



Progress, measurement, and democracy: the ideas and the evidence behind ANDI

In this booklet, we set out some of the basic arguments and the most important ideas and evidence behind the ANDI project, and many others like it – projects seeking to develop a fairer, more sustainable and more democratic model of societal progress and better ways to measure it - and how and why citizens need to be engaged in that task.

These ideas belong not just in the 21st century or in the realm of statistics, nor do they apply to Australia alone, but are part of a much older and wider debate about human progress.

Here, we have used the words of many writers, thinkers and researchers; experts in the fields of economics, statistics and public policy; and the findings of key reports in this field, to support the arguments and flesh out the ideas. We encourage readers to use this as a basic source document.

1. Progress is a powerful and influential political idea ...

1. No single idea has been more important than the Idea of Progress in Western civilization for three thousand years.

(Nisbet, R. History of the Idea of Progress, 1980)

2. Since the Industrial Revolution, the idea of 'progress' or 'development' has occupied a central position in Western society, conferring legitimacy on political power and providing a positive unifying theme for national policy. And it is potent not least because it conveys a sense of destiny: it has become the 'meta narrative of history and human evolution' that 'occupies the centre of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation. There is nothing in modern mentality comparable to it as a force guiding thought and behaviour ... It converted history into a programme: a necessary and inevitable destiny...'

(Salvaris, M. 1998, 'Citizenship and Progress' in Eckersley, R. (ed) Measuring progress: Is life getting better?, Collingwood, Victoria: CSIRO Publishing, p 38)

... and the statistical indicators which define and measure progress are therefore also very influential ...

3. The most powerful instrument of political authority is the power to give names and to enforce definitions.

(Thomas Hobbes)

4. "When I use a word" said Humpty Dumpty, "it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less." "The question is", said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." "The question is", said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master - that's all"

(Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass)

5. Statistical indicators are the structural DNA codes of nations. They reflect a society's values and goals and become the key drivers of economic and technological choices.

(Hazel Henderson)

... which means they are often used to serve particular political interests...

6. 'Just' or 'right' means nothing but what is in the interest of the stronger party.

(Thrasymachus in Plato's Republic)

7. I gather, young man, that you wish to be a Member of Parliament. The first lesson that you must learn is, when I call for statistics about the rate of infant mortality, what I want is proof that fewer babies died when I was Prime Minister than when anyone else was Prime Minister. That is a political statistic.

(Winston Churchill)

8. How sad. All governments find it tempting to tweak the numbers they are judged by. But in doing this they deprive themselves of the best guide to future policymaking. And they also create a self-defeating spiral of distrust in which even the numbers they have not tweaked are disbelieved.

(The Economist, "The Importance of statistics – Lies, damned lies", 1 March 2007, p. 18)

9. Social measurement, both official and unofficial, inevitably embodies the values of the group doing the measurement. If only politically marginalised groups voice objections to the categories being used, the indicators can easily appear to be neutral and non-ideological. That is why the ideological character of official statistics becomes harder to detect as we approach the present. Our own ideology is usually invisible to us.

(Cobb, C. 2000. 'Measurement Tools and the Quality of Life'. San Francisco: Redefining Progress: p. 20)

10. Official statistics (do) not always cover subjects which arouse controversy or conflict and are very sparing about social inequality. Bureaucracies and governments have a vested interest in demonstrating social progress. The politician presents those statistics about his government's course which put that course in the most favourable light. Because the civil servant has to play a compliant role and has little interest in demonstrating needs which imply administrative upheaval he will offer indirect support to the politician in the presentation of information. So the statistics we use to assess trends may differ at different points in time in their relevance to reality. ... The upshot of this argument, then, is not merely that shrewd technical definitions or measures of change need to be invented but that such definitions or measures have to be established independently of bureaucratic control.

(Peter Townsend, 1975, Sociology and Social Policy, p 19)

... but their ultimate legitimacy in a well governed state should be as a means to improve people's lives.

