

Case Study

South Australia: State of Wellbeing

Challenge

The project challenge was to develop a wellbeing statement that would be accepted and understood by the entire population.

Decision

A design workshop was conducted between stakeholders to scope the challenge.

Key aspects of this discussion:

- **Acknowledgment** – Wellbeing is a broad term, used in many ways. There are many factors that influence wellbeing – all are important, and none can address wellbeing in isolation.
- **Purpose** – While there is much wellbeing activity occurring, what's the higher level impact we hope to see from this?
- **Application** – Inequality significantly impacts on wellbeing – can and should wellbeing efforts be prioritised to address wellbeing?
- **Alignment** – What is the opportunity to align wellbeing efforts towards population measures/targets, and show joined up State progress

The intent to achieve a common shared understanding of wellbeing. Recognising that wellbeing means different things to different people and is multifaceted, multi layered, with many competing and complementary cause and effect relationships. It is not one dimensional and does not stand alone.

From this, a [90 Day Change Project](#) commenced, which:

- Was led by the Community Services Division of the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI), in partnership with the Strategic Partnership branch of SA Health
- Was sponsored by Minister Bettison (lead for the Premier's wellbeing priority, within her social inclusion portfolio), and Minister Vlahos (within her Mental Health portfolio).
- Included representatives from Government (DCSI, SA Health, DPC, Mental Health Commission, DECD, DEWNR, Office for the Chief Psychiatrist, TAFE), Local Government (LGA), Academia (Flinders University, Torrens University), Non Government (Wellbeing and Resilience Centre, Community Centres SA) and Business (ECH).

Outcome

The launch of the [SA: State of Wellbeing](#) Statement by the Premier, at the 5th Australian Positive Psychology and Wellbeing Conference here in Adelaide.

The Statement updated Professor Martin Seligman's 2013 report 'Building the State of Wellbeing', and:

- Provided a simple description of what wellbeing is
- Reflected a small survey of what South Australians said wellbeing means to them
- Showed the many factors or determinants that impact on wellbeing, at various levels; and
- Updated what is occurring to build a State of Wellbeing

The Statement also posed the question that for SA to be a State of Wellbeing, should South Australia look to know and measure our wellbeing? It included a link to a [YourSAy](#) engagement to gauge wider views on this – do South Australians feel it is important to know if our wellbeing is improving as a State?

Learning

The task was more complicated than first appeared. The project underestimated the journey to reach common shared understanding and though we could have got there much more easily than we did, everybody had to go on a journey. We assumed that the level of understanding was better developed than it was.

Without persevering and respecting differences it could have deteriorated into an academic exercise if the context and content were not well understood. This was a project risk, mitigated by the good governance and strong project management

We learned that relationships were all important, relationships between individual team members, organisations, government departments and political leaders.

It was also too ambitious in terms of developing wellbeing index indicators.

What worked well:

- The 90 Day Project brand has currency, and brings stakeholders together in a way that may not otherwise occur
- Ministers as sponsors added additional currency. It allowed for conversations to occur at a very high level. The good links formed with Ministers offices through this project will assist on post-project follow up work.
- Partnering in the project between DCSI and SA Health was invaluable. While DCSI nominally led the project, in reality there was shared leadership. SA Health brought a perspective, skillset and connections that benefitted the project

enormously. It is doubtful the project could have delivered the same outcomes if it did not occur in partnership.

- The relationships between project members across DCSI and SA Health was extremely collegiate and collaborative. There was a richness of debate and discussion within the project, and a sharing of understanding of each other's drivers and context.
- Being able to draw on wide group of skilled and knowledgeable stakeholders was extremely beneficial. Despite the diversity of interests that different stakeholders had, there was a good collegiate approach by stakeholders.
- The role of Change@SA was similarly invaluable. Change@SA provided logistical and process support, and an independent advisory role. Change@SA was invited to participate as substantive project member along with DCSI and SA Health. It provided an essential independent prompt to the project, outside of our own drivers and beliefs. It also provided an essential contextual link in the terms of other work that Change@SA had been involved in, or was also involved in.

What could have been better:

- Greater focus on the political dimension and relationships
- Better planning - the application of additional resources and/or governance impetus at key points

Closing Statement

The project achieved its aim to bring together diverse wellbeing interests, provide a simple description of wellbeing, illustrate the multifaceted nature of wellbeing, and update on SA's progress in developing the State of Wellbeing. Further work remains on how wider measurement of wellbeing could occur.