# South Australia:
# State of Wellbeing

Government of
South Australia

SOUTH
AUSTRALIA

# Contents

This document acknowledges Aboriginal people as the first Australians: their culture, languages, law and history. A State of Wellbeing includes Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing and recognises the importance of connections to kinship, land/country, stories of creation (Dreaming) and spirit.

Care and responsibility to these concepts is essential to Aboriginal wellbeing and is just as important to understanding wellbeing for all South Australians.

## Premier's message

In 2013, South Australia's Thinker in Residence Professor Martin Seligman challenged South Australia to position itself as a world-leading State of Wellbeing. Professor Seligman recognised South Australia's unique potential to accomplish this aim. For while our state has its challenges, it is also strong on assets – affordability, rich cultural diversity, relative peace and stability, a 'clean and green' environment and a vibrant food, wine and arts scene, to name a few.

Professor Seligman's challenge is aspirational. It asks us to think in terms of strengths – it asks us to consider seriously what we most hope for – for ourselves, for our families and communities, and for the future of our state. It provides a framework for moving all South Australians towards this hope, by measuring the wellbeing of all South Australians and by teaching, building and embedding wellbeing practice across South Australia.

We have taken up this challenge. Since Professor Seligman's residency, we have committed to using positive psychology tools to benefit all South Australians, including establishing the Wellbeing and Resilience Centre at the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute.

Wellbeing is more than psychological health. Our government, non-government sectors and community are playing crucial roles in supporting a vast range of programs, policies, resources and facilities that contribute to personal, community and societal wellbeing. We also recognise the strong link between the wellbeing of our citizens and communities and the economic prosperity of our state.

Our government is strongly committed to collaborative partnerships that integrate efforts and resources to improve outcomes for South Australians. And so it is with great pride that I present **South Australia: State of Wellbeing** as a statement of commitment to the wellbeing of South Australians, as a vehicle for collaboration across all contributors to South Australian wellbeing, and as a platform for innovation in the reinvigorated territory of wellbeing.

As Professor Seligman stated in his 2013 strategy,

## 'Everyone has a role to play in wellbeing'.

I thank all who contribute to our government's fundamental aim – to strive for the wellbeing of all South Australians.

**Premier Jay Weatherill**

# Ministers' foreword

Building South Australia: a State of Wellbeing is a tremendous opportunity to bring together and build the current wellbeing work in South Australia. Our State of Wellbeing ambition gives focus and momentum to something that has always been fundamental to the work of government – helping our citizens access the things they need to create the life they want; supporting and improving the wellbeing of people, communities and our society as a whole.

As Ministers responsible for portfolio areas critical to achieving this, we have jointly led the development of this South Australia: State of Wellbeing statement. This Statement highlights South Australia's long history of social innovation and the government's long-standing commitment to the wellbeing of its citizens, as well as the opportunities that lie ahead for us as a state.

The statement describes the many factors that contribute to personal, community and societal wellbeing, and how these are experienced by South Australians.

We have asked South Australian citizens to tell us what they think is most important in shaping their wellbeing. We have brought together wellbeing experts from government, academic, non-government and community sectors. We have considered what the national and international research tells us about what wellbeing means, what it is shaped by and how it can be measured. We have listened to all these voices and have used this information to answer our fundamental question: how can we together build South Australia: the State of Wellbeing?

There is much evidence in the coming pages of the progress we have already made towards achieving this aspiration – an aspiration that involves all South Australians.

**Hon. Zoe Bettison**
Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion

**Hon. Leesa Vlahos**
Minister for Disabilities
Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse

# What do we mean by wellbeing?

We all share a common aspiration to be happy and lead a good life, to experience positive wellbeing. While what we individually consider to be important for wellbeing might vary, there are common elements to this – including personal safety, economic security, belonging and connection with people and places, and access to opportunities, support and resources to help us when needed. These support our capacity to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives. They enable us to have hopes and aspirations, and to progress as individuals, as families and communities, and as a society.

Wellbeing is made up of physical, mental and social components. Good physical and mental wellbeing may include experiencing positive physical and mental health (such as feeling healthy and not suffering from disease or illness). Social wellbeing includes whether we feel like we are a part of something, if we feel connected to other people and the places where we live, and if we feel like we contribute and make a difference.

Each of these physical, mental and social components is influenced by ourselves, others and the places we live. For example, good physical health could include personally eating well and exercising regularly, employers providing a safe workplace, and all levels of government providing good parks and strong environmental protections. The 'what shapes wellbeing' section of this statement includes further information about these influences.