11. Social indicators ... enable us to assess where we stand and are going with respect to our values and goals.

(Raymond Bauer, Social Indicators, 1966)

12. Statistics are people with their tears washed away.

(Victor Sidel, US physician, quoted in Levy, Barry S., 2006, 'Health consequences of the war in Iraq', presented at AFL-CIO headquarters, Washington, February 23.)

13. Statistical indicators are important for designing and assessing policies aiming at advancing the progress of society, as well as for assessing and influencing the functioning of economic markets. Their role has increased significantly over the last two decades. This reflects improvements in the level of education in the population, increases in the complexity of modern economies and the widespread use of information technology. In the "information society", access to data, including statistical data, is much easier. More and more people look at statistics to be better informed or to make decisions.

(Stiglitz, J., A Sen and J-P Fitoussi. 2009. Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, Final Report, Paris p. 7)

2. GDP is currently our most politically powerful progress indicator, but it is a poor measure of the true progress of societies.

14. Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else.

(Aristotle, 384 – 322 BC)

15. The overwhelming majority of our people seek a greater opportunity for humanity to prosper and find happiness. They recognise that human welfare has not increased and does not increase through mere materialism and luxury, but that it does progress through integrity, unselfishness, responsibility and justice.

(Franklin D. Roosevelt, State of the Union Address, 1934)

16. A society that enables its citizens to aspire to greatness, to develop virtues and loyalties, to become skilled and artistic, and to attain wisdom is far better than a society that merely provides the means to satisfy desire.

(Trewin et al, 2009, Measuring the Progress of Societies, OECD, Paris, p 39)

17. The welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income.

(Simon Kuznets, creator of GDP, on GDP and wellbeing, 1934)

18. There is a growing sense that traditional measures of economic performance such as GDP, employment and income data do not capture the full story of what is happening in society. This has provoked a desire to monitor the state of social and economic well-being of society.

(Canadian Policy Research Networks, 1994-2019)

19. Too much and too long, we seem to have surrendered community excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our gross national product - if we should judge America by that - counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for those who break them. It counts the destruction of our redwoods and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and the cost of a nuclear warhead, and armoured cars for police who fight riots in our streets. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the

integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it tells us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans.

(Robert F. Kennedy, Address, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, March 18, 1968)

20. Economic growth has raised living standards around the world. However, modern economies have lost sight of the fact that the standard metric of economic growth, gross domestic product (GDP), merely measures the size of a nation's economy and doesn't reflect a nation's welfare. Yet policymakers and economists often treat GDP, or GDP per capita in some cases, as an all-encompassing unit to signify a nation's development, combining its economic prosperity and societal well-being. As a result, policies that result in economic growth are seen to be beneficial for society.

We know now that the story is not so simple – that focusing exclusively on GDP and economic gain to measure development ignores the negative effects of economic growth on society, such as climate change and income inequality. It's time to acknowledge the limitations of GDP and expand our measure development so that it takes into account a society's quality of life. A number of countries are starting to do this.

(Kapoor and Debroy, 2019, 'GDP is not a measure of human wellbeing', Harvard Business Review, 10)

21. The shortcomings of GDP make it a poor guide for policies aimed at societal progress and following it as a compass in the quest for society's well-being can be a dangerous distraction. This is particularly true in rich countries, where the living standard is already high and where the emphasis can thus be put on improving the non-material dimensions of well-being, such as social capital, health, education, entrepreneurship, environmental quality, public safety etc. Because the metrics by which we choose to measure progress determine our priorities– as Stiglitz et al (2009) famously say “what we measure affects what we do” – it is crucial to overcome the flaws of GDP by looking for indicators that properly measure well-being. Adequate indicators should help policymakers take decisions that better address what really counts for people and should allow for objective information of the population on the progress actually made.

