

Mathematics Level 7

Chapter 2 — Place and liveability

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Measuring liveability, and how it shapes where people live

Curriculum focus — Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Geography, Levels 7 and 8, strand *Geographical Knowledge and Understanding*, sub-strand *Place and liveability*. Content description VC2HG8K06.

Elaborations drawn on: VC2HG8K06.E01 (how the values people find in places — economic, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic — shape where they choose to live), VC2HG8K06.E02 (what liveability means and how it gets measured; objective versus subjective measures), VC2HG8K06.E03 (how income, employment, family, schools, lifestyle and liveability shape where people choose to live), VC2HG8K06.E05 (how environmental quality affects the places people choose).

In this section

Everyone lives somewhere, and everyone has opinions about where they live. But geographers do more than give opinions. They look for **measures** — information that can be checked — to describe how good a place is to live in.

In this section you will learn:

- what **liveability** means, and how it is measured;
- the difference between **objective** measures (numbers that are counted or recorded) and **subjective** measures (people's perceptions, gathered by asking them);
- the three families of measures used to evaluate places: **environmental**, **economic** and **social**;
- how organisations turn many measures into a single **liveability index** — and why the result can be contested;
- where Victorians actually choose to live, using real Australian data;
- the factors that influence where people choose to live: income, work, family, schools, lifestyle and environmental quality.

Key words to learn: liveability, measure, environmental measures, economic measures, social measures, objective, subjective, perception, index, weighted score, density, median, survey, tree change, sea change.

1. What is liveability?

Defining our terms. The Victorian Curriculum uses the word *liveability* but does not define it, and different organisations define it in different ways. In this section, *liveability* means **how good a place is to live in, judged by what the place offers the people who live there**. Every question in this section can be answered using that definition. Where we refer to another organisation's definition, we say whose it is.

Start with the idea itself. A place is **liveable** when it meets the needs of the people who live there and makes their lives safe, comfortable and enjoyable. Different people need different things from a place. A family with young children may care most about schools and parks. A retiree may care most about health services and quiet streets. A worker may care most about how long it takes to reach a job. So two things shape liveability: what a place *has*, and *who* is judging it.

How do you measure something so personal? Geographers begin with one big distinction — between two very different kinds of measure. It is the key to the rest of this section.

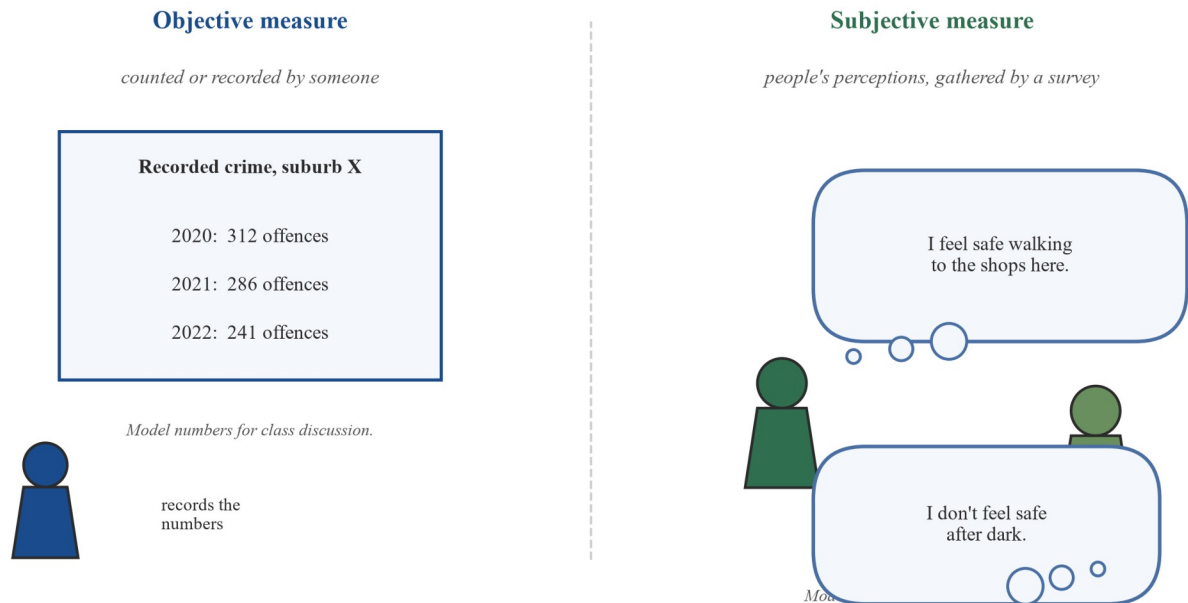
2. Objective and subjective measures

There are two very different ways to measure the same thing, and geographers need both.

An **objective measure** is one that is counted or recorded, so different people who check it should get the same answer. The number of crimes recorded in a suburb in a year is objective: it comes from police records. The average January temperature of a town is objective: it comes from a weather station. So are the things governments build and count — transport infrastructure such as train lines and roads, and medical services such as hospitals.

A **subjective measure** is one that reports people’s own perceptions — how things seem to them. Perceptions are gathered by asking people, usually through a **survey** (a set of questions asked to a group of people). How safe people *feel* walking home at night is subjective: two people can walk the same street and have different feelings about it.

Two ways to measure the same thing: is this suburb safe?



Model diagram showing two ways to measure the same thing, safety: on the left an objective measure as a card of recorded crime numbers for a model suburb falling over three years, and on the right a subjective measure as two people giving opposite survey answers about feeling safe

The numbers and responses in this figure are model data, invented for class discussion. They show the difference between the two kinds of measure, not real results.

Notice something important about the figure. The recorded numbers fall each year — the objective story is “this suburb got safer”. But one resident still does not feel safe after dark. Neither side is wrong. The records count what *happened*; the survey reports how life *feels*. A place’s liveability depends on both.

Objective and subjective measures can disagree in either direction:

- a suburb can have low recorded crime yet residents who feel unsafe (perhaps because of poor lighting or news reports);
- a suburb can have higher recorded crime yet residents who feel fine (perhaps because they know their neighbours well).

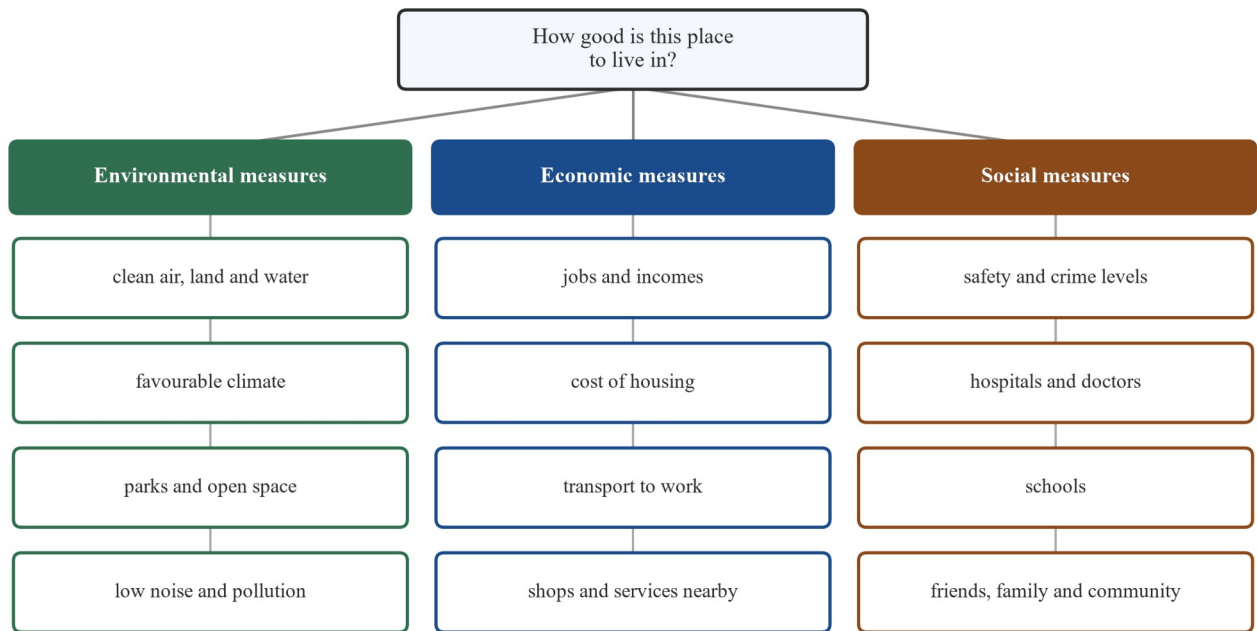
Comparing the two kinds of measure is one of the most useful things a geographer can do. It stops us thinking that numbers tell the whole story — and it stops us thinking feelings tell the whole story either.

A tool for looking at places. Victoria has a public online tool called **Digital Twin Victoria**. It is a digital 3D model of the state that brings together data about places — buildings, transport, services and more — so that planners and citizens can explore information about an area on a screen. Tools like this are one way governments make objective data about liveability easier to see and compare.

3. The three families of measures

Objective or subjective, measures of liveability usually fall into three families: **environmental**, **economic** and **social**. Some things people value — such as beauty, culture and spiritual meaning — do not fit easily into those three families, so the content description also allows for **other** measures.

Measures used to judge how liveable a place is



Examples only — a real study chooses the measures that fit its question.

Diagram with the question how good is this place to live in at the top, branching to three families of measures: environmental, economic and social, each with four example cards such as clean air and water, jobs and incomes, and safety and crime levels

Environmental measures describe the natural surroundings of a place and how clean and healthy they are. Examples include:

- clean land, air and water;
- a favourable climate (for example, not too hot, not too dry, not too stormy);
- parks, gardens and open space;
- low noise and low pollution.

Economic measures describe money, work and how much things cost. Examples include:

- how many jobs there are, and what they pay;
- the cost of housing, to rent or to buy;
- transport to work, schools and shops;
- whether shops and other services are nearby.

Social measures describe people's safety, health, learning and connections with others. Examples include:

- safety and crime levels;
- access to hospitals, doctors and other health services;
- schools and other places to learn;
- being near family, friends and community.