Whether individuals, families or communities, our experience of wellbeing is influenced by the challenges we might face and the supports and resources we have to meet these challenges, relative to our aspirations and our opportunities to access supports and resources.

For example, an individual whose job is becoming redundant (challenge) may have the ability to overcome this by being retrained for other work by their employer, with encouragement by family and friends (supports and resources). This assumes that the person wants to continue working e.g. is not at retirement age (aspiration) and has an employer willing to retrain them, and family and friends to encourage them (opportunity).

Similarly, a community that experiences a catastrophic event like a fire (challenge) may be able to rebuild and even improve on the strength of the local community through the collective efforts of various levels of government, businesses, service providers and the wider community working together with the affected community (supports and resources). This assumes that many in the affected community want to remain and rebuild (aspiration), and that there are sufficient resources and supports available to do this (opportunity).

Viewed this way, wellbeing is the **balance** between the **challenges** we face, and **supports and resources** available to us, subject to our **aspirations** and the **opportunities** available to us. We experience positive wellbeing when our access to supports and resources is equal to or more than our challenges, subject to our opportunities to access these supports and resources, and what our hopes and aspirations are. This balance is dynamic and can frequently change, and is true for us as individuals, as families and communities and for our governments, business and wider society.

The State of Wellbeing ambition aims to provide all South Australians with the supports and resources they need to manage challenges, grasp opportunities, achieve their personal and collective goals, and flourish.

## Challenges

Individually and collectively we often face events or circumstances that have potential to negatively impact our wellbeing, particularly if the right supports and resources are not available to us.

## Supports and resources

The things that are available to people that help to maintain or protect existing levels of wellbeing, or can be drawn on to enhance or promote wellbeing.

## Wellbeing

## Aspirations and opportunities

No matter our circumstances, we all want to live a better life. Access to the right supports and resources can help us realise our aspirations, and help us take hold of opportunities to improve our wellbeing.

\* Based on Dodge et al, International Journal of Wellbeing

# What does wellbeing mean to South Australians?

In its broadest sense, wellbeing is about societal progress – is life getting better for individuals, families and communities, and society as a whole?

We conducted a YourSAy survey 'What does wellbeing mean to you'?, inviting over 500 South Australians to tell us what factors were most important for their personal wellbeing, and for the wellbeing of their families and communities, and the state as a whole.

Within these three wellbeing areas below is the full list of factors that contribute to wellbeing, with the **top three factors identified in bold**.

## Personal wellbeing

Creating the life we want to live

**personal safety** physical health resilience happiness life satisfaction self-esteem **sense of achievement** employment adequate income career love family **emotional/ mental health** work-life balance opportunity education social connection **having good relationships** acceptance meaningful activity.

## Family and community wellbeing

The people we care about and the places we live

social connections **safety** healthy environment public spaces good public transport **access to health services** community and recreational facilities vibrant local culture **access to schools and education** active participation in local decisions resilience in hard times childcare good local services **time spent with family** work opportunities.

## Societal wellbeing

Being part of the bigger picture of our state

economic growth essential services and infrastructure **justice and equity for all** environmental **stability and sustainability** entertainment and culture **availability and accessibility of services** housing affordability cost of living effective political systems **job security and opportunities**.

# What shapes our wellbeing?

Wellbeing is shaped by the complex relationship between many factors. It is influenced by personal, community and societal resources and supports, as well as by social, economic and environmental conditions which exist at state, national and global levels.

## Global conditions

This includes climate change, connection to country, justice and inclusiveness, trade, human migration and displacement.

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## State and national level resources

This includes essential services and infrastructure, social and economic policy, food security and nutrition, education, employment, housing, income, built and natural environment, government policy, crime and safety.

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## Community and neighbourhood resources

This includes social cohesion (equity, tolerance/acceptance, cultural awareness), resilience, availability of services (health, housing, education, transport) safety and security, environment, access to employment opportunities, community advocacy and action.

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## Personal resources

This includes knowledge and skills, attitudes and beliefs, experience and life history, personality, genetics, financial resources, social connections and relationships, family, resilience, identity (gender, culture), sense of agency and control.