(Cordemans, N, Decerf, B., and De Ville, F., 2013 'Beyond GDP: towards a country where life is really good', Brussels, King Baudouin Foundation)

22. Organisations are broadening their reporting beyond the traditional financial metrics to encompass social, environmental and governance factors. There is also recognition that these factors show longer terms trends and may vary in the short term. However, as nations we remain closely tied to judging the performance of policy, and therefore our politicians, on quarterly GDP growth rates. GDP is not a measure of broad prosperity but rather a measure of current economic activity. It is measured and reported frequently, which also ties nations into short term focuses. So why do we judge our nation's performance on GDP? It is a simple single number and it's easy to measure reliably and on a timely basis. But it doesn't actually measure policy outcomes. We value things like families, our health, a high calibre education system, safety and security, the environment and equality, which are outside the scope of GDP. GDP is too well entrenched to simply stop reporting it, but we could report another broader measure alongside it. It is possible that this measure may not be trending in the 'right' direction from a policy makers perspective. But surely that's the point. We need to start understanding how we are performing in a broader societal wellbeing perspective in order to create the policies for long term prosperity for all.

(Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, 2014, 'Rethinking how we measure the success of a nation')

23. GNP is not a measure of welfare. Maximization of GNP is not a proper objective of policy. Economists all know that, and yet their everyday use of GNP as the standard measure of economic performance apparently conveys the impression that they are evangelistic worshippers of GNP.

(William Nordhaus and James Tobin, "Is Growth Obsolete?" in Economic Growth, National Bureau of Economic Research General Series No. 96E, Columbia University Press, 1972, p. 4)

24. Economists and statisticians have long known that GDP is not and was never intended to be a measure of wellbeing or progress. While we have long known its limitations, we as a discipline, have not done enough to discourage its use in inappropriate places. In fact, we arguably, if inadvertently, do much to promote GDP as a measure of progress. For example, speaking of my own institution (the Australian Treasury) in the budget papers we present detailed analysis on the level and growth of GDP as well as its determinants....

(David Gruen, Macroeconomics Director, Australian Treasury, 2017, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-09-17/treasury-admits-gdp-used-inappropriately/2264978>)

25. If we continue to use (GDP) as a measure of progress, we will not achieve sustainable development. GDP, rather than leading us down the right path, points us in a completely random direction. It is no measure of progress. It increases with polluting activities and then again with their clean-up. It takes no account of income distribution, or the depletion or degradation of natural resources, and treats crime, divorce and other elements of social breakdown as economic gains. GDP is merely a gross tally of products and services bought and sold, with no distinctions between transactions that add to well-being, and those that diminish it. It is as if a business tried to assess its financial condition by simply adding up all 'business activity', lumping together income and expenses, assets and liabilities.

(Friends of the Earth, UK, 'What is Wrong with GDP?', 2010, www.foe.co.uk/community/tools/isew/annex1.html)

26. GDP cannot distinguish between growth (an increase in quantity) and development (an improvement in quality).

(Osberg, L. 2001. 'Needs and wants: What is social progress and how should it be measured?', The Review of Economic Performance and Social Progress, pp. 23-41)

27. Progress measured by a single measuring rod, the GNP, has contributed significantly to exacerbate the inequalities of income distribution.

(Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, 1973)

28. The Government needs to bring its economic statistics up to date. For 50 years this effort has been geared largely to the needs of the GDP and related measures. As a result, the country knows distressingly little about how the economy actually affects the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities... Better accounting might not guarantee better policy; but it's doubtful we'll have better policy without it.

(Clifford Cobb, Ted Halstead, Jonathan Rowe, authors of the Genuine Progress Indicator, 1995)

29. Trying to run a complex society on a single indicator like Gross National Product is literally like trying to fly a 747 with only one gauge on the instrument panel... imagine if your doctor, when giving you a check-up, did no more than check your blood pressure.

(Hazel Henderson, US economist)

3. It is time to change the way we define and measure progress: this means, first, shifting focus from production to wellbeing.

30. Our object in the construction of the state is the greatest happiness of the whole, and not that of any one class.

(Plato, 429-347 BC)

31. The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government.

(Thomas Jefferson, 1743 – 1826)

32. Human advance is conditioned by our conception of progress... It is time to end the mismeasure of human progress by economic growth alone. The paradigm shift in favour of sustainable human development is still in the making. But more and more policy makers in many countries are reaching the unavoidable conclusion that, to be *valuable* and *legitimate*, development progress—both nationally and internationally—must be people centred, equitably distributed, and environmentally and socially sustainable.

