



# South Australia: State of wellbeing

## Statement Summary

The SA: State of Wellbeing [statement](#) describes how South Australia is building a State of Wellbeing, since Professor Martin Seligman's 2013 term as Thinker in Residence.

A [90 Day Project](#) recognised that for SA to be a State of Wellbeing there was a need to be clear about:

- What we mean by wellbeing (i.e. a wellbeing description or definition);
- What contributes to wellbeing (i.e. a framework of wellbeing determinants); and
- How we could best measure the impact of our wellbeing efforts?

The project sought to answer these questions in a way that was also accessible and relatable to everyday citizens – to help support the good wellbeing work occurring in SA.


### Why a wellbeing description?

We often talk about wellbeing – without describing what it is. Wellbeing is a broad term that is used in many different settings. It can also be highly personal, and can mean different things to different people. When we ask people about what wellbeing means to them, people often identify aspects that contribute to wellbeing, rather than what wellbeing is. This was reinforced through a YourSAy [survey](#) of citizen's views.

As per the diagram below, the project considered wellbeing to be the concept of positive balance – i.e. an ability to meet, exceed and minimise the challenges we all face with supports and resources, subject to what we aspire to, and the opportunities we have.



\* Based on [Dodge et al. International Journal of Wellbeing](#)



In other words, if our supports and resources outweigh our challenges, in line with our aspirations and opportunities, then we could consider having positive wellbeing.

The individual aspects that people might identify as wellbeing (for example good health) usually fit within this description – for example:

- Good health can be a support or resource in meeting other challenges
- Good health can also be an aspiration (e.g. if we specifically wanted to improve our health, we might consider what opportunities we have to do this, plus the supports and resources we have, and the challenges).
- (Poor) health can also be a challenge.

This concept of positive balance was felt to apply at the individual, family, community and even State and national level.

### **A multi level wellbeing framework**

In line with this concept of wellbeing as positive balance, the statement also identified a framework of the different levels that impact on our wellbeing, and the different ‘determinants’ of wellbeing within each level.

We all have different levels of personal influence over these levels, based on social, political, economic and environmental circumstances, and how these may change. The framework identified:

- The **global** level conditions that contribute to our wellbeing include factors such as; climate change, connection to country, justice and inclusiveness, trade, human migration and displacement.
- At a **state and national** level, the resources that contribute to wellbeing include; social and economic policy, food security and nutrition, education, housing, income, employment, the built and natural environment, policy, and crime and safety.
- At a **community and neighbourhood** level, wellbeing is determined by factors such as; social cohesion, resilience, availability of services, safety and security, environment, employment opportunities and community advocacy and action.
- On a **personal** level, our wellbeing is determined by factors such as; knowledge and skills, attitudes and beliefs, experience and life history, personality, genetics, financial resources, social connections and relationships, family, resilience, identity (gender, culture), sense of agency and control.

### **Why measure our wellbeing?**

If our wellbeing is about positive balance and if many things influence our wellbeing at different levels – is it important to know and measure our wellbeing? How much would this help South Australia become a ‘State of Wellbeing’, and what use could this information be? The next step for this project is to consider these questions, and work towards a South Australian measurement of wellbeing.

**As a State, as individuals, and as families and communities, South Australians experience wellbeing when they have the right balance of supports and resources needed to manage challenges, grasp opportunities, achieve personal and collective goals and flourish. This balance is dynamic and can change based on shifts in social, political, economic and environmental circumstances.**