Beyond the three families. Places also hold value that is harder to count. **Cultural** value comes from the traditions and connections of cultural groups — for example, living near a community, festival or place of worship that matters to you. **Spiritual** value comes from the meanings people attach to places — for example, a memorial, a place of worship, or the town your family came from. **Aesthetic** value (say it: es-THET-ik) comes from beauty and what pleases the eye — a view over the sea, a tree-lined street, or the “bright lights” of a big city at night. These values are real reasons people choose where to live, even though they cannot be measured with a number.

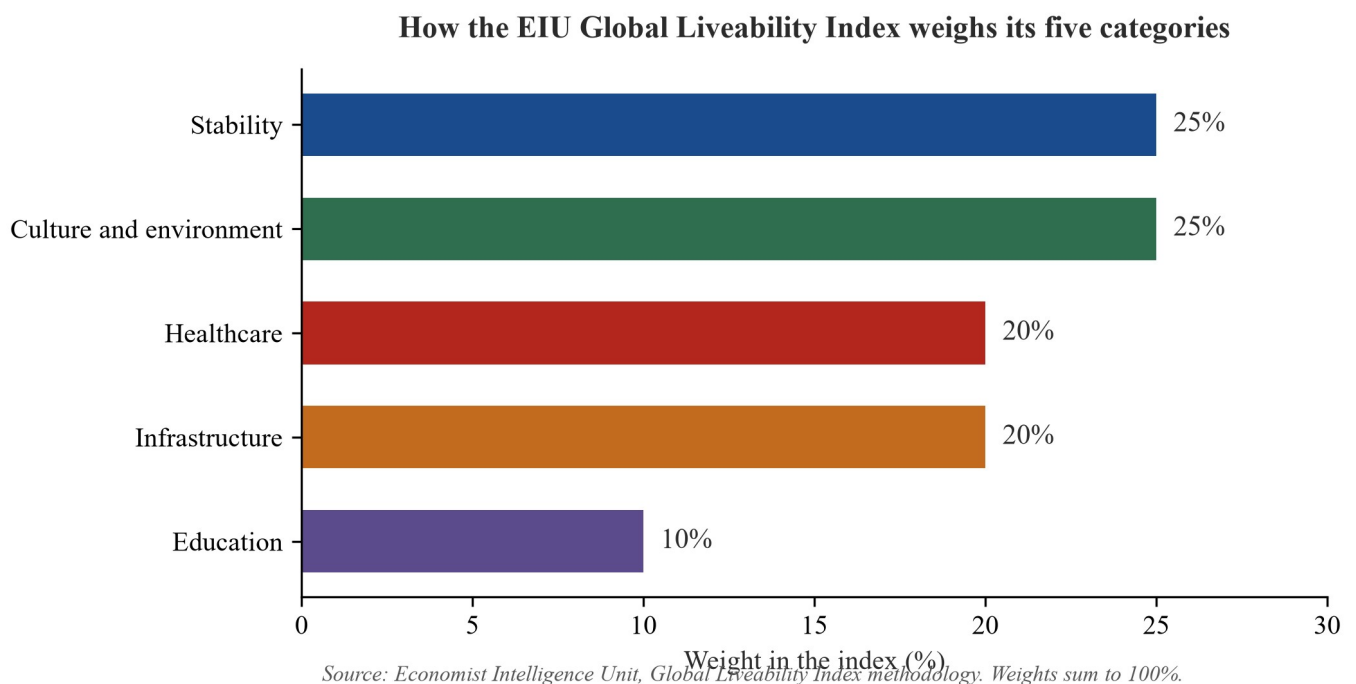
4. Turning many measures into one score: liveability indexes

You will sometimes see news stories saying that one city is “the most liveable in the world”. These claims come from **liveability indexes**. An **index** is a single score built by combining several measures.

Building an index takes three steps:

1. **Choose the measures.** Decide which things matter (safety? hospitals? climate?).
2. **Score each measure.** Give each place a number on each measure, often out of 10 or out of 100.
3. **Combine the scores.** Add the scores together. Usually the scores are **weighted** first: a weighted score counts some measures as more important than others. For example, if healthcare has a weight of 20%, it contributes one-fifth of the total.

One of the best-known international indexes is the **Global Liveability Index**, published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). It scores cities in five categories with these weights:



Horizontal bar chart of the five categories of the EIU Global Liveability Index and their weights: stability 25 per cent, culture and environment 25 per cent, healthcare 20 per cent, infrastructure 20 per cent and education 10 per cent

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit, Global Liveability Index, published category weights, retrieved 25 August 2026.

Why indexes are contested. Look closely at the figure. Two people who both care about liveability can still disagree about those weights. Someone who values schools above all would give education more than 10%. Someone who values safety might want stability weighted more heavily. Changing the weights can change which city comes first. That is why a liveability index is not “the truth about a city”. It is one organisation’s measured judgement, built on choices about what to include and how much each part should count.

Indexes also rely mainly on objective measures. They struggle to include the subjective side — whether people feel at home, welcome and connected. Two places can score the same on an index while feeling very different to live in.

Here is the weighting arithmetic in full, worked for two invented places with model scores made for class discussion. The method is the point.

Building a composite liveability score (worked example)

Measure	Weight	Riverview (inner-city, model)		Gum Creek (country town, model)	
Environmental measures	30%	6	$0.3 \times 6 = 1.8$	9	$0.3 \times 9 = 2.7$
Economic measures	30%	8	$0.3 \times 8 = 2.4$	5	$0.3 \times 5 = 1.5$
Social measures	40%	6	$0.4 \times 6 = 2.4$	8	$0.4 \times 8 = 3.2$
Weighted total (out of 10)	100%		6.6		7.4

*Riverview scores well on jobs and services but worse on environment;
Gum Creek does the opposite. The totals are close — a small change in the
weights (for example, giving economy 50%) can change which place 'wins'.*

Model scores invented for class discussion. The weighted-total arithmetic is the teaching point.

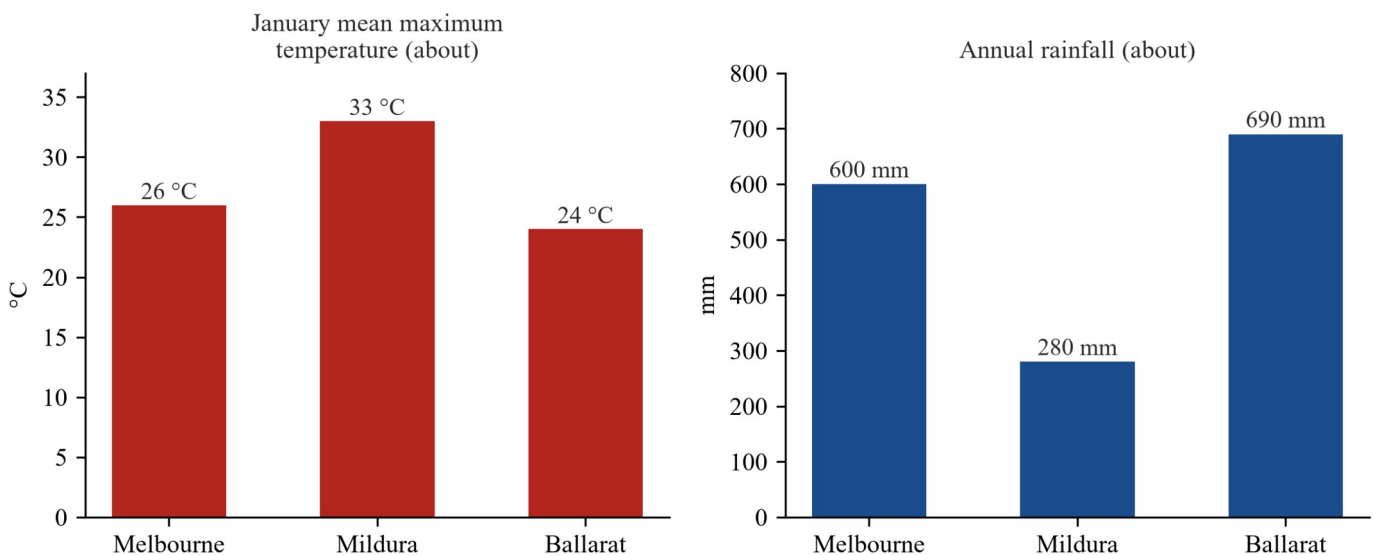
Worked table showing environmental, economic and social scores out of 10 for two model places, Riverview and Gum Creek, with weights of 30, 30 and 40 per cent and weighted totals of 6.6 and 7.4

The scores in this figure are model data, invented for class discussion. The weighted-total arithmetic is what you should learn.

Worked demonstration 1 — Comparing the environmental quality of three Victorian places

Environmental quality is one family of liveability measures. Let us compare three real Victorian places on part of it: their climate.

The same state, three different climates



Two bar charts comparing the climate of three Victorian places: January mean maximum temperature about 26 degrees in Melbourne, 33 in Mildura and 24 in Ballarat, and annual rainfall about 600 millimetres in Melbourne, 280 in Mildura and 690 in Ballarat

Source: Bureau of Meteorology long-term climate averages (1991–2020), rounded, retrieved 25 August 2026.

Step 1 — Read the temperature chart. Mildura’s January days average about 33 °C — a full 9 degrees hotter than Ballarat’s. Melbourne sits in between.

Step 2 — Read the rainfall chart. Ballarat receives about 690 mm of rain a year, more than twice Mildura’s 280 mm. Melbourne is in between again.

