

“Building wellbeing into policy and action in Australia”

University of Canberra, 21-23 November 2022

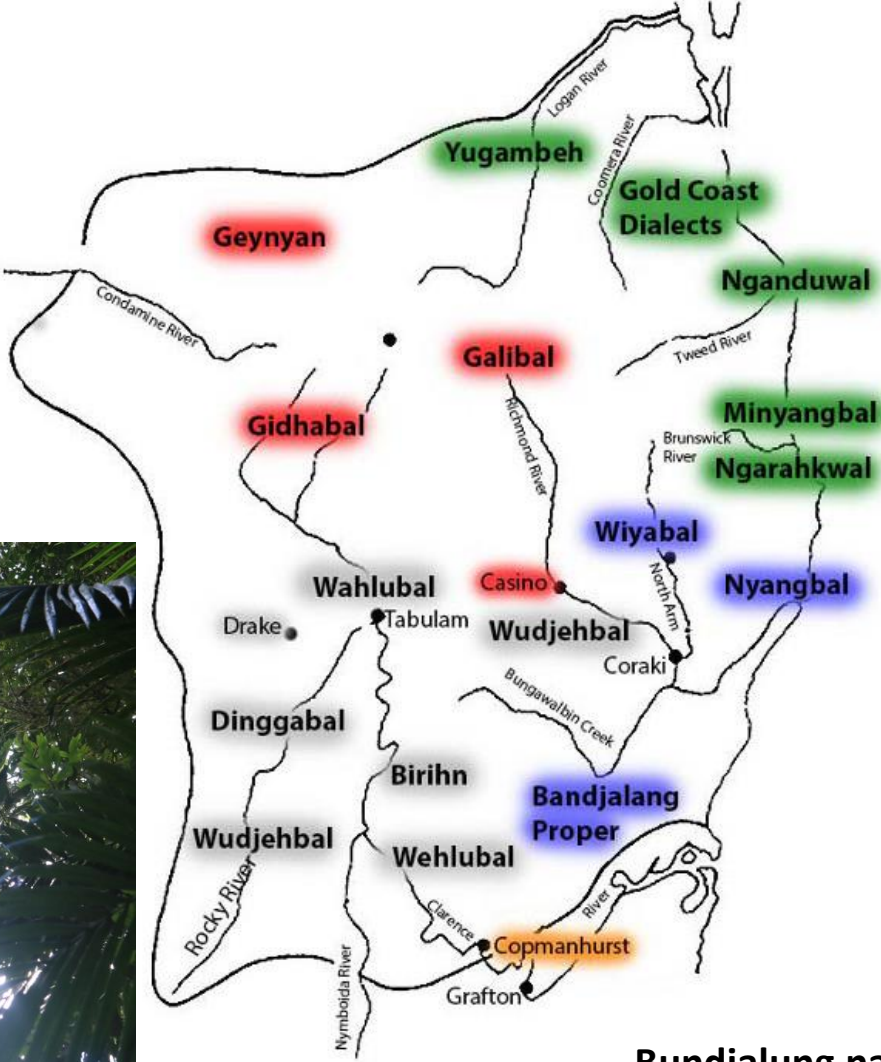
NSW Wellbeing Budget: an experiment in bottom-up policy-making

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Planning and Environment

Acknowledgement of Country

Traditional custodians of the Lismore region, NSW:
Widjabul wyabal people of the **Bundjalung** nation.
Includes SE Queensland and NE NSW.



