of violence against individual women, we propose an indicator to capture information on the extensiveness of areas considered "women safe zones", which will hopefully place greater emphasis on the creation of 'safe' places for women, through the provision of safe transport and support services, and rigorous enforcement of alcohol licensing to limit the impact of alcohol fuelled violence against women.

Expand to include the following measures:

- Proportion of women who have experienced physical violence within the past year
- Proportion of the precinct of the City of Sydney that is considered a "women safe zone"

Existing Indicator: Family violence

Domestic/family violence is primarily directed at women. As most of the care in our society is provided by women, violence can impact on children who depend on women, and the effects of this violence can be profound. The ABS suggests that close to half of the individuals who experienced violence by a 'current partner' had children in their care".³

Further, according to the World Health Organisation, "children who grow up in families where there is intimate partner violence may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances that can be associated with the perpetration or experiencing of violence later in life."⁴

Expand to include the following measures:

- Incidence of domestic violence where children are present in household, or Proportion of children witnessing/experiencing domestic violence within the past year.

Policy area: Service availability

We make suggestions to the indicators covering health, child care and essential services below. Our main purpose is to highlight the need for an integrated approach to measuring accessibility of services, which recognises that lack of access can be a symptom of social and economic disadvantage.

Existing indicator: Health services

“Practitioners and policy makers alike have long recognized the contribution of social, economic and ecological factors to poor health outcomes and are committed to exploring new models of funding, service delivery and care to target disadvantage.”⁵

Lack of access to essential health services is both a contributor to social disadvantage, and a reflection of inequality in society. While access to services can be measured, it is much more difficult to measure the ‘social determinants of health’ - factors that contribute to poor health outcomes, such as poverty, lack of housing or joblessness, amongst others. They are extremely important in evaluating overall community wellbeing.

Measuring the social determinants of health is complex and potentially beyond the scope of the City of Sydney Indicators. Recognising this, where relevant, our submission has highlighted areas where indicators can be expanded to take account of health related issues.

The existing measures and the first three of our suggested measures below target the *availability* of health services. They do not however capture information or trends in the *accessibility* of these services. Additional measures, such as those we have suggested below that seek to capture the ability of marginalised individuals/households to access essential services when needed would provide a fuller understanding of health-related wellbeing.

Rename *Health services availability*, and expand to include the following measures:

- Availability of hospital beds
- Ratio of nurses to patients in hospitals
- Number of ‘integrated’ or ‘primary’ health care services per head of population

Add *Health services accessibility* and include the following measures:

- Proportion of residents with private health insurance (disaggregated by relevant demographics)
- Number health care services/prevention programs targeted at disadvantaged individuals/households
- Other measures of accessibility

New indicator: Early childhood services

The doubling of unmet childcare demand in the decade to 2009 signals the importance of this issue to working families. As well as undermining the ability of parents, especially mothers, to have stable, paid work, lack of childcare places also puts pressure on extended family acting as informal care-givers, who are often older people. When caring is intensive and demanding, and it’s given because of a lack of perceived alternatives, the likelihood of adverse physical and psychological effects on carers is high.

We believe the existing child care measure should be moved from under the *Education Services* indicator to be its own indicator to ensure visibility of this crucial service. The indicator could be called *Early Childhood Development and Education*, which is consistent with contemporary policy in this area. We also suggest expanding the indicator to include the suggested measures below.

Move existing child care measure to new *Early Childhood Development and Education services* indicator and include the following measures:

- Vacancy rates for childcare services
- Proportion of city residents unable to access/afford desired levels of child-care
- Proportion of city workers unable to access/afford desired levels of child-care local to workplace
- Number of services compliant with best practice ratios of care workers to children

New indicator: Accessibility of essential services

We believe it is important to capture this subjective measure alongside the existing objective measures and those suggested above. It could either be included as a separate measure under each of Health services, Education services, Early Childhood Development and Education services, or be a combined general indicator for the *Service availability* policy area.

