

Measuring Up:

A Framework for Government Social Performance Reporting in NSW

Executive summary

As the peak body for the non-government human services sector, NCOSS has a strong interest in economic, social and environmental sustainability. In particular we are keen to explore how sustainability reporting can be enhanced by more stringent social performance reporting; leading to better integration between the fiscal and social justice aims of government.

NCOSS believes that social performance reporting needs to become a central feature of governance in our state. This form of reporting is useful in both evaluating results and ensuring that indicators are linked to resources and actions within and across government agencies.

Although the challenges associated with implementing a social performance reporting framework are considerable, they are not insurmountable. In developing this framework, which we have called *'Social Results for NSW'* we are mindful that any suggested model needs to be simple.

Further, results measures need to have relevance and impact and be tied to action if this new style of public policy is to gain traction both within government and the broader community. Results measures need to be embedded in all parts of government if the framework is to promote whole-of-government approaches to achieving better social outcomes.

International and interstate experience shows that social performance reporting can be implemented at relatively low cost if currently collected information is used as the primary source of data against which reporting takes place.

There are key issues that need to be addressed in any potential model of measuring government's

social performance. These include definition issues around poverty and exclusion, determining the boundaries of social progress and well-being, and the problematic area of selecting a set of headline or primary indicators.

In selecting indicators, the principle selection criteria used by NCOSS are:

- They must be the most meaningful compared to others;
- The most understandable or communicable,
- They must be easily collectable, robust, measurable and feasible for diverse populations;
- They must fit together and tell a clear story;
- They must include positives (ie community resilience) and not just negatives;
- They must be reviewable over time;
- They must measure outcomes over which a state government has significant impact; and
- They must galvanise action.

It is also important that the social performance reporting allow for the different experiences of population groups. For this reason, each indicator needs to be measured for general population, and then cut across equity data needs to be reported on for at least three population groups – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities and people with disability.

Spatial dimensions of data are also important. Data must be readily available at state, regional, local government area/statistical local area and postcode level for meaningful performance measurement. Ideally, data would be available at

sub postcode or neighbourhood level. This is because social conditions vary widely at the very local level. As Vinson argues and as the NSW government has acknowledged through its commitment to place based initiatives - neighbourhoods matter.

Social performance reporting must be linked to the goals and aspirations of the Government and community. NCOSS considers that these goals must be based on equity and social inclusion. The concentration or dispersion of poverty within a community is a leading indicator of equity, and equity is one of the foundations of sustainability.¹

We all want:

- To make NSW a better place to live;
- To reduce poverty and social exclusion, and encourage community participation and inclusion;
- To maintain high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
- To ensure the state shares its prosperity to all its residents;
- To create higher standards of community well being through improved provision and access to education, health, housing, employment, justice and other community services;
- To enforce effective protection and sustainability of the environment;
- To promote a just and equitable state that is enhanced by diversity and looks to the future.

The NCOSS model for social performance, *Social Results for NSW* is a set of robust indicators that measure the institutional performance of Government against standards of social well being that are reported against annually, with the results made public. The framework aims to:

- Measure current performance and our progress over time towards shared goals;
- Embed social and economic equity within the State's decision-making processes, and to promote social and economic equity to the wider community; and
- Be a model that incorporates planning, budgeting and policy priorities for NSW in a comprehensive package focused on outcomes.

The areas to be measured are:

- Health, both physical and mental
- Economic security and financial hardship
- Education, including access to early childhood, school and vocational training
- Essential services
- Housing
- Transport and connectivity
- Care and support, including child protection, community care, and support services for older people and people with disability
- Safety, both in the home and in community
- Resilience, including social participation

In each of these areas benchmarks and headline indicators have been selected to give a whole-of-government picture of social performance.

Social Results for NSW can be illustrated graphically (*see opposite page*).

Social results for NSW needs to be championed throughout government if it is to have impact. NCOSS would recommend the following implementation strategy:

- Governmental oversight to be undertaken by the Cabinet Social Justice Committee, with advice from the Social Justice Reference Group;
- Lead responsibility for its implementation across government agencies to rest with the Premiers Department and Treasury;
- Monitoring and reporting on its implementation at agency level to be coordinated through the Human Services CEO's Cluster.

As the indicators represent priorities for government, these must also be expressed through policy and budget decisions. That is, over time results of spending should be measured against the indicators, particularly those that are outcome based.

Social Results for NSW does not replace existing performance measurement; rather it complements those activities through the creation of a set of summary indicators across government. Therefore, each agency must include results against their existing social performance indicators in their Annual Report and through existing mechanisms, for example the Report of the Chief Medical Officer.

Benchmarks and headline indicators for social performance indicators

1 Individuals, households, neighbourhoods and communities in NSW

2 Who are:

Healthy

- Life expectancy
- Death rates
- Hospital separation rates
- Difficulties getting health care
- Self rated health
- Psychological distress

Live in decent accommodation they can afford

- Proportion of NSW households paying more than 30 percent of disposable income in housing costs
- Public sector rental dwelling stock as proportion of total housing stock
- Numbers of households on the public housing waiting list
- Number of households receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance

Have a decent income and share in NSW's economic prosperity

- Median household income
- Means to purchase food
- The number of utilities disconnections
- Proportion of disposable income spent on utilities

Close to good jobs and services, are well educated

- Proportion of four years olds receiving pre-school education
- Cost of childcare/preschool
- School participation and retention rates
- Literacy and numeracy attainment rates
- Year 12 Completion Rates
- Indigenous to non Indigenous attainment rates
- Transport stress (costs as a proportion of annual income).
- Share of Trips by Car
- Average Travel Times to work
- Distance from home to transport stop
- Map of jobs, housing and transport
- Proportion of transport fleet that is accessible

Are safe and cared for, and can participate in community life

- Child Protection Notifications
- Pick up of unallocated cases
- Out of home care placement stability and breakdown rates
- Unmet need for HACC services
- HACC, HomeCare, supported accommodation waiting list data, community access services
- Labour force participation amongst people with disability
- Social participation of people with a disability
- Reports of domestic and family violence
- Unmet need, turn away rates from refuges
- Reports of sexual assault
- Provision of sexual assault counselling and support
- Victims and per capita rate personal crime
- Imprisonment rates, adult and juvenile
- Recidivism rates, adult and juvenile
- Sport and recreation activities, religious activities, volunteering or community groups
- The ability to get help from neighbours and people outside the home
- Homelessness, suicide, drug death data

In addition, each agency should include in their Annual Report an evidenced statement of how the agency has contributed to the whole-of-government Social Results for NSW.

A summary report against Social Results for NSW should be tabled to parliament by the Premier and by the Treasurer as part of the NSW Budget.

The NSW Auditor General should act as the watchdog for Social Results for NSW, as part of his/her duties in ensuring compliance with other government standards/accounts.

Questions regarding compliance with and progress against Social Results for NSW could be undertaken through the Budget Estimates Committee and through parliamentary questions and debate when the Premier provides his annual report on progress against *Social Results for NSW*.

Social Results for NSW should be reviewed every five years to ensure its objectives are being met and to consider changes to results measures.

¹ Long Island Index Committee 2004, *Long Island Index 2004*, p 29



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