Bundjalung nation,

<https://bundjalung.dalang.com.au/language/dictionary>



Lismore, NSW:
the fragility of
wellbeing

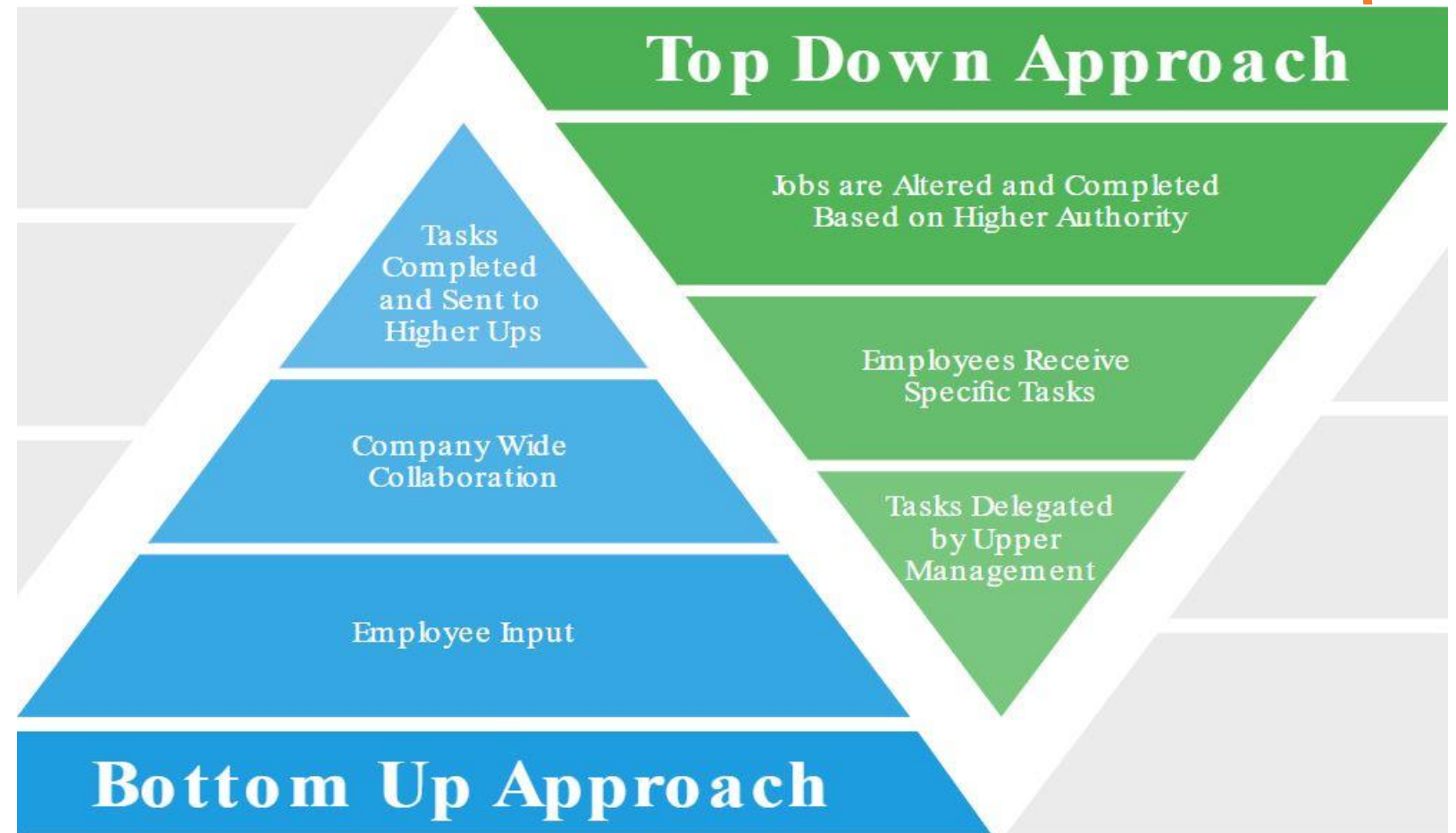


Alternative management/leadership styles

Bottom-up supports:

- inclusion
- collaboration
- exchange of ideas
- informed decision-making
- morale-building
- democratic (not technocratic) policy-making
- sense of ownership

(See also... community engagement literature)