Include the following measures:

- Resident's satisfaction with their ability to access essential services, such as health, education, childcare and transport
- Resident's satisfaction with the quality of these services

Policy area: Housing

Historically, the City of Sydney enjoyed a mixed and diverse population, supported through the provision of public housing and hostels. As housing demand has increased and land values have escalated, many low income groups have been forced to the outer reaches of the city or suburban areas, while some have remained, homeless in the city. The provision of affordable housing is vital to well-being, as are measures to reduce homelessness. We make some suggestions on the indicators below.

New indicator: Housing availability

The growing cost of housing is a major contributor to income stress within households, and the low stock of available housing is a large part of this issue. Therefore, in addition to capturing current housing *affordability*, measuring current and future housing *availability* is crucial.

Councils can through their planning and development process inadvertently place limits on future housing stocks. By adequately measuring trends and setting appropriate targets Councils can be proactive in this area. Understanding the housing needs of residents through these indicators can also assist the City of Sydney to take an activist approach, determining the housing needs of people in the City (in its broadest sense) and then developing housing and investment models to increase stocks.

Include the following measures:

- Vacancy rates for private rentals
- Number of applicants on the waiting list for public housing
- Proportion of city considered medium- and high-density residential.
- Number of new "affordable" housing developments

Existing indicator: Homelessness

Homelessness both reflects inequality and compounds it. It is caused by many factors, but principal amongst them is housing affordability and availability – to state the obvious, “people are homeless because they don’t have a home.”⁶

It is important to recognise that the actual measure of homelessness at any one point-in-time is only a small proportion of those living in ‘housing stress’. We believe it is therefore important to capture the prevalence of homelessness over time, as well as having a point-in-time count such as the census, to understand both the risk of, and movements in and out of homelessness.

Capturing the demographics of those who experience homeless is also important in being able to use the wellbeing data target to target policy interventions. Research by Columbia University’s Centre for Homelessness Prevention has shown that some population groups are more likely to be at risk of experiencing homelessness than others. One key population group is young people, who constitute one third of the homeless population in Australia.⁷

Finally, to fully understand the impact of homelessness on people’s wellbeing, it is important to measure the quantity and quality of homelessness services available.

Expand to include the following measures:

Incidence of homelessness

- Number of people who have experienced homeless within the past 1 and 5 years.
- Incidence of child and adolescent homelessness
- Demographics of people experiencing homelessness

Homelessness services

- Number of people assisted by homelessness services
- Availability (ie. current *unused* capacity) of homelessness services
- Average daily number of people with their request for Supported Accommodation and Assistance Program (SAAP) accommodation unmet
- Proportion of people experiencing/reporting violence in assisted accommodation

Policy area: Income and wealth

Ground breaking overseas studies such as *The Spirit Level*⁸ show that once countries achieve a certain level of development, what matters is not the overall amount of wealth in a society, but where people stand in relation to others in their own society: that is, how equally wealth is distributed. This work shows that societies with higher levels of income equality do better on a range of social indicators, including better health, longer life expectancy, lower crime rates and greater levels of social cohesion and well-being.

Existing indicators: Income / Distribution of income

The *Distribution of income* indicator captures the tenet of the above comments above, but we suggest supplementing this indicator to include the incidence of ‘relative poverty’. We make a suggestion below but also refer to other accepted relative poverty lines. Particularly important to capture as part of this is the incidence of child poverty, which in Australia is considerably high amongst developed countries: in 2005, one in seven children was living in poverty. An understanding of child poverty is important in informing support and other services for children, some of which (early childhood education, care or community services) are within the jurisdiction of the City of Sydney.

To capture the impact of inequality on wellbeing, it is also important to measure the differences in income and wealth distribution across different demographic groups. Data commissioned by Catalyst in 2009 highlighted the disparity in wealth between men and women. Understanding the demographic distribution of wealth is important to informing service delivery and highlight populations at risk, eg. women and older people.

