



# *Measuring Wellbeing, Engaging Communities*

*Consolidated report of the Round 2 consultation process for the Victorian Community Indicators Project*

*December, 2005*

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### **Report of the Round 2 consultation process for the Victorian Community Indicators Project**

#### **Table of Contents**

<b>1. The Consultation Process and Key Outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1 The background to the consultation process	2
1.2 Key consultation outcomes – Executive summary and conclusions	3
<b>2. Summary of Responses to the Consultation forums</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Stronger community engagement	7
2.2 Agreement on key wellbeing measures	8
2.3 Improving the quality of local statistics	11
2.4 Using wellbeing measures for local and regional policy	13
2.5 Improving local skills and capacity	14
2.6 Integrating the development of community indicators	15
<b>3. Individual and organisational responses</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1 Stronger community engagement	17
3.2 Agreement on key wellbeing measures	19
3.3 Improving the quality of local statistics	35
3.4 Using wellbeing measures for local and regional policy	40
3.5 Improving local skills and capacity	41
3.6 Integrating the development of community indicators	42
3.7 General comments	44
Attachment 1: List of submissions from individuals and organisations	47
Attachment 2: Attendance list at consultation forums	48

## **1. Measuring Wellbeing: Engaging Communities**

### **1.1 Introduction and background to the consultation process**

The Victorian Community Indicators (VCI) Project is a major initiative funded by VicHealth and is being carried out over 2005 and 2006. The Project is designed to support local governments develop and use community wellbeing indicators, to measure health, wellbeing and sustainability, and improve citizen engagement, community planning and policy making.

The VCI Project is a broad collaboration. Its major partners are VicHealth, the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) and its project team includes Victoria and Swinburne Universities and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The project is designed to involve and benefit the whole Victorian local government sector and all councils and their communities but is also working more intensively with ten representative 'Partner Councils' across the state. The Project's broad reference committee has strong state and non-government representation from the Departments of Victorian Communities, Human Services, Premier and Cabinet, Sustainability and Environment, and Infrastructure and the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS).

The implementation of the VCI Project has been planned and implemented in three main stages. Broadly, the culmination of Stage One was the development of the discussion paper, *Measuring Wellbeing, Engaging Communities*, as a tool for consulting with Local Government, State Government and NGO's on strategic options for the development and implementation of a Victorian Community Indicators strategy and framework.

The discussion paper provided background to key considerations and strategic options in implementing a Victorian Community Indicators framework and posed six key questions that were concerned with:

1. Stronger community engagement in planning and wellbeing measures;
2. Agreement on key wellbeing measures and framework;
3. Improving the quality of local statistics;
4. Using wellbeing measures for better local and regional policy;
5. Improving local skills and capacity in wellbeing measures and planning; and,
6. Integrating the development of community indicators.

The discussion paper was completed in September, 2005 and was distributed to all Victorian Local Government Authorities, State Government Departments, key non Government Organisations such as VCOSS, the Brotherhood of St Lawrence and the Melbourne City Mission as well as a broad audience of individuals and organisations interested in the development of a community indicators framework. Responses to the questions posed were invited.

A round of consultation forums was also conducted to discuss the questions posed by the discussion paper. Five Local Government Authorities involved with the Project including the City of Greater Bendigo, Wellington Shire Council, Knox City Council, Surf Coast Shire and the City of Melbourne hosted these forums. 107 people attended the forums representing 30 Local Government Authorities and 14 other organisations that included State Government representatives, community groups and non Government organisations. Attendance details are provided at Attachment 2. Focus group discussions were also held with the Project Steering Group, the Reference Group and the Partner Council Group. In addition, the discussion paper was posted on the Project web-site and an e-newsletter was sent to notify those registered at the site. At the time of writing, 338 people are registered to received newsletters about the VCI Project.

This report describes and discusses the feedback received at the consultation forums, the focussed discussions and through the responses received from individuals and organisations. It needs to be noted that all comments received through the consultation process are reported

and that while some comments may be contradictory or factually incorrect, they are the beliefs and opinions that were expressed through the consultation process.

## **1.2 Key consultation outcomes – Executive summary and conclusions**

This section summarises the wide-ranging responses to the discussion paper, *Measuring Wellbeing, Engaging Communities* that were received at five consultation forums and by written submissions. Overall, while a diversity of views were expressed, there were also strong themes of agreement, particularly in relation to the overall VCI Project objectives and the broad domains and indicators that have been proposed as a draft planning framework. This section summarises these areas of agreement and highlights some priorities and gaps that were identified as important to address in the ongoing development of a community indicators planning framework.

### **1.2.1 Key themes of agreement include:**

#### **Community Engagement**

- There is strong agreement that there is a need for longer term and strategic approaches to community engagement to support the ‘bottom up’ aspect of Local Government planning. A common concern is that currently, community engagement strategies are restrained by short term and intermittent funding arrangements;
- There is a need to embed indicators across other agendas. A common issue identified is that community engagement is often perceived as only relevant to the areas of social and community services when it is equally important for all areas of Local Government planning. To be successful, there needs to be a ‘whole of government’ approach to indicator development and measurement;
- A concern was expressed about the need for mechanisms to be in place to ensure genuine community engagement and that this rests on the need for continued and strong Local Government control over the interpretation of information.

#### **Wellbeing measures and framework**

- All participants in the consultation process agreed that the proposed domains provide a useful starting point. The focus on wellbeing was widely welcomed as an important shift from an ‘output’ focus for Council performance measurement;
- Many detailed suggestions were made in relation to specific proposed indicators as reported on Pages 17-25. The most extensive comments were made in relation to Personal Health and Wellbeing, Early Childhood and Transport indicators;
- There was wide support for the need for continued collaboration with all stakeholders in making future choices about core and locally specific indicators;
- There was also a clearly expressed need for a pool of optional indicators that could address the diverse conditions and issues of LGAs across Victoria.

#### **Quality of local statistics**

- A widely held view was that there is a need for a central coordinating body to compile, analyse and disseminate data. This was identified as necessary in order to protect the quality of the data and enhance the potential for sustainable data collection. Relevant local data is currently patchy and difficult to access in a timely way and this data needs to be made affordable and accessible. An important concern was also to improve regional data analysis to provide a focus for key issues (such as water management or access to GPs) that cut across municipalities;
- The need for a partnership approach to data management was widely expressed. Many people suggested that this is a State Government responsibility but strong input and guidance from Local Government peak bodies and representatives is required;
- An important and common concern raised was around the potential for insensitive use of data generated either in creating ‘league tables’ that compare Local

Governments or in relation to 'sensationalised' treatment of indicators by the media with the potential for damaging portrayals of specific communities being created.

- A major priority is also that data be made available to Local Government in a timely, affordable and accessible way. There were repeated concerns that while Local Government regularly provides data to State and Commonwealth agencies, it is difficult to access this data in a digested form.

### **Using Community Indicators**

- It was widely recognised that Local Government needs resources and support to use and apply indicators as a basis for planning. A range of suggestions were received about the type of resources required;
- A partnership approach was seen as necessary for the use of indicators. A common view was that a central coordinating body is required for the collection of the data, while the use of data needed to be controlled by the wide range of stakeholders involved – Local government in particular, with support from the State and Universities in data interpretation and use.

### **Skills and capacity**

- It was widely acknowledged that Local Governments have varied capacity to work with indicators of community wellbeing and that capacity building initiatives are required if indicators are to be widely applied. Rural Councils, in particular, have difficulties in accessing the relevant expertise required. Strategies such as a 'travelling road show', a continuous professional development program and an upgraded web-site were repeatedly suggested;
- State and Federal Government were widely seen as the appropriate levels of government to fund this and that capacity building strategies should be planned and implemented with input from a wide range of partners – Local Government in particular;
- A further comment was the need for capacity building for State government officers to best support Local Government in accessing and interpreting data.

### **Approach over time**

- The need for a central coordinating agency was widely seen as necessary and that decentralised models of data collection, analysis, coordination and dissemination are highly problematic;
- There is a need to be careful not to duplicate efforts of other agencies;
- A large set of optional indicators are required for LGAs to select to suit local conditions;
- A strong view was that it is necessary to maintain ABS involvement in indicator development and use, both to maintain the quality of data as well as to facilitate coordination of data gathered at a Commonwealth level;
- That there must be long-term commitment to indicator development and data resources.

### **1.2.2 Other comments and priorities**

A number of other comments were made that were identified as important to address in the following stages of the VCI Project development. These include:

#### **Equity and diversity**

- There is a need for a sharper focus on gender. The comment was made that at this stage, the framework appears as 'gender blind' and recognition is required that all indicator measurement requires gendered analysis for a meaningful interpretation of data. For example, drug use behaviours are highly gendered in all relevant considerations such as patterns of drug use, abuse and health risks. To gather and analyse data without a

gendered perspective provides a partial and misleading perspective on the character of drug use and to potential policy responses. The need for a gendered approach needs to be applied across the proposed framework;

- Similarly, the need to focus on disability issues and the inclusion of further indicators around disability access, community inclusion and wellbeing generally was expressed;
- Issues around ageing populations, particularly in regional and rural communities, was identified as needing further consideration and focus within the framework;
- It was also strongly recommended that there needs to be considerably more effort in ensuring that the document, specific indicators and any future indicators program more effectively highlight principles of equity, inclusion and access. Specifically, it was suggested that there needs to be capacity for disaggregation by relevant demographic indices, including age, indigenous and cultural heritage, gender and disability.

### **Use and quality of data, privacy and the 'league table'**

- Repeatedly, concerns were raised about the need for quality data, the need for protocols and protection around privacy issues, and the potential for the use of data in a manner that could be damaging to individuals and communities. While the major benefits of using indicators were identified as being able to allocate resources to areas of high need, the potential for using data to stigmatise particular communities is a real danger that needs to be a major consideration in the future development of the community indicator development and management;
- A common and related concern was also the potential for indicators to be used as a means to compare or 'rank' local government performance. Such use has dangerous implications of detracting from the real purpose of enhanced community wellbeing as well as stigmatising particular LGAs.

### **Reinventing the wheel and a partnership approach**

- Many consultation participants expressed the need to build upon the experience and learnings of previous and related initiatives. A major example of this is the Municipal Public Health Plan which incorporates a framework that overlaps with the proposed Community Indicators Framework;
- The need for a partnership approach in community indicator development and implementation was stressed in almost all aspects of the process.

### **LGA capacity**

A major consideration in future indicator development is consideration of the varying capacities and resources of LGAs across the State. Small rural Councils experience qualitatively different circumstances and issues with few resources to allocate to programs above and beyond the provision of essential services. Similarly, needs and priorities vary considerably across metropolitan, interface, and regional Councils.

### **1.2.3 Conclusions**

Overall, feedback on the Discussion Paper has confirmed broad support for:

- a) The crucial importance of the overall goal of establishing a sustainable system of Victorian local community indicators;
- b) The overall scope and architecture of the proposed framework of indicators. The proposed indicators also received considerable support although there are a range of constructive suggestions about changes and additions;
- c) The importance of sustainable local level data collection and instruments including through the ABS, improved access to State Government administrative data, existing surveys (such as the Victorian Population Health Survey);
- d) The importance of ensuring adequate resources are available to support the regular collection and dissemination of these data sets in an accessible and affordable way;
- e) The need for an integrated set of actions to improve the capacity of local government, state government and community sector staff and citizens to understand and use community indicator data sets and processes;

- f) The need for integrated actions to improve the links between community indicators, community engagements and planning and policy making at both local and State government levels;
- g) The establishment of an appropriately resourced independent body to provide the organisational mechanism for coordinating and supporting the collection, analysis and dissemination of local community indicator data, capacity building for communities and governments and improved links between community indicators, planning and policy making.

## 2. Consultation Forum Responses

The purpose of the forums was to gain feedback identified in the discussion paper, 'Measuring Wellbeing, Engaging Communities'. The responses received across all of the forums are grouped according to key themes and responses.

### Key Questions

#### 2.1 Stronger community engagement in planning and wellbeing measures

*Q 1.1 What actions and initiatives will be most important to support broader and more democratic citizen engagement in community planning and the development and use of community indicators? (Generally, what will best ensure community priorities and values are reflected in local planning and policies?)*

Overall, a strong and clear view was expressed that there is a need for longer term and strategic approaches to community engagement in the community planning process. The forum discussion in response to this question can be grouped around the themes of:

- Challenges to community engagement in planning;
- Suggestions for approaches and strategies that can support community engagement; and,
- Support required to promote community engagement.

#### Key challenges

- How to overcome the 'squeaky wheel' issue – ie. There are often dominant community members or groups who can monopolise community debates and participation efforts;
- Related to this is the difficulties in involving those groups and individuals who are disengaged from the planning process. There is a need for support to engage specific communities – CALD communities, people with disabilities etc. and other communities that are difficult to reach;
- Local leaders and Councillors that are elected on a narrow platform or agenda can often have a short term focus in community planning and resist efforts towards long term planning. How to encourage leaders to understand the value of measuring wellbeing indicators over the long term is a major challenge;
- There are diverse needs and abilities for planning across LGAs. For example, small rural Councils have vastly different cultures, resources and constraints than do metropolitan, regional or interface Councils;
- How to encourage ownership by communities with the planning process is a constant question. This is particularly an issue for new communities that are often characterised by apathy and inertia in relation to community planning processes;
- There also needs to be recognition by State Government of the very broad range of agendas that local government are involved in. It was commented that the State Government is constantly identifying Local Government as the mechanism for rolling out services with little recognition that they have little opportunity to engage in 'big picture' thinking. This leads to heightened and often unrealistic community expectations about what LGAs have real control over.

