



Commonwealth Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

“A Sustainable Population Strategy For Australia Issues Paper”

City of Melbourne Submission

This submission has been prepared by the City of Melbourne in response to a request by the Commonwealth Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities for comments on the “A Sustainable Population Strategy For Australia Issues Paper”.

Comments

The paper comprehensively discusses current demographic trends affecting Australia’s recent and projected population growth, sixteen key implications of demographic change for Australia’s liveability and sustainability and gives an outline of the approaches to designing a population strategy.

The following lists some challenges and opportunities the paper has not yet identified that should be considered in the development of a sustainable population strategy.

1. ***The primary purpose of a sustainable Population Strategy***

The primary purpose should be to maintain and improve Australian cities as sustainable and liveable places. The role of each level of government and its influence need to be determined to ensure their activities are coordinated and complementary.

2. ***Coordinating and Prioritising Government Actions***

2.1. *A City Performance Matrix*

Figure 1 summarises the common “liveability” attributes among the Mercer and EIU surveys. The purpose of this list is not to endorse these indices, but to illustrate how a set of “liveability” attributes could be used to coordinate and prioritise government actions. The performance of Australian cities could be considered using a matrix similar to that shown in to highlight attributes that might be considered “under threat” and those considered “strengths”.

In deciding priorities for actions that might be taken with respect to improving a city’s performance, it is useful to consider the influence Federal (F), State (S) and Local (L) activities can have on each attribute to ensure they are complementary. The city of Bilbao, which won the inaugural, “World City Prize” provides an excellent example of how all levels of government worked together to rebuild the city and improve its performance.

2.2. *The Hierarchy of Liveability Attributes*

There is a hierarchy of liveability attributes, similar to Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Human Needs” in which basic survival needs, e.g. food, water, shelter and safety, must be provided before higher order needs become important, e.g. recreation, sport and cultural pursuits. Hence, in the same way, there is little point in improving higher order city “liveability” attributes, e.g. sports facilities, if the basics, e.g. availability of water, aren’t maintained.

2.3. *Liveability Attributes Change Over Time*

Liveability Attributes change over time, for example the expectations have changed regarding communications networks, from “dial up” to “broadband” to “ubiquitous” services.

3. ***“Liveability = Workability”.***

Creative, skilled workers are attracted to highly liveable cities. Cities with high concentrations of creative, skilled workers are attractive for businesses. These workers also start and grow new businesses. Hence by maintaining its liveability, a city can attract skilled workers, creative individuals and activities thereby providing an environment conducive to growing new businesses.

4. ***The Role of the Knowledge Economy and New Technologies***

4.1. The knowledge economy should be recognised as a driver of future prosperity, sustainability and population growth. It is important that the development of the knowledge economy does not lead to a divided city with the benefits restricted to particular locations or regions.

4.2. The role of new/developing technologies in providing solutions for climate adaptation, education, productivity and communications and engagement need to be considered.

5. ***Cities as Networks of Activity***

The Issues Paper focuses on the primacy of Australia’s metropolitan areas, however the way in which cities relate to one another and their surrounding regions is not discussed. It is important to understand the influence cities have on one another and their regional surroundings to inform major investment decisions. Considering cities as a network rather than predominantly independent entities can provide a broader approach to accommodating a sustainable population.

6. ***Cities Are Not homogeneous.***

It is important to understand the factors which shape the locations of jobs and homes. The paper correctly identifies the increasing separation between jobs and homes in many cities. The forces creating this separation in each city need to be understood so action can be taken to address this trend.

7. ***The Role Central Areas Play in Major Cities***

Further to point #6 above, city centres within the nation’s major cities provide focal points for employment, cultural and knowledge activities. Any sustainable population strategy must ensure this role is supported.

8. ***Public Transport***

Efficient reliable, public transport systems should provide the main links between cities and within them. It can reduce the pressure on housing affordability by providing greater access to more locations connecting home, work and social life. More attention needs to be paid to the development and running of public transport if cities are to grow in the manner that the Issues Paper suggests. The Federal government has a major role to play in the facilitation of financial investment in public transport infrastructure to both encourage and cater for population growth in major cities.

9. ***Consistent Spatial Information***

There needs to be a consistent set of spatial information on cities to enable investment decisions to be made. In particular the City of Melbourne’s integrated planning approach, whereby its community driven 10-year plan informs its Municipal Strategic Statement which identifies the potential residential capacity and form of development, could be used as a model for other cities.

10. ***Australian National Development Index***

The development of an Australian National Development Index could be used in engaging the Australian community to set Australian goals for sustainable population development. The components of this index could also assist in the development of “liveability” attributes to be used assess the performance of Australian cities and to coordinate and prioritise government actions, as described in point 3.1 above.

11. ***Temporary Residents***

Temporary residents, including students, are very important to our cities’ economies and culture. A sustainable population strategy should be sensitive to adversely impacting on temporary residents.

12. ***The Environment***

A major feature of climate change is the increased number of major weather events. The Issues Paper does not consider the impact of this increase and its effects on increased population and human settlements.

Figure 1: An Australian Cities Liveability & Sustainability Attributes Assessment Matrix

Liveability & Sustainability Attributes (These examples were derived from Mercer and EIU Liveability Indices)	Status - Under Threat - Stable - Strength	Influence		
		F	S	L
People/community Social Connectedness Social Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tolerance and respect for others fair and equitable sharing of common resources Support for rich social interactions and inclusion of all residents in community life Visitor enjoyment and fulfilment 				
Health & Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical and health considerations (medical supplies and services, control of infectious diseases, sewage, waste disposal, air pollution, etc) Threat of violent crime, threat posed by terrorism/armed conflict natural disasters 				
Housing Quality & Affordability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of housing stock Housing costs, rent, household appliances, furniture and maintenance services 				
Natural & Physical Environment Geography & Climate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of the natural and built environment; water and air quality Access to and quality of open space and parks 				
Infrastructure & Public Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport networks, public transport, traffic congestion Utilities, energy, gas, electricity, water sewerage, drainage, waste disposal/recycling Standard and quality of technology communication 				
Affordability & availability of personal consumer goods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic needs met re consumer goods, availability of food/daily consumption items household supplies food, clothing and footwear, personal care Food away from home, cars, etc). Note disparities regarding domestic help & services 				
Culture, Recreation & Entertainment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreational availability, leisure, nightclubs, restaurants, sporting activities, events and facilities, theatres, cinemas and concerts 				
Built Form & Urban Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The attractiveness of the city, its buildings and streetscapes 				
Economy Economic environment standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic, banking & financial services, currency exchange regulations Economic development and a vibrant local economy Creativity, innovation development and growth 				
Education Knowledge skills talent creativity lifelong learning - self actualisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of affordable, quality primary, secondary, trade and tertiary, education Opportunities for the attainment of personal goals, hopes and aspirations 				
Governance Civil and political rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency, openness and lack of corruption Political and social stability and law enforcement Socio-cultural and personal freedoms and limited censorship restrictions 				
Urban Planning, Governance & Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community’s and the government’s concern for ensuring liveability is maintained though planning controls covering civic design and land use. 				