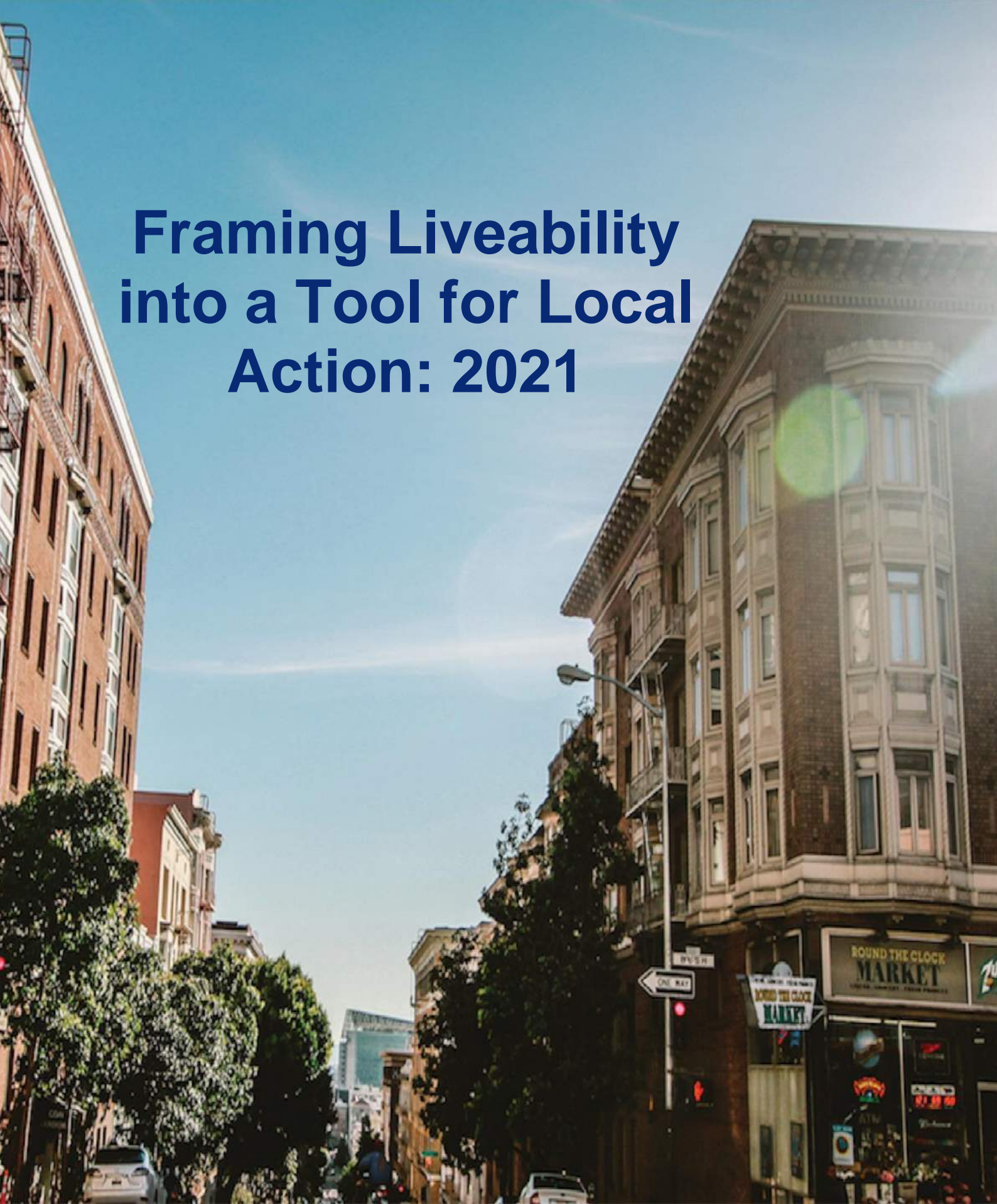


# Framing Liveability into a Tool for Local Action: 2021



## Executive Summary

This report provides a brief overview and literature review of liveability, looking at major themes and bodies of work internationally, nationally, and specifically in the Victorian context. It also identifies some of the work that has commenced in the liveability space in Western Victoria, and the differences between liveability in urban, regional, and rural settings.

Although it does not attempt to be comprehensive, its aim is to draw on the extensive activities that have been undertaken in order to provide a common understanding and language for those tasked with working to enhance the liveability within Victorian communities and the wellbeing of their inhabitants. This project will also attempt to provide a workable framework for systematically considering the interactions of various community amenities when planning, implementing, or evaluating/monitoring programs and actions that contribute or impact liveability within the diversity of Victorian communities and proposes a strategy for taking the concepts forward.

Liveability has no common or accepted definition, although most people would understand that it refers to what makes a place attractive to those who wish to live, work and recreate there and perhaps particularly to attract new residents to that location. For those familiar with the social determinants of health, there is a close correlation to many of these aspects and the elements that people believe constitute requirements for liveable communities, such as clean, healthy environments, food, water, and housing; the ability to contribute and influence through social interactions, commerce, and governments; access to enjoyable leisure activities; and the ability to access social supports and health services when needed. Although the specifics of these may look slightly differently depending on the respondent's position in the life cycle, their social standing and cultural upbringing, generally no matter where one lives, these are the elements identified as being critical to *Liveability*.

### Recommendations:

1. The Liveability Framework is shared across the Western region as a common tool toward integrated planning, prevention, and monitoring of liveability on a local level, promoted by Champions who understand and believe in its value.
2. Priority is given to:
  - a. Creating support tools tailored to different audiences (e.g., local government, environmental agencies, NFPs, etc.)
  - b. Creating a community of practice on *liveability* that can promote and support the framework and its use
  - c. Develop incentives for using the framework
3. Create a data/metrics expert group to refine and further develop potential metrics identified in the Indicator Analysis section of this Report; source relevant data; and establish and maintain a platform for open access to a liveability dashboard to support urban, regional, and rural use.

## ***Current Liveability Frameworks – International***

### WHO

With the signing of the Declaration of the Alma Ata in 1978, followed by the Ottawa Charter in 1986, and the Rio Political Declaration on the Social Determinants of Health in 2011, Australia has committed itself to addressing inequities in health. As stated in the Declaration, “...the attainment of the highest standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition. ...the promotion of health equality is essential to sustainable development and to a better quality of life and wellbeing for all, which in turn can contribute to peace and security. .... Health inequalities arise from the societal conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age which are called the **social determinants of health**. These include early years’ experiences, education, economic status, employment and decent work, housing and environment, and effective systems for treating and preventing ill health. Good health requires a universal, comprehensive, equitable, effective, responsive, and accessible quality health system. But it is also dependent on the involvement of and dialogue with other sectors and actors as their performance has significant health impacts. Collaboration in coordinated and intersectoral and policy actions has proven effective....”.<sup>1</sup>

With these statements and principles in mind, since 2011 there has been an aim within Australia to build a framework that can effectively guide, monitor, and measure health inequities across regions. It is well known that generally, health status in rural regions is poorer than in urban and regional centres<sup>2</sup> and as population pressures are creating an outflow into rural areas, policies and programs aimed at addressing these inequities have gained support and attention at all levels of government. More recently, there has been interest in looking at liveability indices and what differences there might be between regional, rural, remote, and urban settings in terms of community expectations as well as the social determinants of health as outlined above.

US, Canada & UK - In the US, considerable work has been undertaken, particularly by the AARP (representing older persons over the age of 50) to look at aspects of liveability<sup>3</sup>. Their position is that if a community’s amenities address the diverse needs of older people, they will also meet the

---

<sup>1</sup> Executive Board, 130. (2012). Social determinants of health: outcome of the World Conference on Social Determinants of Health (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, October 2011): report by the Secretariat. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/2374>

<sup>2</sup> 2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Rural & remote health. Cat. no. PHE 255. Canberra: AIHW. Viewed 01 May 2020, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/rural-remote-australians/rural-remote-health>

<sup>3</sup> [The Livability Index - AARP Public Policy Institute](#)



needs fundamentally of everyone, including children and those with a disability. Their website has many resources as they have developed a framework incorporating the 7 domains of: 1) Housing 2) Neighborhoods 3) Transport 4) the Environment 5) Health 6) Civic and Social Engagement and 7) Opportunity. They have several projects/programs that have implemented change at a neighbourhood level and descriptions, tools, and evaluations of these can also be found on their website.

In addition, livability has emerged at the forefront of the recent *Partnership for Sustainable Communities* formed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This partnership identified six livability principles to enable the partnership to collaborate to improve access to affordable housing, increase transportation options and lower transportation costs, protect the environment, promote equitable development, and address the challenges of climate change in communities nationwide.

The Transportation Research Board has undertaken several projects linking transportation as a key element in liveability<sup>4</sup>. **HEALTHIEST COMMUNITIES**<sup>5</sup>, is an interactive destination for consumers and policymakers, developed by U.S. News & World Report in collaboration with the Aetna Foundation, an independent charitable and philanthropic affiliate of CVS Health. Backed by in-depth research and accompanied by news and analysis, the site features comprehensive rankings drawn from an examination of nearly 3,000 counties and county equivalents on 84 metrics across 10 categories, informing residents, health care leaders and officials about local policies and practices that drive better health outcomes for all. Data was gathered and analysed by the University of Missouri Center for Applied Research and Engagement Systems (CARES). And there are many more sites that have undertaken significant research into *liveability*, sometimes linked with *sustainability* and *thriving* communities.

Canada, through the CRC Research group<sup>6</sup>, has engaged with both liveability and sustainability primarily within the context of the urban built environment. As consistently selected as one of the most liveable places anywhere, their work has been primarily concerned with maintaining the amenity of their cities into the future.

