



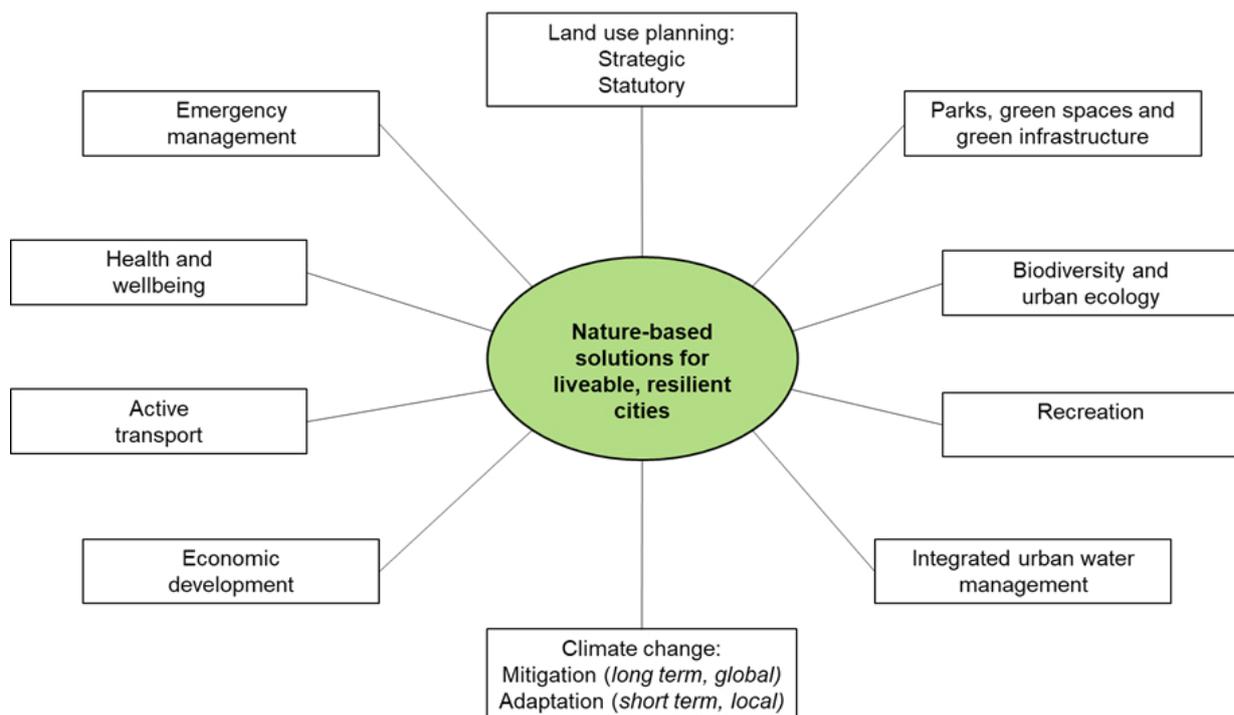
# Multifunctional urban green-blue spaces: Policy domains

Urban green-blue spaces, such as parks, waterways, street trees, gardens and nature reserves are essential elements of resilient and liveable cities. As well as being aesthetically pleasing, green-blue spaces provide many functions and benefits for people and the other species that call our cities home. They cool our cities, treat air and water, provide space for recreation and connection, and habitat for biodiversity.

Because green-blue spaces are multifunctional, providing a range of nature-based solutions, there are multiple policy domains associated with their planning and management. Effective planning and management of green-blue spaces requires communication and coordination across these policy domains, government departments and community organisations.

## Policy domains

In addition to urban land-use planning, which provides the overarching strategic directions for urban development and land use, other relevant policy domains include environmental sustainability, climate change, integrated water management, heritage protection, ecology and conservation (natural-resource management). Nature-based solutions also contribute to the policy domains of health and emergency management through a range of ecosystem services, addressing both short-term, acute perspectives such as disaster and natural hazard mitigation, as well as long-term, chronic issues such as public-health improvements associated with physical activity, mental wellbeing and social cohesion.





Images: (above) As well as contributing to the city's drainage infrastructure, urban waterways and wetlands provide important biodiversity habitat and (right) street trees in Northcote, Melbourne. Credit: Judy Bush

## The challenges of monofunctional governance and multifunctional green-blue spaces

Individual urban policy and governance processes are predominantly focused on single dimensions or functions of green-blue space. The multiple policy domains risk piecemeal, uncoordinated and less effective approaches to urban green-blue space planning and management, resulting in situations where actions operate at cross purposes. This is exacerbated when jurisdictional boundaries, for example between different local governments, have no relationship with biophysical systems, such as urban waterways and catchments.

### More information

CAUL Factsheet: Planning and managing urban nature-based solutions: Governance perspectives: <https://nespurban.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Planning-and-managing-urban-nature-based-solutions-Governance-perspectives.pdf>

CAUL research: Bush, J. (2020). [The role of local government greening policies in the transition towards nature-based cities.](#)

Citation: Bush, J. 2020, Multifunctional urban green-blue spaces: policy domains Project 3.8 Factsheet, CAUL Hub, Melbourne.

The Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub is funded by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

## Green-blue space policy and governance: 'vertical' and 'horizontal' integration

A focus on effective approaches to policy and governance for urban nature-based solutions requires increased integration between policy domains and levels of government, as well as participation from a wider range of voices and knowledges. The voices of Aboriginal peoples, the Traditional Owners play a central role as custodians of Country.

### Case study: Memorandum for Health and Nature

There is increasing awareness of the importance of access to green-blue spaces for people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. These linkages between nature and health were recognised by the Victorian Government in the Memorandum for Health and Nature, co-signed by the Ministers for Health and for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The Memorandum commits the government to "supporting and enabling an integrated, whole of government approach", including developing "health and nature-focussed initiatives to encourage under-represented groups such as culturally diverse communities, people with disabilities and families from lower socio-economic backgrounds the opportunity to benefit". Parks Victoria and the Department of Health are working together to deliver these initiatives. Read more here: <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/victorian-memorandum-for-health-and-nature>



### Sources

Bush, J. (2020). The role of local government greening policies in the transition towards nature-based cities. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 35, 35-44. doi:10.1016/j.eist.2020.01.015

Bush, J., Coffey, B., & Fastenrath, S. (2020). Governing urban greening at a metropolitan scale: an analysis of the Living Melbourne strategy. *Australian Planner*. doi:10.1080/07293682.2020.1739093

Coffey, B., Bush, J., Mumaw, L., de Kleyn, L., Furlong, C., & Cretney, R. M. (2020). Towards good governance of urban greening: Insights from four initiatives in Melbourne, Australia. *Australian Geographer*. doi:10.1080/0049182.2019.1708552

Cumpston, Z. (2020). To address the ecological crisis, Aboriginal peoples must be restored as custodians of Country. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from *The Conversation* website: <https://theconversation.com/to-address-the-ecological-crisis-aboriginal-peoples-must-be-restored-as-custodians-of-country-108594>