Guest editorial

The many paths to societal wellbeing: charting a course forward
Introduction
Wellbeing is most often associated with quality of life (Shin and Johnson, 1978; Zikmund, 2003; Rees *et al.*, 2010; Stratham and Chase, 2010), whereby quality of life can be defined as:

> [...] an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment (World Health Organization, 1997).

Indeed, although traditional conceptualisations of wellbeing tend to focus on individual subjectivity, more inclusive conceptualisations of wellbeing also consider family, community and society and acknowledge the importance of environmental, socio-economic, geographic and political factors that contribute towards the achievement and maintenance of wellbeing at all levels of society (Knight and McNaught, 2011; La Placa *et al.*, 2013). Wellbeing can be conceptualised at the individual, family, community and societal level. Individual wellbeing is actively created and interpreted by individuals in response to their positive and negative evaluations about factors such as work and life satisfaction (La Placa *et al.*, 2013). Family wellbeing extends this further by including evaluations of the quality of interpersonal and intergenerational relations and family access to economic and other resources (La Placa *et al.*, 2013). Community wellbeing, of which social capital is a core component (Coleman, 1998; Putnam, 1995, 2001; Baum and Ziersch, 2003; Helliwell and Putnam, 2007), extends beyond subjective wellbeing, by also considering the influence of structural, environmental and ecological factors (La Placa *et al.*, 2013). Finally, societal wellbeing is achieved when the basic needs of citizens are met, and they are integrated through a sense of purpose and belonging within a society (La Placa *et al.*, 2013). Wellbeing is a macro level construct concerned with both objective and subjective assessments of wellbeing as a desirable human state (La Placa *et al.*, 2013). Examples of objective indicators that aid in the measurement of wellbeing include economic and social indicators such as income, housing and work (Diener *et al.*, 2009), while examples of subjective indicators include constructs such as individual, emotional and psychological interpretations of wellbeing (Felce and Perry, 1995).

Wellbeing as an emerging policy agenda
The development of societal wellbeing as a concept has highlighted issues around social inequalities (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010) and has gained increasing attention from governments and policymakers. In November 2010, the UK Government established the Measuring National Well-being (MNW) programme to monitor and report "how the UK as a whole is doing" through various measures that include both objective (e.g. unemployment rate) and subjective (e.g. job satisfaction) data (ONS, 2017). Twice a year, a report is published to assess change over time and establish if national wellbeing in the UK is improving or deteriorating (ONS, 2017). These wellbeing indicators are intended to complement the data provided by economic measures, such as gross domestic product (GDP), which have been found to be insufficient on their own (ONS, 2017).

Further, in May 2011, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched the OECD better life initiative (www.oecd.org/betterlifeinitiative) (OECD, 2013). As a part of this initiative, the *How's Life? Measuring Well-Being* report, published every two years, seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of wellbeing in OECD countries and other major economies through measuring material conditions and quality of life across the population. Like the UK-based MNW programme, the OECD framework for measuring wellbeing and progress was developed in response to the limitations of macroeconomic statistics in adequately providing policymakers with the most accurate understanding of living conditions of ordinary citizens (OECD, 2013). Frameworks that can more holistically capture the everyday experiences of citizens have the potential to produce more accurate wellbeing indicators that can improve the credibility and accountability of public policies (OECD, 2013).

Approaches to wellbeing
One of the most common approaches in wellbeing research is situated within the psychology area, including positive psychology. Psychology-based wellbeing research approaches include two different approaches. First, the hedonic tradition focuses on constructs like happiness, positive affect, low negative affect and satisfaction with life (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984; Kahneman *et al.*, 1999; Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999). In contrast, the eudaimonic tradition emphasises positive psychological functioning and human development (Rogers, 1961, Ryff, 1989a, 1989b; Waterman, 1993). There is agreement that wellbeing is reflective of both objective and subjective indicators. Positive psychology has sought to integrate the subjective states with objective elements and then focusses on wider structural considerations (La Placa *et al.*, 2013). This acknowledges the wider, external circumstances that influence individual subjective wellbeing (La Placa *et al.*, 2013). Although there is a lack of a consensus definition of wellbeing, owing to its inherently complex nature, Shin and Johnson's (1978) definition of wellbeing as "a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his or her own chosen criteria" (p. 478) acknowledges both the objective and subjective measures that exist at the individual, community and structural level and which should be considered when determining subjective wellbeing.

Another approach concerned with the achievement of wellbeing outcomes is the transformative perspective (Mick, 2006), which includes transformative consumer research (TCR) and transformative service research (TSR). TCR focusses on issues of consumer welfare (Mick, 2006), however, does not directly address the role of services in affecting consumer wellbeing (Anderson *et al.*, 2013). Hence, TSR was borne out of this gap in the TCR research and also in response to a gap in traditional service research, whereby outcomes related to consumer wellbeing are rarely considered (Anderson *et al.*, 2013). TSR focuses on understanding the transformative impact of services on consumers (Anderson *et al.*, 2013) and can include commercial services that also seek to achieve commercial (i.e. profit) outcomes for the organisation.