#### Priority principles and approaches to community engagement

- A point emphasised across forums was the need to embed community engagement strategies across local government planning areas. Community engagement is often associated with social services/health areas when it is just as important for communities to be engaged in other areas of Council decision making such as roads and other infrastructure and development areas;
- The need to link community engagement with a clear communications strategy was also highlighted. This is in recognition of the diversity of communities and their varying perceptions of, and willingness to be involved in community planning. Real

choice about citizen engagement needs to be supported by the provision of information about how and why participation will be of benefit;

- The process needs to be premised by a real commitment to, and value of, citizen participation. The process needs to build trust and genuine community involvement;
- Community engagement strategies need to avoid 'overload'. Strategies should not be about constant consultation but utilise various methods and approaches to community engagement and understanding community attitudes;
- Community engagement needs to be closely linked with State Government policy agendas and programs;
- Local consultation supported by resources and with clear outcomes in mind;
- Communities need to be supported in how to be involved and ask the right questions.

#### Priority strategies for community engagement:

- Strategies need to provide the community with a 'whole picture' in order to minimise the perceived remoteness of Local Government;
- The community needs to be involved in indicator design;
- Indicators need to be built into neighbourhood planning;
- To be effective, the community needs to see results in the short term, in areas that are of key importance to them. Communities need to know 'what's in it for them' and the most effective way to do that is to make sure that the engagement process is focussed on the 'hot issues'. For example, for northern rural shires, water management is a key community issue – this should be highlighted in any indicator development process;
- Engagement strategies need to incorporate celebrations of success arising from evaluation mechanisms and feedback strategies;
- Use data to demonstrate how the data can support and assist communities in tangible ways.

#### Support for local government to implement community engagement

- Support is required from the state through integrated planning processes and increased recognition of the expanding burden on local governments to implement multiple agendas;
- Resources are required such as:
  - 'Tool boxes' of strategies to support local community engagement;
  - Diverse methods that can be applied in diverse communities;
  - Support in using media – selling the concept and its importance to communities;
  - Accessible and affordable training on community engagement;
  - Training for newly appointed Councillors should be considered to promote the role and value of community indicators.

#### *1.2 Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding these actions?*

The major theme in response to this question was that State government needs to resource local government planning and engagement. This support needs to recognize the highly varied needs across LGAs and that there are different resourcing requirements.

Another key comment is that design and implementation needs to be shaped by local government priorities but supported by externally designed resources and assistance. The need for a partnership approach was emphasized.

## **2.2 Agreement on key wellbeing measures and framework**

*Q 2.1 To what extent do the domains, issues and indicators in the draft VCI framework provide an appropriate starting point for the initial development of a common set of Victorian community wellbeing indicators? What needs changing, deleting or adding?*

The overwhelming response to this was that generally, the measures and framework are a useful tool. While it was commonly identified that there is a need for refinement from this stage, there was no comment to suggest that this wasn't an appropriate framework. The forum discussion is grouped around the strengths, risks and opportunities for improvement. Key points included that:

- There are many perceived strengths of the proposed framework. These were identified as:
  - Providing a useful benchmarking tool for Council performance and planning;
  - The focus on community wellbeing as opposed to an output focus was welcomed as a positive shift in the approach to planning;
  - That the framework reflected a triple bottom line approach which is also received an increasingly accepted and positive move ahead;
  - The indicators will be a valuable tool in identifying community needs and wants that is lacking at present;
  - That the framework effectively elevates the status of social indicators as core business in Council operations. There is an understanding that economic indicators have dominated the planning agenda and the inter-relatedness of economic and social has been obscured;
  - That the concept of having a core set of indicators with room for flexibility to identify local concerns is useful and appropriate for local government planning processes and priorities.
- An important theme of discussion was about the need to support local communities in the development of indicators – that ideally, the indicators would be clearly defined and articulated by community members;
- Some concerns were expressed about the indicators and possible negative impacts on communities through use of this form of measurement. The point was raised a number of times that there is potential for the measurement outcomes to be used to compare local government conditions to the detriment of communities that may not 'score well' against some of the indicators. The issue of how to prevent negative and damaging media responses to wellbeing measurement was raised as an issue that could arise from the implementation of the framework;
- Concern was also raised about the extent to which there could be a common set of indicators applied across all Councils. While the domain areas were generally seen as reasonable, there were some who expressed the view that each LGA is too different to use similar measures;
- One comment was the concern that the framework reflected a 'third way' policy approach where communities are understood as partners in the planning process. This is not necessarily supported by all councils and there is a need to limit the extent to which state government continues to 'roll out' increasing obligations for local government;
- Across the forums, there were suggestions in regard to the need for 'tweaking' the indicators. One suggestion was the need for an appropriate 'filter tool' that would assist in determining indicators that were effective in measuring core values. It was also suggested that indicator measurement needs to marry as closely as possible with those indicators that are already being reported in order to minimize the amount of new information that needed to be collected and reported. Those with specific suggestions provided this detailed comment in writing which is detailed in the following section – pages 18 - 25;
- Understanding wellbeing for people with disabilities was identified as not being visible in the framework.

*Q 2.2 What processes should be used, and what groups and stakeholders need to be consulted, in future choices about 'core' (common?) and 'locality specific' indicators?*

Little specific comment was made in relation to this question at the forums. There was wide agreement about the need for an optional list of indicators from which Councils can choose those that are most relevant to local conditions and communities.

A wide range of stakeholders were identified as relevant to contributing to future indicators, both 'core' and 'common'. These included local and state-wide action groups, local MPs, individual community members and media.

It was commented that the process, however, would be dependent upon future arrangements in terms of policy makers and data managers who will influence the progress of indicators.

## **2.3 Improving the quality of local statistics**

*Q 3.1 What new and expanded mechanisms and instruments will be needed to collect the local level data needed to support the sustainable development and use of local community indicators? Who should be responsible for designing and administering and funding these instruments?*

A number of specific suggestions and priorities were made in response to this question.

### Process

There is a need to continue what has been started with the VCI project. The process is on the right track. That is – we need to understand what exists by way of data and capacity, develop mechanisms for sharing information and apply intellectual analysis to the data.

### Professional Development

There is a need for a continuous professional development program to support people on how to use data.

### Access and privacy:

A core priority for wellbeing measurement is the provision of affordable and accessible data in order to measure progress against indicators. The inherent risk in this is that individuals or small communities might be identified and protecting individual privacy is a key concern. The need for the development of ethical protocols to support both access to data and the right to privacy was identified as a priority;

### Enhanced collaboration and utilization of existing data

A priority in data collection needs to be to support collaboration between agencies to maximize the comparability and scope of data sets. A further discussion theme was about the need to make existing data accessible. This was discussed in the context of whether a new government survey should be implemented and using existing data more effectively was seen as a higher priority than further surveys. The idea of a more effective web-site to access data, was also suggested;

### Rigorous and quality data

The need for rigorous data collection, analysis and dissemination methods was a frequently mentioned in discussion about data;

### Economic investment activity

A further point that was raised about the need for new data that will support the attraction of economic investment activity.

*3.2 What mechanisms are needed to improve shared access to local level data? Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding this work?*

Key points and themes of discussion in response to this question were:

#### Centralised data collection

A repeated comment at the forums was the need for data to be compiled, analysed and disseminated by a central clearing house. It was also commonly suggested that this function should sit with a University. This will support the development and implementation of uniform protocols and standards for data collection – a priority that was repeatedly expressed. The need for centralizing data was supported by the need to gather basic aggregated and verified data to start with before supplying more complex data. This data should be organized around a uniform base or 'building blocks'. A 'roll out' process was suggested. The approach being taken by the VCI Project was endorsed where the priority is to identify key areas to measure and then identify what data is required to populate those measures.

One point raised was that the real issue is not so much about the data, but who controls how the data is interpreted and used in a policy implementation process. Whether or not the data is located centrally is of secondary importance to how effectively data is used to support community planning and democratic processes.

#### Communications strategy

One comment made was about how relevant data currently seems remote and inaccessible. Any data dissemination strategy needs to be accompanied by a very strong communications strategy in order to promote the accessibility and potential use of the data. This was a common theme and there were numerous suggestions about the need for better web access, design and interpretation of data.

#### Organisation of data around key regional and local issues

It was suggested that, in order to support movement on regional issues, a strategy should be to organize data around key issues that cut across municipalities – issues such as transport or water management. This will assist in clarifying resource requirements to address issues within the direct responsibility of State government or as stated, *'This will shape the stick to use on the State to bring resources to bear on common concerns.'* A point raised in response was that good regional data, coupled with effective communication strategies, would actually assist in supporting a *'group hug'* between state and local governments.

G21 – at the Centre for Population Health was identified as a useful model for supporting a regional approach to data management and dissemination. Specifically, G21 can manipulate data for local and regional purposes and support local government workers to use and translate data for their own planning purposes. Such features were identified as important in the management of data around indicators.

Regional Universities such as LaTrobe University at Bendigo were identified as being able to play a role in regional data analysis, dissemination and interpretation for local communities.

#### Reflecting differences between LGAs and communities

A further point was raised about the need for detailed data that would enable LGAs to highlight the difference between regions in terms of priorities and conditions. A related comment was that it was important to be able to identify differences with 'hard to reach' communities.

#### State government role

The State government was identified as having a major role in funding and supporting local government in understanding why and how they can use data. There is also a major role for the state in data provision and access.

*Q 3.3 Who should be responsible for collating and distributing the results of local data collection?*

A strong theme in the responses to this question was that there is a need for data to be available centrally. The reasons for this were identified as:

- Data needs to be available centrally to prevent the 'spin factor'. If Councils control the production and management of data, it will be manipulated to put a 'good face' on what is measured;
- State wide coordination is essential for ensuring consistency in data management, quality control and the implementation of protocols;
- The need for the management of the interpretation of data and independence in how data is interpreted is a high priority;

In relation to who should actually collate and distribute the results of local data collection, there was a widely expressed view that a University would be an appropriate place due to the need for independence and specialist expertise in data collection and management. It was also widely commented that State Government has a large role in the distribution of the data. Local government also needs to have a significant role in data use and analysis. It was suggested that there is an important role for an independent commissioner in relation to overseeing the use of data.

A related theme of discussion was around the issue of media use of data and the potential risks that information could be used to sensationalise issues, negatively promote community issues to the detriment of specific communities or use information to compare localities in a 'league ladder'. It was suggested that there is a role for local government to play in relation to the censorship of data use to ensure that information is used sensitively.

## **2.4 Using wellbeing measures for better local and regional policy**

*Q 4.1 What initiatives should be taken to strengthen the potential for local community wellbeing indicators to inform and drive local and regional planning, policymaking and reporting?*

The responses to this question included a number of identified constraints in relation to community capacity to inform policy and planning. Many of the constraints identified were those that related to the politics of data and information and the need to enhance the political will to support data collection and dissemination. The main issue was due to the short term cycles of local government giving government a short term view in relation to planning. This is exacerbated by many Councillors being elected on a narrow platform with a narrow view of community issues. Further, there is a danger within Local Government of the tendency to use data for causal analysis that does little to progress longer term strategic thinking in relation to planning.

A number of specific initiatives were proposed however. These included:

- The development of a communications strategy to support long-term understanding and capacity around the management and use of community indicators;
- The establishment of processes aimed at monitoring, review and evaluation of indicator development and measurement;
- Thinking laterally about ways of engaging citizens in wellbeing measurement;
- Using wellbeing measures to inform regional management frameworks;
- Developing education programs on planning that are accessible to communities;
- Running pilot community engagement activities to encourage communities to be involved with local government in the planning process;
- Ensuring that the first step in local government planning processes be to ensure the articulation of a local community vision that is owned and accepted and developed by the community as a reference point;
- Encouraging joint ownership of indicators by council, community and other long term partners relevant to outcomes of goals and strategies;
- Engage specific groups in long term involvement for each dimension or set of indicators. For example, in relation to safety issues, the Police should be involved.;

- The demonstration of commitment at state and regional level;
- Demonstration tools of how the indicators fit together within a broader model – ie. with government policy and processes and how they can be used;
- Ensure that indicators are valuable over time – be connected with a longer term vision;
- Understanding what are the factors contributing to the indicators – sensitivity/variability eg. Feeling happy in the community.

*Q 4.2 Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding them?*

Comments included that:

- There should be joint state funding for project development and implementation;
- The CEOs forum should contribute to the design and implementation of indicators;
- Peak bodies need to be involved in overall management and supervision of indicator use;
- There is a need to think about economies of scale and scope. For example, closely compare the relative costs and benefits of a broad different models;
- The idea that there should be a partnership approach to work on indicators. Partners include local community, including business community, local government, state government, the private/corporate sector and Federal Government;
- Local council plays a key role but requires partnership approach. It is unrealistic to expect small councils to contribute;
- A regional approach is a useful strategy to coordinate local government areas.

## **2.5 Improving local skills and capacity in wellbeing measures and planning**

*Q 5.1 What are the key priorities for improving skills and capacity (of Councillors and council staff, state agencies and communities) in the development and use of local community indicators?*

The response to this question included a mix of discussion about current constraints and issues in relation to council capacity to implement wellbeing measures within planning processes as well as a series of suggestions about what is required.

### Current issues and constraints

- There is often a false assumption that Local Government's actually represent their communities. In order to support better understanding and representation of communities, there needs to be better resources to support engagement;
- Councillors are often an impediment to taking a long-term view on planning – there is a need for training in local government once elected. It is also difficult for Councillors to understand the benefits of indicators, to get Councillors to apply indicators across Council processes and there is difficulty in gaining 'ownership' in relation to indicators and goals.
- Local government has developed relatively high levels of capacity in relation to economic management and setting economic indicators. Capacity in relation to social indicators are less well developed;
- There needs to be a focused evaluation of capacity within local governments to identify where capacity building is required;
- One view expressed was that there is actually reasonable planning capacity within Local Government but the problem is disparate and patchy data available to support planning. What is available is often difficult to obtain in a timely manner;
- There is a skills shortage in relation to community planning and demographic analysis that needs to be recognized;
- There needs to be the development of a common language around indicators.