(UNDP, 1996, Human Development Report)

33. 77% of Australians believe that government's chief objective should be to promote policies designed to maximise human happiness and wellbeing rather than greater wealth.

(Ipsos Mackay poll, 2006)

34. Asked 'What is the primary purpose of government', the highest number of Australian respondents nominated 'Improve the overall wellbeing of the population' (32%), followed by 'Deliver and fund critical services and social (31%)', 'Ensure a decent standard of living' (19%) and 'Maintain public safety and the rule of law' (11%).

(Essential Media Report, February 2022)

35. For 60 years Gross Domestic Product has been the dominant way in which the world has measured and understood progress. This approach has failed to explain many of the factors that impact most on people's lives ... The OECD must develop new methods to measure the progress of societies, integrating the usual economic indicators with other social and environmental measures, working with key non-Member economies and other international organisations. We have to move towards measuring welfare not just output. It will constitute a major contribution to stability and democracy.

(Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary General, 2007)

36. What we measure affects what we do; and if our measurements are flawed, decisions may be distorted. Choices between promoting GDP and protecting the environment may be false choices, once environmental degradation is appropriately included in our measurement of economic performance. So too, we often draw inferences about what are good policies by looking at what policies have promoted economic growth; but if our metrics of performance are flawed, so too may be the inferences that we draw ... The time is ripe for our measurement system to shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people's well-being. And measures of well-being should be put in a context of sustainability ...

(Stiglitz, J., A. Sen and FJ-P Fitoussi. 2009. Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, Final Report, Paris pp. 7, 12, 18)

37. In previous centuries nations measured their success by military power. For most of this century they measured it by their economic power and their ranking in GDP tables. By 2020... our obsession with growth and GDP will seem as odd as the 19th century fetishisation of armies does to us now. Increasingly, societies will be judged by very different criteria: by quality not quantity, well-being not income, balance not growth".

(Geoff Mulgan, UK Social Exclusion Unit, 1995)

38. The case for measuring economic performance and societal progress “beyond GDP” is well-established. In this respect, it is increasingly acknowledged that taking GDP as a single compass does not provide policymakers with a sufficiently rich and accurate picture of the way in which the economy performs for citizens or of the long-term impacts of growth on sustainability ... The potential for improving policy decisions and outcomes, based on a multi-dimensional notion of well-being, is significant. By focusing on outcomes across the many dimensions that matter to people, policymakers can better identify the areas of good performance, detect challenges and areas of strain at an early stage and set priorities more effectively.

(OECD 2019, The Economy of Wellbeing, Paris)

4. Today a global movement to redefine progress is developing.

39. For a good part of the 20th century there was an implicit assumption that economic growth was synonymous with progress. The world now recognises that it isn't quite as simple as that ... Over the past 10 years or so there has been an explosion of interest in producing measures of societal progress ... that go beyond GDP to represent a broader view of the ways in which societies are progressing and regressing ... Initiatives to do just this are being run in many countries rich and poor ... by governments, by civil society, by academics and the private sector ... A world movement is emerging and the linkage between statistical indicators, policy design and democratic assessment of the performance of a country (a region, a city etc) is at its core.

(OECD Statistics Directorate, 2008. 'Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies: Strategic Action Plan', Paris: OECD: selected quotations)

5. The task of developing new measures of societal progress necessarily includes both logical and democratic requirements. Logically, we must first be clear about what progress means, and what our goals and values are

40. The idea of progress means that civilisation has moved, is moving and will move in a desirable direction. But in order to judge that we are moving in a desirable direction, we should have to know precisely what the direction is.

(J. B. Bury, 1920. 'The Idea of Progress'. London: Macmillan, p 2)

41. In order to measure quality of life, one must have a theory of what makes up a good life.

(Clifford Cobb, 2000, Measurement tools and the Quality of Life))

42. To develop social indicators that can evaluate the health of society, we are faced with the necessity of spelling out some more or less explicit working model of society.