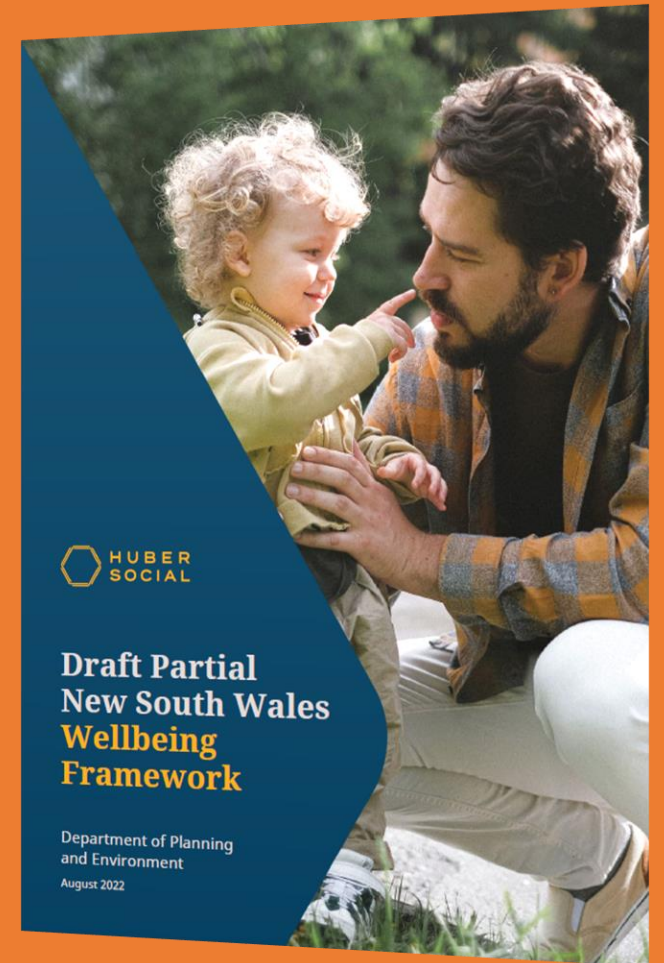


NSW Wellbeing Budget: project evolution

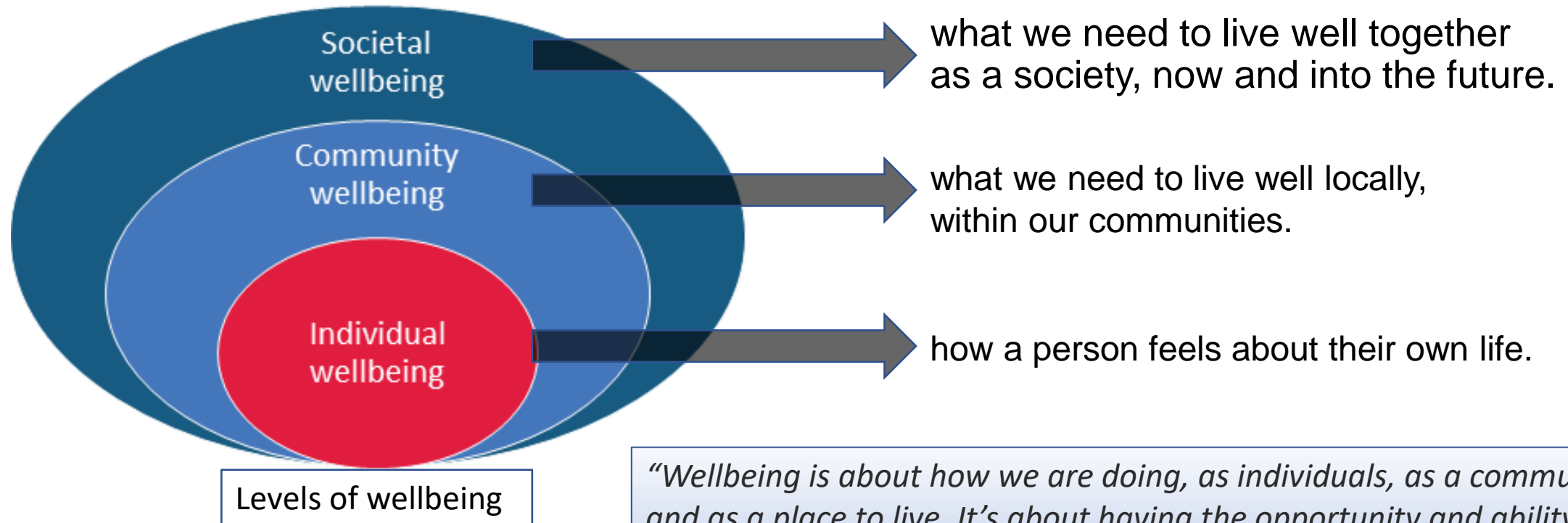
- Late 2020: DPE 'Daring Ideas' challenge.
- 20 volunteers signed up to develop a business plan to pitch to the executive.
- Appointed a core team of 5, with governance overseen by Project Control Group.
- Desktop research produced **Foundation Paper**.
- Included 89 DPE staff in **nine workshops**.
- Findings and more research informed **draft framework**.