Suggested initiatives included:

- The development of a 'tool-box' of examples of engagement;
- Support for Councillors and community is required to own and understanding indicators:
- Linkage with the LGPRO in the implementation of capacity building strategies;
- The analysis of and interpretation of data for the specific purposes of Local Government planning;
- There is a need for training modules supporting analysis and interpretation of evidence and data;
- The development of education programs for Councillors. Currently Councilors are primarily responsive to 'squeaky wheels' and are unresponsive to the planning process;
- The development of a social atlas;
- Regional hubs for holding data;
- Enabling approach to support Local Governements;
- A repeated suggestion was the need for a 'traveling circus/road show' of people who can support LGs to access and use data;
- A set of promotional tools for the whole idea of wellbeing measures and indicators as a planning framework;
- Consultation with community, staff and councilors by specialized team;
- Develop a pilot program or uncover existing local examples;
- Place a facilitator within the community to work with existing groups;
- Organise high profile events/launch with staff, councillors, community leaders and youth.

*Q 5.2 Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding this work?*

Comments included the need for:

- The establishment of a centre of excellence around wellbeing measurement and planning;
- State government data to be fed into this process;
- The development and implementation of affordable and accessible training;
- Application of the Centre for Population Health Model as an approach to supporting regional and community planning;
- ABS to be involved in capacity building strategies;
- Communities should be involved in capacity building strategies;
- The development of models of practice – case studies and models of how to bring indicators down into a meaningful process;
- Promotional tools to encourage understanding of the wellbeing planning process;
- MAV support for capacity building;
- The establishment of a 'skills exchange';
- Resources and funds for community engagement strategies; and,
- Accessible and free data for planning.

**2.6 Integrating the development of community indicators**

6.1 What are the best institutional and governance arrangements to ensure that local community indicators are developed and used in a more integrated way?

Comments included that:

- The Department of Education and Training needs representation in the project;
- Small rural communities need to be understood as having specific needs and support requirements;
- Regional forums will play an important role in marrying top-down and bottom-up planning processes;

- To be meaningful, indicators have to be mandated by the community;
- State Government is the only statewide agency with a general mandate;
- Doubt about the competence of state government departments was also expressed in relation to the extent to which bureaucrats could understand the planning needs of local government;
- Data needs to sit with a body that is least likely to control or constrain access to data and information. Currently data is not readily accessible by Local Government and they need assistance to access this;
- There is an issue in relation to managing media coverage of the data and institutional arrangements need to be well placed to manage that;
- There needs to be a state-wide system to support local planning;
- Some key points included the need for an integrated and empowering approach that involved all levels of government and community. There was a focus on the need for regional information;
- Need to understand that there is highly variable levels of progress by Councils in relation to community planning. Not all Councils have a community plan that is guided by a community formed vision;
- The VLGA should be involved to support stability and consistency; and,
- Need a top-down, bottom-up approach.

*6.1 Where should the resources to support these arrangements come from?*

- Not from local government;
- Resources are required to make sense of the data;
- VLGA/MAV.

### 3. Submissions from organisations and individuals

As part of the consultation process, submissions were invited from interested organisations and individuals in response to the Discussion Paper, *Measuring Wellbeing, Engaging Communities*. Fifteen responses were received and respondent details are listed in Attachment 1.

This section combines the responses received in relation to the specific questions asked, other comments that were made as well as specific suggestions in relation to indicators and data measurement.

#### 3.1 Stronger community engagement in planning and wellbeing measures

*Q 1.1 What actions and initiatives will be most important in supporting broader and more democratic citizen engagement in community planning and the development and use of community indicators?*

- A repeated comment was about the need to ensure that the indicators talk full account of different population groups. For one council, an important population group are visitors, and homeless people. Another respondent discussed commuter residents. There needs to be scope within the indicators to pick these up;
- There needs to be more indicators relevant to Indigenous people. The following Indigenous specific information which could be included in the Community Wellbeing Indicators Framework:
  - Percentage of local government funding allocated to Indigenous projects;
  - Number of Indigenous specific projects funded;
  - Number of people who participate in Indigenous activities and events;
  - Protection of registered Aboriginal Cultural Heritage sites in Local Government Areas;
  - Number of Indigenous people employed in senior positions in government and non-government organisations;
  - Local government engagement with Traditional Owners;
  - Number of Indigenous home owners;
  - Level of Indigenous material wealth;
  - Number of Indigenous Cultural Events.
- A repeated comment was about the need for building the capacity and skills of the local government sector –staff, Councillors and community. The need was expressed for a comprehensive approach that requires ongoing support mechanisms, which builds the capacity and skill of the key stakeholders in citizen engagement and community strengthening, fosters innovation and open and responsive community engagement strategies. This includes local, state and federal government staff, community sector staff and volunteers and community themselves;
- The application of the key principles for good community planning including equity, intersectoral cooperation, community involvement and sustainability. Suggested measures to support community planning include:
  - Providing the community with skills to engage;
  - Developing a sense of community – rights V responsibility
  - Addressing issues of time poor community members
  - Addressing issues of limited access, social capital and infrastructure
  - Addressing feelings of disempowerment
  - Enhancing local government capacity.
- Community forums for consultation, linked into existing networks such as church, sporting activities and other community groups, and opportunities for people who do not access

existing groups, provides an opportunity for broad and specific representation of community groups that encompass social, cultural and geographic communities.

- A policy platform that supports a broad, ongoing way for supporting skill building and community strengthening for all communities, rather than a 'piecemeal approach' where stakeholders are required to apply for grants in order to undertake community building initiatives. Providing opportunities to communities to determine how they will approach reaching an agreed set of objectives. This will ensure that community ownership and participation is supported and increases the chances of creating sustainable outcomes for communities. This will support an increased capacity in communities for democratic citizen engagement at a range of levels (i.e. a local example of this is the development of community plans through State funded Community Capacity Building Initiative- CCBI);
- Appropriate resources are required to support policy platforms- the increased recognition of local government's role to support citizen engagement and community strengthening must be accompanied by appropriate resources. Local Government's ability to undertake citizen engagement and community strengthening is varied across the State and many large rural Local Governments have a limited ability to resource such activities;
- Conducting innovative pilot projects exploring various models of community engagement; A strong view was expressed in regard to the need for greater support for citizen engagement in community strengthening initiatives, especially engagement of disadvantaged and difficult to reach communities. It was also noted that capacity building and skill development at local government level (staff and elected representatives) were important to enhance understanding of the value of:
  - community engagement and the place of the corporate plan, community plan and the Municipal Public Health Plan and ways in which these can be steam-lined; and,
  - local planning and developing and implementing community indicators.
- A repeated comment made was about the synergies between community Health Plans and the VCI. There is a need to integrate planning frameworks, learn from models of best practice and build upon these learnings. The need for a partnership approach between communities and levels of government was a repeated suggestion;
- There is a need to provide useful guidance materials on systems, methods and good practice in supporting citizen democratic engagement, including a variety of innovative case studies. These need to be designed to be useful to local and state governments, statewide data collection and management organisations and communities in their different roles. The strategies suggested include:
  - Development and dissemination of tools and other resources
  - Funding innovative pilot programs
  - Determining and disseminating good practice models and case studies
  - Programs to broaden frequently excluded groups
  - Ensuring that indicators and measures are simple and user friendly in design
- One comment from a rural council was that communities who have insufficient funds to maintain essential services such as roads are not in a position to react to other community needs.

*Q 1.2 Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding these actions?*

- The need for a partnership approach was emphasised. All key stakeholders involved in this project should be utilised with the responsibility falling to state and federal government to implement and fund these actions. It should be the responsibility of all key stakeholders to design these actions. Others stressed the need for implementation to happen at a state government level;
- A repeated comment was for the need for indicators that are accepted across the State to ensure consistency and participation across all Councils within Victoria. Funding should come from the State but Local Government implementation and collaboration is essential;
- One suggested approach to this was to establish local partnership groups that are provided with appropriate resources by State and Commonwealth Governments. These groups should ensure engagement with local community groups and services as well as work to maximise participation by diverse individuals and groups.

- As this is a state government initiative it should be wholly funded at that level. It is unlikely that there will be the required level of consistency and participation across local government if these actions are not funded;
- There is a need for government to invest in resources and processes to build local government capacity to engage communities in planning processes. A program of indicators is unlikely to be effective without this investment; and,
- One comment was that most items in the indicators are controlled by State and Federal Government, although constant cost shifting by both (levels of government) try to make them a Local Government responsibility. Probably State Government should be responsible for the design, implementation and funding.

### **3.2 Agreement on Key wellbeing measures and framework**

*Q 2.1 To what extent do the domains, issues and indicators summarised in the draft VCI framework provide an appropriate starting point for the initial development of a common set of Victorian community wellbeing indicators? What needs changing, deleting or adding?*

#### Broad comments about the framework

- All respondents made the comment that the draft framework was an acceptable starting point for the initial development of a common set of indicators. Most respondents, however, suggested areas for amendment and improvement;
- Two councils were concerned that the core indicators did not necessarily reflect key values for their particular councils. For example, retail spending was not a major indicator for Councils with large numbers of small towns or metropolitan areas that do not include large shopping precincts;
- There needs to be recognition of the broad involvement in, and application of the MPHP framework *Environments for Health* in 2001;
- The fact that the broad domains applied by the VCI broadly reflect those used by the MPHP framework is supported. It was also suggested that there needs to be closer integration of indicators with MCHP as both a strategy to support Local Government Engagement but also to reduce duplication of effort. At the same time, there needs to be greater emphasis on the program being about outcomes and not performance as this is a critical aspect of the wellbeing approach;
- There is an argument for fewer indicators in order for measurement to be achievable for local government;
- There is a need for local area data to ensure that the diversity of issues across the municipality are identified and monitored;
- There is widely shared concern that the data will be used insensitively to the detriment of the community;
- A rationale is required for reasons for adding a separate domain of democracy/citizenship, which could conceivably be included within the social domain;
- The MCHP framework will soon be evaluated and the findings of this should usefully inform the further development of the VCI;
- There needs to be greater clarification about the purposes of the indicators – are they for democratic process, policy development or reporting. The lack of distinction in purposes blurs the extent to which assessments can be made about data selection and indicators;
- It needs to be made explicit that the intention of the framework is intended to support additional indicators that are locally relevant;
- Equity considerations in data collection, presentation and use should be made more explicit. The gendered nature of indicator measurement also needs to be highlighted as a priority;
- The suggested indicators are very comprehensive for the stage of development of the initiative. It may be appropriate to adopt a general principle that fewer, more robust, and more sustainable indicators are developed and that a staged approach to indicator development takes place;
- There will be considerable difficulty in coordinating the data and determining whether the sample size of some of the data sources allows for local level LGA interpretation;

- Where specific existing data sources are proposed, it is hard to determine from the discussion paper whether the measures proposed are captured by questions already on the survey, or if indeed they are compatible with the objects of the surveys being conducted;
  - If they are, are they framed in such a way that they can appropriately capture the information needed for the VCI? This is a concern if the studies/surveys were not designed originally for VCI purposes;
  - If they are not, or some of the questions are not currently included in the proposed data sources, are the organisations managing the data prepared to accept additional questions or modification of their own questions to suit the VCI project? Will it compromise the validity of their own data? These questions have significant ramifications for the feasibility and cost of collecting the measures.
- What are the implications for “no indicator presently available” or for which data is being drawn from one-off surveys; with no clear plan/ resourcing of repeat surveillance?
- For those indicators that rely on Council annual surveys/CSS, how many languages are these done in? What is their general response rate? Do they have sampling methods to compensate for vulnerable groups? What is their sample size and do they have sufficient funds to increase their sampling size to accommodate an acceptable sample size to cover all the measures VCI wish to be addressed through the Council annual surveys;
- Food security indicators were identified as a significant omission;
- There were repeated comments about the need to make the framework ‘plain English’;
- One submission suggested that there be consideration of:
  - ❖ Local investment by the private sectors;
  - ❖ The amount of government investment in infrastructure;
  - ❖ The proportion of residents on fixed incomes and proportion on government support;
  - ❖ Workplace injury levels;
  - ❖ Road transport indicators on usage and infrastructure;
  - ❖ Number of community groups per capita;
  - ❖ Community participation.

Specific suggestions about domains and indicators:

*Domains*

All submissions and comments expressed general support of the domains. One suggestion was that the domain of Democracy and Citizenship should be included within Social.

*Indicators*

**Social**

Need to add the goal of ‘cohesive’ communities, and ‘a community that nurtures its children and young people and respects others and the aged.’