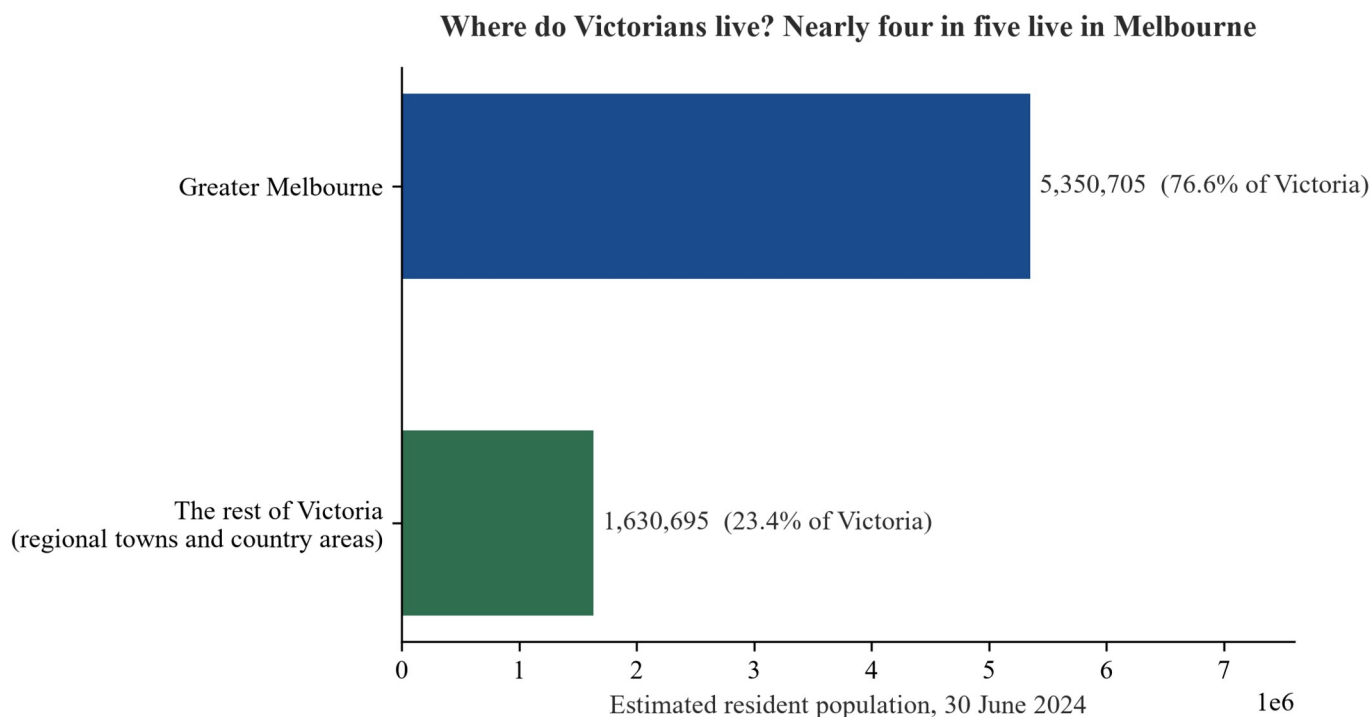
Step 3 — Describe the climates in words. Mildura: hot and dry. Ballarat: cool and wet. Melbourne: moderate on both counts.

Step 4 — Think like a geographer. Which place has the “best” climate? The question has no single answer, because climate is an objective measure but our *judgement* of it is subjective. A person who grows fruit for a living may prefer Mildura’s hot, sunny, dry summers. A person who loves cool, green hills may prefer Ballarat. Someone who dislikes both heat and damp might choose Melbourne.

Geographer’s conclusion: the same objective measure — climate — can suit one person and not another. That is why liveability studies must always say *who* they are measuring for, and *which* measures they chose.

5. Where do Victorians choose to live?

Now for the second half of the content description: how liveability influences where people live. Start with the facts about where Victorians live today.

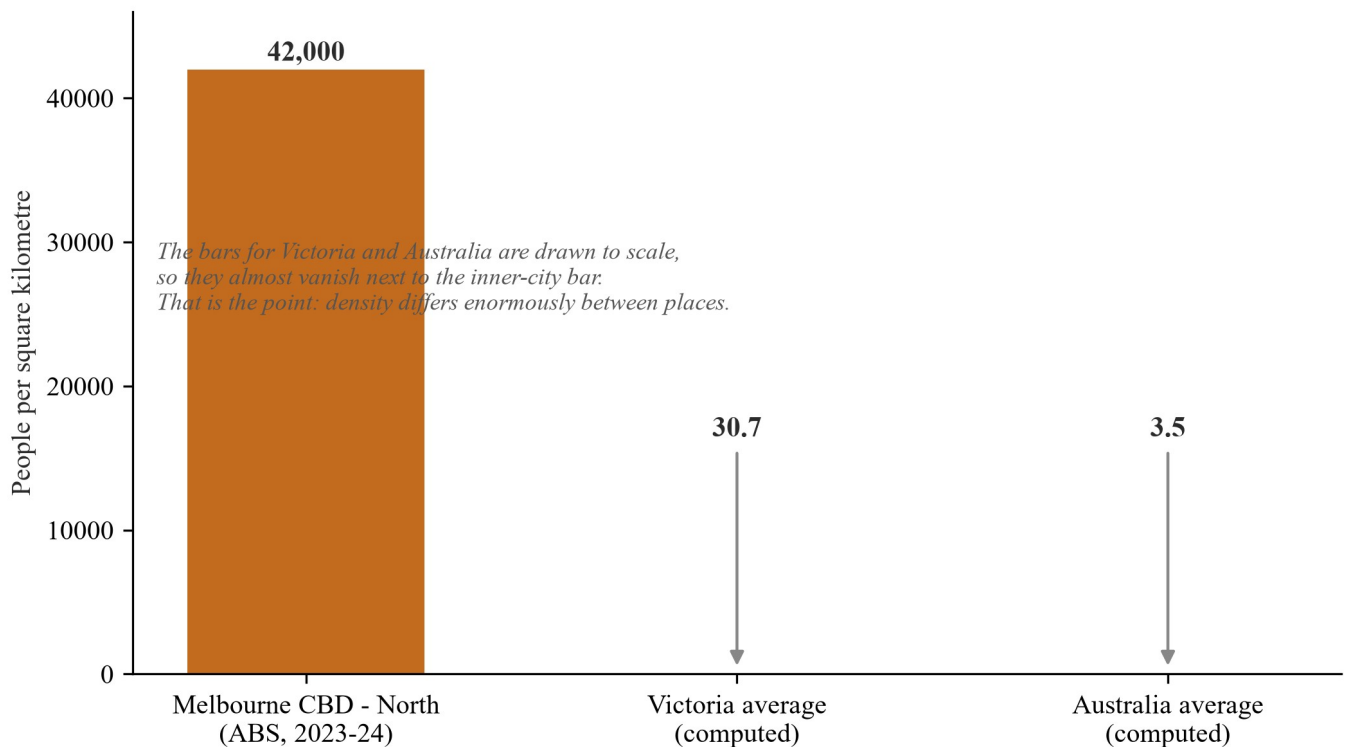


Horizontal bar chart showing that of Victoria’s estimated resident population of 6,981,400 at 30 June 2024, 5,350,705 people, or 76.6 per cent, lived in Greater Melbourne, and 1,630,695, or 23.4 per cent, lived in the rest of Victoria

Source: ABS, Regional population, 2023–24, and National, state and territory population, June 2024 quarter, retrieved 25 August 2026. The regional figure is the difference between the two published totals.

Nearly four in five Victorians live in Greater Melbourne. Melbourne concentrates jobs, hospitals, universities, transport, sport and entertainment — many of the economic and social measures from Section 3. The concentration is striking when you look at **density**: how many people live in each square kilometre.

Density: from 42,000 to 3.5 people per square kilometre



Bar chart of people per square kilometre: Melbourne CBD - North at 42,000 from ABS 2023-24, the Victoria average computed at 30.7, and the Australia average computed at 3.5, with a note that the two smaller bars almost vanish at this scale

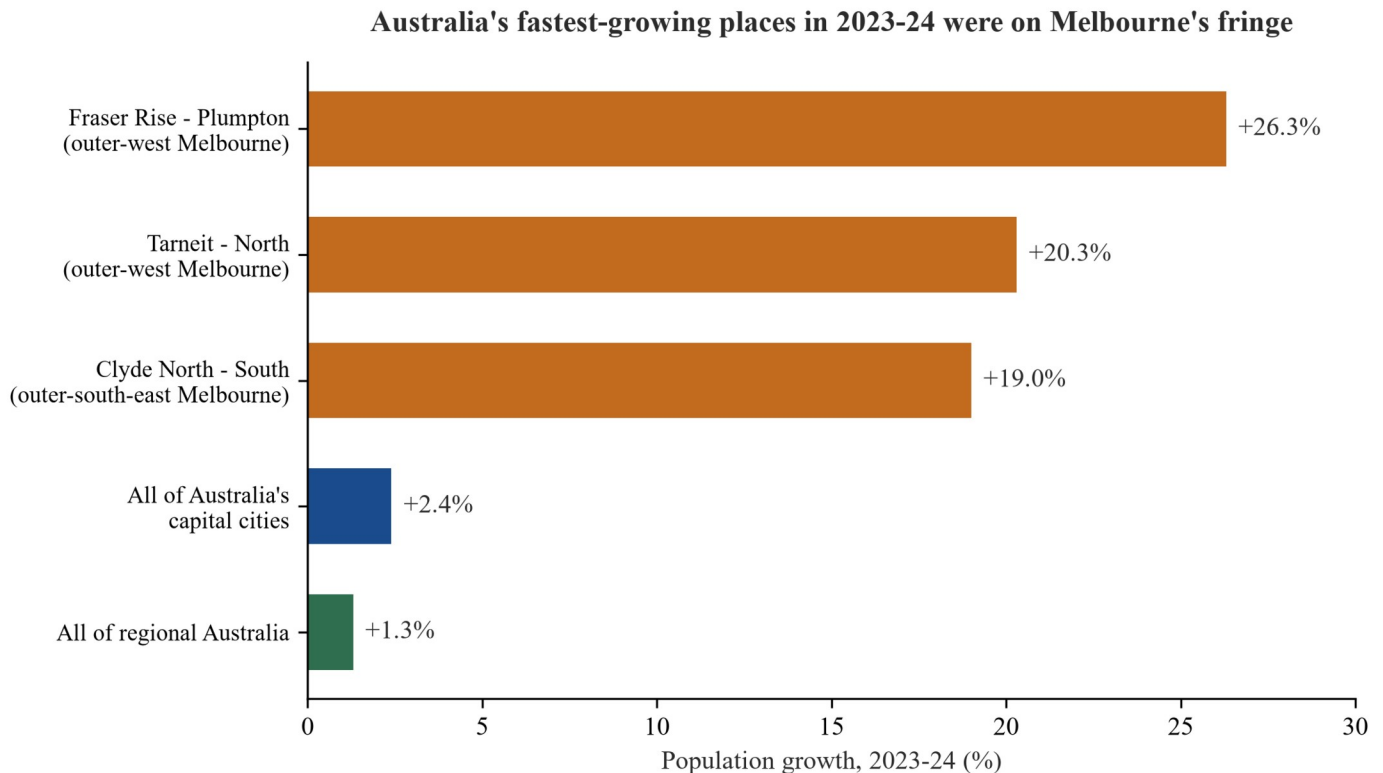
Data: ABS, *Regional population, 2023–24* (Melbourne CBD – North); ABS *population totals and standard published land areas*, used to compute the Victoria and Australia averages; retrieved 25 August 2026.