(Kenneth Land, Professor of Sociology, Duke University)

43. To measure progress, one needs to know what it looks like.

(OECD, 2008, 'Measuring the progress of societies: what is the relevance for Asia and the Pacific?', Report to UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP))

44. A fundamental question around measuring national progress is: what do we value? The answer to this question should be the driver of our choice of metrics for measuring national progress.

(Chartered Accountants Australia New Zealand 2014, 'Is Policy Measuring Up? Rethinking how we measure the success of a nation', p 13, www.charteredaccountantsanz.com)

... and especially what kind of future we want to progress to ...

45. It is from its bearings on the future that Progress derives its value, its interest and its power.

(Bury, J. 1920. The Idea of Progress. London: Macmillan, pp 6-7)

46. The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created - created first in the mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths to the future are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.

(John Schaar, US Futurist and Political Philosopher, University of California at Santa Cruz)

... so that we measure what is important, not just what is easily measured.

47. Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted, counts.

(Albert Einstein)

48. Man does not inhabit a social vacuum; thus failure to set those aspects of quality of life that we can measure in a wider framework will be a futile exercise. To discuss only the measurable components would be analogous to the old joke about the drunk looking for his lost keys under a lamp post, although he had dropped them elsewhere, because the light was better under the lamp.

(Fallowfield, L. 1990. The Quality of Life, London: Souvenir)

6. But also, in a democracy the task of re-defining national progress has fundamental democratic requirements ...

49. When the focus of benchmarking and indicators moves from the goals of single organisations to the well-being of whole communities, important democratic issues are raised, and the underlying values and assumptions of the benchmarks and indicators must be made explicit. Some indicators, such as the GDP (gross domestic product) have been extraordinarily influential. They have not only determined public policies, but also popular and political perceptions as to whether the society as a whole is making progress and indeed, what progress means. These are ideally decisions that should be made by the whole community, not by economists, scientists or Ministers.

(Salvaris, Tasmania Together: Benchmarking Community Progress. 2000)

50. Measuring progress raises democratic as much as technocratic issues. Democracy and progress measurement are linked in at least five important ways:

1. Defining what progress should be is the proper responsibility of democratic citizens.
2. The development of democracy is itself a key component of social progress.
3. Healthy democracy improves progress and wellbeing in other areas.
4. Social progress indicators are a tool for better and more accountable governance.
5. Engaging citizens in progress measurement strengthens their democratic capacity.

(Salvaris, OECD Kyoto Conference, Measuring Progress of Societies, 2009, adapted)

51. The selection of key indicators is a political process that needs to be carried out in a democratic way, i.e., with the involvement of all components of the society (government, opposition, trade unions, business associations, civil society, etc.), to provide a broad-based legitimacy to the indicator set, which is a necessary condition if it is to be trusted by citizens and recognized as shared knowledge.

(OECD, 2009, 'Measuring the progress of societies: what is the relevance for Asia and the Pacific', Paper to UN ECOSOC, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific)

52. In a democracy, social reporting has a very special function; it is to inform the citizens about the prevailing living conditions in their society and give them a perspective on national development by comparing this with developments in other countries.

Democracy assumes that the citizens have access to such knowledge in order to be able to challenge the government, discover new welfare problems and bring alternative solutions to a decision stage by means of political parties and organisations. Accordingly, social reporting has a very special role in society's production of information; it belongs to the democratic infrastructure and has a special political function. Put simply, social reporting places welfare issues on the political agenda. It supplies material to the public debate, influences the media, and, indirectly, the administration.

(Joachim Vogel, 1990, Journal of Public Policy, 9, 4, 439-444, 'Social indicators: a Swedish perspective', p. 441)

53. The availability of statistical indicators of economic, social and environmental outcomes and their dissemination to citizens can contribute to promoting good governance and the improvement of democratic processes. It can strengthen citizens' capacity to influence the goals of the societies they live in through debate and consensus building, and increase the accountability of public policies.

