

National Cities Performance Framework – Interim Report

Feedback Survey

We are seeking your input on the Interim Report until 18 August 2017.

Please complete this form by writing in the text boxes below each question. When you have completed your feedback, email this document to cityperformance@pmc.gov.au. Your input will inform development of the final National Cities Performance Framework.

Thank you for taking the time to assist in the development of the Performance Framework.

Contact Information

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- I am submitting on behalf of an organisation
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Permissions

- I request that my submission be confidential and not published.
- I request that my name be withheld from published information.

Indicators included in the Performance Framework

Which indicators would you like to comment on?

LIVEABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

2. Access to urban green space
4. Residential water use

GOVERNANCE, PLANNING AND REGULATION INDICATORS

What is your comment on these indicators?

LIVEABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

2. Access to urban green space

- The stated rationale for this indicator includes, stormwater abatement, urban heat island mitigation, habitat connectivity and improved overall ecosystem function. For the indicator to incorporate all of these benefits, more information is required than simply the proximity of green space. The variation in quality and purpose, i.e. for recreation, ecological health, flood mitigation, etc. means that all urban green space is not equal and can provide very different benefits. The indicator should either be redefined in scope so it is a more specific indicator, or more data included to qualify the spaces and their potential benefits.

4. Residential water use

- The urban water industry does not consider that residential water use, measured as household expenditure, a useful nor sensible indicator of sustainability and liveability. The urban water industry has, for many years, been focussed on improving water efficiency. Through pricing and water efficiency campaigns we are providing residential and business customers with the tools to manage their water use. In general water use per capita has reduced significantly in most communities. However, there are many contributors to residential water use across Australia. While environmental awareness and behaviour is a key factor of water use locally, at a national scale environmental differences, like climate and soil type, can have much greater impacts on water usage. Hot, dry conditions for instance, have been observed to greatly influence the amount of water that residences use, the amount of variation across the country in this factor alone has the potential to negate any differences in behavioural water use. With so much variation in conditions across the nation, residential water use per capita is clearly not an indicator of the environmental sustainability of a city.

GOVERNANCE, PLANNING AND REGULATION INDICATORS

- We support the objectives of this priority to make a shift to a holistic and collaborative approach to create value in cities. Greater flexibility in regulatory frameworks and good governance has the opportunity to improve resilience, economic, environmental and social outcomes. Through a more outcomes focused approach, benefits beyond the regulated responsibility of water and sewerage management can be better considered when making investment decisions.

Indicators that measure quality coordinated and integrated policy and planning would further drive the achievement of this objective. We appreciate that developing indicators in this area provides

challenges, however, current selection of indicators lack the quality elements that would make this element of the framework direct this change.

Please suggest data sources which could be used to improve or modify these indicators.

National Performance Report (NPR) benchmarks the pricing and service quality of Australian water utilities. Published annually and prepared independently by the Bureau, State and Territory governments, and the Water Services Association of Australia, the reports support commitments under the National Water Initiative. The report covers 182 performance indicators from 86 service providers; comprised of water utilities and councils, and bulk water suppliers, who service over 20 million people across Australia. The indicators and data sources recommended in this submission largely come from this report.

LIVEABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

4. Residential water use –

- As stated in the previous section, we do not believe that residential water use is a sustainability indicator on its own. The NPR database does contain data on the “Average annual residential water supplied (kL/property)”. This is much more accurate than the proxy suggested in the report. Even with this indicator, comparisons across cities will not indicate sustainability performance nor will year on year comparisons within cities be meaningful because of climatic change but also differences (e.g. a Perth summer is distinctly different to a Sydney summer). However, this indicator may have a role in looking at long term trends. This should be considered alongside other sustainable behaviours such as energy use and household waste.

<http://www.bom.gov.au/water/npr/docs/2015-16/Urban-National-Performance-Report-2016-high-res.pdf>

Indicators suggested for inclusion

What is the indicator you would like to suggest for inclusion in the final Performance Framework?

LIVEABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

We appreciate the difficulty of deriving nationally consistent indicators in this area that provide meaningful comparisons across cities and regions. Of the NPR data we consider that the best indicator of health and wellbeing of residents is “Drinking water quality”. This is defined as the percentage of the population serviced by the utility for which microbiological compliance was achieved. Compliance is assessed against the Australian drinking water guidelines 2011 (Australian National Health and Medical Research Council) or licence conditions imposed on the utility. In later sections of the template we outline the pros and cons of this indicator.

More broadly it should be relatively easy to obtain information on “length of paths/cycle-ways providing connectivity”. This is an indicator of the walkability of a city for its citizens through good urban planning and design. We raise this as water assets, such as easements and stormwater channels, are often valued for this purpose.

