

Wellbeing Series

Principles for action

For thriving individuals, families,
workplaces and communities



June
2017

This publication was developed by the Mental Health Commission of NSW in consultation with the NSW Wellbeing Collaborative.

Preferred citation:

Mental Health Commission of NSW (2017), *Principles for action for thriving individuals, families, workplaces and communities 2017*. Sydney, Mental Health Commission of NSW

© 2017 State of New South Wales

ISBN: 978-0-6481120-0-6

Principles for action

Contents



2

Strategic context



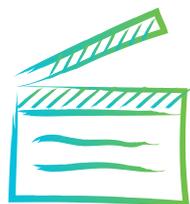
4

A vision for action
on wellbeing



4

Purpose of this
document



4

Call to action



5

What is wellbeing?



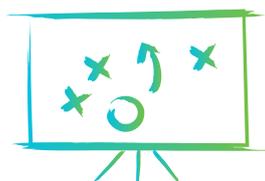
6

Guiding principles
for wellbeing



8

Leadership and
collaboration



9

Strategic level



10

Regional and
community level



Strategic context

The development of these Guiding Principles and companion resources arose from the publication of *LivingWell: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014-2024*. A number of actions and themes from *Living Well* are relevant.

Living Well calls for the establishment of a NSW Wellbeing Collaborative to support wellbeing initiatives among organisations, share knowledge and promote innovative and successful activities.

The NSW Wellbeing Collaborative was formally launched on June 2015. The Collaborative seeks to build the capacity of government agencies, non-government organisations and private enterprise to implement the actions within *Living Well* that relate directly to wellbeing, and broader initiatives that promote the wellbeing of the people of NSW.

Living Well calls for a whole of government and community response to address those things that enable people living with mental illness to enjoy full and satisfying lives. It also has a focus on universal measures to build the wellbeing of the entire NSW community and calls for action for early intervention and prevention for vulnerable groups. Education, workplaces, and local communities all have a critical role in bringing the vision of *Living Well* to life. Wellbeing is everybody's business.





Wellbeing clearly starts with the individual. Everyone has enormous scope to take action to improve their own wellbeing, to be active, to connect with those around them, to keep learning throughout life, to take notice and be aware of themselves and their surroundings, and to give back and participate in society.¹

It is also essential for government—Commonwealth, state and local — to embed the concept of wellbeing in policies, programs and services. Non-government organisations are important partners in this endeavour and employers across sectors must look to address the wellbeing of their workforces. Any concerted effort to protect, improve and enhance wellbeing needs to involve every level of society and:



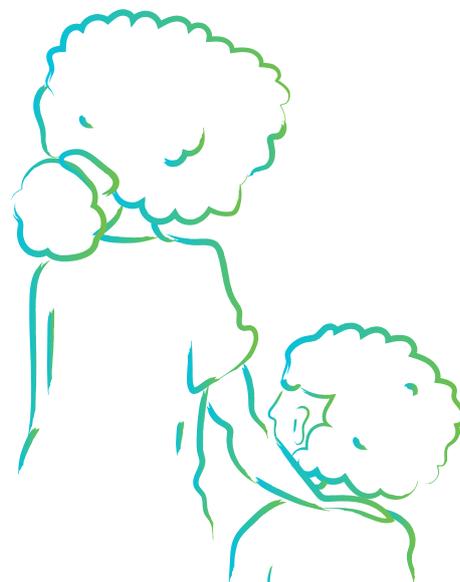
Individuals need to be empowered to take action



Communities need to be engaged to understand their aspirations, and



Organisations need to be mobilised to strategically assess and plan.





A vision for action on wellbeing

Government agencies, non-government organisations and private enterprise will collaborate and direct action so that individuals, families, workplaces and communities across NSW have the resources they need to thrive.

Purpose of this document

These Guiding Principles are one of a series of resources that the NSW Wellbeing Collaborative has developed to build the foundations and capacity of government agencies, non-government organisations and private enterprise in NSW to develop and implement policies, programs and services that promote wellbeing. It provides a set of principles to promote collaboration, innovation and action on wellbeing.

