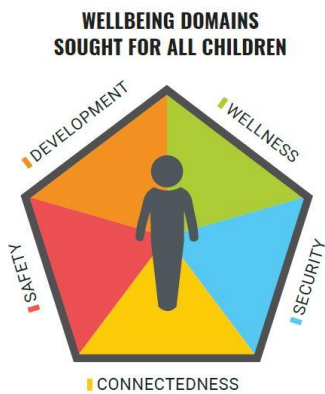


Public Issues: Thinking about Wellbeing August 2018



Just about every government department is zoning in on Wellbeing and consulting with the public to develop their mission statements and policy.

As we begin these discussions we can reflect on Christian wellbeing and see what we can contribute from these values. I think of the gospel stories where people share food, where health is restored, where responsibility and faith are required, where cultural separations are broken and transcended by relationships of respect and inclusion. As the early Christian community became established

wealth was shared and communities organized themselves to respond to their mission and growth. Wellbeing was and is a communal affair always held within the guiding and inspiring power of the holy spirit.

Some Questions about what is included in Wellbeing

Many of the values can be recognized in the policies taking shape, although with a different mission focus, *without* an explicit communal focus and without spirituality as part of wellbeing. Wellbeing is not being framed by Te Tiriti – rather by the promotion of Te Ao Māori and Te reo Māori. There is no specific mention of Pacific peoples' wellbeing although cultural wellbeing is included as a generic principle.

In the main wellbeing is understood as people-centred, and while there is some reference to environmental health and values, the dependence of human wellbeing on environmental health is not well developed. Treasury includes environmental wellbeing as 'natural capital' in one of their four major categories for intergenerational wellbeing. When you drill down into Treasury's twelve indicators however, only one of these is a generic 'environmental quality' which includes air and water. Ecosystem health would be a far more holistic and comprehensive approach to environmental quality which would include land use and biodiversity. Reporting on environmental wellbeing also needs to distinguish between a snapshot of the current situation and what ecosystem health should be in the future.

Intergenerational wellbeing is surely a signal to for climate justice to be included in wellbeing framing. Climate change is more than air and water as suggested by the current Treasury indicators. This is our opportunity to talk about the churches commitments to climate justice as ensuring inclusive policies for transitions. While this includes support and training for the changing profile of work, and also making technology available to all and that waste and access to renewable energy is accessible to all.

Multiple Ministries and new thinking beyond the market

Each of the Ministries or policy units has their particular angle and interest: Treasury, Statistics NZ, the Investment for Social Wellbeing Unit, the Child Wellbeing Unit under Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Minister Tracey Martin, Oranga Tamaraki Lifetime Child Wellbeing (formerly CYF). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFE) has an interest in wellbeing policy through the lens of Sustainable Development Goals reporting.

MFE fulfills our SDG interests internally through StatsNZ reporting on wellbeing, and through our AID 'investment' by supporting Pacific partners to achieve SDG's such as reducing poverty, investing in quality education and acting on climate change. Alongside these, Global policy influence includes working to stop subsidies that contribute to illegal and unregulated fishing, advocating for oceans issues and Small Island States.

It is noticeable that there are different definitions of wellbeing which opens the question of whether there could be a National Policy Statement on Wellbeing – as there is for Freshwater. At one of the consultations this month I asked whether all these departments are talking to each other to develop a common framework – the head of data collection design assured us there is active collaboration. It seems that Treasury and Stats NZ are working together closely.

During the last government, Social Services and organizations working with families and children, and journalists such as Gordon Campbell rang alarm bells about the way social investment was being interpreted and designed for reducing costs on welfare, and on data collection of personal information that could be used to anticipate risk. One concern for example, is that would be in identifying Maori persons with a CYF record (Children and Young Persons and Families) as predisposed to be at risk in the future – without an account of opportunities for remedy and change. This predictive risk carries a racism bias.

The consultation on the new framing of ‘investing for social wellbeing’ was a chance to see if this is simply a new branding for the same interests in data collection. Many of us questioned the market model still implied in the term ‘investing’, and we also thought that a Eurocentric worldview is implicit in the new policy. Contact: yoursay@sia.govt.nz

More interesting work is being done by Treasury – working with wellbeing indicators to support their Living Standards Framework as the new guide for the 2019 government budget. **This is very important** move beyond fiscal accounting for GDP and the prior policies on achieving budget surpluses through lowering taxes rates and stopping investment in social wellbeing. Now wellbeing policy is expanding from fiscal capital to human, social and natural capital to monitor ‘intergenerational wellbeing’.

Moving to recognizing non-market values is a quantum leap in framing government measures and investments and signals recognition of attributes that are ‘incommensurable’ with monetary values.¹ The move beyond GDP as the measure and reference for policy, is a move away from the predominance of monetary assessment only towards an account of quality of life, participation, and social connection. It is a metrics beyond the borders of the market which calls for indicators that should start to ensure prevention of risk to children and optimize opportunity.