Some Melburnians live stacked in apartments at 42,000 people per square kilometre, while the average across all of Australia is just 3.5. Density shapes liveability in both directions: high density puts shops, jobs and transport close by, but it can also bring noise, traffic and little garden space. Low density brings space and quiet, but services are further away.

Where people live is not standing still. In 2023–24, Australia’s fastest-growing places were on Melbourne’s outer fringe — suburbs of newer houses that cost less than homes closer to the centre — while some of the fastest growth in Victoria was in smaller towns near the city, such as Mitchell Shire, just north of Melbourne: a tree change that keeps city jobs within reach. Worked demonstration 2 looks at the growth numbers and asks why people are making these choices.

Worked demonstration 2 — Why is Melbourne's outer fringe growing so fast?

The growth data below is real, from the ABS. Let us reason with it like geographers about where people choose to live.



Horizontal bar chart of population growth in 2023-24: Fraser Rise - Plumpton up 26.3 per cent, Tarneit - North up 20.3 per cent, Clyde North - South up 19.0 per cent, all Australian capital cities up 2.4 per cent, and regional Australia up 1.3 per cent

Source: ABS, Regional population, 2023–24, retrieved 25 August 2026.

Step 1 — Read the growth chart. In 2023–24, the three fastest-growing places in Australia were all on Melbourne's outer fringe: Fraser Rise – Plumpton (+26.3%), Tarneit – North (+20.3%) and Clyde North – South (+19.0%). All capital cities together grew 2.4%, while regional Australia grew 1.3%.

Step 2 — Ask who is moving. Suburbs that grow by a fifth or more in a single year are full of new houses and new households — above all, young families buying their first home.

Step 3 — Bring in income and housing. The median weekly household income across Australia was \$1,746 at the 2021 Census. Houses close to Melbourne's centre cost far more than many such households can pay. On the fringe, newer houses are within reach.

Step 4 — Weigh the trade-off. Fringe households accept longer trips to work, hospitals and events. In return they gain space, a newer home, and schools and parks built for young families. The growth numbers tell us that many households judge the trade worth making.

Geographer's conclusion: patterns of where people live are liveability choices made visible. The fastest growth is not chance — it is thousands of household decisions about income, housing, work and family, the same influences you will meet in Section 6.

6. What influences where people choose to live?

Geographers have studied this question for decades. The main influences are:

- **Income.** What you earn sets your housing budget. In 2021, the **median** household income in Victoria was \$1,639 a week, and across Australia it was \$1,746 (the median is the middle value — half of households earn more, half earn less). Housing near the centre of Melbourne costs more than housing on the fringe or in country towns, so many households move further out to find a home they can afford. That is why the outer-fringe suburbs in the growth chart above are growing so fast.
- **Place of employment.** People choose homes within reach of work. Some jobs even pull people to remote places — for example, mining and farm work pay wages that draw workers to places far from the cities.
- **Family, friends and community.** Many people live near relatives or near others who share their culture or language. Being near the people who matter to you is a social measure of liveability with real pull.
- **Schools.** Families with children compare schools and often choose a home within reach of the school they want.
- **Lifestyle.** Some people want the “bright lights” of the city — its cafes, sport and events. Others make a **tree change** (moving to the country or the bush) or a **sea change** (moving to the coast) to gain space, scenery and a slower pace.
- **Liveability itself.** When people can choose, they compare places — consciously or not — on the measures in this section.
- **Environmental quality.** Clean land, air and water; good views; parks and recreation facilities; and a favourable climate all draw people. Worked demonstration 1 showed that different climates attract different people.

Liveability survey — my local area

Model form — adapt the questions to your own suburb or town

1. How safe do you feel walking near your home during the day?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Very poor Poor Okay Good Very good

2. How easy is it to get to school, shops and sport from your home?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Very poor Poor Okay Good Very good

3. How good are the parks and open spaces near you?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Very poor Poor Okay Good Very good

4. How clean and quiet is the area where you live?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Very poor Poor Okay Good Very good

5. How well do you know your neighbours?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Very poor Poor Okay Good Very good

Record for each question: Who did you ask? How many people answered?

Tick one circle per question per person. Keep your question the same for everyone, so your results can be compared.

Section 5B shows how to turn your answers into numbers and graphs.

Model survey form titled liveability survey - my local area, with five sample rating questions about safety, transport, parks, clean and quiet streets, and knowing neighbours, and instructions to adapt the questions to any suburb or town

Fieldwork hook. The survey above is a model you can adapt to your own suburb or town. Ask the same questions of several people, keep the rating scale the same, and record who answered. You now have subjective liveability data about your own place. Sections 2F and 5B take this further, when you plan a local liveability investigation and learn survey methods in full.

One last caution, linking back to Section 2. A place's liveability numbers can look good while some residents still do not thrive there — because their income, their family ties or their needs are not reflected in the averages. Measures describe a place on average; individual lives vary. Good geography keeps both ideas in mind at once.

Practice — scaffolded

Q1. Define **liveability** as it is used in this section.

Q2. Copy the three families of measures from the measures tree figure. Under each family, add one example of your own that is not already in the figure.

Q3. Classify each of these as an objective measure or a subjective measure: (a) the number of hospitals in a town; (b) residents rating their local park out of 10; (c) the recorded crime rate; (d) how safe residents feel at the train station; (e) the average January temperature.

Q4. In the objective-versus-subjective figure, the recorded crime numbers fall for three years while one resident still feels unsafe. Give two possible reasons why her perception could differ from the records.

Q5. Use the EIU weights figure. (a) Which two categories carry the highest weight? (b) Which carries the lowest? (c) If you built an index for choosing where your family lives, which category would you weight most heavily, and why?

Q6. The scorecard figure in Section 4 gives Gum Creek 7.4 and Riverview 6.6 with the weights shown. Show, with the working written out, that the weights environment 20%, economy 50%, social 30% make Riverview win instead.

Q7. Use the population figure. (a) How many Victorians lived in Greater Melbourne at 30 June 2024? (b) What percentage of Victoria's population is that? (c) Give one reason so many Victorians live in one city.

Q8. The growth figure shows three outer-Melbourne suburbs growing by more than 19% in a single year. Use the income and housing ideas from Section 6 to explain why these places are growing so fast.

Practice — unscaffolded

Q9. “A liveability index tells you how good a place is to live in.” Identify one strength and one weakness of this claim. Use the EIU weights figure and the scorecard figure in your answer.

Q10. Explain, with two named Victorian examples from this section, why the same objective measure can attract one person and repel another.

Q11. A friend says: “Objective measures are facts, so we should ignore surveys about how people feel.” Write a short reply arguing for or against this view. Refer to the crime example in Section 2.

Q12. Choose one influence from Section 6 (income; employment; family and community; schools; lifestyle; environmental quality). Explain how it could push a family away from one place and pull them towards another.

Extended response

Q13. “*Liveability rankings tell us which places are the best to live in.*”

Do you agree? Write an evidence-based response of about 200 words. The strongest responses will:

- state a clear position (agree, disagree, or agree with limits);
 - steelman the other side — give the best argument *against* your position before you answer it;
 - use at least **two** figures from this section as evidence;
 - refer to the difference between objective and subjective measures, and to the choices hidden in weights;
 - refer to their sources.
-

Teaching notes (for the teacher)

This section delivers VC2HG8K06 and draws on elaborations .E01, .E02, .E03 and .E05. Elaboration .E04 is excluded per the series content policy and §2A of this build’s TOC; nothing in this section draws on it, and no task assumes it. .E02 names the Digital Twin Victoria platform, which is treated here at awareness level — one example of how governments make place data viewable.

Suggested sequence: define the term and its contested nature → objective versus subjective (the chapter’s analytic engine, per the TOC chapter notes) → the three families of measures (plus cultural, spiritual and aesthetic values from .E01) → how an index is built and why it is contested → worked demonstration 1 (environmental quality) → Victorian population data → worked demonstration 2 (growth) → the influences on where people live. The two worked demonstrations use real, cited data (BoM climate averages; ABS population, growth and income figures); the scorecard and survey figures are clearly-labelled model data, for teaching weighting arithmetic and fieldwork design respectively. The fieldwork hook deliberately hands survey design forward to 2F (local liveability responses, VC2HG8K11) and survey method to 5B (VC2HG8S02); keep the hook light here.

Data sources, all retrieved 25 August 2026 unless stated: ABS *Regional population, 2023–24* (Greater Melbourne ERP 5,350,705; growth rates; density figure; fastest-growing SA2s and LGAs); ABS *National, state and territory population*, June 2024 quarter (Australia 27,204,809; Victoria 6,981,400); ABS 2021 Census (median weekly household income: Australia \$1,746; Victoria \$1,639); Bureau of Meteorology climate averages 1991–2020 (rounded); EIU Global Liveability Index methodology (category weights only — no city rankings are reproduced). Density averages are computed from the published population and land-area figures as shown.

The contested-terms rule is applied to *liveability* itself (defined at first use; other definitions acknowledged) and to indexes (weights are choices; steelman built into Q13). Vocabulary sits at or below the Year 7 ceiling except curriculum vocabulary defined at first use.

Glossary

Liveability — how good a place is to live in, judged by what the place offers the people who live there (this section’s working definition; see Section 1). **Measure** — a piece of information, usually a number, used to describe or compare something. **Environmental measures** — measures of the natural surroundings: clean land, air and water; climate; parks; noise and pollution. **Economic measures** — measures of money and work: jobs, incomes, housing costs, transport, nearby shops and services. **Social measures** — measures of safety, health, learning and connection: crime, hospitals, schools, family and community. **Objective measure** — a measure that is counted or recorded, so different checkers should get the same answer. **Subjective measure** — a measure that reports people’s perceptions, usually gathered by survey. **Perception** — the way something seems to a person. **Survey** — a set of questions asked to a group of people to gather their views. **Index** — a single score built by combining several measures. **Weighted score** — a score in which some measures count for more than others, according to set weights. **Density** — the number of people living in each square kilometre. **Median** — the middle value: half of the group is above it and half below it. **Tree change** — moving from a city to the country or the bush. **Sea change** — moving to the coast. **Aesthetic value** — value that comes from beauty, or from what pleases the eye.