Call to action

The NSW Wellbeing Collaborative calls on government agencies, non-government organisations and private enterprise to use the growing research evidence base about wellbeing to renew their efforts to understand the impact of their policies, programs and services on the wellbeing of the people of NSW and take action to improve wellbeing for all people in NSW.





What is wellbeing?

While there is no single, universally agreed definition of wellbeing there is considerable research and practice in this area and looking across a range of attempts to define wellbeing common elements emerge. At an individual level, wellbeing is made up of how a person feels, how satisfied they are with their lives, and their sense of meaning and purpose².

Aboriginal understandings of social and emotional wellbeing remind people to think holistically and collectively when thinking about what makes life good. Social and emotional wellbeing is often described as the harmony of elements such as mental, physical, cultural, spiritual, environmental, social, economic, and political and ideological health.³

Western literature now offers similar wisdom and credible analyses of the drivers or determinants of wellbeing often provide a list of parts of life that are important to our wellbeing including things like income, education, work, family and community life, values, environment and physical and mental health.⁴



The NSW Wellbeing Collaborative has developed a *Wellbeing language and definitions guide* as part of this series to provide further guidance on the range of definitions that could be used to describe wellbeing.



Guiding principles for wellbeing

The following principles are designed to guide the activity of government agencies, non-government organisations and private enterprise in NSW to develop and implement policies, programs and services that promote wellbeing. They have been created by the NSW Wellbeing Collaborative.⁵ Most are universal principles that cover good practice in the interest of the public good and some speak more directly to what it means to apply a wellbeing lens to policy-making and program design and implementation.

Active citizenship

Put people at the centre, rather than systems and processes. Enable people to move from being just the recipients of programs and services to active citizens who can engage in the planning, shaping and delivery of their own solutions. Connection and participation are two of the foundations of wellbeing. Use co-design and engagement tools to gain an understanding of the communities' aspirations and create the opportunity for participation.

Collaboration

Establish meaningful collaboration across agencies, departments, local government, academia, the workplace, non-government organisations and the community. Invest in establishing relationships of trust with partners. Develop a shared vision and set mutually reinforcing activities to ensure a co-ordinated response. Wellbeing requires collective action across what are traditionally silos.

Leadership

Inspire and lead the case for a strategic and holistic approach to wellbeing at every opportunity, on every level. Assess the impact on wellbeing when developing policies, programs and services at state, regional, community and workplace levels. Articulate the case for change and enact these guiding principles.



Transparency and accountability

Ensure that collaborative structures, whether strategic, or workplace or community based, have sound governance. Share data, measure and evaluate progress to provide ongoing evidence and continuous improvement. Strengthen local decision-making.

Innovation

Engage in innovative practice. Disrupt the status quo and reframe the issues using creative intelligence and co-design. Use research, and measurement and evaluation to provide evidence-based initiatives.

Equity and inclusion

Take a whole-of-society approach to wellbeing. Everyone's aspirations and hopes, regardless of age, culture, sexual or gender identity, mental health or physical health status, and location need to be considered. Address the socioeconomic determinants of wellbeing and inequities in how wellbeing is distributed.

Intervene early with a long term view

Reorient action from an exclusively crisis response to one that includes prevention, early intervention and post-crisis recovery for living well. Take a long term vision and consider issues of sustainability and intergenerational impacts.