The UK has undertaken work through the Design Council UK in collaboration with Social Change UK that looks at how creating healthy places promotes health, well-being, and productivity<sup>7,8</sup>. They too have looked at the over-50 population in much of the research that they have

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://rip.trb.org/Results?txtKeywords=livability> .

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities>

<sup>6</sup> [CRC Research](#)

<sup>7</sup> (<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/design-series/better-places-series>)

<sup>8</sup> [Healthy Placemaking Executive Summary.pdf \(designcouncil.org.uk\)](#)

undertaken. Their conclusions are that better environmental design leads to greater liveability and amenity for all.

### Scandinavian Countries

The Netherlands has identified 5 quality of life measures that they include in their assessment of liveability. Liveability there is generally measured by factors that provide quality of life, such as *access* to fresh water, food, housing, transport, health care, education, and a safe and stable environment. This demonstrates that it is not only the elements of liveability which are important, but also the quality of those elements – e.g., how accessible, affordable, equitable, sustainable, flexible, appropriate, etc. Traditionally, Sweden and Dutch cities are considered some of the most livable places on the planet, however in recent times this has been shifting as CoVid has impacted amenity and social cohesion.

### India

The Department of Architecture & Regional Planning, Indian Institute of Technology (authors Paul Arpan (PhD) and Joy Sen (PhD))<sup>9</sup> have written *A critical review of liveability approaches and their dimensions* which highlights the difficulty in forming a single definition of liveability and/or sustainability. They have suggested a systems approach to developing definitions that reflect that these will continue to develop over time and are situational in their usefulness.

### China

As China has become more urbanized over the past decade, considerable interest has evolved around liveability. In 2007, the Ministry of Construction produced the Scientific Assessment Standards of Livable Cities which included measures such as: 1) Social civilization (including political civilization, social harmony, community civilization, public participation) 2) Economic prosperity (including per capita GDP, disposable income per capita fiscal revenue, employment rates, and percentage of tertiary industry employment vs total employment) 3) Environmental soundness (including the ecological environment, climate, cultural environment, and urban landscape) 4) Resource sustainability (including per capita fresh water resources, recycling rates of industrial water, per capita urban land use, and food security) 6) Living convenience (incorporating traffic, commercial services, municipal facilities, educational, cultural and sports facilities, green open spaces, housing, and public health) 7) Public security/safety (including completeness of life-line projects, facilities and systems to mitigate against natural and human-inflicted disasters, rate of successful handling of public security issues in past years by the municipal government) 8) Negative condition (including high crime rates, social polarization, pollution, fresh water deficiency or ecological deterioration)<sup>10</sup>. The system of regulation and

---

<sup>9</sup> [A critical review of liveability approaches and their dimensions - ScienceDirect](#)

<sup>10</sup> YU Fang, Peng Fei, Cao Dong, Wang Jinan — Empirical Study of Urban Environmentally Livable Index for China

compliance in China is such that their efforts are not necessarily ones that may inform those in Victoria, although China has gained some of its research through Australian efforts, extracting useful insights particularly from Victoria.

### International Rankings

Most people are familiar with the Mercer City Rankings<sup>11</sup>, Kearney's Global Cities Index and GC Outlook, and the work of the Economist Intelligence Unit<sup>12</sup> (EIU - business market research) – and there are several others across *liveability, wellbeing, and quality of life*. Their work ranking cities across the globe as 'most livable' relies on the views of ex-pats, potential residents looking to relocate, and business prospects/prosperity within each city. Some encompass many social and objective indicators as well as objective ones. However, as noted, primarily they are concerned with large urban rather than regional or rural settings with weightings heavily emphasizing economic and political prospects.

The EIU Liveability Index examines 140 cities worldwide to quantify the challenges presented to an individual's lifestyle, such as the pandemic in 2021. Each city is assigned a liveability score for more than 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure. Although the work undertaken by each of these organisations is valuable within their respective context, it is not as relevant in the search for developing policy and programs or a framework for the future for our purposes. We will, however, use some of their metrics to cross-reference those that we might consider for our use.

US News also undertakes and publishes a yearly Quality of Life international country ranking which surveys 17,000 global citizens from four regions to assess perceptions of 78 countries on 76 different metrics. The *Quality of Life* sub-ranking is based on an equally weighted average of scores from nine country attributes that relate to quality of life in a country: affordability, a good job market, economic stability, family friendly, income equality, politically stable, safe, well-developed public education system and well-developed public health system. This ranking system is perhaps more informative for our purposes in determining the most important elements of what is considered important for liveability, but again is too broad to be more than a reference, particularly for regional and rural locations.

### IN SUMMARY

Although there has been significant international activity in the (primarily urban) liveability space over the past decade which has informed that within Australia, the work undertaken within Australia itself has also been prolific and perhaps more informative for our purposes. We will take

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mercer.com/newsroom.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.eiu.com/>

a closer look at several research projects that we might draw upon in the context of developing a relevant framework and metrics for the future.

### ***Current Liveability Frameworks – Australian Examples***

The Australian Urban Observatory (RMIT) has developed the Healthy Liveable Cities Liveability Index from eight years of research<sup>13</sup>. It defines livable communities as those which are safe, socially cohesive, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable. Liveable Cities have affordable housing linked via public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, employment, education, shops and services, public open space, and social, cultural and recreational facilities. The 13 measures which comprise the liveability index are: 1) street connectivity; 2) access to community, culture and leisure destinations; 3) access to childcare services; 4) access to public schools; 5) access to health services; 6) access to sport and recreation facilities; 7) access to fresh food; 8) access to convenience stores; 9) access to regular public transport; 10) access to large public open space; 11) low housing affordability stress; 12) dwelling density; and 13) local employment opportunities. They provide free access to their methodology and indicators assigned to the Cities which they have researched. Again, this research is limited to urban settings.

The Planning Institute of Australia<sup>14</sup> has included in their position statement the following: “...Good planning delivers stronger communities and choices available for where and how people live and work – such as, shorter travel times to work; safe and walkable neighbourhoods; a range of choices and opportunities of places to live; and better education, healthcare and recreation opportunities that are respectful of cultural diversity.” Additionally, they recognise the importance of collaborative development reflective of local values. They recognise the 3 pillars of how development impacts the **Economy, the Environment, and the social fabric** of that community and suggest that good planning must include measuring the changes that occur because of any intervention. They have built liveability measures into their planning and operational frameworks.

#### Regional Australia Institute

Regional Australia has undertaken a massive amount of work on promoting liveability in the rural areas of Australia. They actively promote the interests of those living in the rural sector and have developed a ‘tool-kit’<sup>15</sup> to assist local governments in addressing issues related to liveability and have a discussion paper on liveability<sup>16</sup> in which they have attempted to define liveability in the

<sup>13</sup> <https://auo.org.au/>

<sup>14</sup> [Policy - Planning Institute of Australia](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Strengthening Liveability: a toolkit for rural and regional communities looking to grow - Regional Australia Institute](#)

<sup>16</sup> Bourne, K. (2019). Understanding Regional Liveability: Discussion Paper. Canberra, The Regional Australia Institute.

rural sector based on both the literature and on the subjective responses from people moving into rural areas of Australia. They have segmented their views across the life cycle, looking at 4 distinct age-groups. The six elements that they have identified are: 1) Health services 2) Education services 3) Cost of living 4) Amenity 5) Connections to community, friends, and place and 6) Lifestyle and opportunity. The Institute recognises the subjectivity of trying to define liveability but acknowledges its usefulness in terms of attracting people into the rural towns to enable them to thrive and compete into the future. In looking at a framework that might work for the rural sector, it would be advisable to partner with the Institute to maximise what has already been learned.

### The Australian Unity Well-being Index<sup>17</sup>

Since 2000, Deakin University has undertaken research into the wellbeing of Australians. This research, known as the Australian Unity Well-being Index measures both personal and national characteristics. It is largely subjective data based on Australian perceptions across a range of different elements such as: health; personal relationships; safety; personal standard of living; personal achievements; community participation; future security; national social conditions; the national economic situation; the environment; business; national security; and governments. While the emphasis for well-being is on the individual rather than the community for liveability, the cross-over is significant and insights can be gained through data like this. It is also valuable to be able to access trends over time and this data set has been collected for over 20 years.

### The Hunter New England Model<sup>18</sup>

In 2009 in New South Wales a research project was funded to develop a liveability assessment tool and model for the Hunter New England region. This trial, funded through the *Liveable Communities Project*, established four key domains with several indicators under each to assess different communities across the region in terms of liveability and inequity. Subsequently, the Hunter New England Population Health team shared their lessons learned to expedite other regions to work with local governments to develop frameworks to improve, monitor and define the liveability of their communities. Several of the lessons published are useful in considering a Victorian model, as the project was evaluated after implementation. It is especially helpful for its insights into working and partnering with local governments, understanding their constraints and perspectives.

---

<sup>17</sup> [What is the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index? | Australian Unity](#)

<sup>18</sup> Hunter New England Population Health (2012). Model for Working with Local Government to Create Liveable Communities. Hunter New England Population Health



## *Victoria Specific Research*

### The Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission<sup>19</sup>

In 2008, the Victorian government undertook an inquiry into enhancing Victorian liveability. Although ranking well in international market research, the government was interested in ensuring that liveability in the future was not compromised. It also perceived that the links between liveability and competitiveness were worth exploring as the attraction of place can bring additional skilled migration which provides competitive advantage. The inquiry defined liveability as encompassing a wide range of common characteristics such as: community and economic strength; built and social infrastructure; amenity and place; environment; citizenship; equity and human rights; participation; leadership and good governance; information; transport; and innovation.