Services and facilities: how accessibility shapes perceptions of liveability

For the teacher — VC2 codes: VC2HG8K07; elaborations drawn on .E01, .E02, .E03, .E04.

Teaching sequence (teacher-facing) — 1) Anchor the three defined terms and re-link to 2A's objective-vs-subjective engine. 2) How Australia measures accessibility (Remoteness Structure, ARIA+). 3) Where people and services sit across settlement types (E01, E04). 4) Health, education and retail evidence as remoteness grows. 5) Inner vs outer suburbs from an aerial view (E04). 6) Transport and the 20-minute idea (E02). 7) Australian cities vs Asia/Europe (E03). 8) From access to perceptions, with two steelmanned views. 9) Skill: aerial-image audit of any Victorian locality. Then worked examples, practice, extended response. Elaborations are linkage to the curriculum, not a forced teaching order.

Section 2A looked at how we **measure** liveability. This section follows one of the biggest influences on it: how easy it is to get to the **services and facilities** a household uses — shops, schools, doctors, hospitals, pools, parks, stations — and how that ease (or lack of it) shapes what people **say and feel** about where they live.

Theory

Services and facilities — what are we counting?

A **service** is help that people provide to other people: a doctor's visit, a lesson, a bus run, a library loan. A **facility** is the built place that makes the service possible: the hospital, the school, the bus stop, the library. Geographers group them so we can compare places side by side. This section uses four groups, the same four the curriculum names:

- **retail** — corner shops, supermarkets, shopping centres, online delivery runs
- **education** — kinders, schools, TAFEs, universities, libraries
- **health** — doctor clinics, chemists, dentists, hospitals, ambulances
- **entertainment** — cinemas, pools, ovals, parks, cafes, live music and sport

Three words we define before we use them

liveability (*working definition — the curriculum does not define it, so this chapter sets one out; same definition as 2A*): how good a place is to live in, **for a particular person or household**. Not one number for everyone.

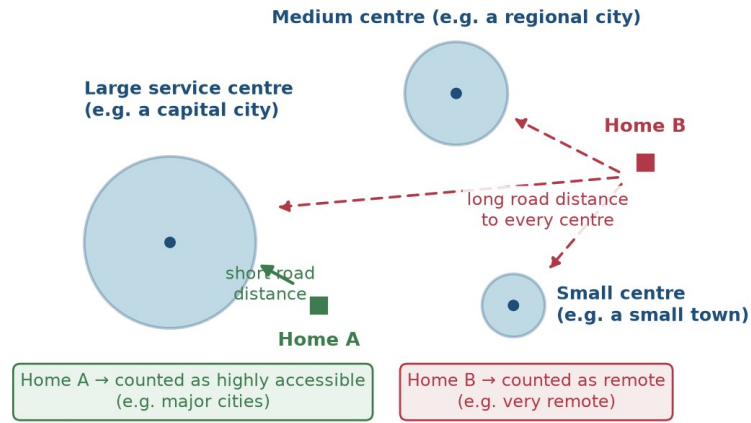
accessibility (*frame-dependent term — the answer changes with who is asking*): how easy it is for a particular person to reach the services and facilities they need and want. The same street can be highly accessible for a driver and hard to access for a 13-year-old on a bike, a parent with a pram, or an older person who no longer drives. The ABS measures one frame of it (road distance to service centres); we will always say **whose** accessibility we mean.

perception (*response-reporting term — we treat what people report as data*): what people say and feel about a place. If a resident reports their town as hard to live in, that report is true *as a report*, even where our measures say something different. 2A opened this objective-vs-subjective split; it is the engine of this whole chapter.

How Australia measures accessibility: the Remoteness Structure

The Australian Bureau of Statistics sorts every part of Australia into five **Remoteness Areas**: major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote. The ABS says the classification is made “on the basis of a measure of relative access to services”. That measure is an accessibility index built by the University of Adelaide, and its core question is simple: *how far is it, by road, to the nearest service centres of different sizes?* Figure 1 shows the idea with two homes.

Measuring accessibility: how far is it, by road, to the nearest services?

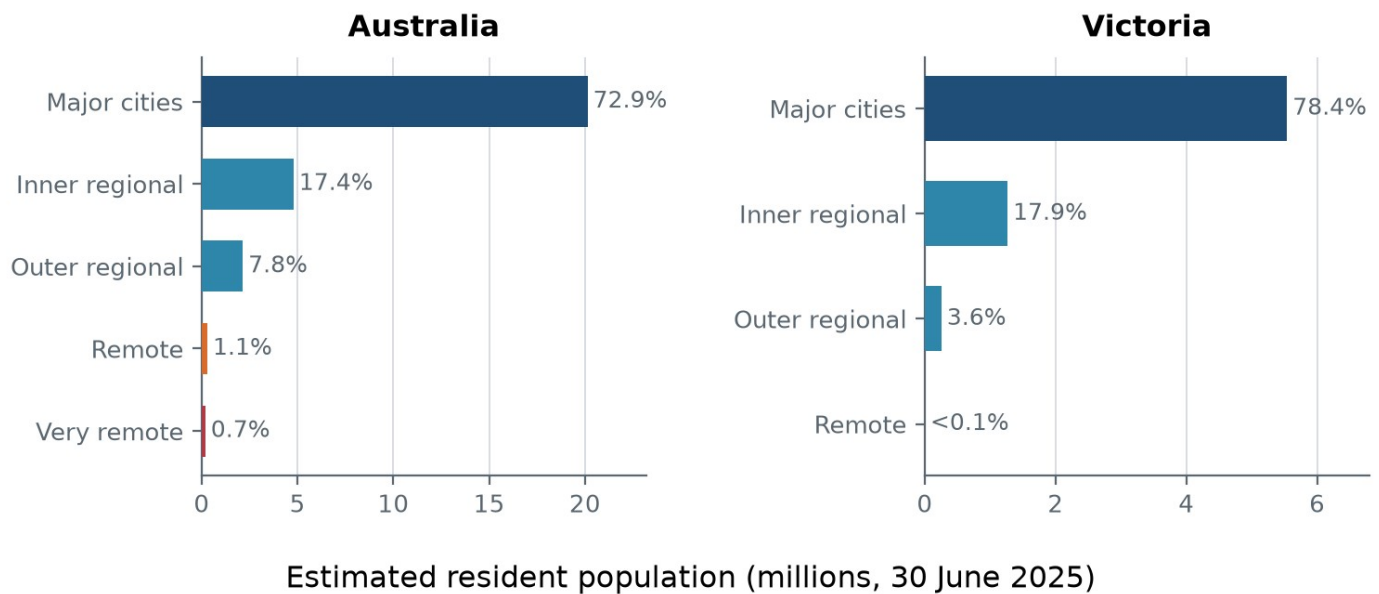


Schematic only — not a real map, not to scale. Idea: the ABS Remoteness Structure classifies places by relative access to services (based on ARIA+, University of Adelaide).

Schematic diagram of how remoteness is measured: Home A sits close to a large service centre with a short road-distance arrow, while Home B sits far from every centre with long dashed arrows to the large, medium and small centres

Figure 1 — Measuring accessibility: road distance to service centres decides the category (schematic only, not a real map).

Now look at where people actually live under that system (Figure 2).



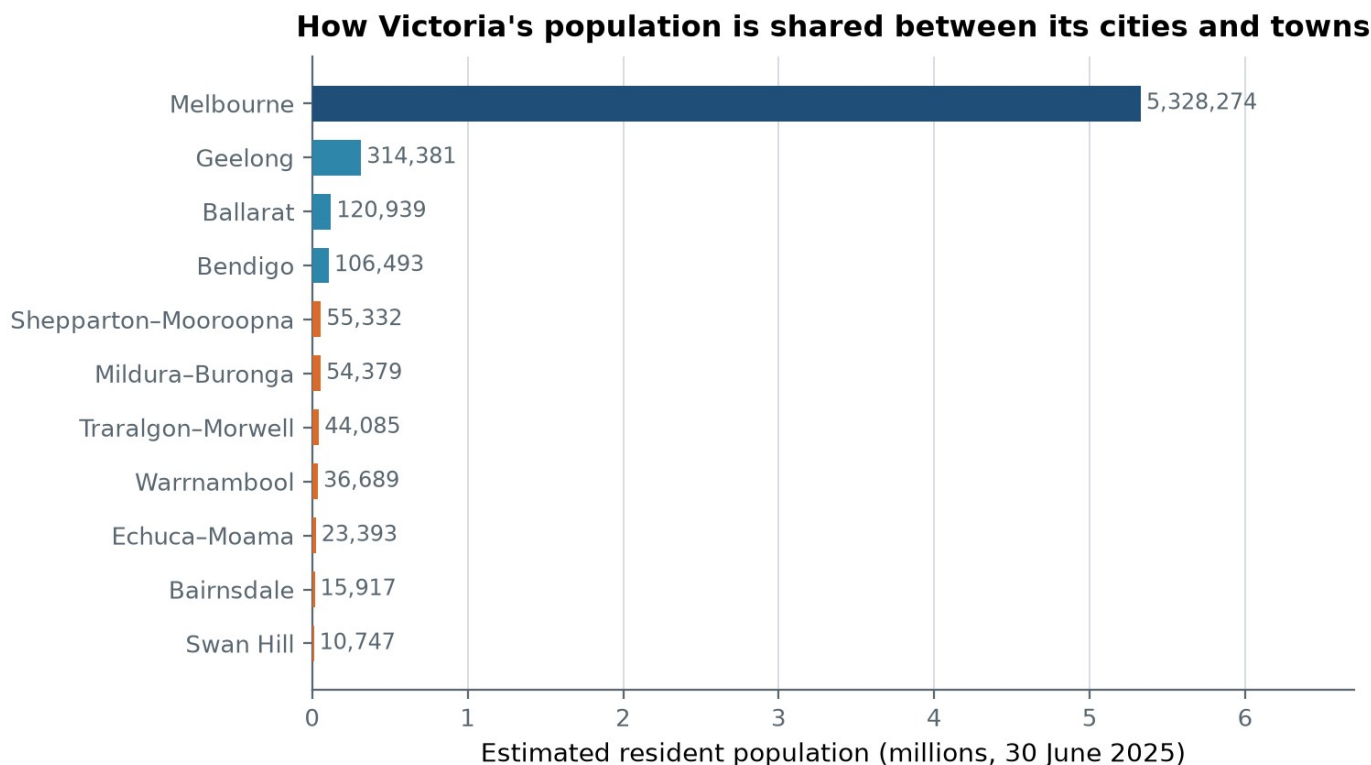
Two horizontal bar charts of estimated resident population at 30 June 2025 by remoteness area, for Australia and Victoria: in Australia, major cities 72.9 per cent, inner regional 17.4, outer regional 7.8, remote 1.1, very remote 0.7; in Victoria, major cities 78.4 per cent, inner regional 17.9, outer regional 3.6, remote under 0.1

Figure 2 — Where people live by remoteness area, estimated resident population, 30 June 2025 (ABS cat. 3218.0).