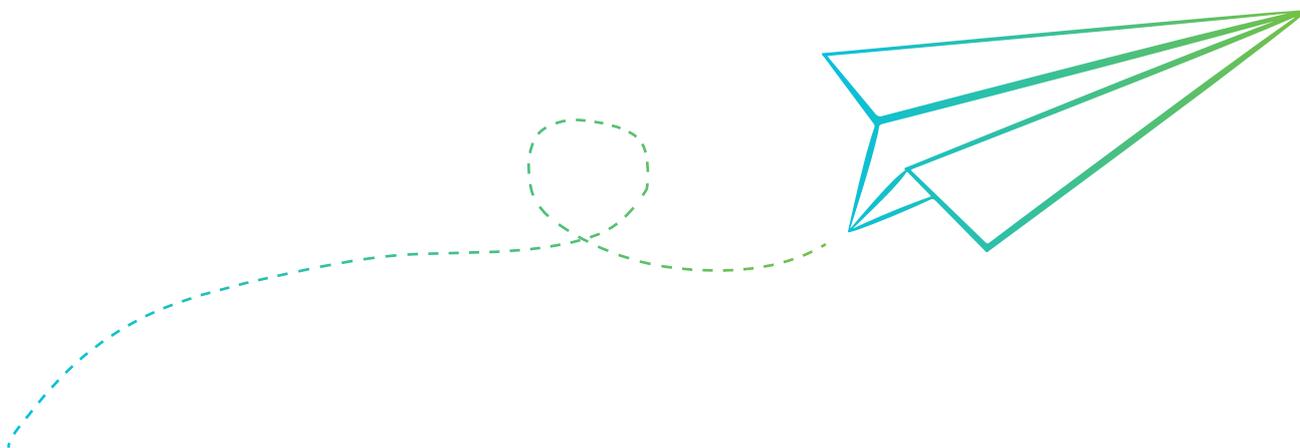
Leadership & collaboration

To embed the notion of wellbeing into the policy, program and service planning of government agencies, non-government organisations and private enterprise, leadership and collaboration is needed at every level, in every setting.

Organisations need to search for and engage with those who display a talent for leadership, who can innovate and who understand the interplay between different domains of life – people who can articulate that wellbeing is both a destination and a route.

The idea of champions is not new but it has the potential for huge positive impact when coupled with the concept of wellbeing and new methods for engagement, inclusion and participation by individuals, employees and community.

A wellbeing focus leveraging available tools and measures should be beneficial to individual organisations and the people they serve. However, the potential benefits should increase exponentially when that focus is undertaken in a collaborative manner. True collaborative relationships feature trust and a shared understanding of what needs to change in order to create that vision. Collaboration at all levels, strategic, regional and local community, is the key to delivering wellbeing outcomes that will impact everybody.





Strategic level

At a strategic level the NSW Wellbeing Collaborative will provide this leadership. It will:

Identify opportunities to collaborate or provide support on projects of mutual interest related to the promotion of wellbeing

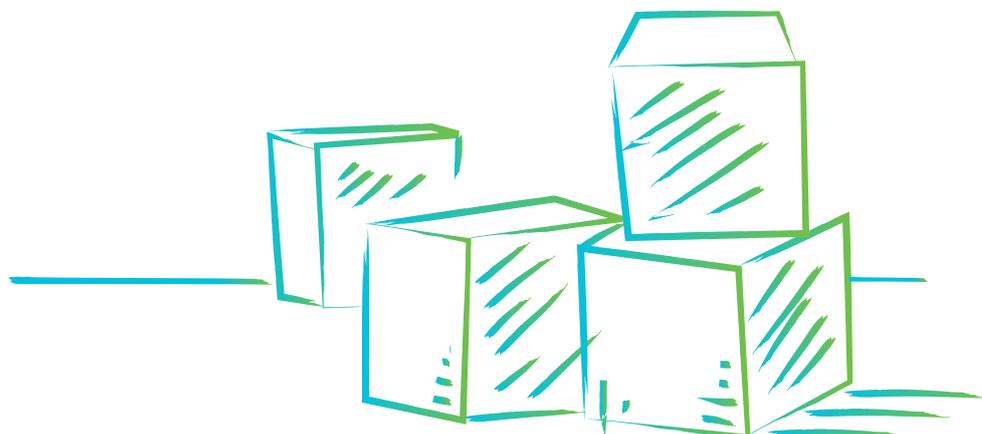
Share knowledge, research, tools and experience on the promotion of wellbeing and promote best practice

Advocate for the expansion of the evidence base around the promotion of wellbeing, through research, evaluation and monitoring

Promote and monitor innovative practice and practical tools toward the promotion of wellbeing

Build on current activities and identify gaps in the current efforts to promote wellbeing.