Community Connectedness/Sense of Community

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Percentage of people who like living in their local community	○ Needs better definition of community and society.
Percentage of people who can get help from friends, family or neighbours when needed.	○ Keep indicator unchanged
Percentage of people who feel they can trust people who live in their area.	○ Not good enough data to measure – don’t use.
Volunteer rate (regular and occasional).	○ The data sources for volunteer rates seem problematic;
Percentage of people who believe their community is an accepting place for people from diverse cultures and	○ This highlights negativity – shouldn’t be used; ○ Why is this core when the ‘lives better’

backgrounds	indicator is optional. The latter has been tested by DVC.
Percentage of people who have experience or observed inequity based on either class, ethnicity, race, age, gender or sexual divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Shouldn't be used</li> <li>o The indicator on perceived inequity is 'fuzzy'. Needs to be based on reported cases as reported the HREOC or EEO commission;</li> </ul>
Percentage of people who believe that people in the area are willing to help their neighbours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Keep indicator unchanged</li> </ul>
Percentage of people who think multiculturalism makes their live better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Shouldn't be used</li> <li>o *Suggested alternative - % of people who have experienced or observed discrimination based on either class, ethnicity, race, age, gender, disability or sexual divisions</li> </ul>
Percentage of people who feel valued by society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Suggest – %of people who feel valued by neighbours and/or community organisations.</li> </ul>
Percentage of people who agree that sense of community spirit exists in the neighbourhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Don't use – may contribute to negative perceptions – better attached to other programs.</li> </ul>
Number of residents people feel they can talk to regularly in their street or block	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Don't use</li> <li>o The indicator misses the mark – a sense of community comes from many places, not just the neighbourhood;</li> </ul>
Young people's perception of levels of local racism and racial abuse or alienation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Don't use – there is no useful measure.</li> <li>o Why just young people (repeated comment)</li> </ul>
Percentage of parents with school age children that attend activities at their school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o why not sporting clubs and other groups?</li> </ul>

- o Should add 'membership of a group or organisations' here;
- o Would the "local survey" quoted for several indicators be a standardised survey funded at LGA level?
- o Number of community groups per capita could be an indicator to consider;
- o There needs to be one indicator which reflects on the experiences of and perceptions about people with a disability, especially in the context of 'whole of government' approaches to building inclusive communities – this should also not be lumped in with multiculturalism – the suggested indicator is, % of people who believe people with disabilities are accepted and included in local communities;
- o Needs some reference to the aged given that this is such a growing population;
- o Add - % of people who feel home;
- o Suggest that it would be useful to collect and analyse data about conflict resolution processes.

### Early Childhood

Infant immunisation rate or percentage of eligible infant immunisations completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Keep – no change.</li> </ul>
Breast feeding rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Support as an indicator but a big issue with breastfeeding data is the definitions of breastfeeding initiation and duration (ie definitions need to be standardised.) Also self-reporting provides unreliable data;</li> <li>o Keep – no change;</li> </ul>
% of key child health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o % of child health assessments should go beyond 12 months</li> </ul>

assessments completed up to 12 months of age	of age.
Satisfaction with availability and quality of early childhood services	o shift to 'services' theme.
Injury rate including types of injuries	o Needs to go under safety – this was said twice.
Stress in families	o 'Stress in Families' needs definition; o This is difficult – perhaps should go into 'wealth' and requires improved data collection
Annual % of birth notification receiving a home visit	o not a good indicator as many women go to a centre first;
Utilisation of child care facilities	o Data related to utilisation of child care facilities is complex as it is not currently collected in one place; o Commonwealth rebate data is a better measure of child care use; o An indicator around childcare availability/access and childcare wait list could be considered, as many communities in East Gippsland have no access to childcare- which means that the 'utilisation rates of childcare facilities' indicator is meaningless to these communities; o Needs to go in Theme 6 – services – needs improved clarity for measurement.
Children in poverty	o Could use Brotherhood of St Lawrence SEFA data; o Should go in Theme 9 – Wealth.
Child abuse	o Caution should be used in interpreting and reporting this data.

- o The framing of the indicators overlooks that there is a critical shortage of child care currently. Also that the measures ignore the informal sector such and in-kind exchanges between friends and family;
- o It was noted that immunisation and breast feeding rate data is collected at LGA level by DHS;
- o It may be worth consulting with the VicHealth Safe Community Network re: data for injury rates/types of injury;
- o The play groups association currently has data on the number of play groups by LGA;
- o The indicator of, % of children who go to kindergarten prior to starting school should be included;
- o Consider adding 'preschool participation rates' and 'number of children not reaching literacy and numeracy benchmarks in primary schools';
- o Also consider adding 'number of low birth-weight babies' and focus on 'Indigenous child health' would be useful;
- o Linking with 'Indicators of Change in the Wellbeing of Children and Families' (Gippsland DHS) would be useful, as it provides many of these indicators. In addition, DHS have been looking at a whole set of early childhood indicators through Best Start projects, and having access to a similar set of indicators would be invaluable (particularly since local governments are required to have Municipal Early Years Plans);
- o Consider adding 'Maternal & Child Health enrolments as a % of birth notifications. Whilst this is an input measure it does tell you about change in population and is important for interface communities;
- o Add 'Preschool participation. Although preschool participation is linked to Theme 5, Learning, it is more appropriate to be linked with early childhood development. The participation indicator should include – preschool, playgroup and story time at libraries;
- o There appears to be a focus on health indicators and less of an emphasis on wellbeing indicators. Other indicators could include asking children how they feel about their lives

and community, asking children and parents about the availability of places to play, participation in playgroups and the accessibility issues in relation to open spaces.

### Personal Health and Wellbeing

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Life expectancy including indigenous Australians (or disability adjusted life expectancy)	o Retain without change
Physical activity (exercise choices, adequate exercise to derive health benefits)	o Retain without change
Incidence of mental illness	o Don't use – it measures illness and disadvantage.
Obesity	o Don't use – it measures illness and disadvantage.
Mortality and morbidity data on smoking, asthma and alcoholism	o What is the rationale for only looking at tobacco, asthma and alcoholism mortality and morbidity data? The AIHW and the Vic Burden of Disease Report has good morbidity and mortality data on other risk factors, including physical activity and nutrition markers. Separations should be available at a local hospital level through Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset but the accessibility of this would need to be explored; o Don't use – it measures illness and disadvantage.
Drug use (ambulance attending drug overdose or alcohol involvement in causing the ambulance attendance, ambulance attendance to other drug overdoses (mainly prescription)	o Don't use – it measures illness and disadvantage.
Drug related offences	o Don't use – it measures illness and disadvantage.
Closure of GP Waiting Lists	o this data is not currently collected at the local level; o Don't use – it measures illness and disadvantage.

### Other comments and suggestions on services

- o Need to include the indicator ' % of people who rate quality of life as adequate or better'.
- o Needs indicators about nutrition: fruit and vegetable intake, high energy dense food and beverage consumption, and food access;
- o Consideration of other indicators about injury is required;
- o General health and wellbeing seems fragmented into clinical measures and risk factors; rather than perceived overall well being i.e. SF12 or SF36; or the tools used to measure happiness and health by health economists;
- o If local surveys are going to be potentially developed, is there scope for those to include SF 12 type general wellbeing data?
- o Why include physical activity data and not fruit and vegetable consumption? These are both self-report data collected in the VPHS. And fruit and vegetable consumption is an excellent proxy indicator for general nutrition. It is also a critical risk factor for certain types of cancer (approx 30% of all cancers are attributable to poor fruit and vegetable consumption), and is therefore a major public health issue;
- o The new Physical health measurement pilot and ongoing surveillance will be a good source of "real" data on obesity and will provide a validation of self-report data. Due to start in June 2006. (Mike Ackland, DHS – key contact);
- o The Victorian Ambulatory Care Sensitive Conditions Study conducted in 2001-02 gives data at a primary care partnership level on those conditions for which hospital admissions are preventable if well managed. Data from this source is available for asthma, diabetes,

dental, and other clinical presentations which could be better managed in the community. Again the key contact is Mike Ackland, DHS and the ongoing resourcing of repeat analysis needs to be confirmed;

- o An ABS adopted “Regular meal consumption” question is now included in the VPHS and will help to track food insecurity. This should be included as an optional indicator, particularly as there is likely to be more investment/interest in LGA approaches to food insecurity. The Child Health Survey also includes a relevant question at state level (pilot phase);
- o The VicLanes project (<http://www.kcwh.unimelb.edu.au/viclanes/>) is developing methodology and tools to collect observational area level data as well as individual and household data on food-purchasing, physical activity and alcohol consumption in census collector districts (CCDs) in the 20 innermost local government areas in Melbourne. These include the walkability of areas, presence of recreational facilities, presence of food shops, price and availability of healthy and less healthy food alternatives and common alcoholic drinks. Tools such as these could be usefully adapted and developed as templates for observational environmental surveys and household surveys for local government.;
- o Re: incidence of mental illness – DHS searchable data base has not been found to be that useful. Consider administrative data from DHS;
- o Involvement in local groups and hospital admissions should be included;
- o Life expectancy data source is unreliable;
- o Drug use indicator needs to include smoking;
- o GP waiting lists – need to work with GPs to get reliable data;
- o Consider adding an indicator 'access to services' (for example, GP, mental health services, speech pathologist, dental services and transport), in this section or under theme 6. Access and availability of services as this is a common barrier for people living in remote and isolated areas;
- o Hospital admission ratios need to be included;
- o In the indicator concerned with physical activity it is recommended that schools are used as a potential data source in addition to the sources already listed. Furthermore it is recommended that the mortality and morbidity data on smoking, asthma and alcoholism is expanded to include the morbidity and mortality data on obesity and depression. While waiting lists to see GPs are important, waiting lists and accessibility to see other health professionals such as paediatricians and psychiatrists are also of local significance;
- o It is recommended that data regarding problem gambling is collected. For example, it would be interesting to introduce some gambling risk related data, eg. Gaming machines per 1,000 adults, expenditures per gaming machine, bankruptcies due to gambling (Gamblers Help data and Magistrates Court data), or operating hours of gaming venues under the crime and safety theme;

### Safety

Indicator	Comments
Perceptions of safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Will this include road safety?</li> <li>o Keep without change</li> </ul>
Incidence of crime	o Needs to take account the place of residence of the victim.
Perceptions of crime	o Keep without change.
Domestic Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o data is a poor source as it considers reported incidents only;</li> <li>o Should be classified as 'Family Violence' (repeated comment)</li> </ul>
Victims of crime	

- o Need to get pre-existing Safety Survey back on the agenda;
- o Have Victoria Police been consulted for local level data for assaults?
- o Motor Vehicle Accident data: VicRoads, hospital separation data and Monash University Accident Research Centre may give useful advice re motor accident, and occupational and farm related injury;
- o Increased Police presence and street lighting may be useful optional indicators;

- o Important to check the Victorian Council Against Violence Data base to determine whether suitable data available ([www.vcav.vic.gov.au](http://www.vcav.vic.gov.au));
- o Work place injury levels;
- o In the “Safety” subset of the Social Domain it is recommended that the term family violence is used as opposed to domestic violence (again somehow taking into account/reconciling that most family violence is unreported). A further indicator regarding the safety of women (or perception of women’s safety) more generally could also be included within this subsection. There is also currently no mention of any programs or initiatives pertaining to injury prevention;

Learning

Indicator	Comments
Perception of local schools	
Library usage (% of residents with a library membership, average number of visits per membership).	o This is not useful for fringe councils due to accessibility for commuters. Growth of membership is better.
Destination of school leavers’ (pathways after Year 12)	o Need to try ATO and universities for school leaver destination surveys;
School retention rates	o Keep without change
Community education (enrolments)	o Also think about ACFE, TAFE, L&LC;
Apprenticeship and vocational training	o Keep without change but also needs to include higher education and all forms of education.
% of residents using the internet	o Why just measure internet use and not other new technologies such as mobile phones, PDAs etc;
Lifelong learning	o Lifelong learning needs to be defined;
% of residents in full time work or education by age group	o This needs to be moved to Theme 8 – employment.
Enrolment in local schools	o Keep without change
Education levels	o The measure of education attainment needs to be closely related to impacts on income and occupation.

- o Average class sizes as a key indicator? Available from regional education data sets?
- o Consider adding an indicator 'access to telecommunications', as 'percentage of residents using the Internet' only highlights those people that actually have adequate access. In many remote communities access to telecommunication impacts on education. If access is available, connection is slow and limited, which means education by correspondence, is difficult. In addition, 'access to telecommunications' also impacts on a community's ability to connect with others (phone and radio) and a community's ability to contact emergency services in an emergency;
- o Also consider adding 'range of education options available' as this provides a sense of what is available in the community and relates to indicators that gauge participation in education;
- o Literacy levels need to be mentioned.

Access and Availability of Services

Indicator	Comment
Access and availability of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Services should not be just made available but should be designed to attract people of all ages, especially youth. There might be issues with young people not accessing services because they are inappropriate. Especially when we come to issues like sexual health, young people may prefer to deal with younger GPs than older ones;</li> <li>o Service access indicators need a lot more work and exploration</li> </ul>

	<p>about whether it is possible or available or useful. Very complex and this indicator is inadequate;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Does “services” include retail? Access to good quality, affordable, culturally appropriate food may be usefully be included. There are some accepted planning guidelines for LGAs to use in new urban developments. LGAs geographers can use Geographic Information Systems to map distances and transport routes to and from affordable shops;</li> <li>o Need to define what services are meant by access and availability of services;</li> <li>o The ARIA has limited usefulness in Victoria. There is a need to develop a Victorian Index that addressed remoteness from services for suburban and regional Victorian populations. For some members of the community, the lack of public transport infrastructure can result in a similar remoteness from services.</li> </ul>
Disability access to public transport and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Also think about disability data – disability type and severity by LGA (ABS synthetic data);</li> <li>o Disability access – need to consider role of the Metro Access Program (DHS);</li> <li>o This needs to go into the transport theme</li> </ul>
Number of meals delivered (in Meals on Wheels program) compared to target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o ‘Meals on wheels’ deliveries is not a good measure – ignores community connectedness obtained by not delivering meals but taking older people out of the home. Also consider adding indicator 'meals on wheels waitlist', as the number of meals delivered does not highlight how many people are not able to receive this service;</li> <li>o Keep without change;</li> </ul>
Number of local residents accessing emergency relief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Emergency relief – need to define what is meant by this;</li> <li>o Keep without change</li> </ul>
Number (or percentage of) Indigenous families accessing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Indigenous families and services – what services?</li> </ul>
Percentage of family day care referrals that cannot be met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o % of day care referrals – need to define childcare more broadly, not just FDC;</li> <li>o Don't use – the usefulness of waiting lists as a measure is limited.</li> </ul>
Waiting times for high needs clients for HACC general home service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Waiting times for HACC general services – needs to include all HACC services;</li> <li>o Don't use – the usefulness of waiting lists as a measure is limited.</li> </ul>
Access to financial counselling services	
Closure of podiatry waiting lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Waiting times for podiatry services is a better indicator (this was suggested several times);</li> <li>o Don't use – the usefulness of waiting lists as a measure is limited.</li> </ul>
Closure of dental services waiting lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Don't use – the usefulness of waiting lists as a measure is limited.</li> </ul>
Access to settlement services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Access to settlement services needs to be defined;</li> </ul>

#### Other comments and suggestions

- o This section is misleading and unclear. It appears that while some services are grouped under the relevant topic, for example ‘Satisfaction with availability and quality of early childhood services’ appears under the Early Childhood section, some other services have been separated under Access and Availability of Services. It was one view that it would

be better to have all of these indicators grouped under the relevant topic (Early Childhood, Older Adults and so on);

- Consider adding indicator 'access to services and waitlists for services' (GP, mental health services, speech pathologist, dental services and transport) this is important for regional and rural areas where access to a number of services are limited which are not listed under this theme.
- Need to include 'utilisation rates of childcare facilities here;
- There should be data regarding access to community care services, child care and other primary needs. With regards to aged care, over and above data on Meals on Wheels, there should also be data collected on personal care, home care and respite services. Furthermore there needs to be some form of data collected on the adequacy of these services;
- Disability access to transport (data collection could be lead by the Department of Infrastructure), and disability access to car parking data (local councils) needs to be included in this domain.