Key Outputs



A Wellbeing Framework for NSW: Foundation paper – conceptualising wellbeing



“Wellbeing is about how we are doing, as individuals, as a community, and as a place to live. It’s about having the opportunity and ability to lead lives of personal and community value – with qualities such as good health, time to enjoy the things in life that matter, in an environment that promotes personal growth and is sustainable.”
(ACT Wellbeing framework, <https://www.act.gov.au/wellbeing>)

Design considerations: Feedback from workshops

- Top-voted 'vision' words were environmentally or socially oriented (nobody voted for 'economic' terms such as 'prosperous' or 'wealthy'):
sustainable... inclusive... equitable... fair... healthy
- Support for:
 - aligning with international standards (e.g. SDGs, OECD Better Life Index)
 - using both 'objective' and 'subjective' measures
 - a hybrid domain/goal-oriented approach
- Must inform Government priorities, policies and investment decisions.

- 9 workshops during Jan-Feb 2022
 - 89 participants (72% of registrations)
- 17 different Aboriginal nations
- 1481 responses to polls and free-text questions

Need for diverse data

"Quantitative data will always be important, but it's the stories behind the data that tell us what the outcomes are. You can't count outcomes – you can only talk about them."

(Workshop participant)

First Nations wellbeing

*“The western experience of land is one of property, an appropriated ground given a monetary value, a landscape that is tamed, built upon, produced, owned. In the Aboriginal sense of the word, Country relates to the nation or cultural group and land that they/we belong to, yearn for, find healing from and will return to... Country soars high into the atmosphere, deep into the planet crust and far into the oceans. Country incorporates both the tangible and the intangible, for instance, all the knowledge and cultural practices associated with land. People are part of Country, and their/our identity is derived in a large way in relation to Country. Their/our belonging, nurturing and reciprocal relationships come through our connection to Country. In this way **Country is key to our health and wellbeing.**” (emphasis added)*

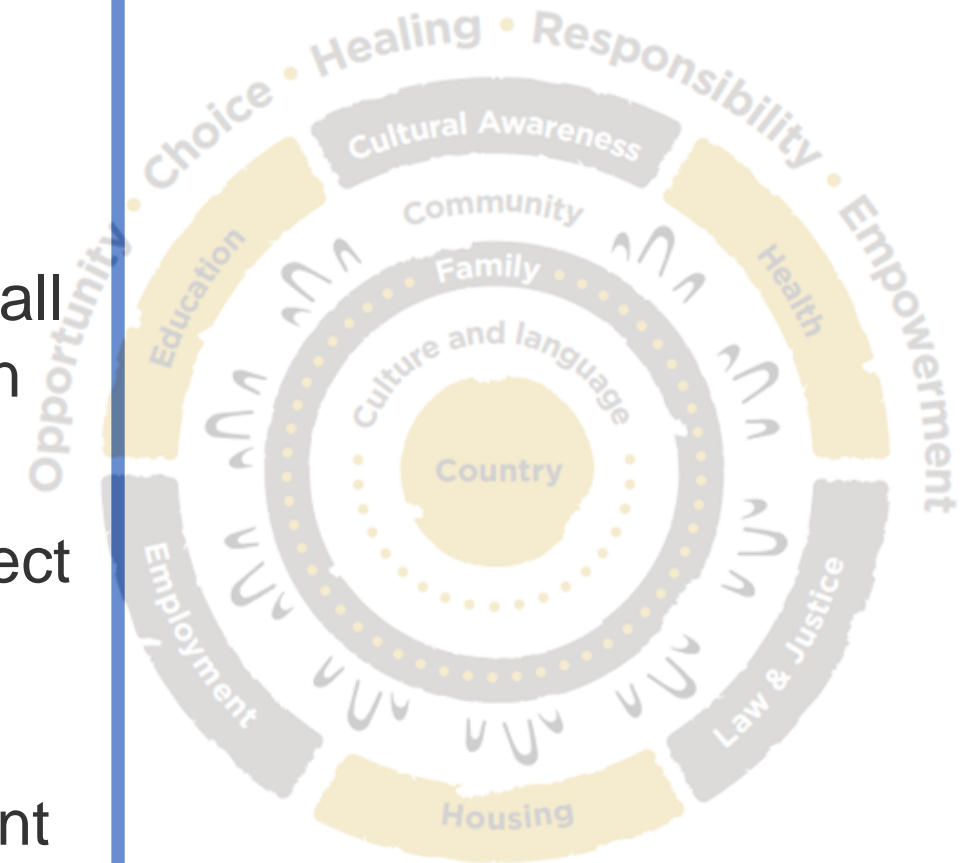
(Danièle Hromek, in ‘*Designing with Country*’, NSW Government Architect)