DEL P – Liveability Victoria International<sup>20</sup> recognises that “Liveability means different things in different places. It is not a one-solution-fits-all”. Focussing on developing solutions that fit the differing cultural needs of people where they live, they have worked at developing Melbourne’s ‘liveability’ through a long-term collaborative process that draws on expertise across disciplines, many of which are shared with other cities around the world, including:

- Growth: Growth can be both a challenge and an opportunity, requiring new investment in housing and infrastructure but it also attracts more highly skilled workers and business investment.
- Diversity: With a multicultural population and varied climate and geographies across Victoria, our cities, suburbs, and towns are designed with diversity and inclusiveness front of mind.
- Innovation: In Victoria we bring the engineering and design professions together with industry, government, academia, and utilities to find innovative liveability solutions.
- Creativity: Melbourne is known as Australia’s design capital and design excellence is pursued through acclaimed engineering and design schools at the University of Melbourne, RMIT, Monash University, Swinburne University and Deakin University.
- Natural Environment: Clean air, beautiful landscapes, protected water catchments and green space are highly prized by Victorians. Parks, gardens, and reserves are central to our cities and towns.
- Regulation: Victoria has a long history of effective regulation and innovative policy reform.

---

<sup>19</sup> Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission 2008, A State of Liveability: An Inquiry into Enhancing Victoria’s Liveability, draft report, May

<sup>20</sup> [Liveability Victoria International - Liveability Victoria International](#)

Some of their partners include: [Global Victoria](#), [City of Melbourne](#), [CRC for Water Sensitive Cities](#), [Environment Protection Authority](#), [Intelligent Water Networks](#), [Melbourne Water](#), [Parks Victoria](#), and [Sustainability Victoria](#) and they have been engaged together in improvement projects working toward better sustainability and greater amenity for the communities in which they work across the metropolitan landscape.

### Rural Councils of Victoria

Recently, Rural Councils Victoria commissioned Urban Enterprise to undertake research pertaining to rural liveability as most research has focused on major Cities. The final report, *Services for Rural Liveability*<sup>21</sup>, was released in August 2019. It provides excellent insight into the changing environment in the rural sector and the views of rural residents. This study identified four main factors (Lifestyle, Economy, Environment, and Connections) as being particularly relevant in the rural parts of Victoria.

### Prevention Victoria<sup>22</sup>

Health and wellbeing plans are developed by each municipality, supported by the prevention work of local health organisations and other partners. Prevention Victoria provides resources to assist in formulating these plans and has collected health and wellbeing data from the ABS specific to Victoria which can be used to collect metrics on resident wellbeing.

### RMIT – Centre for Urban Research<sup>23</sup>

In September 2018, RMIT's Centre for Urban Research published a paper *Creating Liveable Cities in Australia* which looked at defining liveability as one that is "safe, attractive, socially cohesive and inclusive, and environmentally sustainable; with affordable and diverse housing linked by convenient public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to employment, education, public open space, local shops, health and community services, and leisure and cultural opportunities". They made several suggestions for policy to encourage Melbourne to aspire toward improving its liveability, including suggesting metrics which might be used across the following seven domains: 1) Walkability 2) Public Transport 3) Public Open Space 4) Employment 5) Alcohol Environment 6) Housing Affordability and 7) Food Environment. Many of the metrics were already collected and therefore lent themselves to monitoring trends over time.

---

<sup>21</sup> [https://media.ruralcouncilsvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/19091016/Services-for-Rural-Liveability\\_Final-Research-Report-v1.1.pdf](https://media.ruralcouncilsvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/19091016/Services-for-Rural-Liveability_Final-Research-Report-v1.1.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <https://prevention.health.vic.gov.au/>

<sup>23</sup> Arundel J, Lowe M, Hooper P, Roberts R, Rozek J, Higgs C, Giles-Corti B. *Creating liveable cities in Australia: Mapping urban policy implementation and evidence-based national liveability indicators*. Melbourne: Centre for Urban Research RMIT University, 2017

In summarizing their conclusions, they write: “Liveability enhances the health and wellbeing of Melburnians, as well as supporting productivity.... Delivering liveable communities requires a whole-of-government approach to ensure integrated planning, particularly across the health, transport, and planning portfolios. Policies to promote liveability need to be supported by best practice, evidence-informed standards that can be measured spatially, with specific targets for implementation. Housing affordability, local employment, access to healthy food and moderated access to retail alcohol outlets are critical aspects of liveability. Specific spatial policy standards and targets are needed for these liveability indicators.”<sup>24</sup> One of the most significant centres in Victoria participating in this area of research, it would be critical to form an alliance or partnership with their team to maximise resources and to ensure that future efforts across this project and their centre align.

### City of Melbourne

The City of Melbourne has developed a set of indicators of liveability<sup>25,26</sup> which are drawn from 1) The City of Melbourne Social Indicator Survey (CoMSIS) (which provides insight into the health, wellbeing, participation, and connection of residents in Melbourne and is collected to address some of the Council Plan’s municipal outcome indicators and to support health and wellbeing priorities). In addition, 2) the World Council on City Data (WCCD) is a network of cities committed to improving services and quality of life with open city data and standardised urban indicators. The WCCD developed and oversees an international standard for city data: (ISO 37120 Sustainable Development of Communities: Indicators for City Services and Quality of Life). The City of Melbourne is a member of this network and annually submits indicators for verification in accordance with this standard. The indicators from these two data sets are grouped into 15 elements including: People; Economy; Fire, Safety & Shelter; Health & Education; Transportation; Housing, Government & Economy; Finance; Governance; Recreation & Urban Planning; Water, Energy & Environment; Health & Physical Activity; Wellbeing; Food Security & production; Culture, Diversity, & Safety; and Participation in Activities. Together they provide objective trends against liveability in Melbourne.

### IPSOS<sup>27</sup>

In November 2017, Ipsos asked 10,188 Australians to select the top five attributes that they believe make somewhere a good place to live. They also asked them to rate how well their state and local area performed against all 16 liveability attributes (which include: safety, health,

---

<sup>24</sup>Dr Lucy D Gunn, Julianna Rozek, Dr Jonathan Arundel, Associate Professor Hannah Badland and Professor Billie GilesCorti Liveability Critical Policy Brief. Melbourne: Centre for Urban Research RMIT University, 2017

<sup>25</sup>[City of Melbourne Liveability and Social Indicators | Open Data | Socrata](#)

<sup>26</sup>[Liveability and quality of life - City of Melbourne](#)

<sup>27</sup>[Life in Australia 2017 | Ipsos](#)

housing, public transport, natural environment, jobs, community, shopping/leisure and dining, education, connectivity, social cohesion, equitable opportunity, prosperous economy, roads/transport, sports & recreation, and cultural facilities). Victorians reported that feeling safe is by far the most important attribute that makes somewhere a good place to live. Access to high quality health services and affordable decent housing are very important as is reliable and efficient public transport, access to the natural environment and good job prospects. When compared to the rest of Australia, Victorians placed a higher value on reliable and efficient public transport, high quality education opportunities and opportunity for all. This annual study of community values and liveability provides some useful comparative data for Victoria. Interestingly, there was a slight difference in the views of urban and rural Victorians which needs to be accommodated in a framework that can be useful across the state.

#### WSW Victorian PCPs – (WSW Rural & Regional Liveability Project

In 2020, the Wimmera and Great South Coast (GSC) Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs), together with the (then) Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), met to identify or develop and adopt an agreed framework for working across the Wimmera Southwest area (WSW) in partnership on issues pertaining to liveability in the rural & regional sectors. It was envisaged that this framework, once developed, could be adopted by member agencies of the PCPs and others within the region to fund and guide strategic areas of focus on common priority health, wellbeing, and community issues to maximise impact and improve rural liveability outcomes. Drawing on the literature, particularly those Australian examples, a draft framework was developed and presented to over 200 different organisations/individuals across the region to validate its usefulness and align it with Victorian requirements e.g., Councils' Health and Wellbeing Plans; Councils' Visioning statements and Plans; and where possible, other strategic planning processes already underway. Critical to these efforts were adapting urban concepts to something that could be used successfully in the regional and rural context.

The results were a framework that included 12 elements, aligned to the determinants of health (employment, education, housing, transport; health & social services, leisure, recreation & creative pursuits, safety, engagement in one's community while having a voice in decision-making and generally feeling a sense of inclusion and belonging; as well as the state of the natural and built environments, including water & food security) divided into the 3 domains or broader groupings relating to triple-bottom line accountability with principles or lenses through which each of the elements were judged, such as affordability, accessibility, etc. The group also have been working on identification of key focus areas that work as 'enablers' to move liveability forward across multiple elements. Some of the 'enablers' include digital connectivity, attraction and retention of key skilled workers, and environmental issues.



### DISCUSSION

There is a consensus that *liveability* as a term is useful, however it is probably unhelpful to try and find a single definition for it, understanding that in part, it is a subjective experience that can change over time. Therefore, it has become more useful to look at broad elements of what commonly constitutes liveability as nominated by local communities as priorities in creating an attractive place for them. In the next section of this report, we will look at the common features of the elements highlighted in the lists above with a view to drawing on them to suggest metrics that might be used to measure changes in community liveability and resident wellbeing, over time.

I would also propose that, although weightings might vary and be applied differently by urban, regional, and rural communities, a common framework of individual elements can be created that has resonance across all communities and can then be 'tweaked' to ensure local application aligns with local priorities while retaining a common understanding, language, and system of measurement. 'Lenses' that provide quality measures will form part of such a framework.