(Istanbul Declaration, Measuring the Progress of Societies, World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy, Istanbul, 30 June 2007.)

54. New measures of progress should be part of a larger process of civic renewal. As corporatism has grown, citizens have gradually metamorphosed into customers. Somewhere along this path, and despite the increase in our material well-being, modern civilization has lost its reflective capacity, the ability to ask the Socratic question "What is the way we ought to live?". It is by asking this question, and by making specific claims for the standards of a decent society against the dominant corporate goals, that we can re-assert the lost legitimacy of a democracy of citizens.

(Ralston Saul, J. 1997, The Unconscious Civilization, Penguin, Ringwood, Australia)

... starting with the need for a shared and honest understanding of reality...

55. When we look at the human condition, it is not for us to laugh or cry or lament or curse or pretend that it is different. It is for us to understand. That is our sacred duty as human beings.

(Baruch de Spinoza, 1677)

56. If the people had known all the facts, they would never have supported the war. (World War I, in which 16 million people died)

(David Lloyd George, wartime British Prime Minister, quoted in Margaret Macmillan, 2003, 'The Peacemakers: Six months that changed the world')

57. We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people.

(John F. Kennedy)

58. Without a shared understanding of reality, fruitful democratic debate is almost impossible

(OECD, 'The OECD Global Project on Measuring Societies', Paris, 2007)

59. Understanding our nation's progress towards widely accepted goals is imperative in an age where most of us know far too little about the problems and opportunities we face. Supplying such information requires a trusted, non-partisan source, with scientifically credible and useful data.

(Derek Bok, Professor Emeritus of Harvard University, 2007)

60. Policy makers are misled by inadequate interpretation of bad information based on obsolete concepts and inadequate research and collected by underfed and overlobbied statistical agencies.

(Gross, B. and Springer, M. 1967, 'New goals for social information' in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol 373, issue 1, September)

... and moving to a broader debate on the meaning and goals of progress...

61. Progress undoubtedly means different things to different societies, and we will encourage and help societies to have a dialogue about what progress means to them.

(OECD 2008, above)

62. The Commission believes that a global debate around the issues and recommendations raised in this report provides an important venue for a discussion of societal values, for what we, as a society, care about, and whether we are really striving for what is important.

(Stiglitz 2009, above, p 18)

... which means that citizens must be engaged in that debate and in developing the new measures of progress ...

63. The citizen can bring our political and governmental institutions back to life, make them responsive and accountable, and keep them honest. No one else can.

(John Gardner, US Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, 1912-2010)

64. To be legitimate, societal indicators require the explicit involvement of citizens to determine what matters to them. Then experts can try to devise the measures that citizens need. While there is much activity on quality of life indicators in Canada, there is no project that is national in scope, nor is there one that seeks input from citizens.

(Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) www.cprn.com)

65. The indicators a society chooses to report to itself about itself are surprisingly powerful. They reflect collective values and inform collective decisions. A nation that keeps a watchful eye on its salmon runs or the safety of its streets makes different choices than does a nation that is only paying attention to its GNP. The idea of citizens choosing

their own indicators is something new under the sun – something intensely democratic.
(Sustainable Seattle, 1998, 'Indicators of Sustainable Community')

66. The democratic ideal in local government implies that active participation of the citizens in local affairs is both a goal in itself and an instrument for strengthening democracy in society at large.

(Kjellberg, F. 1995. "The Changing Values of Local Government" in Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol 540, 40)

... working with different stakeholders across society to develop a shared model of better, fairer and more sustainable societies ...

67. We are facing both an opportunity and a duty to rethink what progress really means and to build stronger and more inclusive visions for the future of our societies. Citizens are looking for new ways to improve their lives. We need committed citizens, scientists and well-informed leaders ready to engage the whole of society in an assessment of the challenges ahead. Adequate measurements are essential in helping our societies to define their goals; ensure that we design the right policies to achieve them; and tell us whether those policies are working.

(Angel Gurría, Secretary General, OECD, Opening Message, 3rd OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy 'Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life', Busan, South Korea, 27-30 October 2009.)