NSW Government:
Our Place on Country Framework

Implications – a decolonised approach

1. **Co-design** the framework with Aboriginal communities, reflecting their perspectives of wellbeing.
2. Apply an **First Nations cultural lens** across all wellbeing domains to demonstrate connection and integration.
3. Provisions for **data governance** should respect and support Aboriginal peoples' data sovereignty.
4. Ongoing improvement will require engagement via **cultural conversations**.



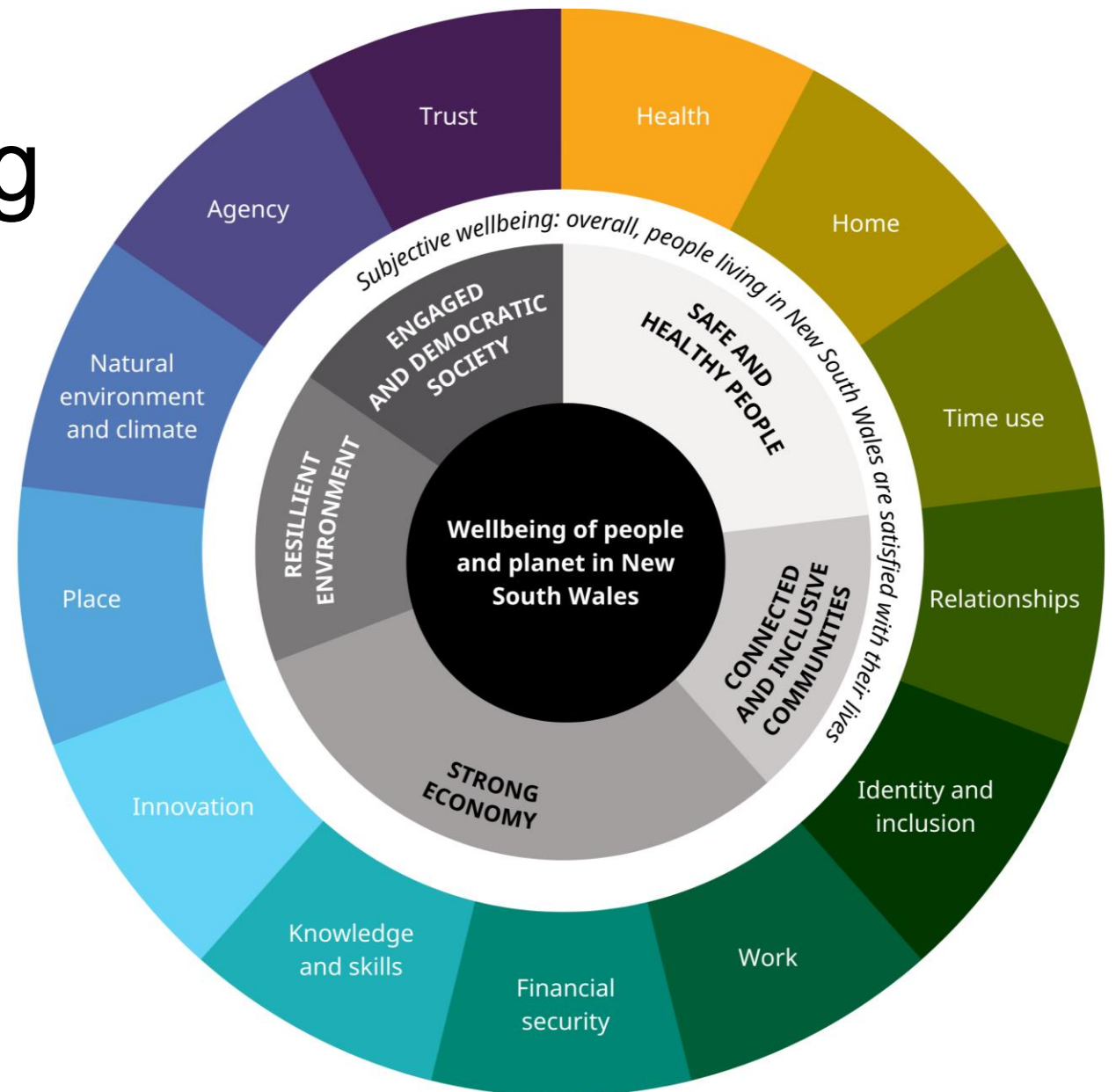
Key concept: equity/justice (Parsons & Mottee, forthcoming)