In the next section of this report, we will develop a draft framework with metrics that also align with Victorian legislative requirements (such as MHWB and Council plans) using data already gathered and available where possible. We will also suggest some supplemental data that would provide valuable additional insights for quality policy and planning purposes if they are possible and economical to collect. Subsequently, the project will test this framework and metrics with a few key stakeholders to ensure acceptability, usefulness, and integrity with a view to providing a 'roadmap' for future work in progressing this concept.

### ***Victorian Activities of Interest and Intersection***

Several Departments and organisations have engaged in planning or initiatives that have possible intersection with this work. The following are of particular interest:

1. VicHealth – Contacts: **Steph Kilpatrick**; Cass Nicholls; Jacqui McCann  
Initiatives – Wellbeing Economy and VicHealth Local Government Partnership  
<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/search/integrating-wellbeing-into-the-business-of-government>  
<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/local-government-partnership>  
<https://content.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/migrated/files/collections/policies-and-guidelines/v/victorian-public-health-and-wellbeing-outcomes-framework.pdf>
2. DELWP, and Dept. Jobs, Precincts & Regions – Contact: **Jo Richardson**, Manager Metro Partnerships (Office for Suburban Development)  
Initiative – 20-minute neighbourhoods; Plan Melbourne; DJPR Outcomes Framework  
<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/planning-for-melbourne/plan-melbourne/20-minute-neighbourhoods>

<https://d.docs.live.net/f1472be48998ba26/Documents/Liveability/DJPR-OUTCOMES-MEASURES-FOR-PUBLISHING.docx>

3. Regional Development Victoria – Contact: **Leah T Torly** (DJPR); **Clare R Harrison** (DJPR); **Kerri Eler** (RDV)  
Initiative – Regional Partnerships; Stronger Regional Communities Program (SRCP)  
<https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/regional-partnerships/partnerships>  
<https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/stronger-regional-communities-program>
4. Heart Foundation – Contact: **(waiting confirmation)**  
Initiative – Healthy Active by Design  
<https://www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au/design-features>
5. RMIT – Centre for Urban Research – Contact: **(Ian Butterworth) Dr Melanie Davern**  
Initiative – Healthy Liveable Communities; Urban liveability checklist  
<https://cur.org.au/project/the-healthy-liveable-communities-urban-liveability-checklist/>  
<https://cur.org.au/research-programs/healthy-liveable-cities-group/>
6. Deakin School of Rural Health – Contact: **Vincent Versace**  
Initiative – Modified Monash Model 2019  
<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/modified-monash-model-fact-sheet>

## A Comparison of Influences, 'Domains', Elements, Values/Lenses, and Metrics

Without getting too side-tracked by what each of the items are called, in this section we will start by doing a comparison of what the different research approaches have used as the 'elements' of what constitutes liveability. The following table compares studies to demonstrate relatively common selections:

Study	Economy				Environment		Social				Other
	Transport	Housing (& Utilities)	Education	Economic Participation	Natural Environment	Built Environment	Amenities	Health & Community Support	Civic Participation	Social Participation	
AARP	X	X			X			X	X	X	*Neighbourhoods *Opportunities
Partnerships For Sustainable Communities	X	X			X	X					*Climate Change
Netherlands	X	X	X					X			*Safety *Food & Water Security
China	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	*Sustainability *Safety & crime *Disaster management *food & water security
Australian Urban Observatory	X	X	X	X	OPEN SPACES		X	X		X	*Street connectivity *Childcare *Food & water security *Convenience stores
Regional Australia Institute			X				X	X		X	*Cost of Living *Lifestyle and Opportunity
Aust Unity Wellbeing Index				X	X			X	X	X	*Safety *Standard of living *Personal relationships & achievements *National security *Governments
Hunter NE											*Respect & Social Inclusion

# Framing Liveability into a Tool for Local Action

CommCorp Consulting  
 Authored by: Glenda Stanislav,  
 Managing Director  
 www.commcopconsulting.com



	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	*Communication & Information
Vic Competition & Efficiency Commission	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	*Community *Equity & Human rights *Leadership & good governance *Information *Innovation
RMIT – Centre for Urban Research	X	X		X	OPEN SPACES						*Walkability *Alcohol Environ *Food Environ
City of Melbourne	X	X	X	X	WATER, ENERGY	X	X	Physical Activity X		X	*People *Fire, Safety, Shelter *Government & Economy *Finance *Governance *Wellbeing *Food Security *Diversity, Culture
IPSOS	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	*Safety *Community, connectivity, social cohesion *Equitable opportunity, prosperity *Sport & rec *Cultural facilities
WSW Victorian PCPs/DFFH	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*Safety *Food & Water Security

### Summary:

The following table provides an aggregate of the various issues/elements that are the most common from the literature and from which we will attempt to create a draft framework which can be used to evaluate, monitor, and improve liveability across the urban, regional, and rural community.

Domains	Economy				Environment			Social			
Elements	Transport	Housing (& Utilities)	Education	Economic Participation	Food & Water Security	Natural Environment	Built Environment	Lifestyle	Health & Community Support	Civic & Social Participation	Safety, Crime, Security



## Defining the Terms:

### Economy - Prosperity

1. Transport – including all forms of public transport (trains, buses, taxis, Uber, planes, etc.); private transport; active transport (walking tracks, street connectivity & walkability); transport systems (new, repairs & maint.) and parking for vehicles.  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of whether the transport is 1) affordable 2) sustainable 3) appropriate/diverse 4) equitable 5) accessible 6) flexible to meet changing demand as well as the obvious – 7) available*
2. Housing & Utilities – including both public/social housing and private stock. Also includes utilities such as electricity, gas, water, sewerage, waste removal, TV/ internet, and phone.  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of whether it is 1) affordable, 2) appropriate/suitable (variety that meets cultural/demographic needs), 3) sustainable, 4) accessible, 5) equitable, 6) available*
3. Education – Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary as well as industry-specific. Also includes personal development, cultural and special interest courses.  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of whether it is 1) affordable 2) sustainable 3) appropriate/diverse 4) equitable 5) accessible 6) flexible to meet changing demand and local need and 7) available*
4. Economic Participation – including the economy; prosperity and the cost or standard of living; employment; opportunities; innovation  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of whether it is 1) sustainable 2) diverse 3) equitable 4) accessible 5) flexible to meet changing circumstances 6) adequate and 7) socially responsible*

### Environment

5. Food & Water Security – includes continuous access to nutritious food and clean water  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of 1) accessibility 2) affordability 3) diversity 4) flexibility 5) appropriateness (incl. cultural) 6) sustainability and 7) equity*
6. Natural Environment – including the impacts of Climate Change. Includes open spaces (green & blue); flora and fauna; preservation of ecosystems and respect for balancing nature and urban needs  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of 1) sustainability 2) diversity 3) equity 4) accessibility 5) flexible to meet changing circumstances 6) adequate and 7) socially responsible*
7. Built Environment – including buildings and infrastructure, streetscapes; sporting, parks, & recreational facilities; and arts, historical & cultural venues.  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of 1) sustainability 2) diversity 3) equity 4) accessibility 5) flexible to meet changing circumstances 6) affordability and 7) socially responsible/adequate*

## Social

8. Lifestyle – including shopping, recreational options, eating establishments, lifestyle, convenience stores, artistic and cultural offerings; sense of place  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of 1) diversity, 2) equity, 3) sustainability, 4) affordability, 5) accessibility 6) appropriateness and 7) flexibility*
9. Health & Social Supports – Health & support services; community information & communication; childcare; and disaster/pandemic/emergency management  
*This element should be evaluated through the 'lens' of 1) accessibility 2) flexibility 3) diversity 4) appropriateness 5) affordability 6) equity 7) sustainability and continuity*
10. Civic & Social Participation – including governance; leadership; government; human rights/respect; community participation/inclusion; and volunteerism. Sense of community or neighbourhood (the 'culture' of the place); belonging; social connections or cohesion; Events, Celebrations, & Festivals  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of 1) equity 2) diversity 3) sustainability 4) appropriateness 5) flexibility, 6) accessibility and 7) affordability*
11. Safety, Crime, & Security – Levels of personal assaults/violence and/or property crime; feelings of safety; alcohol & other drugs' environment. Emergency services, including police, fire, SES, ambulance, etc.  
*This element needs to be evaluated through the 'lens' of 1) equity 2) appropriateness 3) diversity 4) availability 5) sustainability 6) accessibility 7) affordability and 8) flexibility*

## Looking at the 'Lenses' or Values that create Standards for Measurement

There are multiple principles or values that a community might apply to the above elements/components to evaluate how well they meet the requirements or standards for making a community liveable - the following are those most often mentioned by the literature, experts, and residents themselves:

- 1) **Accessibility** (often this also incorporates affordability, appropriateness, availability, approachability, and/or access for all)
- 2) **Equity and Equality** (being fair/impartial, providing the same opportunities to all - sometimes through providing added advantages to marginalised groups to create a more 'level playing field')
- 3) **Sustainability** (efficient/effective use of resources to sustain long-term effort; meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs)
- 4) **Connectivity** (the ways people, networks, services, facilities, and information link and/or integrate)
- 5) **Flexibility** (the ability to change or be changed easily according to need, demand, and the situation) and
- 6) **Diversity** (giving choice; cultural variety; tailored to need and preference)

## Framing *Liveability* into a Tool for Local Action

CommCorp Consulting  
 Authored by: Glenda Stanislav,  
 Managing Director  
[www.commcopconsulting.com](http://www.commcopconsulting.com)



Domain	Economy				Environment			Social			
Element	Transport	Housing (& Utilities)	Education	Economic Participation	Food & Water Security	Natural Environment	Built Environment	Lifestyle	Health & Community Support	Civic & Social Participation	Safety, Crime, Security
<i>Lens or principle:</i>											
<i>Accessibility</i>											
<i>Equity/Equality</i>											
<i>Sustainability</i>											
<i>Connectivity</i>											
<i>Flexibility</i>											
<i>Diversity</i>											

The chart above can be used as a general audit tool to assist with auditing liveability in a location (to identify areas for improvement and/or what’s important to a community, etc.) or to conduct an environment scan/system mapping exercise for strategic planning in an area. It also can be used when designing a program or project (e.g., program logic) and to identify possible risks and the intersection with other initiatives.