Another area of importance in terms of a city’s environmental sustainability and liveability is suitability for recreation in waterways. Along with the environmental impacts, water quality in a body of water influences the way that communities can use it for recreation and business. Measuring these recreational waterway health outcomes on a national scorecard is not an easy task, however there are national guidelines published by the National Health and Medical Research Council that are applied reasonably consistently across the nation. Beachwatch, used in NSW, is an example of how this indicator could be developed at a national level. Each state tends to report differently and not all regulators include suitability for swimming for inland water ways, however WSAA strongly suggests this be developed for national comparison.

A possible but not preferred indicator through the NPR includes a measure of “Sewer overflow reported to the environmental regulator (no. per 100 km of sewer main)”. This is by no means a perfect measure of waterway health but goes some way in measuring the water industry’s impact. State government bodies like NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and Environment Protection Authority Victoria also run water quality monitoring programs which may provide useful data for this purpose.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

There are a range of indicators in the NPR that could be used to assess water infrastructure performance. The preferable indicator would be the International Leakage Index (ILI) developed by the International Water Association which has an agreed formula and can compare Australian urban communities against international cities. The indicator that could be used to compare for instance against energy is “average duration of an unplanned interruption to water supply”. This indicator would report the average duration of unplanned interruptions to water supply in a utility’s operation, aggregated by major urban centre. The NPR contains data on:

- Average frequency of unplanned interruptions—water (no per 1,000 properties)
- Infrastructure leakage index (ILI)
- Sewerage mains breaks and chokes (no. per 100 km sewer main)

Where can the data for this indicator be obtained? Please provide as much detail as possible, e.g. ABS Category Numbers.

LIVEABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Percentage of population for which microbiological compliance was achieved – National Performance Report H3
- Sewer overflows reported to the environmental regulator (no. per 100 km of sewer main) E13

INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

- Average duration of an unplanned interruption to water supply – National Performance Report C15
- Average frequency of unplanned interruptions—water (no per 1,000 properties) C17
- Infrastructure leakage index (ILI) A9

- Sewerage mains breaks and chokes (no. per 100 km sewer main) A14

The National Performance Report (NPR) is produced by the Bureau of Meteorology annually.
<http://www.bom.gov.au/water/npr/docs/2015-16/Urban-National-Performance-Report-2016-high-res.pdf>

Please explain why you feel this indicator should be included, with reference to the six Smart Cities policy priorities.

LIVEABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- Drinking water quality

Having clean safe water to drink is fundamental to the liveability and health of a city. While utilities typically record very high (often 100 per cent) compliance on this indicator, this is essential to a productive city and to the health of its residents. In addition, it recognises the significant resources devoted to achieving these results. Not only does this acknowledge what we do well as a country, it also highlights the importance of maintaining this quality going forward.

- Length of paths/cycle-ways providing connectivity

Research has shown that suburbs with greater 'walkability', including walking and cycle paths, tend to have less obesity. Connectivity in a city promotes greater physical activity in reducing negative health impacts associated with a passive lifestyle.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT

- Average duration of an unplanned interruption to water supply -

This indicator fits within the Infrastructure and Investment policy objectives 'Better infrastructure services' and 'Better use of existing infrastructure'. Water supply loss can impact productivity of cities and amenity and quality of life for residents and the community. There are also key city services like hospitals that rely on a reliable supply of water to support the community.

This corresponds with the 'average time without power' indicator already proposed.

Future directions for the Performance Framework

The Government is considering the release of annual complementary reports, to coincide with updates to data in the Performance Framework, focused on a particular theme relevant to the Smart Cities Plan. Please list any examples of reports, or other complementary work, that you feel would be useful or valuable in concert with the Performance Framework.

Overall, the commitment to continual improvement to cities and development of greater understanding of cities for policy makers is an important one. However, it is unclear the purpose of this framework and what it is trying to achieve with the indicators that have been selected. Without more clarity on how these measures will be used it is difficult to assess them well or recommend additions.

An assessment of how well Australian cities are performing against the high level Smart Cities policy priorities will be misleading without regional context to qualify it. Comparison of city performance can be very useful, but should be done in a way that acknowledges inherent differences in size,

environment, community priorities and development capacity.

Some complementary work that may provide value in the development of the framework includes:

- National Performance Report - <http://www.bom.gov.au/water/npr/>
- Next Gen Urban Water: The role of urban water in vibrant and prosperous communities - <https://www.wsaa.asn.au/publication/next-gen-urban-water-role-urban-water-vibrant-and-prosperous-communities>
- Global Goals for Local Communities: Urban water advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals - <https://www.wsaa.asn.au/publication/global-goals-local-communities-urban-water-advancing-un-sustainable-development-goals>
- WSAA Occasional Paper 31 – Liveability Indicators - <https://www.wsaa.asn.au/publication/occasional-paper-31-liveability-indicators>