Finally, social marketing is another approach that is oriented towards the achievement of wellbeing at the individual, collective and societal level. Social marketing involves the development and application of marketing theories and concepts, in addition to other approaches, to influence individuals, communities, structures and societies to bring about positive social change. Contemporary social marketing approach involves strategic considerations and interventions at the upstream (policy), midstream (service, communities) and downstream (individual) levels to achieve societal wellbeing. Upstream and midstream approaches in particular are useful in a field where downstream approaches have long dominated, as these help close the gaps that arise from focussing too heavily on individual

factors. For example, effective upstream social marketing can successfully alter the structural environment (Gordon, 2013) in ways that can facilitate individual and group behaviour change that improve individual, community and societal wellbeing. Midstream social marketing alternatively proposes working with partners and community groups to act as enactors of social change (Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2013) that can lead to wellbeing outcomes for society.

Societal wellbeing as the theme for the International Social Marketing Conference 2016
In light of the increasing attention and interest in wellbeing in the academic research, practical and policy fields, the 2016 International Social Marketing Conference (ISMC) featured the theme of societal wellbeing. The ISMC was hosted by the University of Wollongong from 25 to 27 September 2016 in coastal Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia. In line with the release of the OECD framework for measuring wellbeing and progress (OECD, 2013), and with wellbeing as an interdisciplinary construct, combined with an emerging policy agenda, the opportunity exists for social marketing to be positioned within and add to this important discourse. The theme was not only topical but also diverse enough in nature to assist the linkage of multiple scholars and practitioners.

About the special issue
The use of multiple approaches, perspectives and pathways in a complementary and coordinated way has the potential for the development of more effective social change programmes and intervention strategies that are more likely to achieve desired wellbeing outcomes. A collection of five papers on the theme of societal wellbeing is featured in this special issue. The authors have drawn from a variety of theoretical perspectives and approaches including behavioural science, human geography, engineering, service thinking, systems thinking, community-based approaches and social enterprise to demonstrate how these pathways can be used in addition to social marketing to charter a course forward towards societal wellbeing. The first paper is by François Dessart and René van Bavel entitled, "Two converging paths: behavioural sciences and social marketing for better policies". It argues that social marketing and behavioural sciences should be used as two paths towards the development of better social policies and describes how the two approaches are similar, different and how they can be used to complement one another. The authors highlight that there has been an increase in the adoption of behavioural sciences to inform policies that promote societal wellbeing and that although social marketing is not always explicitly used in the same way it is used in a *de facto* manner. The second paper is by Ross Gordon, Gordon Waitt and Paul Cooper entitled, "A social marketer, a geographer, and an engineer walk into a bar: reflections on Energy+Illawarra and undertaking interdisciplinary projects". This paper describes the interdisciplinary approach undertaken, through the use of the pathways of social marketing, human geography and engineering, towards achieving societal wellbeing in a coordinated and integrated way to overcome the limitations of each individual path and produce better outcomes for all stakeholders involved. The authors use the case of the Energy+Illawarra energy efficiency programme to reflect on key learning outcomes and offer suggestions for overcoming potential challenges associated with using interdisciplinary approaches in social change programmes. The next paper is contributed by Joy Parkinson, Chris Dubelaar, Julia Carins, Stephen Holden, Fiona Newton and Melanie Pescud entitled, "Approaching the wicked problem of obesity: an introduction to the food system compass". This paper focuses on food consumption as part of the wicked problem of obesity and explores the complex interplay between various stakeholders, such as food producers, marketers, health and medical practitioners and policymakers. The authors present a framework, the food system compass, for use as an analytic tool that can assist in planning social change

programmes to address complex social issues like obesity. The next paper is by Cheryl Leo and Nadia Zainuddin entitled, "Exploring value destruction in social marketing services". This paper demonstrates the use of services thinking as an alternative pathway towards societal wellbeing and investigates value destruction in social marketing services designed to facilitate socially desirable behaviours amongst service users. The authors identify value destruction processes that services should manage, to avoid the negative outcomes described in their study. The final paper is by Sarah Keller and Timothy Wilson entitled, "Preventing suicide in Montana: a community-based theatre intervention". This study suggests that community-based approaches, such as community theatre, can have great efficacy in addressing highly stigmatised social issues such as suicide. The authors discuss the Let's Talk programme, a community-based theatre programme that hosts and facilitates a theatre workshop to address suicide risk and describes how encouraging participants shared their personal experiences and then collaboratively produced a play based on these experiences which had a positive impact on increasing help-seeking behaviour.

Concluding remarks
To conclude, we, as Guest Editors, would like to thank the many reviewers who volunteered their time and expertise in providing constructive feedback to the submitting authors. Without their contributions, this special issue would not have been possible. We would also like to thank Professor Sharyn Rundle-Thiele, Editor of the *Journal of Social Marketing*, for allowing us this special issue dedicated to the important and topical theme of societal wellbeing. Finally, we thank all the authors from around the world who submitted their work to this special issue and for showing us the range and depth of work done in this area.

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