Another use is in identifying potential partners and other key stakeholders and communities (of place, practice, and interest) who need to be involved if change is to be successful, identifying their interests and motivations linked to the framework. These stakeholders can be mapped on an influence/interest matrix for consultation.

Finally, the chart can be used for evaluation, linking the parts of the system you are trying to improve or influence and can assist to identify both intended and unintended consequences. Adding metrics against each of the different elements using the principles as lenses will demonstrate trends over time and how investment in the initiative has had an impact.

### ***Rural and Regional Liveability Data Review - Indicator Analysis by David McIntyre***

#### ***Executive Summary***

Through reviewing the available data, data sources, and liveability papers and frameworks, the section below attempts to capture the main indicators under each domain for the liveability framework for Western Victoria. The collection of indicators attempts to cover each principle or lens within each domain, to accurately reflect all dimensions of liveability for individuals and their communities, across all demographics and population types. The work also highlights the gaps that exist in some cases, where significant work has been funded and completed for densely populated metro settings but not completed for Rural and Regional Australia. In advocating for that work, we need to consider what are appropriate measures for those communities' needs and what benchmarks are desirable for liveable communities in the regions and/or rural areas. It is hoped that having conducted said audit, experts from across the sectors might add to the current knowledge base and/or propose other, more meaningful indicators by which we measure liveability. They might also support and advocate for or even undertake the necessary work to close the data divide between urban and regional/rural settings.

#### ***Background***

In 2020, the work undertaken by most Victorian Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) was primarily on municipal health and wellbeing plans or in partnership with local health services through integrated health promotion activities. Primarily funded by the health sector, most metrics collected were naturally health related.

In trying to capture *liveability* at local levels, it quickly became clear that additional areas or domains of knowledge and metrics were required. The original steering group (set up for the WSW project) set about gathering as many information sources as possible to establish trends across all domains. As PCPs weren't experts in many of the elements, partner networks were asked for their contributions in their area of expertise. The below list is a combination of those that could be found or that showed potential in the timelines specified, with input from responsive partners and data providers that could assist.

### **Metrics Currently in Use for the Great South Coast – part of the WSW Rural/Regional project**

#### **Employment**

*Labour Force Participation Rate (2016) (%)*



*Proportion of households below Median weekly income (%)*

*Top 5 Industries by Proportion of Employed*

*Business Entry vs Exits (Ratio)*

*Labour Force Participation Rate % Adults 15+*

*Labour force participation rate for people 65 years or more (%): Values*

*People 20-24 years not employed or enrolled in education (2016) (%): Values*

*Unemployment Rate (%): Values*

*Youth Unemployment Rate (15- 24 Years) (2016) (%): Values*

*Proportion of household which are one parent family (with children under 15) below Median weekly income (%): Values*

**Extra Indicator - Wages Growth**

### **Education and Training**

*Adult Population having Completed a Bachelor or Higher Degree (2016) (%)*

*People 20-24 years not employed or enrolled in education (2016) (%)*

*Adult Population who Completed a Vocational Qualification (2016) (%): Values*

*Disengagement by Age*

*Person's (%) by age who left school before completing year 11 or equivalent*

*People over 15 years who have completed Year 12 or equivalent (2016) (%): Values*

*People aged 20 - 24 years who have completed Year 12 or equivalent (2016) (%): Values*

*Developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains (at school entry)*

*Youth 15-19 years by engagement type - ABS Data by Region*

**Extra Indicator - CPI Increase 2009-19 by Expenditure Class**

### **Housing and Utilities**

*Personal Housing Stress-mortgage and rental payments >= to 30% income*

*Proportion of Households Living in Social Housing*

*Median Prices – Houses, Attached Dwellings and Rental of 3 Bedroom Houses*

*Proportion all Households renting Social Housing*

*Affordable Housing by Type*

*Homelessness rate per 10,000 population*

*Demand – Net Intrastate Migration to Rest of Victoria*

*Tenure Type Gap*

*Utility Affordability*

### **Transport**

*Proportion People Who Rode a Bicycle or Walked to Work (%)*

*Commuting Distance 2.5 to 30km*

*Method of Travel to Work*

*Commuting Distance (Mean, Average, From Usual Residence)*

## Framing *Liveability* into a Tool for Local Action

*Households with No Vehicle (2016) (%): Values*  
*Number of Cars per household*  
*People who live near public transport*  
*Method of travel to work: public transport*

**Discarded Indicators** - *Average Distance to nearest Public Transport stop – AUO*  
*Percentage of dwellings within 400m of a bus stop – AUO*  
*Percentage of dwellings within 400m of public transport with a 30-min weekday service – AUO*

### **Health and Social Services**

*Registered Mental Health Clients per 1000 population*  
*Mental Health: Adult Population (%) with high/very high distress on Kessler10 scale*  
*General Practice Clinics per 1000 population*  
*GP attendances per 1,000 population*  
*Life Expectancy*  
*Avoidable Mortality*  
*Adult Prevalence of Obesity*  
*Daily smokers (%): Values*  
*Self-Reported Health Status*  
*Average patient contribution for prescriptions*  
*Adult population suffering long term chronic disease*

**Extra Indicator** - *CPI Increase 2009-19 by Expenditure Class*  
*Demand – Net Intrastate Migration to Rest of Victoria*

**Discarded Indicators** - *Ambulance Reports*  
*Clients receiving AOD treatment services per 1000 population*  
*Diagnostic imaging services per 1,000 population*

### **Leisure, Recreation and Creativity**

*Sedentary Behaviour (Adults) Insufficient Physical Activity*  
*Estimated population, aged 18 years and over, who undertook low, very low or no exercise in the previous week (Rate per 100): Values*  
*People who are members of a sports group*  
*Adults (%) who attended a local community event (last 12 months)*  
*Number of visits to aquatic facilities per head of municipal population*  
*% of the municipal population that are members of the library & have borrowed an item*  
*Per Person Expenditure on electronic gaming*

**Extra Indicator** - *People who are members of a religious group*

**Discarded Indicators** - *Attendance at Arts or Culture Events*  
*Participation in Sports Activity or Club Membership*

### Community Strength

*Tolerance of Diversity: Adult population that felt multiculturalism made life in their area better*

*Opportunity to Have a Say on Issues important to them*

*Valued by Society*

*Youth Risk and Protective Factors (Year 9)*

*Adults who could raise \$2,000 in 2 days in an emergency (No, Don't Know, or Refused to Answer)*

*Persons who provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability*

*Adult Population (%) that need assistance with core activities*

*Volunteering Adult Population that helped a local group (Yes, Definitely)*

**Extra Indicator - Demand – Net Intrastate Migration to Rest of Victoria**

**Discarded Indicators - Proportion of Population who are 65 years or more and living alone (%): Values**  
*Help with care from a friend or relative not living with you in an emergency (No/Don't Know)*

### Community Safety

*Family Incidents Rate per 100,000 population*

*Adult population that feels safe on the streets at night*

*Residential Incidents Recorded (No): Values*

*Community Incidents Recorded (No): Values*

*Other Incidents Recorded (No): Values*

*Victim Reports Rate per 100,000*

*Victim Reports 00-24 years of age*

**Discarded Indicators - Adults (%) who felt safe walking in their area after dark ("Yes, Definitely")**

*Criminal Incident Rate per 100,000 population*

*Child protection substantiations per 1,000 population eligible population*

### Belonging and Culture

*Proportion of Households with Internet Access at the Dwelling*

*People who believe multiculturalism made life better in their area (%)*

*Opportunity to Have a Say on Issues Important to them*

*Lone Person Households (2016) (%): Values*

*Indigenous Population 2016 (%): Values*

*Religious Affiliation*

*Number of Overseas born residents who don't speak English well or at all (2016) (%): Values*

**Extra Indicators - Proportion of population who are 25 years or less**

*Scanlon Monash Index of Social Cohesion*

*Demand – Net Intrastate Migration to Rest of Victoria*

### Food and Water Security

*Food Security Adult Population (%)*

*Estimated number of adults with adequate fruit intake*

*Adult Vegetable Consumption (%) who met guidelines (5 servers/day*

*Food Insecurity: Adult Population who ran out of food in the last 12 months & couldn't afford to buy more*

*Oral health Risk Behaviour due to inadequate consumption of Fruits/Vegetables (%): Values*

*Oral health Risk Behaviour due to consumption of Sugar/Sweetened soft drinks (%): Values*

**Discarded Indicators** - *Distance to local supermarket or convenience store – AUO*

*Average Distance to Closest Healthy Food Outlet – AUO*

*Percentage of dwellings without any food outlet within 3.2km – AUO*

### **Built Environment**

*Persons satisfied with quality of roads*

*Solar Installations*

**Extra Indicator** - *Demand – Net Intrastate Migration to Rest of Victoria*

**Discarded Indicators** - *Average number of daily living destination types present within 1600m – AUO*

*Street connectivity: number of intersections of three streets or more – AUO*

*Walkability for Transport Index – AUO*

*Average distance to the closest activity centre – AUO*

*Social Infrastructure Index – AUO*

*Average Distance to Local Playground – AUO*

### **Natural Environment**

*Households Recyclables (kg)*

*Protected Areas Total, National Park, Protected Area, or Indigenous Protected Area*