## Economic

### Economic Activity

Indicator	Comment
Business Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The ABS, 'Australian Business Expectations' has not been published since 2003. It will therefore be difficult to measure business confidence at a Local Government level.</li> </ul>
Retained retail spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Retained retail spending is not very relevant to municipalities where retail spending is not a major area of activity;</li> <li>○ There is currently no good data for this indicator;</li> </ul>
Satisfaction with economic development	
New business start up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New business start-ups is not a good indicator. Many businesses are started for tax purposes and not for the intent of running a business – it does not reflect wellbeing;</li> <li>○ This should be included as a component of business confidence. There are data issues with this though that make it difficult to identify local level trends.</li> </ul>
People who do their shopping locally	
Cost of a salad roll and a drink	
Cost of standard basket of shopping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is the rationale for the inclusion of the last three optional indicators? (especially for the cost of a salad roll and a soft drink?). What are these indicators intended to show? Local purchasing patterns? Competitiveness? Or affordability and take-up? Should soft drink be regarded as a dietary staple or a desirable commodity? It is meaningless;</li> <li>○ There are some limitations to standard food basket surveys;</li> <li>○ Some methods for measuring this should be developed as part of the Food For All VicHealth 3-year program;</li> <li>○ This is only relevant to compare within the metropolitan and regional areas where transport costs inflate the cost of a basket. Turnover is a better indicator. Cost of basket could be a wealth measure if the standard basket was measured against income for instance.</li> </ul>

### Other suggestions for economic activity indicators

- The percentage of food retailers who source locally and what percentage of their produce is from local produce may be an interesting optional indicator depending on whether the LGA is a food producing region;
- Local investment by private sector and amount of government investment in infrastructure;
- The indicators of debt affordability, ongoing commercial/retail rental values, new vehicle purchases are useful indicators;
- Knowledge driven growth potential needs to be defined;
- Average household fuel costs?
- Consider the addition of 'Community capacity to participate in the economy; and
- Proportion of businesses continuing one year after start up.

### Employment

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Employment rate (by specific groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Measures of labour force participation need to include: young people, mature people, indigenous, people speaking a language other than English, Women, People with a disability.</li> </ul>
Local employment (local jobs to resident pop)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not just availability of local employment, but jobs balance/variety in local job opportunities.</li> </ul>
Unemployment rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The ABS does small sample surveys and extrapolates census data for a region. This does not necessarily pick up major changes in local labour markets.</li> </ul>
Non-job ready rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Needs improved data collection methods</li> </ul>
Knowledge driven growth potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Needs clearer definition.</li> </ul>

- Consider adding an indicator from the Learning Theme – '% of residents in full time work or education by age group.

### Wealth

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Percentage of people who could raise \$2000 in an emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This measure relates more to community connectedness than wealth.</li> </ul>
Percentage of people who rate quality of life as adequate or better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This needs to be shifted into Theme 3 – Personal Health and Wellbeing.</li> </ul>
Level of material wealth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider the development of an income gradient, based on the World Health Organisation's Social Determinants of Health.</li> </ul>
Distribution of income, average, top 25% and bottom 25%	
Level of personal debt	

### Other suggestion wealth indicators or comments

- Also consider ABS income levels (household);
- Employment categories;
- Home ownership;
- Proportion of residents on fixed incomes and proportion reliant on government income support;

- Level of personal debt is meaningless without corresponding income data. Mortgage vulnerability rates might be a better indicator;
- Social security dependency ratios?
- Add 'Stress in Families' from Theme 2;
- Add 'Children in Poverty' from Theme 2.

## Built Environment

### Housing

Indicator	Comment
Housing affordability (% of households living under stress)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Housing affordability has two aspects – rental affordability and purchase affordability. Both tenure types need to be included in an indicator of housing affordability. Housing affordability will need to consider linked household income.</li> </ul>
Number of new planning permits using ecologically sustainable design in development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Not sure if this data is kept.</li> <li>○ Who defines ecological sustainability?</li> <li>○ question about whether this is possible to be measured;</li> <li>○ This is a good indicator that should be retained.</li> </ul>
Rent assistance payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This indicator is not adequate. A lot of people rent who do not get housing assistance payments;</li> <li>○ Consider ABS data on rental/owner/purchaser;</li> </ul>
Property prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How is house price and property price different?</li> </ul>
Home ownership	
Home ownership – aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders	
Number of water tanks installed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In relation to 'Number of water tanks installed' indicator, it should be noted that in many regional and rural areas, mains water is not available; therefore water tanks are the only way of accessing water. Need to consider what this indicator is measuring (is it city/town dwellers being water-wise or is it water mains availability in rural and regional areas?)</li> <li>○ Needs to be moved to Theme 15, Water.</li> </ul>
Number of properties using a 3 <sup>rd</sup> pipe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Needs to be moved to Theme 15, Water.</li> </ul>
House price	

### Other suggested indicators or comments on housing.

- Housing diversity is also important, especially in light of Melbourne 2030 and identified need for diverse housing stocks;
- Size of block and type of dwellings should be included;
- Consider adding indicators 'homelessness rates' (this comment was made twice), 'investment rates in affordable housing', also consider 'housing availability' (singles housing, etc), and 'waitlist times for emergency and public housing';
- Number of occupants, number of bedrooms and median mortgage verses median wage are indicators that need to be considered. There is a 'crowding' indicator, which considers things such as sharing by age group and sharing by gender.
- Consider, access to open space and transport connections;
- Consider, mobile telephone coverage, broadband rollout, digital television rollout and pay TV rollout. Data on this is generally held as 'commercial in confidence' by providers;

- In the “Housing” subset there is no indicator regarding homelessness and long term homelessness. This seems to be quite a marked omission with most of the indicators focus on house prices and housing affordability. Moreover there is no indicator regarding shared/ group housing (especially relevant for the City of Melbourne with the high number of students in the CBD, North Melbourne and Carlton areas).

#### Open Space

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Area of public open space (as a percentage of total space in the municipality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does local government collect data on satisfaction of open space more generally than just its appearance? It may be more useful to see data which reflects people’s satisfaction with number of toilets, seats and signage, sun protection etc;</li> <li>○ Needs to take into account rural/regional/metro councils for comparisons.</li> </ul>
Satisfaction with the appearance of public areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Retain this without change</li> </ul>
Percentage who rate appearance of streetscapes as adequate or better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is no measurable value in this indicator</li> </ul>
Percentage who rate appearance of parks and gardens as adequate or better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is no measurable value in this</li> </ul>
Number of street trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of trees should be changed to number of trees per square kilometre;</li> <li>○ There is no value in this.</li> </ul>
Amount of time spent in public realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Need to define public realm and define what is being done when in the public realm.</li> </ul>
Percentage of people living within 3km of public open space	

#### Other comments and suggested indicators for open space

- The number and quality of playgrounds should be included.
- There are no indicators regarding child friendly spaces. There is also a lack of indicators looking at urban open space as opposed to green space. It is submitted that the use of urban public space must be considered and analysed in terms of safety, amenity and accessibility. It may also be useful to include shade provision here, SunSmart are currently encouraging Councils to incorporate shade provision into local planning.

#### Transport

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Percentage of the community who perceive increased opportunities to take public transport within the municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increased opportunities to take public transport within the municipality - by whom? Who pays? Who analyses?</li> <li>○ Needs to identify increases compared to something. This indicator should measure real opportunities and not perception;</li> </ul>
Satisfaction with the standard and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This is difficult to measure;</li> </ul>

effectiveness of the pedestrian/ cycle path network	
Satisfaction with public transport networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Does satisfaction with public transport networks include associated security and lighting facilities?</li> <li>o TravelSmart program could provide real data on changes to public transport patterns and active transport <a href="http://www.travelsmart.vic.gov.au">http://www.travelsmart.vic.gov.au</a>;</li> </ul>
Public and alternative transport patronage	
Percentage who rate ease of travelling around the area as adequate or better	
How children get to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The Child Health Survey will also ask questions about this;</li> <li>o How children get to school needs to be moved into the blue section as this is critical to VicHealth vision in partnership with local government;</li> </ul>
Satisfaction with transport access	
Young peoples' perceptions of public transport safety and accessibility	
Kilometres of dedicated walking and cycling trails	o This should go into Theme 19 – Leisure and Recreation.
Number of car parking permits per household per year	
Rating for local roads and footpaths	

#### Other comments and suggestions for transport indicators

- o There needs to be an indicator that relates to disability and transport. A potential measure is compliance reports on DDA. This is collected by Department of Infrastructure;
- o There are no indicators on road transport and it would be good to include some indicators of road transport usage and infrastructure quality;
- o Community wellbeing indicators can play a key role in exploring the links between social exclusion, transport and the location of services. The ease to which people can access essential services such as work, learning and healthcare is significant in determining community wellbeing. The social costs of poor transport needs to be addressed in measuring the wellbeing of small rural communities;
- o Many of the indicators suggested in the discussion paper – particularly under Section 12 are irrelevant for small rural communities with limited or no access to any type of public transport, footpaths or cycle paths. Asking communities to rate satisfaction levels about services that don't exist would not give rural areas any real measures to work with. This was a comment repeated several times from rural respondents;
- o Suggested indicators for transport are:
  - o The % of people who say that a lack of transport stops them from doing something they would like to do. Impacts on their ability to participate in community activities and every day life opportunities;
  - o The % of people who say that a lack of transport stops them from doing something they would like to do? Impacts on their ability to participate in community activities and every day life opportunities
  - o The % of people who have access to a vehicle during the day.
  - o Level of satisfaction or knowledge of available alternative transport options.
- o The lack of DDA compliance 'services' in rural areas is also one of the largest barriers to mobility for older patrons who have physical difficulties associated with walking and find it difficult boarding/alighting from buses and trains;
- o The VCI project could look at ways of incorporating some of these key questions into existing surveys such as the ABS, Neighbourhood Renewal Surveys or DHS Health Surveys;

- Introducing Accessibility Planning within a State-wide Integrated Transport Planning Framework that enables all transport sector planning and delivery of services to come together would be key to addressing these issues at a statewide and local government level. This is an important challenge for 'joined up government' particularly in relation to identifying the role local government should play in the community planning process;
- Ageing and access to transport is a major issue for regional and rural communities. The availability and physical accessibility of transport is a major issue;
- The extent to which transport links and different modes of transport contributes to liveability is a major issue to rural communities and the extent to which rural areas can attract investment and economic activity;
- Number of cars per household should be an indicator;
- Satisfaction with public transport – the data is not relevant to the indicator;
- Young people's perceptions of public transport – why just young people;
- Kms of dedicated walking and cycling trails – can only really measure total lengths of footpaths;
- Ratings systems for roads vary across LGAs and so difficult to find a consistent measure. Also Vic Roads don't have any role in local roads and so their data is limited;
- Additional indicators and data are:
  - How do people travel to the local shops – shop surveys
  - Road crashes by type and age – crash statistics
  - Speed traffic in strip Shopping centres – LGAs
- Suggest the % living within specified km of rail line or transit-based activity centre as an indicator.
- Many of the indicators only reflect urban situations;
- Public transport is a market determined decision which is outside the capacity of local government to change but may be influenced by State Government.
- Consider adding – 'Utilisation of private transport' and 'Number of motor vehicles per household';
- Disability access to public transport and services needs to be moved across from Theme 6 – 'Access and Availability of Services.
- The creation of the domains should better reflect the fields of community wellbeing. The domain should thus be looking at accessibility and mobility (not just transport).

## Natural Environment

### Energy

Indicator	Comment
Greenhouse gas emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Most councils are members of CCP – need to look at this reporting as it will probably be adequate for this indicator;</li> <li>○ This is difficult to quantify. Inaccuracies can occur due to flaws in recording and reporting;</li> <li>○ Cities for Climate Protection provides Councils with a milestone process to follow a strategic path towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions for both Council activities and in the community.</li> </ul>
Household energy use (or per capita)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is a need to capture all household types, including rural properties to measure household energy. This makes household energy usage difficult to quantify due to the diversity of households, such as cattle farming, agriculture, and car emissions.</li> </ul>
Energy use by sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The measure of energy use per sector would need to be provided by the energy distribution companies.</li> </ul>

### Other comments on energy

- % of households using green energy and LPG in cars should be included as indicators;

### Air quality

Indicator	Comment
Number of days when polluting concentration exceeds NEPM guidelines	o This indicator is limited to metropolitan Melbourne
Number of days when (a particular icon site/landmark) is visible.	o Who, what, how, costs etc. Difficult to see how there could be a consistent method and approach;

### Other comments on air quality

- o Licensed and Restaurant premises that are completely smoke-free may be an interesting optional indicator. Environmental Health within LGAs would collect this data. QUIT may also have some collated data;
- o Suggested indicators:
  - o Air quality in strip shopping centres – traffic pollution and noise
  - o Noise in strip shopping centres – traffic pollution and noise.

