

Report 14.537
Date 13 October 2014
File WRS/09/01/01

Committee Wellington Regional Strategy
Author Richie Singleton, Economic Advisor, Wellington Regional Strategy Office

Wellington Region Genuine Progress Index (WR-GPI) 2014

1. Purpose

To present the draft 2014 Wellington Region Genuine Progress Index (WR-GPI) to the Wellington Regional Strategy Committee (the Committee).

2. Background

The WR-GPI is a key initiative of the Wellington Regional Strategy (WRS) designed to monitor wellbeing progress (economic, environmental, social and cultural) in the Wellington region. The WRS was initially developed in 2009/10 and first published in 2011. The 2011 publication received significant media attention and was widely recognised as a progressive and collaborative initiative, winning the 2011 GHD Supreme Award and the Joined Up Local Government Category at the 2011 SOLGM Local Government Excellence Awards.

The WR-GPI provides an alternative method for measuring progress. It is not designed to replace or to challenge Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It simply provides another system for examining the effects of policies, behaviours and activities occurring in or affecting well-being in the region.¹

3. 2014 WR-GPI

The draft 2014 WR-GPI report (**Attachment 1**) provides results for the 2001 to 2013 time series. A final report will be released by 30 October following

¹ The advantage of having this alternate lens is that it enables the community to demand less answers from GDP. Because GDP has dominated regional, national and international conversations about wellbeing for decades, it is expected to provide a useful interpretation of what is currently happening across multiple aspects of our society. But GDP was never designed to achieve that end. GDP was created as a method for answering questions such as “how fast is the economy growing,” “what is the pattern of spending on goods and services,” and “what percent of the increase in production is due to inflation” (McCulla and Smith 2007 in Costanza, 2009, p.4). It is purely an economic metric.

agreement by the Committee. Summary findings and next steps are presented below.

3.1 WR-GPI Key Findings

The WR-GPI increased by 3.5% between 2001 and 2013. During the 13 year period, there has been a significant degree of variability in the index. The overall increase can be primarily attributed to improvement in the economic and environmental wellbeing areas. Progress appears to have been constrained by declines amongst many social and most cultural indicators.

Cultural well-being was the only aspect overall not to demonstrate improvement, declining by 7.6% between 2001 and 2013. The social aspect improved by 1.4%, a moderate change compared with the increases in economic and environmental well-being of 11.1% and 11.3% respectively (2001 compared to 2013).

3.1.1 Economic Well-being

Overall, the trend for the economic well-being aspect of the WR-GPI is positive, as it increased between 2001 and 2013 by 11.1%. Economic well-being as measured by the WR-GPI was clearly buffeted by the global financial crisis, but has returned to robust growth in recent years. The economic well-being index demonstrates the important role education and labour force participation plays in providing a degree of resilience to the region's economy.

3.1.2 Environmental Well-being

The environmental well-being index increased between 2001 and 2013 by 11.3%. The index exhibits some fluctuations, exacerbated by indicators such as stream and river health, landfill waste and green house gas (GHG) emissions per capita that experienced sharp declines in some years and notable increases in others. Key improvements in the environmental well-being index relate to the suitability of marine and freshwater sites for recreation, and the per capita water supply (a measure of sustainable water consumption). Two indicators that have not shown signs of improvement however are soil quality of dairy farm sites and residents' rating of air pollution.

3.1.3 Social Well-being

Social well-being has improved gradually across the 13 year time period, with the index score in 2013 being just 1.4% higher than that of 2001. Some indicators have experienced more substantial shifts than others, with measures relating to the connected community outcome area showing particularly robust improvement. Access to the internet, public and active transport use, and positive perceptions of the ease of walking and of travelling by public transport in the region all increased across the time series.

These positive effects are countered, however, by increases amongst a number of indicators with negative associations to well-being. The number of households on Housing New Zealand waiting lists, stress, and perceptions about graffiti, vandalism and litter all dragged the index down. Constrained growth has also resulted from sluggish improvement or very gradual decline

amongst a host of other indicators. There is demonstrable improvement in the last 3 years of the time series (2011 to 2013).

3.1.4 Cultural Well-being

The cultural well-being aspect of the WR-GPI is made up of indicators from one community outcome – Strong and Tolerant Community. Cultural well-being was the only aspect in the WR-GPI not to demonstrate improvement, declining by 7.6% between 2001 and 2013. A major contributor to the negative trend in the strong and tolerant community outcome between 2001 and 2013 was the substantial drop in average voter turnout at local elections, the number of children enrolled in Māori language education and the percentage of the population who can have an everyday conversation in te reo Māori.

The overall decline was partly offset by rising trends across two indicators. These are the percentage of the population identifying with the Māori, Pacific or Asian ethnic groups (a proxy for ethnic diversity), and the total number of registered heritage places in the region. The most significant decline in the cultural well-being index occurred between 2010 and 2012. Signs of improvement began to show in 2013.

4 Next Steps

4.1 Application of the WR-GPI

Promotion and application of the WR-GPI is facilitated via the WR-GPI Working Group, which is made up of officers from each council in the region, the District Health Boards and other community stakeholders.

The Working Group is currently developing a communications plan designed to ensure communications relating to the WR-GPI are consistent across the respective organisations. The Working Group will also be investigating how the 2014 WR-GPI can further inform relevant aspects of policy and programs delivered by their respective organisations.

4.2 WR-GPI review

The WR-GPI is a long term monitoring tool and the interpretation of some indicators (and their contribution to composite outcome areas and well-being aspects) will improve as a longer time series of data becomes available. The framework will be subject to continuous revision, improvement in methodologies, and inclusion of additional variables.

The Working Group will be conducting a review of the WR-GPI framework between November 2014 and February 2015. As was anticipated when the WR-GPI was first published, the Working Group has recognised that the current set of indicators could be optimised as some indicators are no longer as relevant as they were in 2011. This is typically because either the data source has weakened in some way, a better indicator has evolved or the indicator's relevance in relation to other indicators or a community outcome requires review.

Results of the review process will be presented to the WRS Committee in 2015.

5. Communication

The WR-GPI report will be printed in hard copy and made available to interested organisations and individuals.

The WR-GPI has a dedicated website at www.gpiwellingtonregion.govt.nz with links from the WRS site.

A series of media releases will draw from differing aspects of the 2014 findings. This approach is designed to ensure promotion of the WR-GPI has longevity.

6. The decision-making process and significance

The matters requiring decision in this report have been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act).

Part 6 sets out the obligations of local authorities in relation to the making of decisions.

6.1 Significance of the decision

Part 6 requires Greater Wellington Regional Council to consider the significance of the decision. The term ‘significance’ has a statutory definition set out in the Act.

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking the Council's significance policy and decision-making guidelines into account. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have low significance.

Officers do not consider that a formal record outlining consideration of the decision-making process is required in this instance.

4. Recommendations

That the Wellington Regional Strategy Committee

- 1. Receives the report.*
- 2. Agrees that the report will be publically released by 30 October 2014.*
- 3. Notes that the GPI Working Group will be promoting the application of GPI and reviewing the indicators in 2015.*

Report prepared by:

Richie Singleton
Economic Advisor,
Wellington Regional Strategy
Office

Report approved by:

Nicola Shorten
Manager,
Strategic Planning

Report approved by:

Jane Davis
General Manager
Strategy & Community
Engagement

Attachment 1: Draft 2014 WR-GPI report