*Public open space: sq Km public open space per person*

**Extra Indicators** - *Kerbside Diversion Rate Recyclables*

*Kerbside Diversion Rate Organics and Recyclables*

*Heatwave Vulnerability Index*

*Carbon Dioxide Emissions*

*Community Attitudes to Climate Change*

*Land Area % that is Greenspace*

*Vulnerability of Terrestrial Habitat and Rivers*

**Discarded Indicators** - *Average distance to closest public open space*

*Percentage of dwellings within 400 m or less of public open space*

*Average distance to closest public open space larger than 1.5 hectares*

*Percentage of dwellings within 400 m of public open space larger than 1.5 hectares*

*Percentage of dwellings within 400 m or less distance of any local park (> 0.4 to. <= 1 ha)*

*Percentage of dwellings within 800 m of less distance of any neighbourhood park (>1 ha to <= 5 ha)*

*Percentage of dwellings within 400 m of less distance of a neighbourhood recreation park (> 0.5 ha)*

*Average distance to closest public open space with a nearby public toilet (within 100 m)*

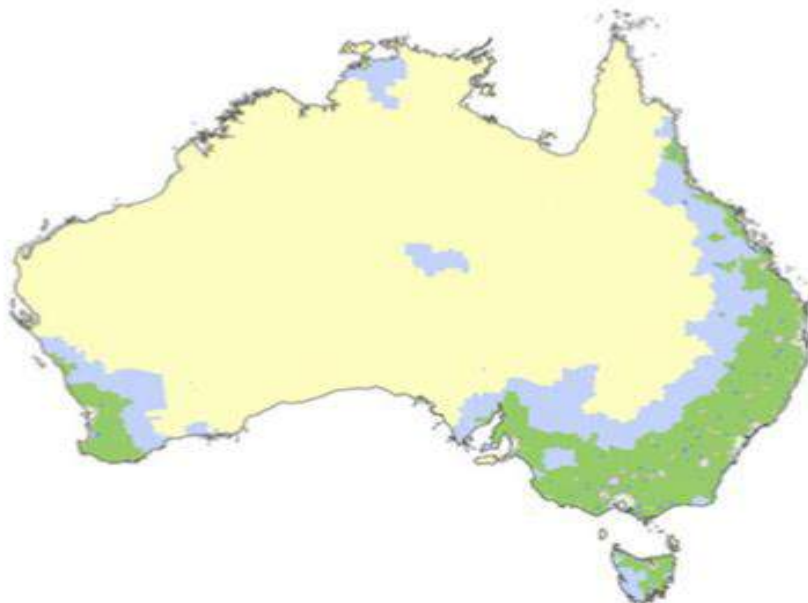
**Note:** *Indicators discarded were deemed inappropriate for rural Victorian communities or were unavailable consistently*

### ***Who are our people?***

In the above investigation of Rural and Regional Liveability, the Wimmera and Great South Coast separately applied a version of the framework to their own population base. In exploring strategies and data with partners in each catchment, interesting variations in priorities were uncovered and so creating a flexible model that allows for local variation was considered critical to successful use and application of the framework. As this project includes an even greater diversity in population and settings - across all the Western region of Victoria, - it is even more critical that the framework and application tools allow for such diversity in settings and the expected differences in users.

### ***The Modified Monash Model***

In the original WSW Rural & Regional Victoria project, discussions with one partner, Deakin University, (specifically Vincent Versace, Director – Deakin Rural Health) focussed attention on the role of population dispersal in individual needs. The Modified Monash Model<sup>28</sup> “*is used to determine eligibility for a range of health workforce programs*” but describes this in respect to a range of population density categories. In doing so, it has wider ranging applications beyond its stated purpose. The model includes MM1 (Major cities accounting for 70% of Australia’s population) right through to MM7 (Very remote communities: Very remote areas (ASGSRA 5). For example: Longreach, Coober Pedy, Thursday Island and all other remote island areas more than 5kms offshore”.



<sup>28</sup> The Modified Monash Model 2019 <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/modified-monash-model-fact-sheet>



Figure A – Modified Monash Model 2019 categories

Modified Monash Category (MMM 2019)	Description (including the Australian Statistical Geography Standard – Remoteness Area (2016))
MM 1	<b>Metropolitan areas:</b> Major cities accounting for 70% of Australia’s population. All areas categorised ASGS-RA1.
MM 2	<b>Regional centres:</b> Inner (ASGS-RA 2) and Outer Regional (ASGS-RA 3) areas that are in, or within a 20km drive of a town with over 50,000 residents. For example: Ballarat, Mackay, Toowoomba, Kiama, Albury, Bunbury.
MM 3	<b>Large rural towns:</b> Inner (ASGS-RA 2) and Outer Regional (ASGS-RA 3) areas that are not MM 2 and are in, or within a 15km drive of a town between 15,000 to 50,000 residents. For example: Dubbo, Lismore, Yeppoon, Busselton.
MM 4	<b>Medium rural towns:</b> Inner (ASGS-RA 2) and Outer Regional (ASGS-RA 3) areas that are not MM 2 or MM 3, and are in, or within a 10km drive of a town with between 5,000 to 15,000 residents. For example: Port Augusta, Charters Towers, Moree.
MM 5	<b>Small rural towns:</b> All remaining Inner (ASGS-RA 2) and Outer Regional (ASGS-RA 3) areas. For example: Mount Buller, Moruya, Renmark, Condamine.
MM 6	<b>Remote communities:</b> Remote mainland areas (ASGS-RA 4) AND remote islands less than 5kms offshore. For example: Cape Tribulation, Lightning Ridge, Alice Springs, Mallacoota, Port Hedland. Additionally, islands that have an MM 5 classification with a population of less than 1,000 without bridges to the mainland will now be classified as MM 6 for example: Bruny Island.
MM 7	<b>Very remote communities:</b> Very remote areas (ASGS-RA 5). For example: Longreach, Coober Pedy, Thursday Island and all other remote island areas more than 5kms offshore.

Figure B – Australian Map of MMM 2019 categories<sup>29</sup>

When we considered Figures A, B and C, the **population in SW Victoria (for example) may possibly be some of the most diverse in Australia**, where we have areas of MM2 right through to MM6. Indeed, the presence of Bendigo, Geelong, Ballarat, and outer Western Melbourne make it more diverse than the Hunter/New England area of NSW that was referenced in our original work<sup>30</sup>.

In the discussions with Deakin, a pattern of finite government funding that works at the two extremes: large spending in metro areas in a “bigger bang for your buck” method and spending in very remote communities to address extreme disadvantage was identified. This pattern, unfortunately, disproportionately disadvantages the “middle” population, shown in Figure B. but is the main area of interest for us in this project. We should also note that the model definitions for the SW Victorian area are measured in a x km drive distance from a town of y population size, which assumes everyone has access to a vehicle.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/modified-monash-model-fact-sheet>

<sup>30</sup> Hunter New England Population Health (2007). *Building liveable communities in the lower Hunter region*. Hunter New England Population Health, Wallsend, N.S.W