Treasury is working with Māori concepts of wellbeing, and while using the OECD ‘How’s Life’ index they have added cultural wellbeing because of the high value of this for Māori in Aotearoa NZ.² The 2018 Treasury Investment paper interprets wellbeing in a range of Māori concepts such as Mangopare kōwhaiwhai (resilience), Pārekere kōwhaiwhai (sustainability) Kaokao tukutuku (system settings as the protective embrace of moving together in unison)³. The Child Wellbeing Unit ‘promotes’ Te Ao Māori and special consultation of Māori wellbeing, and on indicators for Pacific wellbeing is been sought.

Challenges and (In)equality

The challenge is how to measure the intangible qualities of wellbeing? Traditionally, Cost Benefit analysis has been used for all benefits that have a market value that are quantified in the here and now. Intergenerational wellbeing however, means accounting for now and for future time – and while assessments of capabilities and life satisfaction are supposed by Treasury to be measurable, they are consulting the public to see what new thinking emerges.

¹ Geoff Bertram. Green Border Control: Summary Overview of the paper . Prepared for Royal Forest and Bird Society, May 2013. This is a summary of key points from the full report "Green Border Control: Issues at the Environment/Economy Border". [.pdf]

² Conal Smith (2018) Kōtātā – Treasury Living Standards Dashboard. P. 15

³ The Treasury (2018) He Puna Hao Pātiki 2018 Investment Statement Investing for Wellbeing

One of the key challenges is to ensure we have information about inequality and the distribution of wellbeing. This means not only seeing how the different aspects of wellbeing are distributed – eg housing, educational outcomes, income levels, proportion of wealthy and poor people, but how these

benefits and disadvantage distributed across domains. At a Stats NZ consultation⁴ NGO's strongly endorsed the need for inequality measures to be included in wellbeing indicators. There was no dispute that inequality is a sign of exclusion and that inadequate incomes prevents access to housing and food and to the opportunity for children to fulfill their potential and contribute to the wellbeing of society.⁵

A couple of points that guide Treasury's venture: while the indicators and measures need to be relevant to the Aotearoa New Zealand context, they also need to be comparable internationally. Thus Treasury's choice of the OECD as a basis of measurement so that wellbeing held to correspond with what reflects well being for New Zealanders as well as internationally.

Considering the impetus of Sustainability as a more holistic framework for policy, and the SDG's we may question why wellbeing is being developed rather than the three spheres of sustainability – social, economic environmental – sphere. Treasury argues that there is a tendency to retain these spheres as silos, and that they do not readily relate to the social, natural, financial and human capitals of wellbeing. Wellbeing is held to be a more integrated framework.

It is a work in progress and the image of social, natural, human and financial capital woven together gives a glance at the wellbeing and Living Standards framework.



[NZ Treasury](#)

The Child Wellbeing Strategy (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet) will soon announce their plans for consultation. They have already prepared initial thoughts for a strategy from the 600 submissions to the Child Poverty Reduction bill. Public Issues and Methodist Alliance did submissions and presentations to Select Committee. In five wellbeing domains (in the diagram) are safety, security, connectedness, wellness and development. Overall the strategy is to reduce child poverty,

⁴ Huie! 22 August 2018, Wellington.

⁵ Paul Barber (July 2018) NZCCSS comments on the Living Standards Dashboard. Monitoring Intergenerational Wellbeing. <https://nzccss.org.nz/news/library/nzccss-comment-on-wellbeing-framework-july2018-final-docx/>

provide optimal development in the first 1000 days, for children to thrive socially, emotionally and developmentally, have safety with mental wellbeing and be free from racism or stigma⁶.

Next year New Zealand has to report of The Sustainable development Goals, and Department of Statistics are using Ngā Tūtohu with social, economic and environmental criteria which are more akin to sustainable development – but with a wellbeing lens.⁷ Consultations will be from now until September 2018⁸ to sustainable development –but will have a wellbeing lens.⁹

The Sustainable Development Goals Hub [SDG Knowledge hub](#)¹⁰ enables us to look at progress particular goals, themes, on regions, and there is a page dedicated to Pacific Island countries – a great resource that does not just hide the Pacific within Asia.

⁶ Child Wellbeing Strategy: <https://www.dPMC.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2018-06/Appendix%20B-Child%20Wellbeing%20Strategy-Scope%20and%20Public%20Engagement%20Process-May%202018.pdf>
- www.dPMC.govt.nz/our-business-units/child-wellbeing-unit

⁷ www.stats.govt.nz/consultations/indicators-aotearoa-new-zealand-nga-tutohu-aotearoa-consultation?ct=t%28Hui+E%21+Monthly+Pānui+2018_COPY_01%29&mc_cid=05b3feec75&mc_eid=%5BUNIQID%5D

⁸ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/consultations/indicators-aotearoa-new-zealand-nga-tutohu-aotearoa-consultation>] or email [indicators@ stats.govt.nz](mailto:indicators@stats.govt.nz)

⁹ www.stats.govt.nz/consultations/indicators-aotearoa-new-zealand-nga-tutohu-aotearoa-consultation?ct=t%28Hui+E%21+Monthly+Pānui+2018_COPY_01%29&mc_cid=05b3feec75&mc_eid=%5BUNIQID%5D

¹⁰ <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/peace-rights-and-security/work-with-the-un-and-other-partners/new-zealand-and-the-sustainable-development-goals-sdgs/>