



Measuring what matters

Submission - February 2023

Social enterprise in Australia

A social enterprise is a business, for good. They trade like any other business, but exist specifically to make the world a better place.

There are over 12,000 social enterprises in Australia, that make a shared economic contribution of \$21.3 billion and account for 1% of GDP¹. They employ about 206,000 people, or 1.6% of the workforce; that's about the same number of people as the Arts and Recreation Services or the Mining Industry².



These businesses for good have many faces – a café training and employing survivors of domestic violence, a super fund that only invests in things that support people and planet, a community-owned wind farm, or a provider of quality affordable housing.

About us

Social Enterprise Australia is the peak body for social enterprise in Australia. We connect the sector to plan, act, and learn together. We do this to have a shared national strategy and voice, and to develop new ways to build social and environmental wellbeing.

¹ Gales, B., & Khalil, J. (2022). *Business for good: the size and economic contribution of social enterprise in Australia*. Social Enterprise Australia. Retrieved November 27, 2022, from <https://socialenterpriseaustralia.org.au/business-for-good/>

² Gales, B., & Khalil, J. (2022). *Business for good: the size and economic contribution of social enterprise in Australia*. Social Enterprise Australia. Retrieved November 27, 2022, from <https://socialenterpriseaustralia.org.au/business-for-good/>

Our vision is working together to ensure all people, places, and the planet thrive. Our mission is to foster a vibrant and connected Australian social enterprise sector that provides:

- Environmental care
- People-centred services
- Access to decent work
- Community-led innovation

These are the challenges - areas of public need and political imperative - that social enterprises are well suited to respond to.

Our work is supported by The Yunus Centre at Griffith University. We are resourced by the English Family Foundation, the Snow Foundation, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Paul Ramsay Foundation, Westpac Foundation, MinterEllison, and Day Four Projects. We are governed by an independent board who have experience and credibility within and across the sector.

Why this submission?

We welcome the Federal Government's stated commitment to measuring what matters to improve the lives of all Australians. And we welcome this consultation process.

Because social enterprise sits between traditional business and charity, many fall through the gaps in the support infrastructures that exist for the two sectors. It does the job of both without the enablers of either.

Impact data is one such enabler.

Across government, the social sector and the private sector, very few organisations are measuring what matters - the wellbeing of people and the environment that we depend on. While activities and outputs are often measured, the outcomes of activities are not. Those few that do measure differently, and so we don't have a consistent way to talk about and measure outcomes.

Measuring what matters can help put the wellbeing of all people, places and the planet at the heart of decision-making.

It can support social innovation - new ways to tackle big shared challenges.

Recommendations

1. Collect data to see and locate disadvantage

To tackle disadvantage and value the wellbeing of all takes looking at the range of responses, not just averages and aggregates. It also takes understanding the drivers of disadvantage.

We recommend data collection that can show the range of responses and be broken down at a demographic and geographic level.

2. Build capability and tools

Capability and tools will need to be built within the Federal Government to oversee measuring what matters. Further, we recommend investment in impact measurement capability and tools at the action level - within government teams working to achieve wellbeing outcomes, including via non-governmental organisations.

3. Share data

Government has access to data and evidence that can support work to improve wellbeing; on problems in need of a solution, and about the costs and impacts of existing interventions. But it doesn't share this in a way that is easy for social enterprises and other impact-led initiatives to access and use to measure their value.

Changing this can inform innovation.

Further data will be generated by measuring what matters.

Beyond protecting any personal or sensitive information, we recommend that this data be shared, showing the range and allowing for a breakdown at a demographic and geographic level.