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### Personal, community and population wellbeing
Physical, psychological, social
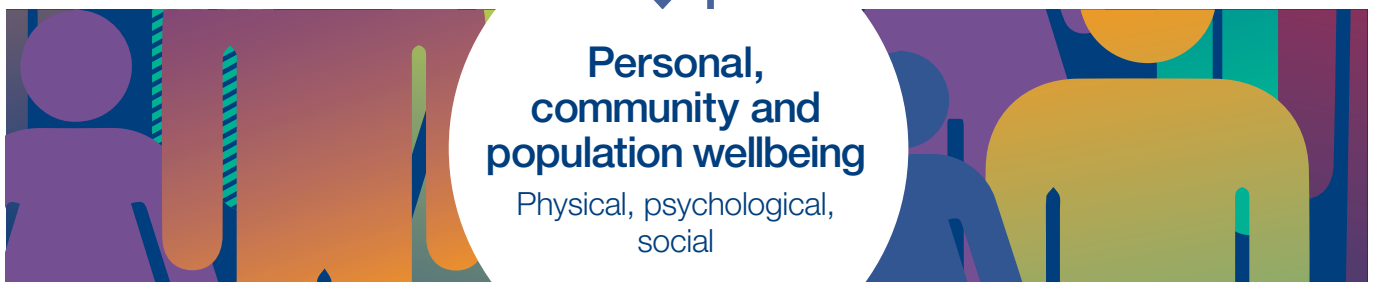
\* Based on ABS extended framework for measuring wellbeing and Dahlgren and Whitehead.

We have more control over some things that influence our wellbeing than others, but feeling empowered to change the things that matter to us is important for our wellbeing.

# Building a state of wellbeing

In South Australia we are progressing a number of initiatives that contribute to wellbeing. It is not possible to describe the vast number of contributions across government, non-government, business, industry and community to the wellbeing of South Australians, but here are some 'snapshots' of current initiatives and programs.

### Hearing the voice of South Australians…

Our government has increased opportunities for South Australian citizens to have input and influence in the decisions that affect them through Reforming Democracy.

### Building supportive infrastructure…

We continue to build and upgrade our physical infrastructure and services for citizens benefit – e.g. the new world class Royal Adelaide Hospital, and Adelaide Oval, the electrification of the Noarlunga train line and underwriting of the Port Pirie smelter upgrade, in partnership with Nyrstar.

### The world's fifth most liveable city…

We continue to punch above our weight, with Adelaide again rated as the world's fifth most liveable city for five years in a row, with many contributions from local government, businesses and community helping to achieve this.

### The Wellbeing and Resilience Centre at SAHMRI…

We have established the Wellbeing and Resilience Centre (WRC), within the South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI). The WRC is undertaking significant work including:

• training 600 wellbeing and resilience trainers who are now teaching positive psychology related wellbeing and resilience skills across South Australia

- measuring the PERMA+ elements of wellbeing (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment, plus physical activity, nutrition, sleep and optimism) of 6000 South Australians using the PERMA+ survey

- building wellbeing amongst young people in disadvantaged communities through a $1.3m project funded by South Australian philanthropists

- launching more than 20 wellbeing projects in education, in manufacturing, in the ageing sector and in some state government agencies.

## Positive education…

We are undertaking significant work in developing student wellbeing by embedding a positive wellbeing approach into many public and private schools across South Australia, including through the Northern Adelaide Secondary Schools Alliance, St Peters College and Mt Barker High School.

This work includes the development of a Middle Years Development Index, which complements measures of academic development with measures of personal and social development.

Aligned to our Reforming Democracy principles this work also has a focus on increasing student participation in the operation and management of schools, and on increasing use of schools as socially connecting community hubs.

## Wellbeing and public health…

Local Government leads a strong public health focus, with public health partnerships created under the State Public Health Plan 'South Australia: A Better Place to Live', and the South Australian Public Health Act.

## Natural environment and natural energy…

We are increasing our connection to nature and open spaces, through our Healthy Parks, Healthy People SA approach, Nature Play SA and the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary.

And we continue to lead the nation in our commitment to renewable energy.

## Thriving Communities…

We are placing strong community at the heart of our Thriving Communities collective impact approach.

## Stronger collaborative partnerships…

Our soon to be released Stronger Together framework is a commitment to further strengthening collaborative partnerships between government and non-government partners.

## High performing workplaces…

We have the High Performance Workplace Index available to help businesses identify where they can improve performance in areas like productivity, innovation, culture, fairness, leadership, workplace wellbeing and customer service.

