

Casting the Net for What Matters and for Whom?



**A Call to Action
to [re]form national
mental health and
well-being
March 2024**

What Actually Matters?

“Having and spreading hope”

The question of what matters is one that is about what's valued, and **by whom** and who is included in what's counted.

What matters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people cannot be relegated to failing policies and out of sync practices. For people living with mental ill-health, the impacts of trauma, and for carer, family and kinship groups, hope matters more than greater economic understanding of societal well-being. Hope is consistently called for by communities, and yet, it is conspicuously absent in what is counted.

What matters for communities is that everyday policy is itself safe enough and that there is an urgent need for policy to be re-humanised. What actually matters is the renewal of the system away from policies that cause ongoing harm for anyone who lives in Australia. It matters that policy starts to matter more in the everyday to support participatory ways of being. Communities are places where deep listening is actually possible and a foundation of hope.

This means that to really measure what matters will take courage. It will take more than relying on what's already counted. What actually matters might not be something that's in current surveys and tools being used.

Quality can be the small things as well as the big. What actually matters is to make things smaller, bring them closer, and make the people **BIGGER.**

What's Not Counted?

“We don’t want questions that imply you are lacking or not enough”

Because how we currently count what matters is based on existing national datasets there is a greater likelihood of questions being asked that make people feel like they are lacking and not enough.

That’s **if you are counted**...at all.

The current national well-being framework has an acknowledgement that traditional economic indicators are not the whole story, but we know that what gets counted is what gets talked about. And then, what happens if you are counted so much in every report on gaps and missing services that everyone else starts to see you in the same negative light?

In an expanded view of what matters for whom, inclusivity is key. While all ways of measuring might count, not all ways are valued equally or appropriate to every setting and community. Valuing the role of experiential knowledge as evidence requires deep listening. This means thinking beyond what exists in national datasets that have been the basis of the current indicators for measuring what matters.

If our starting point includes a capacity to listen deeply, services might become more connected, sustainable and effective. Sometimes it is discrimination, treatment trauma or poverty that limits people’s inclusion in community. Our well-being is increasingly affected by our environment through climate change. Being powerless to create change creates inertia.

CHANGE happens through all of us.

What needs to change

“The past exists within the present”

What matters is that we do not leave some people **adrift** in a national well-being framework by overly focusing on what’s already counted.

Safety is more than security of the nation and prosperity is more than flourishing economically. Sometimes a view of things as safe enough is what matters most for people.

A focus on meeting basic needs is essential. People value trauma-and violence-informed approaches but they want physical environments and care to be healing-informed. And, it is okay to be honest when things cannot be fixed because honesty helps people feel like they matter.

Sectors could learn from how communities come together and understand that cohesion also means that we might not agree 100% of the time. Families, kinship groups and supporters around people hold important knowledge that matters too.

People need opportunities to contribute to their communities to feel empowered. This could look like: small and ground-up opportunities, solutions that are found out “in the wild”, empowering individuals and social enterprises, creating community gardens together, growing groups and resourcing people to develop solutions.

Let’s have ‘sidewalk talk’ just sitting, listening and talking with each other. Why not invest in training and education that fosters **DEEP**

LISTENING as a core requisite?

“An enduring and lifetime view of what matters and for whom”

Our Call to Action

Everything **you** do matters.

Who is this call for? This call is for everyone to be an agent for change. This call is for government and research to be wholly accountable to those who matter and to make policy safe and grow relational systems of care.

Deeply safe policies communicate a shared vision of well-being that matters across the nation and ask people, “what does safety mean to you”? The measure of success: are communities experiencing what matters for them because of this policy? Policy safety that,

is accountable - - acknowledges the wounded - - does not shame its recipients - - reflects on its own potential to abuse power and protect itself - - doesn't violate confidentiality - - doesn't leave anyone behind for any reason - - does not presume a certain level of income or capacities - - makes sure those most impacted are central and closest to decision making - - measures the strengths of our own community according to what matters for them - - intentionally connects community - - helps us to dream and play together.

We call for a well-being framework that moves beyond reform and centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the holders of Country well-being and for wider representation of diverse lived-experience voices to

create **relational systems, safe policy** and

[re]form holistic well-being.

About this Call

The Call to Action lays the groundwork for creating a meaningful dialogue with all parts of government and leading mental health, social and emotional well-being and suicide prevention research bodies and service sectors. The call asks us all to reflect carefully on policy safety and what's counted in a national well-being framework. After all, *we know that what gets counted, gets discussed.*

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You can read the names of the contributing individuals here <https://alivenetwork.com.au/casting-the-net-for-what-matters-for-whom/>

Contact us

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