About three in four Australians live in major cities, and in Victoria the share is even bigger (78.4 per cent). Very few Victorians live in remote Australia (under 0.1 per cent). This matters because services follow people: where populations cluster, shops, schools, hospitals and stations cluster too.

The settlement ladder in Victoria

The curriculum also asks us to compare types of residential areas and settlements: **inner urban** and **outer urban** areas, **regional** centres, **rural** districts and **remote** places. Figure 3 lines up Victoria’s significant urban areas by population, which reads like a ladder: one huge capital city, a few regional cities, then smaller towns.



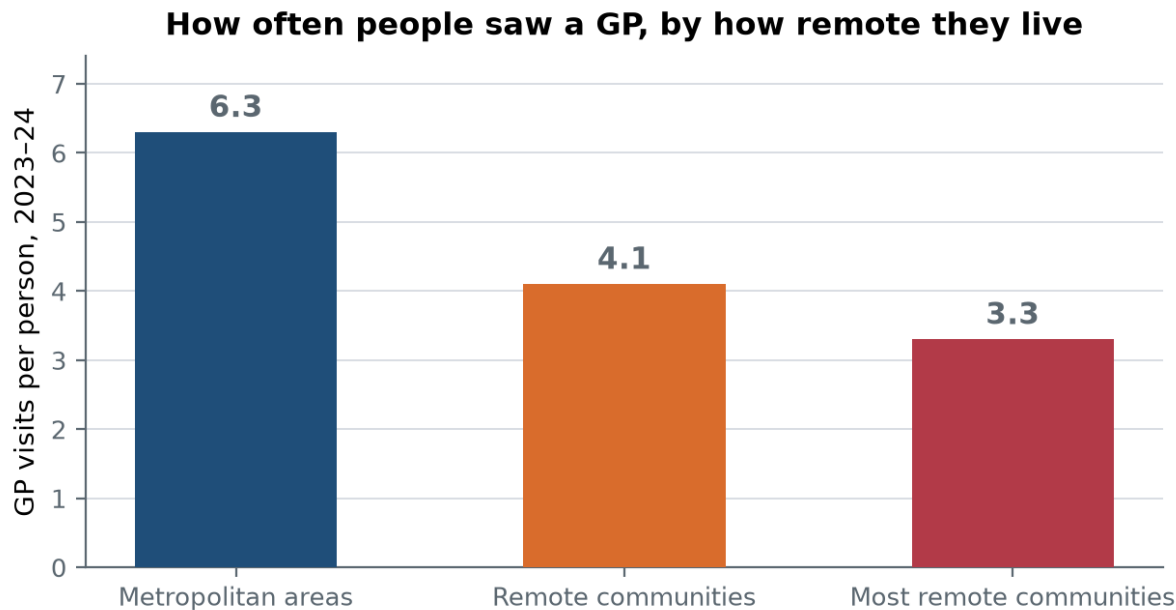
Horizontal bar chart of sixteen Victorian significant urban areas by population in 2025, from Melbourne at 5,328,274 people down through the regional cities and mid-size towns to the smallest bar at 10,747; read the place names off the chart

Figure 3 — Victoria’s settlement ladder, 2025 (ABS cat. 3218.0).

Services sit on the same ladder. Melbourne holds the big, rare facilities: major hospitals, universities, international airports, huge shopping centres. The regional cities — the next three bars on the ladder — still hold big hospitals, TAFEs, many schools and plenty of shops. A smaller town near the bottom of the ladder, such as Echuca-Moama or Bairnsdale, usually holds the everyday basics — a primary school, a supermarket, a chemist, an oval — but not much more. A rural hamlet or a remote station may hold almost none, so even a weekly shop is a long drive. That thinning-out is the **distribution** the curriculum wants you to see: not “bush bad, city good”, simply *different spreads of services*, with real effects on people.

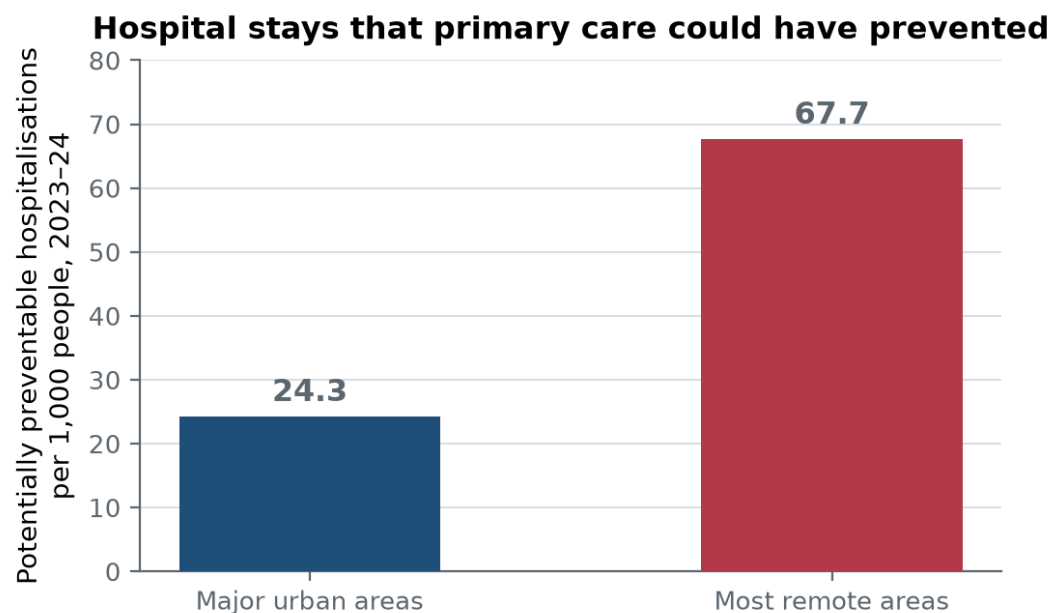
What happens to services as remoteness grows?

Health gives the clearest measured picture (Figures 4 and 5).



Bar chart of family-doctor visits per person in 2023-24: metropolitan 6.3, remote communities 4.1, most remote 3.3

Figure 4 — Family-doctor visits per person, 2023–24 (AIHW).



Bar chart of potentially preventable hospitalisations per 1,000 people: major urban 24.3 against most remote 67.7

Figure 5 — Potentially preventable hospitalisations per 1,000 people (AIHW).

In 2023–24, people in metropolitan areas saw a doctor about 6.3 times each, against 3.3 in the most remote areas. Figure 5 is the flip side: a **potentially preventable hospitalisation** is a hospital stay that good, early primary care (like a doctor visit) can often head off. The rate in the most remote areas (67.7 per 1,000 people) is nearly three times the major-urban rate (24.3). Fewer doctors nearby → harder access → more preventable hospital stays. That is the distribution-to-access chain in one picture.

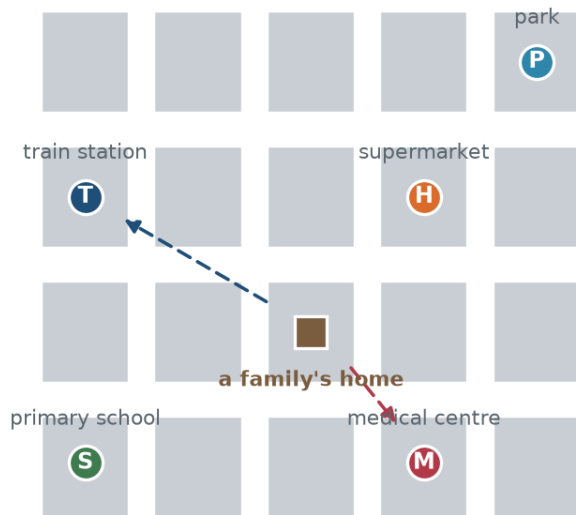
Education and retail thin out in the same way. In a capital city a family can often choose between several schools and see a doctor within a short trip; in a remote area the nearest secondary school or hospital may be hours away, and some students study through distance education with a teacher over the internet. Entertainment follows: cinemas, pools and live music sit where enough people live to fill them.

Inner vs outer suburbs: same city, different access

Remoteness is not the only frame. Inside one city, an older **inner suburb** and a newer **outer suburb** can feel like different worlds. Geographers check this with aerial images (the curriculum's suggested method): from above, inner suburbs show small blocks, corner shops, schools and stations packed close together; outer suburbs show big blocks, one school, and a shopping centre pushed to the edge near the freeway. Figure 6 models the contrast.

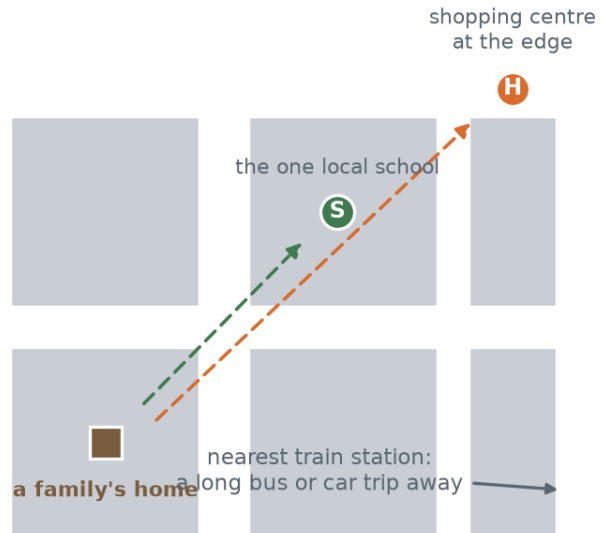
Where do the services sit? A model, not a real place (not to scale)

Inner suburb (older, well established)



Many different services sit within an easy walk.