Government departments, industry and employee bodies, and large employers operating at this strategic level all need to set a vision for their domains of influence, expand these domains of influence through collaboration and provide the tools and resources for more localised groupings to develop solutions.





Regional level

At a regional level, government agencies, non-government organisations and employers have the added responsibility for implementing initiatives on the ground. The development of implementation structures requires representation by the people who will be affected by any change. The principles of co-design need to be followed and a determined effort to listen to all voices must be made ahead of any action.

The Greater Sydney Commission states that effective collaboration and meaningful engagement are at the heart of its planning processes. In developing their Engagement Strategy, they started by identifying some best practice principles⁶:

- Commence early, before decisions are made
- Be genuine, with a commitment to act on what is heard
- Be open, with no attempt to shape or promote a favoured approach
- Be timely, by providing participants with enough time to consider and participate
- Provide feedback on what was said and the difference it did or did not make
- Enable as many people as possible to share their ideas.

An appropriate and effective wellbeing plan or strategy can play a major role in changing conditions at the regional level and aligning impacts and outcomes with state government plans. Many of the projects launched may be generated from the ideas of community and may come at no or limited cost to government. In addition any initiative originating from community will increase the likelihood of success and sustainability through community ownership of ideas.



Community level

Community shapes our identity, quenches our thirst for belonging, and bolsters our physical, mental, emotional, and economic health⁷. It is only by involving the community in planning, decision-making and implementation at every level that true participation is achieved and people can fully realise their ability to shape their own circumstances.

Collective Impact is an approach with potential to address complex social problems. It has particular relevance to wellbeing challenges at a community level, especially when these are associated with social disadvantage. Collective Impact is a type of collaboration that is characterised by a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and the presence of a backbone organisation⁸.

The University of Newcastle's Family Action Centre is a research, teaching and practice centre focused on families and their communities. One of its current projects is in Muswellbrook, a town in the Upper Hunter Valley that has experienced the impacts of downturn in the coal mining industry. The Strong Families-Capable Community initiative will develop a Community Collective Impact Capability Plan, tailored to addressing particular social challenges confronting Muswellbrook. The project will evaluate the utility of the collective impact approach in a community facing structural economic change.⁹

Individual workplaces can be seen as operating at the community level and employers have huge potential to influence the wellbeing of their workforces. Leadership is most powerful when it is across all levels of the organisation – when CEOs set an organisation-wide commitment to a plan for action, when managers and team leaders support thriving teams and when colleagues look out for each other. There are increasingly good resources available that can assist large employers to develop bespoke wellbeing programs and small businesses to introduce small, low cost changes to support the resilience of business owners and their staff.



Endnotes

1. Aked, J., Marks, N., Gordon, G. & Thompson, S. (2008). *Five Ways to Wellbeing*. London: New Economics Foundation.
2. O’Connell, G., Deaton, A., Halpern, D., and Layard, R. (2014). *Wellbeing and Policy*. London: Legatum Institute.
3. Swan, P., & Raphael, B. (1995). *Ways Forward—National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Policy National Consultancy Report*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
4. O’Connell, G. et al. (2014).
5. For a list of members of the NSW Wellbeing Collaborative please see wbcnsw.net
6. Greater Sydney Commission. (2016). *Engagement Strategy*. Parramatta: Greter Sydney Commission.
7. See Born (2014). *Deepening Community; Finding Joy Together In Chaotic Times*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
8. Hanley Brown, F., Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2012) Challenging change: making collective impact work. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. January 26.
9. www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/centre/fac/research/strong-families-capable-communities



