



Research brief: Improving liveability

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How do we understand and measure liveability in Australian cities to improve urban planning and infrastructure?

This research note is particularly relevant for decision-makers across the housing, employment, public open space and urban and transport planning sectors. It will be relevant to policymakers at all levels of government, as well as people from the private and community sectors involved in planning and building urban environments.



Background

The creation of liveable neighbourhoods improves outcomes in relation to health, the economy, and sustainability¹. The liveability of Australian cities is generally good compared to international standards however significant challenges remain. In particular, considerable inequities in liveability exist across inner, middle, and outer metropolitan areas and between Australian cities, with less liveable regions suffering from lack of affordable housing, poor access to local employment, shops and essential infrastructure and services, and related car dependence, resulting in low rates of walking, cycling and public transport use^{2,3,4}.

All levels of government increasingly recognise the benefits of liveability^{5,6,7,8}. However, most existing measures of liveability are not linked to current Australian urban planning policies, and do not measure inequities within cities⁹. This makes it challenging to develop the infrastructure that supports liveability and to monitor Australia's progress to becoming more liveable.

Focus

Research undertaken by the Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub will assess current policy and progress of local, state and federal governments in Australia, on creating liveable neighbourhoods. This research will develop measures of liveability that are suitable for application in the Australian policy context. It builds on work undertaken by the The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre and the NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Healthy Liveable Communities.

Detail

Specific tasks that will be undertaken by the Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub include:

- Identifying and reviewing relevant urban planning policies and legislation, that shape key urban systems, such as employment access; housing diversity, density and affordability; green space provision and access; public transport access, and walkability.
- Assessing how liveability is conceptualised within these policies and systems, and the extent of integration between different levels of government.
- Developing policy-relevant measures of liveability for all of these critical components.
- Mapping liveability indicators across selected regions of interest.

Research will focus on the states of New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, and selected local government case studies within those states, as well as federal government policy.

Expected Outcomes

This research will improve our understanding of current performance and impacts of government policies that influence the liveability of Australian cities. In particular, it will improve our knowledge about how liveability is conceptualised and the level of integration between local, state, and federal government policies related to liveability.

A specific outcome will be a set of liveability indicators that is able to be mapped across major Australian cities at appropriate geographical scales, to assess current levels of urban policy implementation. The research will result in specific policy recommendations to assist with future urban development decision-making.

About the CAUL Hub

The Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub is part of the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Programme. The remit of the CAUL Hub is to undertake "Research to support environmental quality in our urban areas". This includes research on air quality, urban greening, liveability and biodiversity, with a focus on practical implementation of research findings, public engagement and Indigenous Australian participation. The CAUL Hub is a consortium of four universities: the University of Melbourne, RMIT University, the University of Western Australia and the University of Wollongong.



References

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