

## In brief

# A report card on liveability in our cities

This report is a summary of the key points of 'Creating liveable cities in Australia: Mapping urban policy implementation and evidence-based national liveability indicators'.

The full report is at: <http://cur.org.au/project/national-liveability-report/>

## Key messages

- Governments in Australia and internationally recognise the benefits of urban liveability.
- Liveable communities are good for the economy, social inclusion and environmental sustainability, and promote the health and wellbeing of residents. They have affordable housing linked by public transport, walking and cycling paths to workplaces, public open space and all the amenities required for daily living.
- The 'Creating Liveable Cities in Australia' report details the first measurement of liveability in Australia's state and territory capital cities.
- The report maps policy standards designed to create liveable cities and seven domains of urban liveability that also promote the health and wellbeing of Australians – walkability, public transport, public open space, housing affordability, employment, and food and alcohol environments.
- The report also assesses policy implementation.
- In many cases government planning policies are failing to deliver liveability equitably across our cities. Measurable spatial policy standards were identified for only three of the seven key liveability domains.
- Current policies and guidelines do not appear to be informed by the growing body of evidence about how to achieve healthy, liveable cities.
- No Australian capital city performs well across all the liveability indicators, with many failing to meet their own policy targets designed to create liveability.
- There are geographical inequities in the delivery of liveability policies within and between cities, with outer suburban areas generally less well served than inner-city suburbs.
- Evidence-informed policy and practice are needed to maintain and improve urban liveability, improve the health and wellbeing of residents, and ensure that people's quality of life is maintained as our cities grow.

# About the report

- The 'Creating Liveable Cities in Australia' report details the first measurement of liveability in Australia's state and territory capital cities.
- It assesses and maps urban policy implementation and evidence-informed national liveability indicators.
- The research suggests a need for consistent evidence-informed urban planning policies and integrated planning of housing, transport, land use and infrastructure to optimise outcomes and reduce liveability inequities.
- It is the culmination of five years of research, supported by three programs of work:
  - NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Healthy Liveable Communities
  - The Clean Air and Urban Landscapes (CAUL) Hub of the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program
  - The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre's National Liveability Study.

## Key findings

### How policies compared

- All Australian capital cities appear to value walkability and liveability, but there is little evidence that the policies reviewed are sufficient to create, maintain and enhance urban liveability in Australia. There is also little evidence the policies are informed by the growing body of evidence on how to create healthy, liveable and walkable cities.
- No measurable spatial policy standards were identified in any capital city for promoting local employment, housing affordability and access to healthy food choices, or limiting access to alcohol outlets.
- Policy standards for walkability, public transport and public open space varied markedly in the specific urban characteristics measured and their level of ambition (e.g. residential density targets varied from 15 dwellings per hectare to 30 dwellings per hectare, in the case of urban areas in Brisbane).
- Some states had similar policies but different targets. For example, WA's target for access to public transport is that 60% of dwellings should have access to nearby public transport, while NSW's target is much more ambitious and less achievable i.e. that 100% of

dwellings should have access to nearby public transport with frequent services.

- In Melbourne, nearly 70% of dwellings had access to a nearby public transport stop in line with the policy. However, once half-hour service frequencies were included, this dropped to only 36% of dwellings having access to a frequently serviced stop.

### How our cities are performing

- Cities with less ambitious policy targets were meeting their targets, but generally not performing as well as other cities with more ambitious targets in terms of creating healthy liveable communities.
- No city performs well across all the policy and/or evidence-informed liveability indicators. For example, Perth has some walkable neighbourhoods on the urban fringe, but these areas have poor access to public transport.
- There is also substantial variation within cities, with inner-city areas (and many middle-level suburbs) substantially better served than outer suburbs by the urban design, infrastructure and land use planning policies needed to create liveable communities.

# Recommendations

1



## Evidence-informed policies

Evidence-informed integrated transport, land use and infrastructure planning is needed to deliver affordable housing, public transport, accessible employment and amenities, and to create walkable neighbourhoods as the foundation of a liveable city.

2



## Short, medium and long-term targets

Include measurable spatial standards in state government urban, transport and infrastructure policies, regulations and/or guidelines, including short-, medium- and long-term targets as appropriate.

3



## Spatial indicators

Develop spatial indicators of Australian cities to benchmark and monitor the implementation of state-based policies designed to create liveable communities.

4

## Expand the National Cities Performance Framework

Expand the Federal Government's National Cities Performance Framework to include policy implementation indicators for access to public transport, walkability, public open space, employment and affordable housing.

5



## Data standards

Develop agreed standards for the collection and categorisation of state government data that could be used to benchmark and monitor the implementation of urban policies in Australian cities.

6



## Five-year update cycle

Update liveability indicators at least every five years, to coincide with the ABS Census, and more frequently when possible.

7



## Metropolitan governance

Move towards metropolitan governance of cities, starting by ensuring that state and local government policies are consistent and evidence informed, and specifically designed to create healthy liveable communities.

## Creating liveable cities in Australia:

Mapping urban policy implementation and evidence-based national liveability indicators

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The full report can be found at: <http://cur.org.au/project/national-liveability-report/>

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The Australian Prevention  
Partnership Centre  
Systems and solutions for better health



Clean Air and  
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