## Supporting volunteering…

Volunteering is strongly linked to wellbeing, and our state has one of the highest volunteering rates in Australia. We have developed the We Do app so that volunteers can link their time and developing skills to aspirations for paid work.

## Community wellbeing…

Community centres are developing a strong wellbeing focus, through provision of wellbeing and resilience training for staff and volunteers, and embedding wellbeing and resilience principles into programs for people looking to increase their participation in further education, training and employment, such as Adult Community Education and the Personal Support Program.

## Wellbeing training for people and organisations…

A number of organisations (e.g.TAFE SA) provide qualifications and tailored professional development activities in Positive Psychology and wellbeing and resilience.

# Measuring Wellbeing

Across the world, countries systematically track economic growth, through established measures such as Gross State or Domestic Product. While economic growth is vital to wellbeing, this measure alone doesn't tell the whole story.

Many countries are now following other measures alongside economic growth, to gain a more accurate and comprehensive view of the wellbeing and progress of people, communities and society as a whole. This includes countries like the United Kingdom and Canada, and organisations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations. In Australia, we also have Measures of Australia's Progress.

These measures commonly look at things like the standard of living, health, environment and other factors, including how people feel about their lives. Countries that measure their wellbeing and progress do so for many reasons, including:

- Developing a cross community understanding of wellbeing

- Knowing what is working and what needs to improve

- Joining up the efforts of government, community, business and others in working towards improving wellbeing

## Wellbeing in South Australia

We know that measurement is vital to understanding the needs of people and communities, and in monitoring how needs are met. We know that societies measure what they value, and value what they measure. And we know that in South Australia, we value wellbeing.

To be a State of Wellbeing, do we need to measure if our wellbeing is improving as citizens, communities and a state? And if so, how could we best do this, and use this information?

To help answer these questions, we have set up this site on YourSAy, to begin this conversation.

We have already heard from some South Australians about what matters to them, through the 'What does wellbeing survey mean to you?' survey. We would like to continue this conversation as a state, to ask South Australians about these questions.

# case studies

## Supporting a community in crisis

The Sampson Flat bushfire in 2015 devastated this north-eastern Adelaide Hills community, burning 12,500 hectares, destroying or damaging many homes, outbuildings and vehicles, killing a significant number of livestock and severely impacting a number of local businesses. The total estimated insurance loss exceeded $30 million.

When news of the fire broke, there was an overwhelming response from the South Australian community and there are many tales of great courage and selfless generosity both during and after the fire. Government, non-government organisations, service providers and businesses all helped to coordinate a recovery plan. Charitable events brought together local community and businesses and raised many thousands of dollars. Volunteers repaired fences, rebuilt damaged community buildings and recreation areas. Countless community initiatives reinforced the sense of community and helped to build the wellbeing and resilience of people affected.

Despite the devastation, this is ultimately a story of recovery and resilience that reflects how people, community and society all play a role in supporting wellbeing.

# A positive business response to future challenges

Futuris Group faces a challenging future due to the decline in auto manufacturing in Australia, but an investment in workplace wellbeing is realising real benefits. In partnership with the SAHMRI Wellbeing and Resilience Centre, Futuris Group have trained ten staff to deliver the Building Resilience and Wellbeing (BRW) program across their workforce of more than 200, building PERMA+ wellbeing through a focus on strengths, thinking skills, and mental and physical health awareness, and measuring impact through employee benchmarking and feedback.

The practical challenge of maintaining productivity and quality levels while undertaking the BRW program did not alter Futuris Group's commitment. The program has provided real results including reductions in absenteeism, lost time injuries, internal rehabilitation and performance management cases.

# Positive education, positive future

With many families facing financial stress and uncertainty due to manufacturing closures in the region, Lake Windemere Birth to Year 7 School in Salisbury North has adopted a wellbeing approach to supporting the academic, social and emotional development of its students.

A positive education focus involves students, staff and families in a range of wellbeing activities, including working with strengths, managing emotions and anxieties, and practising mindfulness to calm and focus thinking.

The school also provides a flexible range of services and programs to build family capacity and increase community connections. These include an on site paediatrician, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and Indigenous cultural and family support programs and services. There is also a kitchen garden and other alternative garden spaces designed in collaboration with students, Indigenous art projects and nature play spaces.

All of these supports and resources help students and their families think more positively about their future – Lake Windemere School boasts the highest number of students in Australia enrolled in Children's University, and strong links with Adelaide University campus and post school career options. It additionally provides supported volunteering programs for families.