CREATE A BETTER LIFE INDEX

Key lessons learnt	Quality of life can be improved by deepening our understanding of the Better Life Index – a global quality of life index tool that can be used to develop insight among the OECD countries. An analysis using this tool could provide greater insight into the impact of projects leading to greater overall value for our residents.
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Introduction

Improving the quality of life of residents through improved access and accessibility of public services is a core principle for the NSW Government. This principle is central to how the NSW Government operates its service offerings, extending to the investigation of opportunities in delivering public infrastructure.

Generally public infrastructure projects within NSW and Australia are assessed within a formalised business case investment process. Central to this process is determining whether the project supports the social and economic wellbeing of its residents through an economic and financial evaluation.

While these forms of analysis provide a good indication of the whole of life financial impact on government, and whether the project provides a positive economic, social and environmental impact when compared to other projects, they should not be viewed in isolation. Quality of life improvements and the well-being of our residents is therefore an important factor.

Key considerations include Alternative Indicators to Assess the Impacts of Projects

To support the assessment of how countries are performing with regards to improving the quality of life of its residents the OECD has developed the Better Life Index. The Better Life Index was based on measurable metrics that were deemed to represent what makes for a better life based on the input from 100,000 users.

This Index allows users to compare well-being across countries, based on 11 topics and the following material living conditions and quality of life indices, such as:

▶ Housing (dwellings without basic facilities, housing expenditures and rooms per person)

▶ Income (disposable income and household net financial wealth)

▶ Jobs (labour market insecurity, employment rates, long term unemployment rate and personal earnings)

▶ Community (quality of support network)

▶ Education (educational attainment, student skills, years in education)

▶ Environment (air pollution, water quality)

▶ Civic Engagement (engagement with regulators, voter turnout)

▶ Health (life expectancy and self-reported health)

▶ Life Satisfaction

▶ Safety (feeling safe walking home at night, homicide rates)

▶ Work-life Balance (employees working long hours, time devoted to leisure and personal care)

While the richness of human experience cannot be captured in numbers alone, it is important that the statistics shaping public policy reflect both people's material living conditions, and the quality of their lives. This includes how life is changing over time, how lives differ across different population groups, and whether today's well-being is achieved at the cost of depleting resources for the future.

While an index such as this is aimed at macro-economic analysis and trends over an extended period of time it does provide an understanding of the alternative metrics that could be included in a wider qualitative and quantitative assessment of the impacts of a project on a localised basis.

Such analysis should be undertaken to further support and refine projects through its development phase to ensure that it is being designed and delivered in an optimal manner that will have the greatest net positive impact on the residents of NSW.

Source Material

OECD Better Life Index - http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/#/42111111315

▶ **About the author:**

Infrastructure NSW (INSW) Infrastructure NSW was established in July 2011 to assist the NSW Government in identifying and prioritising the delivery of critical public infrastructure for NSW. It is an independent statutory agency, established under the Infrastructure NSW Act 2011.