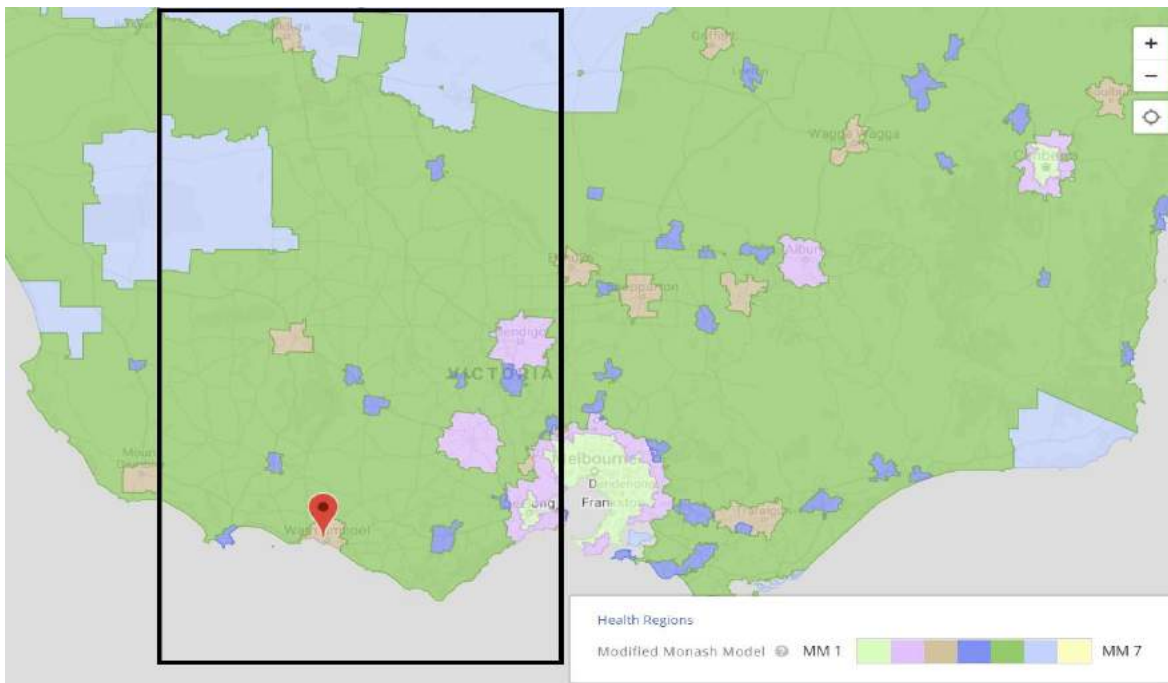


Figure C – Initial Area of Interest<sup>31</sup>

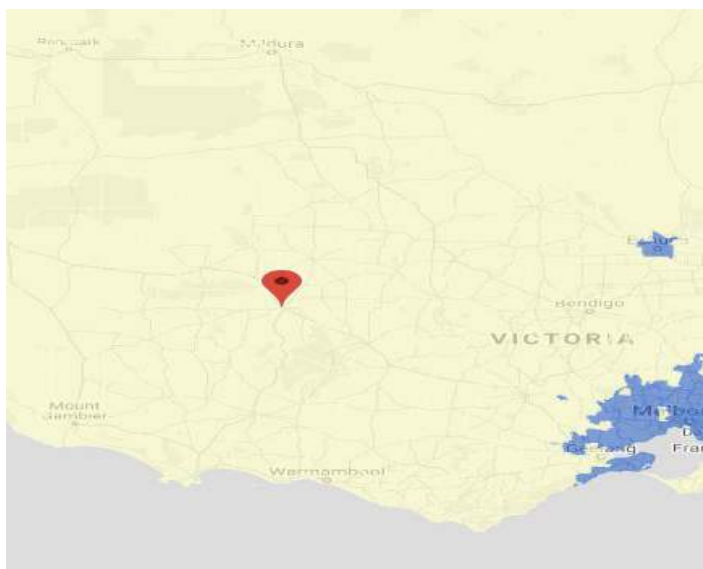


Figure D – Priority Distribution Area GPs

<sup>31</sup> Interactive Health Workforce locator tool <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/health-workforce-locator/health-workforce-locator>

Using the health workforce locator, it demonstrates that almost the entire SW Victorian region is considered a priority area for GP recruitment. This pattern is similar for specialists of all types such as radiology, obstetrics, general surgery, etc. (excluding some specialties in our larger regional centres).<sup>32</sup> These wide-ranging health workforce shortages are an example of the common issues that preventative place-based projects can identify and account for when undertaking program or project planning as they may directly impact on a community and its viability to attract other economic, social, or environmental resources.

### **Demographics**

An additional complexity in this discussion, is the demographics of the local population. It can be helpful to consider this in terms of general life stages to minimize complication. In our data, we have broken this down into 3 life stages:

1. *Ages 0 to 24* – This group are primarily uplifted by strong family and social bonds, education, good food and water. As they age, the concerns of transport, employment, community safety and housing start to emerge.
2. *Ages 25 to 54* – Through a working life, priorities change where job security, housing affordability, built environment and community strength play a large role. Again, as they continue to age, different aspects emerge, health and social services, natural environment and cultural or recreational opportunities rise to prominence with the addition of children.
3. *Ages 55+* - Health and social services rise to prominence in this age as problems encountered in prior phases are magnified as the working life draws to a close. Social and Cultural supports are crucial, as any barrier to access can have large consequences<sup>33</sup>.

### **Which data should we use to capture critical aspects of the Liveability Framework?**

In all cases, two questions remain salient: 1) which life stage demographic is the target group part of? and 2) in which Monash Modified Model grouping are they? These two questions help a user to successfully frame the metrics conversation. **Example**, *Transport – % Households with no vehicles*, has considerably different impacts on a person residing in inner Ballarat (MM2) when compared to a person 25km away from Rainbow (MM6). In fact, the data point is almost **irrelevant where you have substitution options (bus, taxi) but critical where you have none**.

<sup>32</sup> Appendix A – Workforce Priority Areas by Specialty

<sup>33</sup> In one example (Collins, Lum, Versace) the distance to radiotherapy treatment showed a correlation to adverse health outcomes and severity of treatment for women, concluding “A strong association between distance to radiotherapy and the type of surgery for early breast cancer was found. Improving access to radiotherapy therefore has the potential to improve breast cancer outcomes for women in regional Australia”



**Critical Indicators**

Domain	Economy				Environment			Social			
Element	Transport	Housing (& Utilities)	Education	Economic Participation	Food & Water Security	Natural Environment	Built Environment	Lifestyle	Health & Community Support	Civic & Social Participation	Safety, Crime, Security
<i>Lens or principle:</i>											
<i>Accessibility</i>											
<i>Equity/Equality</i>											
<i>Sustainability</i>											
<i>Connectivity</i>											
<i>Flexibility</i>											
<i>Diversity</i>											

**Critical Indicators by Element**

In reviewing current work on the topic of liveability, the indicators or metrics below are what we have determined to be the core indicators that potentially help to describe liveability at a local level. In some cases, the data points are not available, but could be achievable with further work. Available data does not adequately demonstrate what the element is at quality levels.

( \* indicates a metric that is yet to be created or customized for Rural and Regional Areas)

( ^ indicates a recommended indicator per DOTE2021 report)

( ~ Indicator used by Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org))

### Transport

*Average Distance to nearest Public Transport stop\**

*Commuting Distance 2.5 to 30km – ABS Census*

*Number of Cars per household – ABS Census*

*Method of Travel to Work – ABS Census*

*Percentage of dwellings near a public transport stop with a 30-min weekday service\**

*Transport Affordability Index\**

Distance to public transport options becomes less important and availability of vehicles more important as remoteness increases. The availability of transport directly impacts an individual's ability to access the full range of services and opportunities that society has to offer.

### Housing (& Utilities)

*Personal Housing Stress-mortgage and rental payments  $\geq$  to 30% income – ABS via id.com.au*

*Homelessness rate per 10,000 population – ABS Data by Region*

*Utility Affordability\**

*Proportion of people living in social or public housing – ABS via id.com.au*

*Proportion of households without a suitable number of bedrooms (based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard) ^*

Housing that is "suitable" is somewhat subjective, however, the ability to afford housing that accommodates all occupants with a modicum of comfort, in a location that allows those occupants to access the services, employment and amenities they need is a fundamental part of liveability

### Education

*People 20-24 years not employed or enrolled in education (2016) (%) – ABS*

*Developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains (at school entry) – Australian Early Development Census*

*People over 15 years who have completed Year 12 or equivalent (2016) (%): Values - ABS*

*Proportion of people in location with no post school qualification^*

*Person's (%) by age who left school before completing year 11 or equivalent - ABS*

Early intervention at school entry can have significant impacts on the later education and training needs of individuals with flow on effects to their earning capacity later in life.

### **Economic Participation**

*Proportion of households below Median weekly income (%) - ABS*

*Adults who could raise \$2,000 in 2 days in an emergency (No, Don't Know, or Refused to Answer) – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*Participation Rate (%) - ABS*

*Median total income (excl. Government pensions and allowances) (\$) – ABS Data By Region*

*Proportion of people receiving government assistance payments (\$/capita) ^*

*Digital Inclusion Index for Rural and Regional Victoria – Australian Digital Inclusion Index*

Economic Participation is important for an individual's wellbeing. As an economically contributing member of society, one can feel hope, a sense of control and agency in one's own life. If events contravene that, a person may experience high levels of anxiety, hopelessness or even desperation.

### **Food and Water Security**

*Food Insecurity: Adult Population who ran out of food in the last 12 months and could not afford to buy more – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*Average Distance to Closest Healthy Food Outlet \**

*Adult Fruit and Vegetable Consumption (%) who met guidelines (2 and 5 servers/day) – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*Price of Water Entitlements per ML – [waterexchange.com.au](http://waterexchange.com.au)*

*Food Consumption Score ~*

Access to affordable, healthy, and diverse food can have a positive impact on individuals, giving them the very essence of life, energy to work, connections with friends, and the wider society.

### **Natural Environment**

*Average distance to closest public open space \**

*Heatwave Vulnerability Index\**

*Public open space: sq Km public open space per person - ABS*

*Protected Land Area – ABS Data By Region or (Proportion of locations that are declared nature reserve^)*

*Carbon Dioxide Emissions (CO2 tonnes) – Snapshot Climate*

Access to a welcoming, vibrant natural environment has been shown to positively contribute to an individual's mental wellbeing. It needs to be relatively accessible and free from toxicity.

### **Built Environment**

*Solar Installations – ABS Census*

*Average number of daily living destination types present within 1600m \**

*Walkability for Transport Index \**

*Satisfaction with local roads or transport – Council Community Satisfaction Survey*

*Average number of daily living destination types present within 1600m \**

A well-constructed built environment provides opportunities for positive life behaviours that enhance our wellbeing.

### **Lifestyle**

*Social Infrastructure Index \**

*Percentage of dwellings without any food outlet within 3.2km \**

*Average distance to the closest activity centre \**

*Adults (%) who attended a local community event (last 12 months) – PHIDU Torrens University*

The facilities available to individuals, impact on their recreation and opportunities for social connection and interactions. This feeling of support through the activity around an individual is often overlooked as important until such time as it is suggested they be taken away.

### **Health and Community Support**

*General Practice Clinics per 1000 population – PHIDU Torrens University*

*Avoidable Mortality (rate per 100,000 population) – Victorian Health Information System*

*Self-Reported Health Status – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*Mental Health: Adult Population (%) with high/very high distress on Kessler10 scale – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*People who need assistance with core activities – ABS Data By Region*

*Proportion of adults ever diagnosed with two or more chronic diseases – Western Victoria PHN Exchange*

*Mother's Index – Victorian Women's Health Atlas*

A person's actual or perceived level of physical health is a key part of an individual's everyday life. A life complicated by chronic disease, pain or poor mental health can severely limit an individual's enjoyment of life or contribution to society

### **Civic and Social Participation**

*Volunteering Adult Population that helped a local group (Yes, Definitely) – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*Proportion of Households with Internet Access at the Dwelling – ABS Census*

*People who believe multiculturalism made life better in their area (%) – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*Scanlon Monash Index of Social Cohesion – Scanlon Foundation/Monash University*

*Community Wellbeing Index for Rural and Regional Victoria\**

*Low Gender Equity in Relationships – Victorian Women's Health Atlas*

Participation in civic and social society helps individuals by assisting in important social work, welcoming of diversity, and feeling of agency and contribution that has enormous positive social and personal impact.