68. At the national level, round-tables should be established, with the involvement of stakeholders, to identify and prioritise those indicators that carry potential for a shared view of how social progress is happening and how it can be sustained over time.

(Stiglitz et al 2009, above, p 18)

69. It is particularly important ... to avoid the pitfall of defining citizen roles too narrowly. It is true that by viewing citizens as customers, governments can enhance service quality. Yet, governments that view citizens only as customers lose tremendous leverage available by engaging private individuals and organizations to act in concert with government to achieve community goals. Communities can benefit by making a greater place for citizens in building the 'vision' or strategic direction for a community both in terms of problems to be minimised as well as aspirations to be striven for, and by extending a wider invitation for citizens or nongovernmental groups to act as partners to help bring about desired community results in partnerships whether by self-help, service delivery or volunteer efforts. Such efforts hold promise not only of building legitimacy of community measurement and improvement efforts in the view of citizens, but offer the promise of producing better results by mobilising a broader pool of resources and community support to go efforts.

(Epstein, P., Wray, L. et al. 2000. 'Engaging Citizens in Achieving Results that Matter: a Model for Effective 21st Century Governance'. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Citizens League)

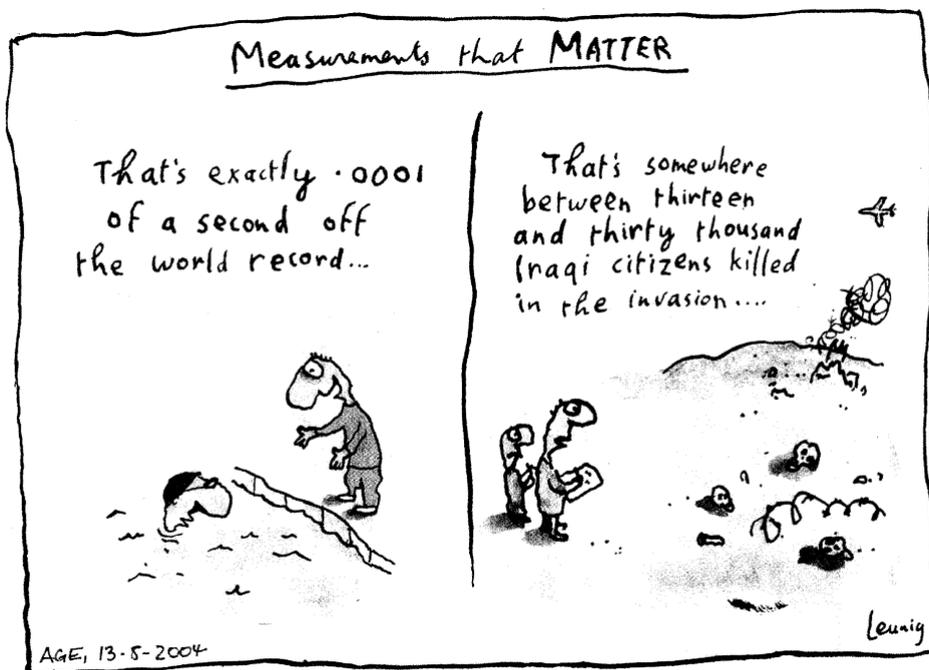
... and a new way to measure national progress.

70. If only the genuine state of the nation, the welfare of all who live here, its qualities like compassion, justice, egalitarianism, tolerance and generosity and the rule of law mattered more than petty party-political point scoring and the obsession with personal electoral survival at all costs.

(Garry Bickley, The Australian, 4/12/2000)

71. The day will come when nations will be judged not by their military or economic strength, nor by the splendour of their capital cities and public buildings, but by the well-being of their people: by their levels of health, nutrition and education; by their opportunities to earn a fair reward for their labours; by their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives; by the respect that is shown for their civil and political liberties; by the provision that is made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and by the protection that is afforded to the growing minds and bodies of their children.
(United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *The Progress of Nations*, 1998)

Leunig's last word: We measure what matters to us



(Updated 13 September 2022)