Expand to include the following measures:

- Proportion of households below 50% of median income (ie. living in 'relative poverty')
- Incidence of child poverty
- Median income and median wealth by gender and age
- Demographics of households in 80th percentile or lower

2. DYNAMIC, RESILIENT LOCAL ECONOMIES

Robust communities are ones that are supported by access to health, education and other essential services. They are also ones where people have access to safe and secure work, and where people can balance work with their family or community activities. We make comment on several of the policy areas highlighted by the City of Sydney below, suggesting new indicators to measure work-life balance and security and safety of employment. Our suggested indicators apply both to residents and to the 385,000 people who spend their working lives in the City Precinct. This recognizes that Sydney is a major national employment hub – and promoting wellbeing in the broadest sense will be valuable to businesses that operate here, and to the communities where people reside.

Policy area: Employment and education of residents

Existing indicator: Employment of city residents

Women's share of CEO and senior management positions sits an underwhelming 8% in Australia, even though women make up 50% of the population and 45% of the workforce⁹. Women largely work in areas of economic activity that build social and human capital rather than financial wealth, and therefore their merits are easily overlooked for senior management.

Catalyst's publication *Who's in Charge of the Corporation?*¹⁰ reports a number of studies that found that in major public companies, boards with more women outperformed those with the least. We believe that this extends to women in senior management in organisations of all sizes and that an increase in this measure would contribute to increased well-being overall.

Expand to include the following measures:

- Women in leadership - proportion of senior managers in City businesses who are women

New Indicator: Safe and Secure work

Secure and safe work is vital in improving wellbeing and alleviating disadvantage and – in policy terms – can be equal to education and health in determining life course and opportunity. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) estimates that around 40% of workers are engaged in 'insecure work' (which includes casual work, fixed term work, contracting and labour hire). Most of these workers don't enjoy the same rights as permanent workers, earn less, have no access to sick or holiday leave and can lose their jobs at short notice without redundancy¹¹.

The impact of insecure work on families and communities is profound. While in some cases, it can reflect the choice of workers, in many others this form of employment is the only one on

offer. This is particularly the case in certain sectors, such as retail/ hospitality and property/building services – all of which are strong employment sectors in the City of Sydney.

Capturing this information for city workers is important to understand the wellbeing of the many people who spend a large proportion of their working life in the city.

In addition to secure work, the ability to work in a safe environment also directly affects the wellbeing of workers. Again, measuring the number of occupational health and safety incidents amongst City businesses is a key part of understanding the wellbeing of people living and working in the City of Sydney.

Include the following measures:

Secure work

- Average turnover rates of businesses
- City residents/workers in 'insecure work'
- Women/ young people in 'insecure work'

Safe work

- Fatality rates amongst city workers
- Lost-time injury frequency rates amongst city workers
- Proportion of city businesses reporting OH&S lead / positive performance indicators

New indicator: Work/Life balance

Recent surveys have highlighted growing dissatisfaction with long hours, or alternatively, too few hours of work (which is addressed later under *Employment*). In the case of long hours, this is a well-recognized problem among many full time workers in Australia, and has detrimental impacts on health and well-being by increasing stress levels and limiting family and community participation. As well long working hours can affect personal relationships, lead to health and safety risks and lower productivity.¹²

Even when people work a standard full time work, labour market surveys show clear public support for flexible work that values and supports caring, studies or volunteering. This includes arrangements such as flexible work hours, working from home or part-time work. This is particularly an issue for parents. Indeed, over a third of all workers surveyed in 2010 said they would like to work fewer hours. The situation was “particularly stark for full time working women and working mothers, seven out of ten of whom said they almost always feel pressed for time.”¹³

Recognising the important place of the City of Sydney in providing employment to residents as well as those from outlying suburbs, we think the indicators should be applied broadly – to both residents and city workers. This will help inform the development of quality working conditions in the City.