### Safety, Crime, Security

*Family Incidents Rate per 100,000 population – Crime Statistics Victoria*

*Adult population that feels safe on the streets at night – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*Adult populations where a friend or relative, who was not living with them, care for them (or their children) in an emergency – Victorian Population Health Survey*

*Number of prison admissions per 1000 adult population aged 18 and over<sup>^</sup>*

*Victim Reports Rate per 100,000 – Crime Statistics Victoria*

*Intimate Partner Violence Rate per 100,000 – Victorian Women’s Health Atlas*

The need for safety is one of humans’ most basic instincts. A safe environment allows individuals to focus on further care of themselves, others, their work, and contribution to society.

## Recommendations for Liveability Data

### 1. Broad Brush Framing

In compiling the data for Great South Coast and subsequently for this project, some contextual information might be helpful at the outset. A broad-brush comparison between rural, regional, and urban Australia could usefully frame further discussions pertaining to liveability. This might include indicators such as:

- Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSEA/IRSDA)
- Socio Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA)
- Median equivalised disposable household weekly income by lowest 20% (P20), median (P50) and highest 20% (P80)
- Working Age Population
- Standardised Death Rate
- English Proficiency
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population
- Average Years Since Arrival of Person’s Born Overseas

An agreed subset of indicators that set the larger context of the discussion would be beneficial before closer exploration of individual elements. This approach has been used in recent liveability analyses such as *Dropping off the Edge*<sup>34</sup> and is salient as many people are moving between the cities and rural areas, due to the pandemic. Focusing on the disparities between the two settings as part of the discourse ensures that unreal expectations are not ignored, leading to a lack of retention of new residents.

### 2. Spatial Data Measurement

---

<sup>34</sup> DOTE2021, *Dropping off the Edge* by Jesuit Social Services, Centre for Just Places and University of Canberra  
<https://www.dote.org.au/home>

It seems as if there is only passing interest in investigating, collecting, and investing in robust data for Rural and Regional areas ongoingly. The *Australian Urban Observatory* has done fantastic work in providing strong information on a range of issues affecting people's liveability, however, as the name highlights, the focus has predominately been urban. While urban research might be seen as a greater return on investment (per capita), more funding needs to be allocated for research institutions to investigate how urban indicators might be applied in rural areas (i.e., which indicators make sense and are relevant, or how they might be modified and mapped to make them relevant), as this would be a major support for measuring liveability in those areas. For example, a discarded Urban Observatory indicator was "Average number of daily living destination types present within 1600m". In its current form, it is irrelevant to anyone living in MM3 level densities and above. However, this could be a very interesting indicator and a key part of liveability, if an appropriate distance for other Modified Monash Model levels could be researched and mapped comparatively.

### 3. Resources

Over the longer term, a multi-disciplinary team who could address the question of data on Rural and Regional Liveability should be drawn from across the relevant sectors. Expertise and input from a wide range of disciplines are needed to inform the discussion. Valuable contributions have already come from Catchment Management Authorities, Social Housing networks, educational entities, and local governments. Economists, Employment Specialists, Infrastructure Experts, Community Specialists, Education, Agriculture, Planners, Government Departments and so on all have potential contributions to make.

**Recommendation:** *that a multi-disciplinary team be established to identify, create, or modify data relevant to urban, regional, and rural sectors against each element of the framework.*

## Descriptive Data Options for the Future

### 1. Element Index Model/Liveability Index

A data input model where we might use a set of indicators per element, with weightings adjusted by MM level. The output would be an index to describe element liveability. This method would also allow a roll up of all element outputs into a Liveability Index by location or postcode.

### 2. Adjustable Indicator model

An alternate method would be to nominate a small number of indicators per element (e.g., 3-5 per element). As the Modified Monash Level is described, the indicators would sort in order of criticality into Critical, Priority and Secondary so that users have a good

understanding of what is most important, in order, and the details of the data point, enabling actions to be planned accordingly.

### Conclusion

The domains, elements, and principles of liveability require further input from a diverse group of experts to establish a set of indicators that accurately describe the lived experience of individuals across all sectors. These indicators must be flexible enough to describe and be used by both large populations as well as small pockets with unique needs. Only then can we gauge the effectiveness of local action and the policy that directs them on liveability at a local level. Until then, we can only monitor through the indicators we have to demonstrate the overall circumstances and liveability of communities across Western Victoria.

### References

**Dropping off the Edge by Jesuit Social Services, Centre for Just Places and University of Canberra**  
<https://www.dote.org.au/home>

**Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations**  
[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

**Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment**  
<https://www.awe.gov.au/>

### Vincent Versace et al, Deakin School of Rural Health

Influence of socioeconomic factors and distance to radiotherapy on breast conserving surgery rate for early breast cancer in regional Australia; implications of change <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ajco.12828>

### Health Workforce Locator

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/health-workforce-locator/health-workforce-locator>

### Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Outcomes Framework 2019-2023

<https://djpr.vic.gov.au/what-we-do/strategies-and-initiatives>

### Western Victoria PHN

<https://www.phnexchange.com.au/priority-areas.php?phn=206&pri=Health%20Risk%20Factors>

### Victorian Women's Health Atlas

<https://victorianwomenshealthatlas.net.au/#/>

### Australian Automobile Association – Transport Affordability Index

<https://data.aaa.asn.au/transport-affordability>

### ***Strategy for the Future – a discussion with Recommendations***

Frameworks are simply tools to provide a common reference point for planning. Their value is in whether they are used by those for whom they are intended. To support their uptake requires three things:

- **Champions** – those who see the value in using the tools and are willing to systematically engage with others to promote, market, and continue to develop the tools supporting the framework – to get it out there and ensure that people are familiar with it and have felt a part of its development
- **Flexibility, adaptability, and review** – the tools and framework need to be able to be adapted to local need while retaining its integrity for comparability. Different audiences will need to use it a bit differently (i.e., local government vs industry or environmentalists)
- **Credible metrics/data** that is available at little cost, across different sectors and locales, that can be used to evaluate the impact and outcomes of investment and initiatives.

For the Liveability Framework to really progress, it is helpful if key groups endorse or adopt it so it becomes a standard tool for planning purposes. It might be recommended as part of a preliminary application for funding or as part of the municipal public health planning process. Toward that end, it should be presented to key peak bodies for their consideration. **Recommendation:** That the MAV, regional partnerships, and other similar bodies are approached for further discussion and agreement as to the use of the Liveability Framework and its tools.

In addition, there needs to be a systematic program of engagement and promotion of the framework and tools. This program requires an interactive capacity for adoption of modifications and expansion of tools, metrics, and processes as the framework is tried and improvements are found. A community of practice that includes local Champions that can assess this feedback and incorporate new contributions ideally will need to continue to fully realise the benefits of the framework. **Recommendation:** That a community of practice is set up with the ability to incorporate modifications and additions as they are identified and verified. **Recommendation:** A sub-group of data experts/users would also be helpful to identify and/or create additional metrics that could validate movement in each element for urban, regional, and rural settings.

Ideally, selection of a few impactful pilot projects that could use the framework and test its validity would be ideal. These pilot projects should be across different sectors, settings and of different sizes. While the framework (slightly modified) has been used in the Wimmera and SW, using it in urban, regional, and rural settings will add to the discussion on comparative metrics and

support the development of additional relevant data for ongoing collection. **Recommendation:** That invitations are given to groups willing to apply the framework for support and recognition. Evaluation of the approach will be provided including of the initiative/project more broadly and documented as the mutual benefit.

### **Conclusion**

Considerable work has been undertaken trying to define liveability at a local level and how to measure it. More work is required to have robust metrics for regional and rural Australia, although significant progress in urban settings has been made through some of the international collaborations such as *Healthy Liveable Cities*. A framework that has acceptability across sectors and departments would assist in advancing liveability through use of a shared understanding and language, encouraging focused collaborative efforts on ‘enablers of liveability’ (such as digital connectivity; key skills attraction & retention; etc.) that improve many elements at once.

Importantly, it is helpful to collaborate with other initiatives working in this space and use tools that are already in existence, such as **STRENGTHENING LIVEABILITY - A TOOLKIT FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES LOOKING TO GROW** developed by the *Regional Australia Institute* in 2021 ([www.regionalaustralia.org.au](http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au)). As a resource for communities wishing to create single action planning, it has a step-by-step guide to attracting new residents to rural areas through improving amenities while thinking on multiple levels.

The Liveability Framework, tools and metrics need to be freely available and remain comparably easy to use if they are going to become standard. Most organisations and projects do not have the required resources to engage with research units such as the Australian Urban Observatory, buying in their expertise, more sophisticated methods and metrics, and evaluation skills - still it is critical that the way forward ensures that the foundation of the framework is compatible with other research and that all initiatives can add collectively to the work being undertaken in liveability.

### **Next Steps**

1. Continue to **engage** with potentially collaborative agencies and government departments (i.e., VicHealth; DJPR, etc.) to reach a mutual understanding, identify projects that could test the framework, and share common language re liveability. This will lead to an authorising environment or acceptability for framework use.
2. **Establish** a community of practice on liveability and invite cross-departmental and other external participants who are interested in liveability to participate
3. **Establish** a working group of data experts who are willing to identify, develop, and evaluate available metrics that are relevant for the framework elements.