### Water

Indicator	Comment
Condition of natural streams and waterways	o Need to ensure consistency with data collection eg. Frequency, collection points etc.
Water consumption per capita and by sector	o There are significant time lags in the assessment of water quality;

- o Number of households/organisations with a tank;
- o There is limited capacity of Council workforce to collect and analyse data;
- o Need to move the indicators from Housing and Biodiversity into this category – these are: number of tanks installed; number of properties using a 3<sup>rd</sup> pipe and measurement of water quality.

### Biodiversity

Indicator	Comment
Vegetation Cover (Ha or km2) tied with rates of carbon sequestration	need to look at this more carefully
Beach index	
Reef condition	
Seagrass cover	
Measurement of water quality in urban waterways	
Hectares of native vegetation lost or gained	

- o Data collection regarding flora is very time consuming. If the information is not collected within certain frequencies then the information is not useful as an indicator and will merely act as a 'snap shot' of the situation. Similarly information on fauna is very resource intensive and costly;
- o Salinity and soil condition indicators are needed;
- o Biodiversity relates to both flora and fauna, but only indicators of flora are included in the indicators.

### Waste

Indicators	Comment

Total waste generation (per household or per capita)	
Participation rate for residential recycling collection.	
Recycling (volume and diversion rate)	
Number of participants in Clean up Australia Day	o There is inequitable distribution of Clean Up Australia sites across Victoria.
Number of users of the Greenwaste service	

- o Crop over-production and retail food waste may be useful optional indicators for some municipalities.
- o Also think about number of people involved in 'Friends of Parks' and other local voluntary groups.
- o Stats about waste indicators are available through Ecorecycle but this is available 13 months after the end of the financial year, which is too late.
- o Number of participants in Clean Up days needs to consider quantity of litter collected.
- o Waste to landfill ratios?
- o Different waste collection methods exist in different municipalities.

## Culture

### Culture

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Maintenance or protection of heritage buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Measures how many heritage buildings there are rather than how the community treats or respects them. That is, a location with few buildings but high respect would score lower than a location with many buildings but low respect;</li> <li>o This doesn't measure community access to heritage buildings. Programming and community use of heritage buildings should also be considered in the indicators.</li> </ul>
Percentage who rate variety of arts and cultural events as adequate or better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o This indicator is too similar to the 'satisfaction with community events..'</li> </ul>
Average occupancy of community cultural centres per month by recurrent hirers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Occupancy of community cultural events – does it mean attendance? Often events are intended to be small;</li> <li>o Some facilities are privately owned – Council records would not be enough for measurement;</li> <li>o This does not consider the use of flexible, multipurpose community facilities for arts and cultural programs. Many programs take place in venues that aren't dedicated arts facilities.</li> </ul>
Number of performing and visual arts venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Number of performing and visual arts venues is not relevant, as they may never be used.</li> </ul>
Percentage of population who feel they have opportunities to participate in affordable local community events/activities of their choosing	
Attendance at local festivals and	

events	
Community satisfaction with the range of community events and festivals	
Local places of significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This is too broad. Of what significance? To who? Data is not good – not all significant places are to do with heritage (comment made twice);</li> </ul>

#### Other comments and suggestions for cultural indicators

- Need to think about an indicator to measure the level of commitment to cultural diversity and to managing diversity and promoting multiculturalism. Also consider indicator of 'satisfaction with supports/services for migrants, refugees and CALD people';
- Consider asking councils to report?
- No of cultural activities undertaken;
- The extent of cultural diversity per se could be inferred from ABS data on birth place and cultural heritage (but this would not necessarily provide any indication of cultural inclusion);
- This section could include indicators on community participation;
- Extent of new migrant and refugee resettlement (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs Settlement Data Base has this by Local Government Area). ([www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au));
- Consider adding 'protection of indigenous cultural heritage' or 'satisfaction with the promotion and/or acknowledgement of indigenous culture';
- Consider the indicators – Measures of attendance and participation rates; Benchmark provision of cultural venues; Religion or spirituality.

#### Leisure and Recreation

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Participation in sporting and recreation activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Need to take account of data from the Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERAS) annual survey by LGA. This is a national survey with a VicHealth over-sample funded by VicHealth and RRV (DVC). Also think about Victorian Child Health Survey. Has some data by state level?</li> <li>○ Has SRV been consulted for their data? See Leisure and Recreation below;</li> </ul>
Membership of a group or organisation (professional, sporting, religious etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This needs to go into Theme 1 – Community Connectedness.</li> </ul>
Number of visits to recreation or cultural facilities	
Percentage who rate variety of sports and recreational activities as adequate or better	
Percentage who rate diversity of options for leisure and entertainment as adequate or better	

- Leisure and Recreation should be included within the Social domain;
- Physical activity –The data source for indicators about variety and diversity of sport, recreation, leisure and entertainment is not relevant;
- Availability of leisure time?
- Need to consider what is available locally and the need to travel significant distance to these;

- There is a need to clarify definitions and terminology;
- Need to add 'kilometres of dedicated walking and cycling trails' from the Transport theme.

## Democracy and Citizenship

### Democracy and Citizenship

Indicator	Comment
Percentage of people who think they have an opportunity to have a real say on issues important to them	
Percentage of people who feel encouraged to participate in decisions that affect them and their community	○ There is no data for this.
Voting in council elections	○ Should measure voting in all elections – not just Local;
Trust in government	○ Ad hoc comments are not relevant or reliable. Also needs to be trust in all government;
Rating of Council Performance	
Women in senior positions	○ Add indigenous and CALD;

- How does the Local Community Survey accommodate those people least likely to participate in decisions that affect them AND those that are likely to be most affected (eg CALD communities and the homeless)? Who currently does it?;
- The number of people who become Australian Citizens should be included;
- Trust in government –Ratings of Council performance should also relate to state and federal performance;
- Data about women in senior positions should not just relate to State government but other tiers of government and the private sector as well;
- Consider adding indicator of 'number and diversity (young people, indigenous, etc) of Council nominations';
- It is also worth considering strength-based indicators that could be developed locally, as most indicators highlight disadvantage, which tends to label certain communities or areas as disadvantaged, which in turn, can have a negative impact on these communities and how they perceive themselves; and,
- Consider adding 'Proportion of invalid votes cast.

*Q 2.2 What processes should be used, and what groups and stakeholders need to be consulted, in future choices about 'core' and 'locality specific' indicators?*

- The criteria for indicator selection seem a good starting point for informing the consultation process;
- A consultative process needs to be undertaken by a key coordinating body (see section 6.1) in consultation with key stakeholders including community representatives, local government bodies, state government departments and statewide agencies;
- One concern was that the development process is depicted in the discussion paper as a linear process that moves from "broad vision to agreed goals and outcomes and then identifies the best and most informative indicators" (p.19). Whilst understanding that the 'tail cannot wag the dog', a pragmatic and sustainable approach would suggest that this may need to be an iterative and phased process in order to take account of, and negotiate, some of the practical difficulties faced (see section 6.1);
- Useful health stakeholders who could be consulted include:
  - The Victorian Public Health Research and Education Council (VPHREC) and data-linkage forum <http://www.vphrec.com.au/>

- DHS Health Surveillance and Evaluation Section [http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/rrhacs/downloads/hses\\_businessplan.pdf](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/rrhacs/downloads/hses_businessplan.pdf)
- Victorian Health Issues Centre <http://www.healthissuescentre.org.au/>
- A view expressed repeatedly was the need for discussion on 'core' indicators to involve peak bodies and councils;
- A repeated view was that locality specific indicators should result from discussions with council/s and the community;
- The process should be designed in such a way that it identifies the elements of community wellbeing that the community most values – there is no point collecting data around areas that are not valuable to the community in question;
- A community development approach could be employed to ensure that there is a range of views presented at a local level in respect to core and locality specific indicators. Key local stakeholders would need to be involved (Primary Care Partnerships, community organisations, communities) in determining these;
- Local governments, as the responsible authorities in local areas are the most appropriate agencies to engage their communities in the process of developing a suite of indicators. To ensure consistency in approach, overarching guidelines need to be developed by the State and Local Government bodies to inform this engagement. It is the view of the City of Melbourne, that the State Government would be required to provide local funding for this work to take place. In the case of the City of Melbourne, workers, day and night visitors, tourists, students and residents (including international students and homeless people) all need to be engaged.

### 3.3 Improving the quality of local statistics

*Q 3.1 What mechanisms are needed to improve shared access to local level data? Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding this work?*

- A repeated comment was that all of the options listed on pages 21-22 of the discussion paper are relevant;
- As this is a state government initiative, it should be funded at that level;
- Design should be a partnership between state and local government, with implementation at a local government level;
- It was suggested that the establishment of a new 'Victorian Administrative Data Clearing House' sounds like useful mechanism to collect and disseminate local data. Accessing data from a range of state and federal government departments is currently difficult and costly. Having access to data from these departments would assist in developing a better picture of what is happening locally. A common collection tool, which fed through to indicators, would be ideal. Pulling information relating to community wellbeing into one accessible location would be incredibly useful;
- In addition, resources and support for developing local data collection methods to establish local indicators (smaller than LGA level) could assist in developing 'local community plans' and providing a clearer picture of what is happening at a local level;
- It was suggested that consideration be given to a data-clearing house similar to WA data linkage unit, with the advantage being that this would allow streamlined access to linked data (currently being pushed by VPHREC). Administrative data access is currently a real problem in Victoria – across all health domains. A centralised resource could take overall responsibility. Consideration should also be given to adding additional data sets to existing surveys, eg VHPS, where practicable;
- The state government has a requirement and a responsibility to protect the integrity of the data it maintains. This needs to be kept in mind, as mechanisms are developed to share data. Public Health is generally unable to release unit record files, however data files from the Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS), for example, may be released under a license deed between the Minister for Health and a relevant agency administering the VCI. It should be noted however that the VPHS is not currently structured to report at the

local level. In Public Health the existing indicators reported at the local level are limited to Burden of Disease and life expectancy;

- To avoid duplication of effort, the project should be aware that in the recent past, guides to accessing data have been produced:
  - *Getting to Know Your Community: A Guide to Using Local Data*, Department for Victorian Communities, 2004.
  - *Selecting and Accessing Population Data – An Information Resource*, Department of Human Services, 2001.
  - *The Victorian Gendered Data Directory*, Women’s Health Victoria, 2004: [http://www.whv.org.au/health\\_policy/directory.htm#demographics](http://www.whv.org.au/health_policy/directory.htm#demographics)
- DVC and DHS web sites are also available which document the types of information available to local planners;
- Concerns were raised about the sustainability of data collections and the need for consultation mechanisms and protocols between local government and state governments to enhance this. Concerns were raised about the cessation of recent state funded surveys without prior consultation with local government (eg the Child Travel Survey, the Justice Survey);
- The need for more ready access to administrative data sets at LGA level (eg child protection, immunisation, child care) was noted;  
Some data sources would need considerable investment to ensure
  - There is survey continuity over the appropriate time frame
  - Data have appropriate periodicity (frequency of survey may need to be increased)
  - Data have utility when broken down by LGA and/or sub population groups
  - Release of information will not be problematic
  - Articulation with state-wide and local planning and community visioning initiatives

More information needs to be provided in relation to:

- If four year community plans are predicated on council elections, are there any ramifications of this for periodicity of data
- Whether data costs could be reduced through private polling and data modelling
- The proposed Victorian Community Survey
- Clarification of the State government department and ABS data sets and their availability and cost;
- A key coordinating body should be responsible for designing and implementing this work. A group of funding bodies should be responsible for funding this activity.
- For mechanisms and instruments that are already in place the organisations that are currently administering them should retain their administration. A key coordinating body should be responsible for negotiating changes to the design, format, periodicity, coverage, sustainability etc. of these instruments to ensure they capture data on core indicators at local government level and for funding any changes;
- One opinion was that the ABS is the only satisfactory collection agency;
- Consultation with a range of stakeholders, including Council, State Departments, Health and Wellbeing Committee and other appropriate networks, community groups and Community Houses is essential for ownership and validity. The establishment of a State wide reference group will assist collaborative and participative involvement in the process of developing the indicators. The involvement of a local partnership group can provide specific information to develop local indicators. The establishment of a State wide reference group will assist collaborative and participative involvement in the process of developing the indicators. The involvement of a local partnership group can provide specific information to develop local indicators. Much depends on the purpose of the VCI, whether it is to advise State or enable engagement at the community level. There needs to be a “Whole of Community – Whole of Government” approach to the development of community indicators. There needs to be emphasis on improving the quality of local statistics. Some of the existing local area data collection methods of State and Australian Departments result in a wealth of information that is not currently available to Local Government. The release of this information, could be beneficial in local area planning. These existing datasets do not require additional resources for collection, only dissemination to Local Government. Examples of these datasets include:

- o Victorian Government Department of Education and Training School Census
- o Australian Government Health Insurance Commission datasets, including more comprehensive PBS and Medicare data
- o There are also several sources of local area information held by privately owned providers of “public good” services, such as energy providers, childcare and health insurance. Not all datasets held by these providers are available to any level of Government including private utility provider information;
- o If a new mechanism is needed it is important that all stakeholders involved meet and develop one basic system set for all. This should be flexible enough to allow Councils to expand to get specific data for specific needs. State funding should be made available to develop this system.
- o It is suggested that there is a central body, for instance an office within the Department of Victorian Communities which is responsible for the collection of the local statistics. It will however be essential for each Council to have the resources to consult, analyse and respond to their local data.
- o There is concern that after the development of these community wellbeing indicators there will be too many indicators to report on and not enough time to deliver core business. The possibility of synergising reporting mechanisms and transferring data from pre-existing indicators that each council uses into a more general community wellbeing indicator was raised.