Include the following measures:

- Average weekly working hours for full-time workers in the City
- Proportion of full-time workers in the City who regularly work more than 50 hours per week
- (In)ability to access part-time work – the number of full-time workers who desire, but are unable to get, part-time arrangements

Existing indicator: Unemployment

In addition to its effects on unemployed adults, joblessness is also a major contributor to child poverty. Research has shown that Australia has one of the highest levels of joblessness among families with children of all rich countries – and reforms to reduce joblessness have been recommended as a priority by the Australian Social Inclusion Unit. We therefore propose expanding the existing indicator to measure the number of households with children within the City of Sydney precinct who are experiencing joblessness. This information will help tailor support services for those in need and will provide useful information to service providers who operate in the Council jurisdiction.

Additionally we propose some measurement of underemployment. Underemployment describes the situation where people would like to work more hours than they currently do. Being underemployed can create distress and reduce wellbeing – a study by the Melbourne Institute found that for part-time workers seeking full-time employment, the effects of underemployment are in many ways not far short of those attributable to unemployment.¹⁴ In addition, it represents lost economic opportunities.

Further, according to the ABS, underemployed workers actually outnumber unemployed people - in May 2010, the underemployment rate was 7.2% compared with the unemployment rate of 5.2%¹⁵. Capturing the rate of underemployment alongside unemployment will provide a more complete picture to the City of Sydney of how lack of waged work undermines wellbeing.

Expand to include following the measures:

- Number of 'jobless' households in City with children at home
- Proportion of residents 'underemployed'

Policy area: Productivity and Innovation

Standard economic measures of productivity focus on market activity and monetary transactions. We believe understandings of productivity need to be broadened to include other spheres.

New indicator: Unpaid, productive work

Unpaid productive work is in many ways 'invisible' to economists, politicians and policy planners, both in terms of its contribution to the nation's productivity and its impact on the wellbeing of a society. There are two broad types of unpaid work: production by households for their own consumption (eg domestic work about the house, child care and purchasing); and volunteer and community work provided free of charge to others (eg. volunteering, community work, pro-bono work, etc).

According to the ABS, unpaid work is estimated to be equal to approximately half of Australia's total GDP. Domestic unpaid work constitutes 90% of all unpaid work, with women contributing 63% of this work. Volunteer work constitutes the remaining 10%.¹⁶ Capturing data on the amount of this work is important for understanding its contribution to the economy and its impact on people, such as those trying to juggle paid and unpaid work.

Further, while we note the inclusion of 'Volunteering' as an indicator under Community Connectedness measuring the proportion of residents who volunteer, we believe that understanding the productivity generated by voluntary work is important, and so believe this should also be measured from the business side.

Include the following the measures:

- Average proportion of week spent doing domestic unpaid work, disaggregated by gender
- Amount of hours contributed by volunteers on average for City businesses

3. SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTS

Policy area: Transport and access

Access to transport is important in supporting participation and social inclusion. Our research has shown that “there is growing interest from policy makers in the role of public transport in creating environmentally, economically and socially sustainable cities that mitigate the effects of social exclusion. This approach recognizes the role of an accessible, safe and affordable public transport system in reducing inequality and disadvantage... it acknowledges that where access to public transport is poor or non-existent, it can compound other forms of disadvantage, in particular low workforce participation, and therefore income inequality.”¹⁷

Existing indicator: Public and active transport

People’s lived experience of the City of Sydney is informed by how easily and economically they can move around it. With a population of 177,000 people, forecast to increase to 243,000 by 2030, the planning and provision of transport services is vital for residents and visitors as it is for the 385,000 employed in the local government area. On behalf of people who live and work here, the City of Sydney has a responsibility to advocate to state and federal governments for investment in safe and efficient transport services.

We suggest below a renaming of this existing indicator to emphasise the uptake/use of transport services as distinct from our suggested new indicator regarding the accessibility and availability of transport (see box). Under this new indicator we suggest three measures to capture the alignment of the supply of transport with commuter demand and the ‘equity’ of access to services, which will assist in forward planning.