Outer suburb (newer, still growing)



Fewer services, further apart; many trips need a car or bus.

Two-panel schematic, not to scale: an inner suburb with a family home surrounded within walking distance by a primary school, medical centre, train station, supermarket and park; and an outer suburb with a family home, one local school, a shopping centre at the edge and the nearest train station a long bus or car trip away

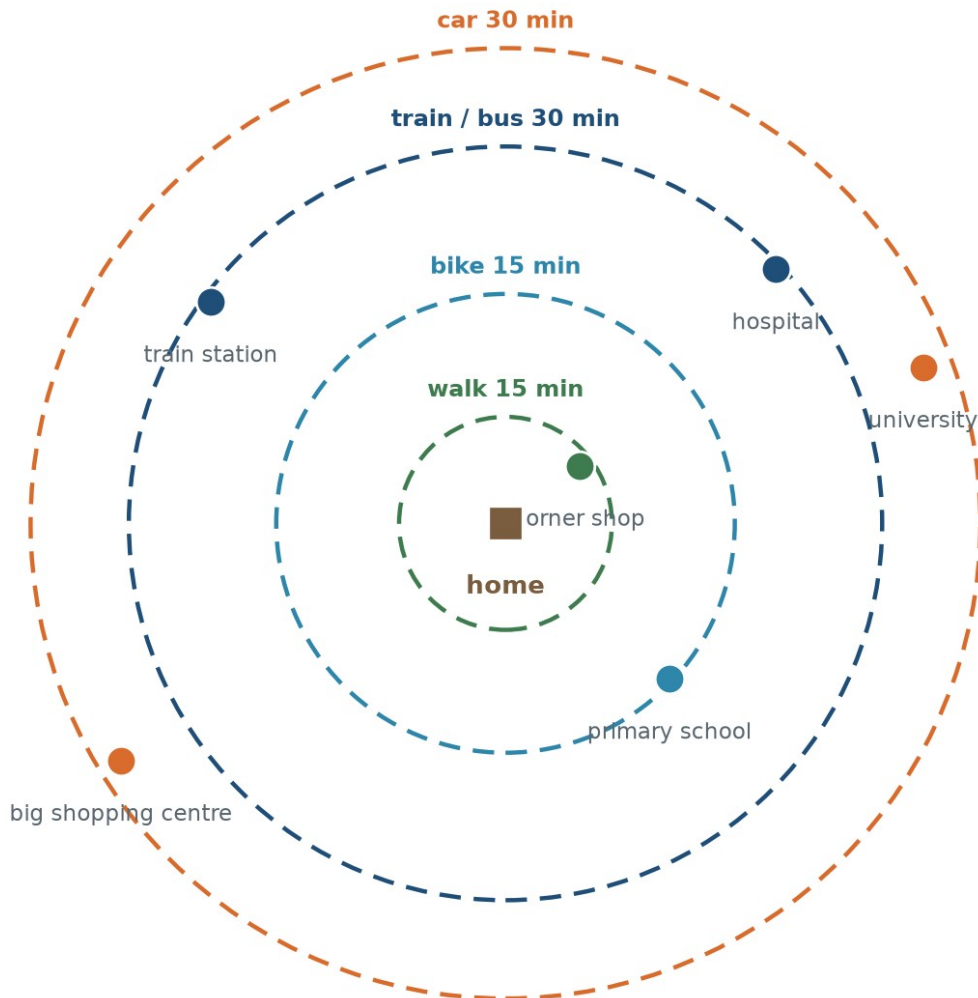
Figure 6 — A model of service spread: inner suburb vs outer suburb (not a real place, not to scale).

The implication for people is the point: in the inner panel, a 13-year-old without a car can still reach school, a doctor, a pool and a station. In the outer panel, the same teenager needs a lift for almost everything. Same city, same label (“suburb”), very different accessibility.

Transport changes what “close” means

Accessibility is not only about where services sit; it is also about how people move. Figure 7 keeps one home fixed and draws how far the *same* time budget reaches by four modes.

Same home, same time budget — how far can you get?



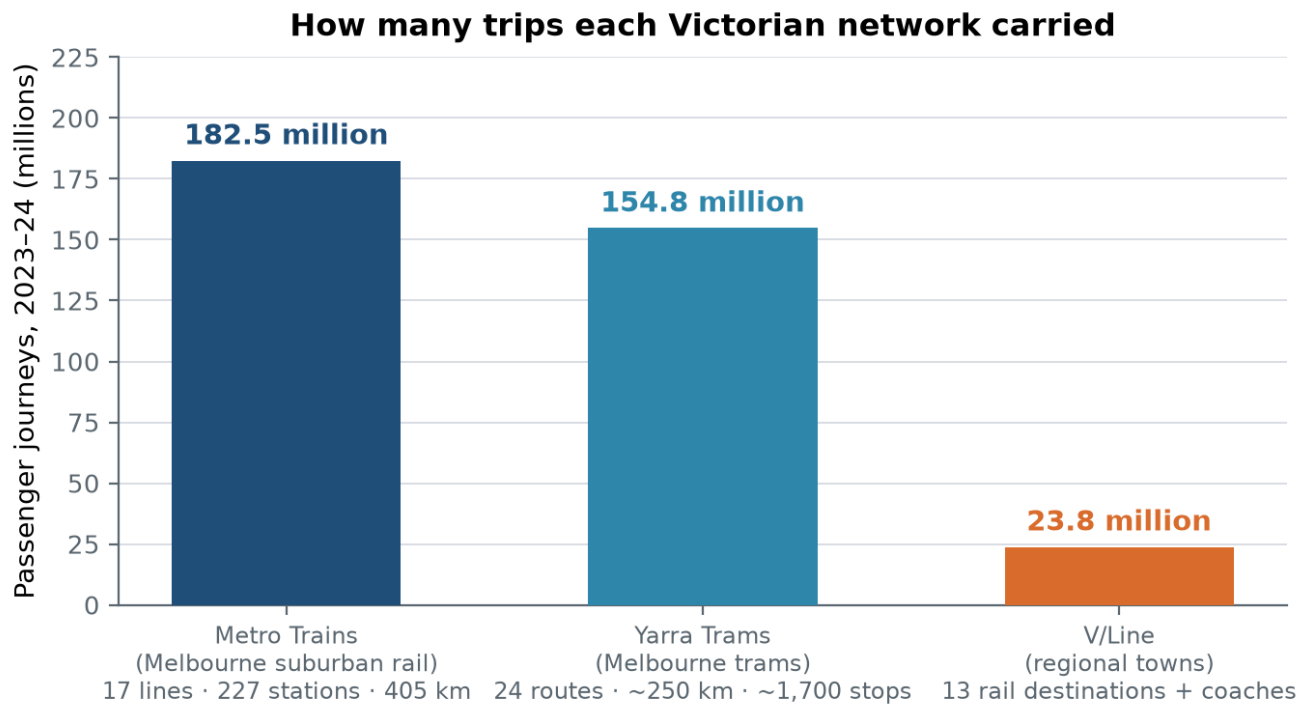
Model only — rings show travel time, not exact distance.

Concentric dashed rings around a home showing how far the same time budget reaches: walk 15 minutes reaches the corner shop, bike 15 minutes reaches the primary school, train or bus 30 minutes reaches the train station and hospital, car 30 minutes reaches the big shopping centre and university

Figure 7 — Same home, same time budget: the mode of travel redraws the map (model only).

The corner shop is a 15-minute walk; the hospital sits outside the bike ring but inside the 30-minute train/bus ring; the university needs the car ring. Change the transport and you change the accessible city — which is exactly the role of transportation the curriculum names: transport decides how easily people reach services **and** take part in activities (sport training, gigs, club nights, seeing friends).

Melbourne's three public networks carry that load (Figure 8).



Bar chart of passenger journeys in 2023-24 on Melbourne's public transport networks: the suburban train network 182.5 million across 17 lines and 227 stations over 405 kilometres, the tram network 154.8 million across 24 routes and about 1,700 stops, and the regional rail and coach network 23.8 million across 13 rail destinations plus coaches

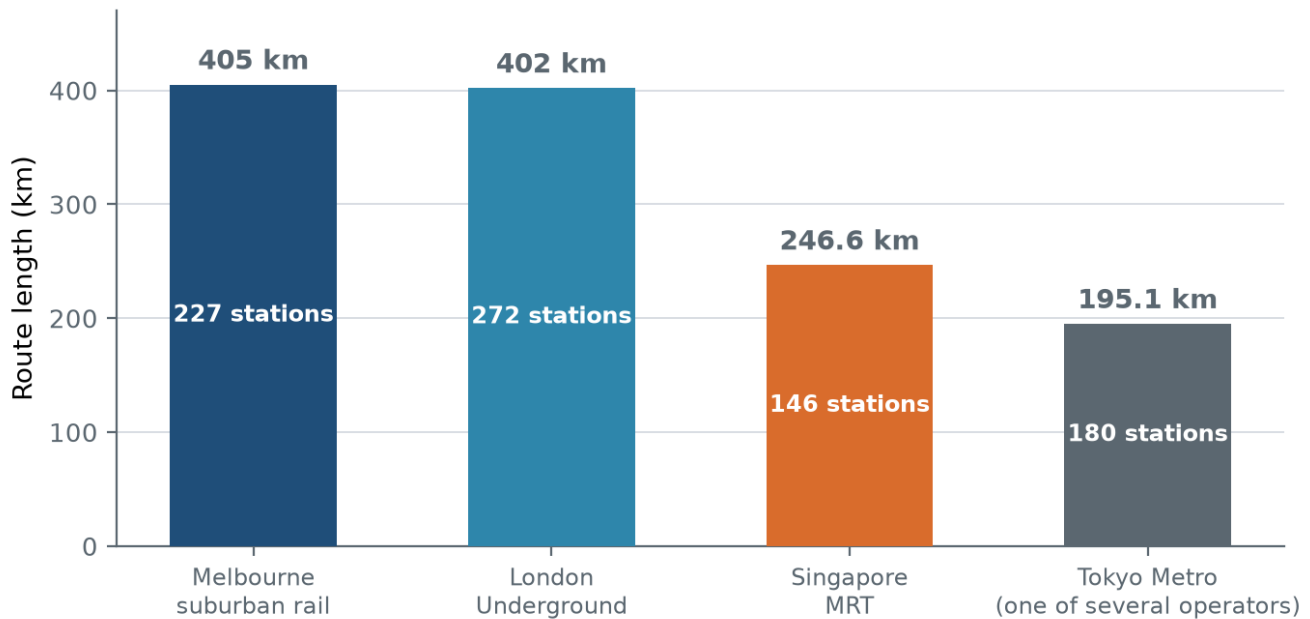
Figure 8 — Melbourne's networks, 2023-24 passenger journeys and network size.