*Q 3.2 What mechanisms are needed to improve shared access to local level data? Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding this work?*

- o Common data collection tools, as well as common storage is needed to share access to local level data. As the state and federal government collect a significant amount of data, the design, funding and administration of these instruments for data collection should be a state and federal government responsibility with input from local government on design;
- o Methods need to be developed to encourage collaboration between data collectors/owners, such as ABS, state government and councils, with design undertaken by all these bodies in partnership;
- o There is a need to link town plans or local area plans into Council planning processes. Using indicators in developing local plans to focus input into areas/issues that need to be addressed. This intensive type of planning approach will require additional resources and good lead in times. In funding and developing this approach it will require a partnership approach between Local State and Federal government;
- o State government should fund the work;
- o A key coordinating body should take responsibility for designing and administering new instruments to capture data on core indicators at local government level;
- o A key coordinating body should support with the collection of local level data for optional indicators (eg by providing survey tools and advice on indicator development, data collection, management and reporting);
- o A group of funding bodies should be responsible for funding this co-ordination, implementation and support activity;
- o Local governments and communities should be responsible for designing and implementing collection of local level data for optional indicators and funding this activity;
- o One opinion was that it should be a State/Federal government responsibility;
- o To ensure its effectiveness, standardised data across State, Australian and Local Government is suggested. The continuous updating of data will also assist. The indicators may be reviewed in line with the Census to ensure alignment and accuracy of data. Access to community indicator information can be supported, strengthened and amplified through the use of new technologies — such as the State Government extranet facility — which has the potential to effectively and efficiently disseminate information for authorised usage. Public access to community indicators needs to be a shared responsibility managed at the local level;
- o Collaboration between data collectors at a local level will be a critical component to success. Methods need to be developed to encourage collaboration between data

collectors/owners, local government and state government and design should be undertaken by the responsible bodies in partnership. Any data collection or requests must also not be onerous on any local level agencies that may be involved. The State government should fund the work.

### *3.3 Who should be responsible for analysing and distributing the results of local data collection?*

- If, like the DVC work, the data are of broad relevance and include the entire State or a region, then State Government may be the suitable body for analysis and distribution. However, if this is the case, it is important that data are not presented in such a way that it invites meaningless comparisons between councils and/or regional and metropolitan areas;
- If the data are locality specific, then the local government in question would be the suitable body for analysis and distribution;
- A key coordinating body should be responsible for analysing and distributing state wide local level data for core indicators. A group of funding bodies should be responsible for funding this activity;
- A key coordinating body should assist with the analysis and distribution of the collection of local level data for optional indicators (eg by providing and advice on data analysis, reporting and distribution). A group of funding bodies should be responsible for funding this activity;
- Local governments and communities should be responsible for analysing and distributing collection of local level data for optional indicators and funding this activity;
- A similar opinion was that responsibility may be shared jointly amongst all relevant stakeholders who have an investment/interest in the local area. Designing and implementation planning should be shared. Funding should consider that local government has a limited resource base;
- One opinion was that the ABS should have this responsibility;
- One opinion was that there should be multiple agencies involved – guided by the overriding principles of joined-up government between various stakeholders – the three levels of government, between and within Councils and with and within communities. The distribution of the results of data collection is believed to be a local government responsibility. The coordination of data should rest with specialist authorities such as the Department of Sustainability and Environment in relation to biodiversity indicators. The ABS also has an important role;
- Depending on the data, the State government would be the most suitable resource for analysis and distribution. However, data should not be presented in such a way that results in meaningless comparisons between councils or regions. Analysis of locally specific data should be by the responsible local government in question.

### **3.4 Using wellbeing measures for better local and regional policy**

*Q 4.1 What initiatives should be taken to strengthen the potential for local community wellbeing indicators to inform and drive local and regional planning, policymaking and reporting?*

- Local government should be resourced to analyse and distribute the results of local data collection;
- Initiatives such as resources for local government to assist in utilising community indicators to improve policy-making and reporting would be useful;
- A mechanism that supports all levels of government to take a greater integrated approach to local policy making is necessary to ensure that collaborative methods are employed to address the myriad of wellbeing issues in communities. As wellbeing is influenced by policies and activities of all levels of government, joint policy-making would help address this. This needs to be considered to ensure that local government is not solely responsible for planning and policy development around wellbeing;

- Exploring how they could be integrated with current local and state government planning and reporting frameworks and tools;
- An on line information service may be useful and economical than a published toolkit or manual;
- Systematic capacity building and skills development approaches need to align themselves or integrate with other professional development opportunities;
- Annual publication of indicators including a streamlined plain language summary that includes analysis for policy makers and practitioners and dissemination strategy That is a resource that clearly articulates what the numbers actually mean. A centralised body should assume responsibility for this;
- Support was repeatedly express for options two and four from the discussion paper which are specifically,
  - Option 2:* “Systematic capacity building and skills development programs for Commonwealth, State and local government staff on using community indicators to inform policy making and reporting...”; *and*
  - Option 4:* “An ongoing government funded service providing support and advice in the analysis and use of indicators and data sets as required.” (page 24)
- The indicators should only be used as a starting point to trial in different sites as to their effectiveness as indicators and robustness over time to identify trends and close correlation. For locality indicators key stakeholders in the areas of health, community safety, employment, economic and environmental should be considered;
- The provision of resources to Local Government to assist in local policy making and reporting is crucial. This must be financial support and the provision of written information is not enough.
- The indicators should be used as a planning tool rather than an accountability mechanism.
- An appropriate communication strategy should be prepared to ensure that survey results are announced in a planned and responsible manner.

*Q 4.2 Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding them.*

- A partnership approach with all key stakeholders should be adopted to design and implement these options, with the state and federal government being responsible for funding them;
- A key coordinating body, in consultation with local government, professional associations and the tertiary education sector; and,
- A repeated view was that this is a state government initiative, it should be funded at that level with design to be a partnership with other stakeholders including local government;
- Local government is responsible for local planning policy making and reporting with State Government support. Regional responsibility may be managed by State Government Departments in consultation with Council. Planning support is required through written information, education and training and support and advice.

### **3.5 Building Local Government Capacity**

*5.1 What are the key priorities for improving skills and capacity (of councillors and council staff, state agencies and communities) in the development and use of local community indicators?*

- Skill development programs required to skill staff in the use of indicators as well as ongoing state government funded service providing support and advice in the analysis and use of indicators and data sets as required;
- Capacity building needs to be premised by – regional consultation and training, an increased understanding of outcomes and benefits, the availability of Project Officers to

work on planning, Networking opportunities at local areas and long term commitment from State Government.

- The provision of manuals and workbooks in plain English;
- The key priorities identified by a number of respondents for improving skills and capacity in the development and use of local community indicators are:
  - Investment by local governments in our in-house capacity, with financial assistance to do so;
  - A well-resourced web site and help desk;
  - Staff development and training programs for local government staff, councillors and local communities with manuals;
  - A small central team to support research and learning about community indicators development, analysis and use; and,
  - The most effective actions to improve these priority areas are support for local government and communities to develop capacity.
  
- All the options listed appear to be useful in capacity building providing the demand for them is there from councillors, planners, CEOs, staff and citizens. Strategies should also be considered to build on existing in-house local government planning capacity;
- One comment was that while there are some core resources and strategies required, one size will not fit all. Education and support needs to complement the provision of infrastructure and resources, to facilitate equity of access for all stakeholders;
- Another factor determining the uptake of community indicators will be the integrity and usefulness of the data collected in informing policy;
- A further comment was that a major priority of education is to ensure the sensitive use and reporting of data. If this is not managed sensitively, there is significant risk or negative perceptions of communities being portrayed;
- Strategies to strengthen local government capacity should be determined in consultation with MAV and VLGA. Guidelines, training of staff etc should be undertaken by a centralised resource. Again use of language will be important. The message needs to be clear and simple and the benefits indicated. The priorities, as seen by several respondents are:
  - Understanding the purpose, role and nature of indicators;
  - Skill development in developing indicators with the community;
  - Skill in interpreting data and using indicators; and
  - Skill in presenting and communicating results/ data to the community.
- Key priorities in improving local skills and capacities in the development and use of community indicators should fall into two categories. The first priority should be to establish the resources and capabilities for providing training and support structures for those involved in the process of implementing indicators. The other priority should be training the community (councillors and council staff, state agencies and communities as mentioned in the question above), which must understand the need for community wellbeing indicators and must be familiarised with some basic statistical and research skills to understand indicators. This will assist the community make the most valid judgements possible about the 'fitness' of the indicators and measures for the purposes to which they're being put.
- For council staff there could be in house training provided on the meaning and use of community indicators and this training could then form part of the professional development process. Training seminars about community indicators and community wellbeing could be provided (by the relevant body depending on the outcome of this process eg the DVC, MAV/LGA or an independent body) for elected representatives and senior administrative staff. Such training/information seminars could also be provided for the wider community.

Q 5.2 *What will be the most effective actions or programs to improve these priority areas?*

- The integration of community wellbeing indicators into Victorian planning and environment undergraduate and post-graduate courses;
- A repeated view was that it should be funded by the State with design to be a partnership with local government;
- Implementation will vary depending on the initiative – either state or local;
- Again, a partnership approach with key stakeholders should be adopted in the design and implementation of these priorities, with the state and federal government providing funding.

Q 5.3 *Who should be responsible for designing, implementing and funding this work?*

- A key coordinating body in collaboration with local government professional associations;
- Education and training is a responsibility of State and Federal government;
- This should be a partnership approach led by DSE research unit in conjunction with DVC, DHS, DE&T, other relevant State Departments and Local Government.

### **3.6 Integrating indicator development across government**

Q 6.1 *What are the best institutional and governance arrangements to ensure that local community indicators are used and developed in a more integrated way?*

- It appears that the strengthening of data collection, analysis and distribution for key common indicators across a range of domains which can be reported at local government (or lower) levels is not only required for indicators of community wellbeing but could meet the expanded planning data needs of local and state government planning related to several current initiatives:
  - Growing Victoria Together
  - Changing the Way Government Works
  - A Fairer Victoria (and realignment of regional boundaries)
  - The Victorian Sustainability Framework
  - The Best Value Commission's initiative to rationalise local government planning.
- The *Measuring Wellbeing Engaging Communities* initiative needs to align itself closely with these other initiatives in relation to the development of core indicators;
- While it may be important to delineate processes of community visioning frameworks and local and state government planning and reporting frameworks it would seem to be practicable to develop data sets that can service both, especially in view of the huge investment required. It is hard to see how the development of core indicators would be funded and sustainable unless this alignment takes place. Reconciling potential democratic and administrative benefits in the rationale for the initiative, and in developing the coordinating infrastructure and process, could greatly improve the proposal;
- Considering the disparate communities and processes that are to be integrated across the state a decentralised or regional model would seem to be insufficient for the purpose of coordination. A state-wide coordinating body with links to local government representative bodies and major government departments would appear to be more appropriate for undertaking the functions outlined in sections 3, 4 and 5 above. An independent resource centre would seem to be justifiable if it were meeting the data needs of communities and local governments as outlined above. This body could be responsible for co-ordinating and resourcing data collection and providing advice and useful resources such as template surveys, best practice guides for engagement and other useful tools;
- The importance of a centralised body being independent of government was stressed in all unit responses;

- A repeated opinion was that option six is most suitable, ie: “A multi-level model combining a statewide co-ordinating mechanism with a range of regional and local level initiatives and services”;
- Considering that many data collection points are currently situated at a regional level, a regional model appears to be the most viable option. However, a local decentralised model would also have great benefits, but would need to have a framework, which provides ongoing support, so that local government areas with limited access to resources would not be disadvantaged. It is important to get input from a local level to develop meaningful indicators and local policy;
- More detail would be needed, but considering the abovementioned, option 6 outlined in the discussion paper- A multi-level model combining a state-wide coordinating mechanism with a range of regional and local level initiatives and services may in fact be the best model of combining the local level, with a broader, integrated approach;
- The resources to support these arrangements should come from all key stakeholder involved in the project, as well as the state and federal governments;
- A combination of options for action as identified in the report is required;
- Inclusion and links with Council Strategic plans may provide the best arrangements for community indicators to be developed and used. Consideration and inclusion in Council's Community Engagement Framework will also provide a forum for development and use in an effective way and will add value to this framework. Long term commitment by State and peak organisations is also required.
- The role of the State Government should continue to provide the legislative imperative and the time frames for the use of wellbeing indicators.
- However, once integrated into the Local Government system, the wellbeing indicators should be used in the context of an aid to local democracy and engagement of the community in local planning. The wellbeing indicators framework should assist planning and tracking of progress at the local level rather than act as an accountability tool to other authorities. Therefore, this objective should be kept in mind as the State Government implements any such system to ensure the use of indicators.
- There needs to be a cultural change within Council in terms of valuing such community well-being indicators and how the analysis of such indicators should form a cornerstone in the development of all Council planning frameworks.
- For any form of community indicators to have significant impact there must be senior level administrative support for the initiative as well the support of elected representatives. Without the support of senior administrators or elected representatives it is unlikely that the community indicators would have any substantial impact in enhancing community engagement.
- Further information is required regarding the proposed future role of the Victorian Local Government Indicators (VLGI) in relation to this proposed framework. Survey based methodologies are proposed for the indicators of health and well being, similar to those used for the VLGI. If surveys to measure some of the social wellbeing indicators are actually conducted as part of the VLGI survey we would have major reservations about the continued use of small sample sizes. The City of Melbourne has expressed its concerns to DVC before about the VLGI survey. We participate in a spirit of co-operation, however the survey has limited value for a capital city Council. We would like to see sample sizes based on the size and type of municipality to ensure a more representative response. The results would also have more credibility if for example; the survey included the large numbers of workers and visitors in the city, who are major stakeholders in a capital city municipality, in addition to residents.
- Local Government is increasingly adopting the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). There needs to be a greater acknowledgement in the discussion paper of the Global Reporting Initiative and if and how the community wellbeing indicators might work alongside the GRI.
- Furthermore there is the question of whether the use of the community indicators would have resonance within the community, or more to the point – how to actually capture the meaning of the data collected. It is posited that community indicators need to have the same strength and rigour as the GDP in order to have flow on meaning for local councils and the community in the long term. They need to have enough meaning and rigour to

engage the body politic. It is neither sufficient nor useful for councils to only take notice of community indicators when the data supplied is dramatic.