FORM OF EQUITY	QUESTION TO CONSIDER: (How) are experiences of wellbeing different for...
intergenerational or temporal equity (i.e. equity across time)	present generations compared with future generations?
spatial or geographical equity (i.e. equity across space)	people living in different places (e.g. urban/rural)?
socio-economic equity	the more vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community, compared with the more resilient, healthy, advantaged, and/or affluent?
gender equity	women, men, and those who identify as non-binary?
cultural equity	those from different cultural and linguistic groups?
age equity	older people, younger people, and different age groups?
democratic equity	those more or less able to represent themselves and participate in society?
procedural equity	those with different experiences of participation in the wellbeing framework/budget itself?

Draft NSW Wellbeing Framework

Principles-based approach:

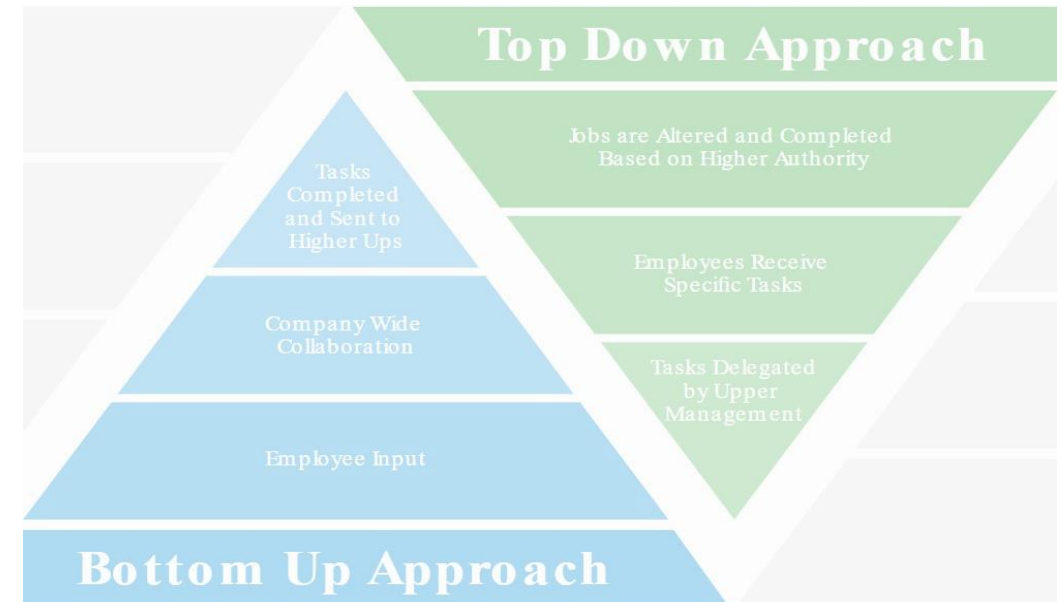
- actionable
- accountable
- aligned
- equitable
- culturally safe
- living
- sustainable



Reflections: challenges with the bottom-up approach

- time burden on staff, especially volunteers (risk of burnout)
- maintaining momentum and motivation
- precarious enabling environment:
 - constantly have to justify project (and define 'wellbeing')
 - risk of executive reverting to 'top-down' (e.g. not supporting citizen engagement)
 - risk of executive withdrawing support (short-termism)

But there are challenges with the top-down approach too (e.g. lack of 'buy-in').



Adapting existing practice? e.g. social impact assessment

Social impacts: how people experience social change resulting from programs, policies, plans, or projects.

Social impact assessment: the processes of analysing, monitoring and managing social impacts.

NSW guideline categories of social impacts

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• way of life• community• culture• health & wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• accessibility• surroundings• livelihoods• decision-making systems |
|--|--|



Smyth & Vanclay (2017), The social framework for projects.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14615517.2016.1271539>

Next steps

- Develop a whole-of government, integrated approach to wellbeing.
- Community participation in defining 'what matters' (from the bottom up...)



Thank you

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