Existing indicator renamed to *Use of public and active transport*

New indicator *Accessibility and availability of public transport* to include following measures:

- Capacity of public transport – estimated current carrying capacity of train, bus networks
- Availability of public transport – estimated unused capacity of current public transport
- Accessibility of public transport – percentage of residents who live further than a certain distance from public transport, disaggregated by train station, metro route stop, major bus terminal, etc.

New indicator: Traffic volume

In Sydney, as in other cities, traffic volumes have increased dramatically. Across Australia, private vehicles, mostly with only one occupant, now account for around 90% of the total urban passenger task.¹⁸

Our research has shown that commuting by car can take a toll on people’s psychological, emotional and physiological well-being, their relationships and interactions with their families, neighbourhoods, communities and workplaces, and the physical and social environment. And when “commutes to work are long, unpredictable and congested these impact are worst.”¹⁹

Monitoring the use of, and congestion caused by vehicles is important in planning. This information can also help advocate for improvements in public transport services (as outlined above), because attempting to curtail car use, without the provision of alternative options for transport, will have little impact on road usage.

Include the following measures:

- Total volume of traffic
- Congestion of traffic

CONCLUSION

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this submission and hope that our paper has highlighted the need to:

1. Ensure all measures of well-being to take account the dimensions of inequality.
2. Include measures of accessibility and availability of services to provide a full picture.
3. Disaggregate relevant measures by appropriate demographics to capture the situations of marginalised groups of people.

Again, we reiterate that to be meaningful, the data captured by these indicators must support new approaches to advocacy and participation that shapes public policy around the issues that are important to people's lives.

References

- ¹ [Rae Cooper and Marian Baird, "Australian Women", Chapter 7, *Equality Speaks*](#)
- ² [World Health Organisation, "Violence against women", Factsheet 239](#)
- ³ [Rae Cooper and Marian Baird, "Australian Women", Chapter 7, *Equality Speaks*](#)
- ⁴ [World Health Organisation, "Violence against women", Factsheet 239](#)
- ⁵ [Jo-anne Schofield, "Inequality is bad for our health", Chapter 12, *Equality Speaks*](#)
- ⁶ [Andrew Hollows and Tony Keenan, "Homelessness", Chapter 8, *Equality Speaks*](#)
- ⁷ [Andrew Hollows and Tony Keenan, "Homelessness", Chapter 8, *Equality Speaks*](#)
- ⁸ [Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level*, Equality Trust](#)
- ⁹ [Jo-anne Schofield, *Who's in Charge of the Corporation?*, Paper 3, Full Disclosure](#)
- ¹⁰ [Jo-anne Schofield, *Who's in Charge of the Corporation?*, Paper 3, Full Disclosure](#)
- ¹¹ [ACTU, *Secure Work Better Future, Get the Facts*](#)
- ¹² [Brigid van Wanrooy, "Work and Employment", Chapter 9, *Equality Speaks*](#)
- ¹³ [Pocock, Skinner and Pisaniello, *How much should we work? Australian Work and Life Index 2010*, University of South Australia.](#)
- ¹⁴ [Roger Wilkins, *The Extent and Consequences of Underemployment in Australia, 2004*](#)
- ¹⁵ [ABS, "Underemployment", *Australian Social Trends 2010*](#)
- ¹⁶ [ABS, "Unpaid work and the Australian Economy", *Australian Economic Indicators 2001*](#)
- ¹⁷ [O'Keefe, Pickette and Thomas, "Transport", Chapter 4, *Equality Speaks*](#)
- ¹⁸ [O'Keefe, Pickette and Thomas, "Transport", Chapter 4, *Equality Speaks*](#)
- ¹⁹ [O'Keefe, Pickette and Thomas, "Transport", Chapter 4, *Equality Speaks*](#)