#### 6.2 Where should the resources to support these arrangements come from?

- The resources to support the arrangements should come from the State Government. Appropriate and adequate funding and support from the State Government would be essential to ensure the development of community indicators that are relevant, adopted and accepted across local communities and on a Statewide basis;
- As with the Victorian Administrative Data Clearinghouse and Victorian Community Survey there would presumably be greater support in investing in an independent body if both local government planning and reporting needs and community visioning needs were met;
- A state and local government funding partnership may be an appropriate model. Establishment and recurrent grants from the Departments of Human Services and Victorian Communities, with fee for service payments from local government and some in kind contributions from the ABS and state departments may be feasible. An alternative means of deriving a local government contribution would be through a system of subscriptions;
- The benefits of spreading the costs are that ownership will also be spread;
- Council does not have the capacity to resource this project.

#### 3.7 General comments

- General support was expressed by all respondents for the process and intended outcomes for the VCI even though almost all respondents suggested refinements and the this will need to be an iterative process that will require refinement over time;
- There is a need to work that has preceded and supported the measurement of health and wellbeing. The Municipal Public Health Plans are a key example of this work;
- Care needs to be taken to avoid duplication of efforts given that there is considerable movement and development in this field;
- Concern was expressed by one Shire in regard to the degree to which the indicators framework would involve continuous collaboration with LGAs. The discussion paper appeared to demonstrate that the purpose of the indicators is for the State.
- The need to put in place a strategy to ensure the engagement of smaller rural and isolated communities was stressed;
- There is a need for detailed local data to ensure that the views and needs of larger regional centres don't over-ride the needs of smaller communities within municipalities;
- The new legislative requirement to develop community plans and the synergies between these and wellbeing indicators is noted. If these are to be effective there is a need for government to invest in resources and processes to build local government capacity to engage communities in planning processes. A program of indicators is unlikely to be effective without this investment;
- One response was that there is a need to strengthen the Local Government Act by stating that Local Government has a responsibility to ask the community regarding their views on wellbeing;
- There is confusion within the discussion paper and the requirements of the Local Government (Democratic Reform) Act. There is some inaccuracy in relation to the actual legislative planning requirements and these need to be amended. The specific concerns were that there is misrepresentation of the Council Plan is a community plan and that there is a misconception that there is a legislative requirement for Council Plans to be based on triple bottom line (TBL) principles;
- Concern was also expressed about the potential duplication of the VCI and future work on the DVC project *Indicators of Community Strength in Victoria (2004)*. The relationships between the two projects need to be made explicit;
- There is a need to guard against the possibility that the data will be used by state and commonwealth or other funding bodies as a data base for assessment of eligibility for grants and access to grants. There is the risk that measures will be compared between councils and of comparing and benchmarking (despite the fact that this is not the intent of

indicator development or outcome measures). This could be a particular problem where LGA level data hides pockets of disadvantage at the township, suburb, postcode or SLA level;

- Considerably more effort needs to be placed into ensuring that the document, specific indicators and any future indicators program more effectively highlight principles of equity, inclusion and access. In particular, this could be achieved by:
  - Working towards the development of data with the capacity for disaggregation by relevant demographic indices, including age, indigenous and cultural heritage, gender and disability; and,
  - Identifying indicators that are relevant to the wellbeing of particular sub-populations, as is the case in the draft indicators currently for early child hood. In this respect, indicators pertaining to the aged should be given particular consideration given local government's role in planning for this population.
- The financial ramifications of data collection, analysis, reporting and distribution are likely to be considerable. The level of commitment from State government departments to collect, collate, analyse, report and provide data is not clear in the discussion paper and requires further attention. There is a concern by some that Local Government might be expected to burden the cost of data collection;
- The implications of the political process, in particular the local political process, on the use of indicators needs to be considered. Related to this is the concern that the data will be used to 'rank' local government in terms of performance;
- There is a concern that the valuable aspects of the measures provided by the Community Satisfaction Survey – ie. Measuring council performance, might be lost if wellbeing indicators are applied more generally;
- One opinion was that, *'It appears to me that we are trying to compensate for lazy Councilors who don't know their community. An annual visit to each resident, being part of the community, being involved in various community and charity organisations and your Councilors will have a good idea of community perceptions. Don't give Councils an additional expenditure to find out what the Councilors should know.'*;
- Two comments were made that the indicators were to an extent 'gender blind' with the underpinning assumption that indicators and measurement are ungendered in their impact and this needs attention. For example, community indicators suggest that high risk binge drinking is increasing among women. There are many factors that contribute to this such as women's changing economic and employment status;
- There is a need to make a connection within the framework to the frameworks developed by Senn and Nussbaum, that are incorporated within the Human Development Index applied by the World Health Organisation and UNESCO;
- Have seen no reference to use of the SEIFA index – has this been considered?
- Consideration should be given to resourcing and developing local survey tools that can supplement the indicators to support community planning and development initiatives. This will have an important capacity building outcome as well as supporting Councils in adapting data to specific conditions. For example, interface Councils, there is a need to understand if there is intra-municipal variation;
- The principal purpose of the VCI Project needs to be clarified;
- There needs to be recognition of the diversity within Shires and the need to support capacity building of Shires before additional demands are imposed on a limited workforce and infrastructure.
- If the principal purpose is to provide State Government with municipal wide data it is recommended that training and capacity building within State Departments be provided to help departmental officers to better understand, utilise and share information to build the capacity of Local Government officers to enhance our communities wellbeing. We currently supply data to State Departments. There are time lags and limited feedback resulting from this exercise.
- It is further recommended that outcomes from Local Government information supplied to State Departments be reported back to Councils in a timely and informative manner;
- Specific modeling for the 'Fringe' councils be developed;
- There must be the adoption of a long term strategy and Local Government will manage the coordination of combining wellbeing with community planning and community

engagement in collaboration with State Government. This is necessary to ensure that communities are genuinely engaged in planning;

- o A decentralised local model with the Local Government being responsible for the governance and management under their legislative responsibilities to their communities. This will include the management, distribution and feedback of information to communities, in collaboration with the level of government responsible for the domain. The resourcing, development, collection and analysis of data and the assurance of quality systems should be a collaborative arrangement with State Government. The resourcing of the model would be according to Local Government capacity utilising an equity model of allocation. This may also include collaboration with other municipalities with common planning requirements required at a sub-regional or regional level.
- o There needs to be a clearer focus on outcomes rather than inputs in relation to wellbeing indicators;
- o There is concern about the potential for the indicators to be based on a 'one size fits all' model;
- o Further and on-going information is required that explains the link between the domains, themes and the indicators.

## Attachment 1

### List of Contributors:

Individual and organisational responses were received from:

Rachel Bell	o Community Planner	East Gippsland Shire Council
Cr Peter Mercer	Councillor	Colac Otway Shire
Dr Marty Grace	Lecturer, School of Social Work	Victoria University
Kerrilie Rice	Research and Policy Officer	Women's Health, Victoria
Darlene Swan	Social Researcher	Knox City Council
Lisa McDonald	Best Value Coordinator	Wellington Shire Council
Councillors		Surf Coast Shire
Holly Pointek-Walker	Public Health Group	Department of Human Services
VicHealth staff		Vic Health
Libby Ward-Christie		Victorian Local Government Corporate Planners Network.
Sheryl McHugh	Transport Planning Officer	Wellington Shire Council
Frances Ford	Rural Access Officer	Wellington Shire Council
Gillian Kay	General Manager, Organisational Development and Governance	City of Kingston
Sally Semmons	Senior Project Officer, Integrated Planning	Department of Infrastructure
Carolyn McClean	Group Manager, Community and Leisure	Bayside City Council
Robert Dobrzynski	Chief Executive Officer	Moorabool Shire Council
Noelene Duff	Chief Executive Officer	City of Whitehorse
Council Officers		City of Melbourne

## **Attachment 2 : Attendance List at Consultation Forums:**

### **Forum hosted by Wellington Shire Council, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2005.**

Peter	Gault	Wellington Shire Council
Lyndon	Webb	Wellington Shire Council
Steven	Dickson	Wellington Shire Council
Six officers		Wellington Shire Council
Steven	Dickson	Wellington Shire Council
Lisa	McDonald	Wellington Shire Council
Henk	Herberts	LaTrobe City Council
Marlene	Rickhuss	East Gippsland Shire
Ryan	Earles	East Gippsland Shire
Margaret	Rasa	DSE
Clare	McHugh	Yarram & District Health Services
Diane	Wilkinson	Gippsland Women's Health Service
Dawn	Marhn	Gippsport
Ann	Guy	East Gippsland Arts & Recreation Access
Eva	Grunden	Centre for Community Child Health - Kilmany Uniting Care.

### **Forum hosted by Knox City Council, 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2005.**

Gerard	Jose	Knox City Council
Trish	Winterling	Knox City Council
Mike	Long	Knox City Council
Darlene	Swan	Knox City Council
Tilak	Abeyrana	Manningham City Council
Rob	Pedder	Casey SC
Marilyn	Kearney	Monash City Council
Andi	Diamond	Monash City Council
Jenny	Grogan	Boroondarah CC
Ruth	Woods	Yarra Ranges Shire
Rebeccah	Haig	Maroondah CC
Heather	McKinnie	Monash City Council
Lorna	Roach	Knox City Council
Kym	Neville	Shire of Yarra Ranges
Urmi	Buragohan	Cardinia Shire Council
Fleur	Cousins	Knox City Council
Karen	Alexander	Cardinia Compass
Sam	Spooner	Knox City Council
Ian	Stevenson	Cardinia Shire Council
Darielle	Crawford	City of Whitehorse
Ron	Cooke	MultiMedia Victoria
Joan	Szalman	Cardinia Shire Council
Sally	Curtain	Knox City Council
Rachael	Bragg	Knox City Council
Sarah	Simkin	ABS
Viv	King	ABS
Bryce	Craggs	Yarra Ranges Shire
David	Blair	Knox City Council
Wendy	Smith	Knox City Council
Kathy	Parton	Knox City Council
Graeme	Emonson	Knox City Council

**Forum hosted by Surf Coast Shire, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2005**

Lenny	Jenner	Golden Plains Shire
Dennis	Barker	Surf Coast Shire
Liz	Wood	Doing Consulting
David	Rasmussen	Wyndham City Council
Kathy	Gray	Colac Otway Shire
John	Dizon	Golden Plains Shire
Paul	Jamieson	City of Greater Geelong
Jane	Wager	City of Greater Geelong
Cr Keith	Grossman	Surf Coast Shire
Amander	May	Surf Coast Shire
Rosemary	Hodge	Surf Coast Shire
Peter	Bollen	Surf Coast Shire
David	Spear	G21 Region Alliance
Trudi	Toyne	Surf Coast Shire
Sharon	Rawlings	Surf Coast Shire
Andrew	Crowley	Surf Coast Shire

**Forum hosted by the City of Melbourne, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2005**

Dinny	Goonan	Banyule City Council
Chris	Newman	Banyule City Council
Mark	Nancarrow	City of Yarra
Adrian	Cully	Nillumbik Shire Council
Jean	Andrews	Shire of Campaspe
Vivien	Clark	City of Hume
Mark	Patterson	City of Greater Dandenong
Nick	Casey	City of Melbourne
David	Conran	City of Monash
Angie	Laussel	Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Craig	Marshall	City of Melbourne
Pete	Appleton	City of Ballarat
Tara	Frichitthawang	VU
Vivien	King	ABS
Hayden	Brown	City of Greater Dandenong
Malcolm	McCall	City of Kingston
Frances	Hoban	City of Yarra
Victor	Vella	City of Melbourne
Nancy	Disanto	City of Melbourne
Sarah	Simkin	ABS
Neil	McLean	ABS
Renee	Shuster	ABS

**Forum hosted by the City of Greater Bendigo, Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2005**

Vicki James	Mildura Rural City Council
Ros Woodburn	City of Greater Bendigo
Mike Bulmer	Department of Infrastructure
John Hedges	Department of Human Services
Sue Davey	Public Health and Innovation
David Ensor	LaTrobe University
Jan Boynton	City of Greater Bendigo
Stephen Haby	Department of Sustainability and Environment
Deb Simpson	Mount Alexander Shire
Julie Gittus	Mount Alexander Shire
Jenny Dyer	Department for Victorian Communities
Jesse Sherwood	Department for Victorian Communities
Linda Beilharz	St Lukes
Barry Seacombe	City of Greater Bendigo
Marg Allan	City of Greater Bendigo
Elsie L'Huillier	Goldfields LLEN
Craig Niemann	City of Greater Bendigo
John McLean	City of Greater Bendigo
Jill Karena	Department for Victorian Communities
Ian McLean	Golden City Support Services
Sue Clarke	Bendigo Community Health Services