

Community Wellbeing Indicators Survey Template for Queensland Local Government



November 2012 - March 2013

Background

This research is being developed by the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) in partnership with the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government (ACELG), including funding support through the ACELG Research Partnership Scheme. It builds on work already undertaken in developing community wellbeing indicators and is expected to result in an enhanced capacity of Queensland councils to plan for, measure and report on the wellbeing of their communities.

The LGAQ launched its two-year Community Wellbeing Indicators Project in March 2011 to fulfil the local government leadership role as a member of the Community Indicators Queensland (CIQ) Steering Committee. The project aims to demonstrate that a core set of wellbeing indicators and a menu of 'fit for purpose' indicators can provide wellbeing data to local government and is a worthwhile and valuable investment in strengthening local government capacity and accountability. More specifically the Project aims to support councils in developing better ways to:

- understand and measure local community wellbeing;
- build a better and consistent statistics base;
- improve community planning; and
- strengthen citizen involvement.

The LGAQ undertook a community wellbeing indicator pilot survey in 2011 in five local government areas to test the CIQ indicator framework and demonstrate the usefulness of such an approach to local government. In January 2012, ACELG in partnership with Penrith City Council released a report to map current research and thinking on the state of community livability indicator development in Australia.

This research will build on these pieces of work and will demonstrate how a community wellbeing indicators survey template may be adapted for use by local governments nationally and be used to measure, analyse and assess the progress of community wellbeing in a local government area.

Partners

The LGAQ and ACELG will partner with Dr Geoffrey Woolcock, a director of the Australian National Development Index (ANDI) and chair of the Community Indicators Queensland (CIQ) (Appendix A), and with Professor Mark Weston, Director of the University of Queensland Institute for Social Science Research. It is proposed to call on the alliance formed through the CIQ Steering Committee with agencies such as the University of Queensland, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Wesley Mission Brisbane, Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) and Partners for Liveable

Communities. The LGAQ will also work in liaison with Tim Eltham, a board member of Regional Development Australia's (RDA) Ipswich and West Moreton.

Researcher

The researcher is Alan Morton (Morton Consulting Services) who successfully carried out the LGAQ's pilot community wellbeing indicator survey. Mr Morton has also carried out LGAQ's Community Satisfaction Tracking Studies and many other LGAQ research projects (Attachment B).

Objectives

The primary research objective is to enhance local governments' abilities to measure the value of their investment in their communities across social, cultural, economic, environmental and democratic activities contributing to community wellbeing through the use of a standardised survey.

The second objective is to use the research findings to inform the Queensland Government of the need in the future for the establishment of the CIQ database and web interface. This is to support the development and use of community wellbeing indicators as a basis for informed, engaged and integrated community planning, investment, policy making and research.

Rationale

Several of the important levers for improving wellbeing are under the jurisdiction of local government. Promoting the wellbeing of individuals and communities is fundamental to the work of local government and many councillors and staff are strongly motivated in this regard. Councils and the local partnerships they form have real power to affect change in their communities' wellbeing.

The majority of Queensland councils have developed long term community plans that represent their communities' views, visions and values and how the community aspires to reach its full potential in the future. These plans are aimed at capturing the expertise, interests and views of stakeholders representing government, business, interest groups, individuals and community organisations. Although the Local Government Bill before Parliament removes the requirement to develop long term community plans, these are in place and have created expectations from residents that councils implement them.

The LGAQ research proposal advocates that within this community planning environment, local government takes a leadership role in adopting a common policy framework that can assist both councils and their communities in agreeing about what is important to them and how this may be measured, analysed and assessed over time.

Such a policy framework is based on the premise that community wellbeing indicators can help local government to govern better by improving their knowledge, responsiveness, effectiveness, transparency and accountability. Furthermore, the indicators can provide the basis for engaging key partners in dialogue and action for improving community outcomes through community, social corporate and other planning.

Approach and deliverables

The research will take a three-staged approach, followed by dissemination:

1. A Literature Review, including the recent ACELG research document¹, council community plans and CIQ performance indicators² – identify elements to be considered for the proposed LGAQ wellbeing framework.
2. Development of the Survey Instrument, including consultation and refinement of the pilot survey questionnaire³ and results, and feedback from pilot council professionals – identify changes to pilot questionnaire and review by reference group of professionals in target councils. The methodology and framework will include:
 - a template of core indicators for use by all councils in determining community attitudes to progress being made in community wellbeing and community plan aspirations; and
 - a ‘shopping basket’ of ‘fit for purpose’ indicators that may be unique to certain locations e.g. resource boom communities, large regional and remote areas with vast land mass and very small population, large cities, coastal towns and/or cities.
3. Prepare a Research Report that builds on LGAQ’s draft *‘Queensland local government delivering social wellbeing’*. This paper provides a theoretical framework for councils’ commitment to measuring progress in achieving community wellbeing. The template and survey results will provide a significant tool for councils in better understanding the nexus between social policy and delivering social and broader community wellbeing.
4. Dissemination will include distribution of the Research Report via ACELG channels, including the Local Government Research Network, publication of a journal article by an academic partner, and presentation at the ACELG National Research Forum to be held in May or June 2013.

¹ *Options for a local Government Framework for Measuring Liveability*’ Net Balance Jan. 2012

² *Draft Community Indicators Queensland Framework*

³ *LGAQ Community Wellbeing Indicators Pilot Survey Report*’ Local Government Association of Queensland November 2011

Attachment A

Profile: Geoff Woolcock



Geoff Woolcock is a Senior Research Fellow at Wesley Mission Brisbane and an Adjunct Associate Professor in Griffith University's School of Human Services and Social Work.

He is particularly interested in applying indicators of community strengths in socio-economically disadvantaged communities and the factors that contribute to building child- and youth-friendly communities. His work with large-scale public and private sector organisations concentrates on developing measures of communities' strengths, closely collaborating with local communities.

Geoff is the current chair of the Australian Community Indicators Network (ACIN), is on the executive steering committee for the Australian National Development Index (ANDI) and Community Indicators Queensland (CIQ) and is a board director of both the Logan Child-Friendly Community Charitable Trust Partners for Livable Communities (PLC) and the Brisbane Housing Company. He is also the current Australian member on the executive committee for the Asia-Pacific Child-Friendly Cities Network and an advisor to Partners for Livable Communities (PLC) Australia.

Attachment B

Profile: Alan Morton



Alan Morton, (B.E., M.Eng. Sc.) is the Principal of Morton Consulting Services Pty. Ltd., a Queensland based consulting company which has undertaken a wide range of projects involving local government operations, policy development, regional planning, social and economic research. Clients have included Federal, State and Local Governments as well as the private sector.

Alan has over 30 years professional consulting experience covering policy analysis, transport planning, regional, social and economic development, government finance and organisation development.

He has consulted extensively for local government in Queensland and elsewhere in Australia. Alan has coordinated the LGAQ Community Satisfaction Tracking Studies since they were introduced in 1997, as well as undertaking a wide-range of other market research projects for LGAQ.

He has also worked with a number of Regional Councils on the integration of rating systems. Alan was a co-author of *Building our Future*, a report prepared for the Civil Engineering Construction Alliance on the need for investment in infrastructure and for *The Roads Solution*, a report on South East Queensland road and transport issues published by the *Courier Mail*.