Trains moved 182.5 million passengers in 2023-24; trams 154.8 million; and the regional rail and coach network, linking the regional cities to the capital, carried 23.8 million. The tram network — 24 routes and about 1,700 stops, the largest urban tram network in the world — is mainly an inner-city network, which is one reason inner suburbs score so well on accessibility without cars. Victoria's metropolitan plan, Plan Melbourne, builds on this with its 20-minute idea: most daily needs within about a 20-minute walk, bike ride or local bus trip from home. Outer suburbs are still catching up to that idea — a gap you can see in Figure 6.

Australian cities vs Asia and Europe

The curriculum asks us to compare transport and accessibility beyond Australia. Figure 9 sets four urban rail networks side by side.

Urban rail networks compared: size is one thing, frequency and coverage are others (route km and stations, latest year available)



Bar chart comparing urban rail networks by route length with station counts labelled: Melbourne suburban rail 405 kilometres and 227 stations, London Underground 402 kilometres and 272 stations, Singapore rail 246.6 kilometres and 146 stations, and Tokyo underground rail 195.1 kilometres and 180 stations, noted as one of several Tokyo operators

Figure 9 — Urban rail compared: route length and stations (latest year available per network).

On paper, Melbourne’s suburban rail is the longest of the four (405 km). Yet length alone is a poor comparison. Singapore’s MRT is far shorter (246.6 km) but carries about 3.5 million passenger journeys **a day**, because more homes sit near a station and trains run very often. London’s Underground packs 272 stations into 402 km. And Tokyo’s underground rail, at 195.1 km, moves about 6.5 million people a day — while being only one of several rail operators in that city, so the whole Tokyo network is much bigger still. The fair comparison is not “most kilometres wins”; it is *how many people can reach how many services, how easily, without a car*. On that test, dense Asian and European networks often beat our spread-out Australian cities, and our cars fill the gap.

From access to perception: two fair views

Now close the chain: distribution → accessibility → **perception** of liveability. Two strong views, each stated at its strongest and both reasonable:

- **View 1 — the services frame.** A family in a very remote town drives two hours to the nearest hospital and four hours to a big department store. They rate their accessibility low, and for them that drags liveability down. Their report is valid data about the place.
- **View 2 — the community frame.** The same family, asked about liveability overall, rates their town *high*: everyone knows each other, kids ride to school safely, housing is cheap and quiet. Fewer services did not decide their perception.

Both reports are true as reports. Accessibility **shapes** perceptions of liveability; it does not single-handedly set them. Even on one street, a driving parent and a car-less teenager live in different accessibility frames and will report the same place in different ways. Holding the measured facts and the reported feelings side by side — without pretending one is “wrong” — is the geographer’s move, and it is the skill this section builds.

Skill: read an aerial image like a geographer

For the audit tasks below, use this checklist on any aerial image of a Victorian locality (your own, or one you visit on a mapping site):

1. **Shops:** corner shops scattered through the streets, or one big centre at the edge?
2. **Schools and health:** how many, and how close to homes?
3. **Stations and stops:** is a stop within an easy walk of most homes?
4. **Street pattern:** a connected grid (many short routes) or loops and cul-de-sacs (few long routes)?
5. **Open space:** parks and ovals within walking distance, or only on the fringe?

Then write one sentence of **implication**: what this pattern means for a resident without a car.

Worked examples

Worked example 1 — Reading the health gap (Figures 4 and 5)

Demonstration: turn two AIHW charts into an accessibility claim, then into a perception claim.

Working	Comment
1. Figure 4: metropolitan 6.3 family-doctor visits per person (2023–24); most remote 3.3.	Name the source and year first — evidence always carries its date.
2. Difference: $6.3 - 3.3 = 3.0$ visits per person per year.	A simple subtraction turns a chart into a gap you can state.
3. Ratio: $6.3 \div 3.3 \approx 1.9$.	“Nearly twice as often” is the plain-English version of the ratio.
4. Figure 5: 67.7 vs 24.3 per 1,000 $\rightarrow 67.7 \div 24.3 \approx 2.8$.	A second measure pointing the same way makes the claim stronger.
5. Chain it: fewer doctors nearby $\rightarrow$ harder access $\rightarrow$ more preventable hospital stays $\rightarrow$ residents have a sound reason to rate access (and perhaps liveability) lower.	This is the section’s core move: distribution $\rightarrow$ accessibility $\rightarrow$ perception.

Worked example 2 — Two suburbs, two walk-counts (Figure 6)

Demonstration: compare service spread in an inner and an outer suburb, then predict perceptions for two different households.

Working	Comment
1. Inner panel: within an easy walk of the home — primary school, medical centre, supermarket, train station, park = 5 services.	Counting services inside a walk is a quick, fair accessibility measure.
2. Outer panel: within a walk — one local school; the shopping centre sits at the edge; the nearest station is off the map = effectively 1–2.	Same city, same label “suburb”, a very different count.
3. Car-less frame: the inner teenager walks or rides everywhere; the outer teenager needs a lift for almost every trip.	Always say whose accessibility you are describing.
4. Predict perceptions: the car-less household will likely rate the inner suburb more liveable day-to-day — while a driving household may rate the outer suburb higher (quiet streets, space, parking).	Two frames, two honest reports. Neither is “wrong”.

Practice questions

Scaffolded

- Q1.** (Figure 2) (a) Which remoteness area holds the largest share of Australians? (b) What share of Victorians lives in outer regional areas? (c) Name the remoteness area that holds a *smaller* share of Victorians than of Australians.
- Q2.** (Figure 1) (a) In one sentence of your own, what question does the Remoteness Structure answer about a place? (b) Which home — A or B — would be counted as remote, and why?
- Q3.** (Figure 4) (a) How many more doctor visits per person did metropolitan residents have than remote-community residents in 2023–24? (b) Suggest one reason for the gap shown in Figure 5.
- Q4.** (Figure 3) (a) Which two places on the ladder sit between 50,000 and 60,000 people? (b) About how many Shepparton-Mooroopnas would fit into one Melbourne? Show one division.
- Q5.** (Figure 6) (a) List the five services within an easy walk of the home in the inner panel. (b) In the outer panel, name two trips that would need a car or a bus.
- Q6.** (Figure 7) (a) Which service sits inside the 15-minute walk ring? (b) Which ring first reaches the hospital? (c) Which two services sit outside even the train/bus ring, in the car ring only?
- Q7.** (Figure 8) (a) Which Melbourne network carried the most passenger journeys in 2023–24? (b) In one sentence, explain why the tram network matters for inner-city accessibility.
- Q8.** (Figure 9) (a) Which of the four networks serves the most stations? (b) Give one reason Singapore’s shorter network may still offer better accessibility than Melbourne’s longer one. (c) Why would it be misleading to label the Tokyo bar as “all of Tokyo’s rail”?

Unscaffolded

- Q9.** (E01) Choose **two** settlement types from: inner urban, outer urban, regional, rural, remote. For each, describe the likely spread of retail, education, health and entertainment services. A four-row table (one row per service group) is a clean way to lay it out.
- Q10.** (E02) Explain how transport changes a 13-year-old’s ability to (i) access services and (ii) take part in activities in their local area. Use at least one example from Figure 7 or Figure 8.
- Q11.** (E04) Using the five-point checklist from Theory, audit an aerial image of any Victorian locality you know (your own, a relative’s, a holiday town). Finish with one sentence of implication for a resident without a car.
- Q12.** Same street, two reports. Write two short liveability reports (2–3 sentences each) from two different households on the same street — for example, a driving family and a car-less household, or a new parent with a pram and a retired couple. Then explain in one sentence why both reports can be true.

Extended evidence-based response

- Q13.** Analyse how the way services and facilities are **distributed** shapes **accessibility**, and evaluate how that accessibility influences people’s **perceptions** of liveability, in two contrasting Australian places (for example, an inner suburb and a remote town). Use at least two data figures from this section and name the source of each. Close with one sentence on why two households in the same place may still report different liveability. (Aim for half a page.)
-

Answers

Q1. (a) Major cities (72.9 per cent). (b) 3.6 per cent. (c) Remote (and very remote): Victoria's remote share is under 0.1 per cent against 1.1 per cent nationally; very remote is essentially 0 per cent in Victoria against 0.7 per cent nationally.

Q2. (a) How far is it, by road, to the nearest service centres of different sizes? (b) Home B — it has a long road distance to every centre, so its relative access to services is low.

Q3. (a) $6.3 - 4.1 = 2.2$ more visits per person. (b) Any sound reason, e.g. fewer doctors and long travel times mean small problems are not caught early, so more people end up in hospital for conditions primary care could have headed off.

Q4. (a) Shepparton-Mooroopna (55,332) and Mildura-Buronga (54,379). (b) $5,328,274 \div 55,332 \approx 96$ — about 96 Shepparton-Mooroopnas fit into one Melbourne.

Q5. (a) Primary school, medical centre, train station, supermarket, park. (b) Any two of: the trip to the school (a long walk), the trip to the shopping centre at the edge, the trip to the nearest train station.

Q6. (a) The corner shop. (b) The train/bus 30-minute ring. (c) The big shopping centre and the university.

Q7. (a) The suburban train network (182.5 million). (b) Any sound sentence, e.g. trams put about 1,700 stops within easy reach of inner-city homes, so many daily trips need no car at all.

Q8. (a) London Underground (272). (b) Any sound reason, e.g. more homes sit within walking distance of a station and trains run more often — about 3.5 million journeys a day on a much shorter network. (c) The operator shown is only one of several rail operators in Tokyo, so its 195.1 km is a slice of the city's true network, not the whole.

Q9. Answers vary; award for two settlement types each described across all four service groups, with the thinning-out pattern correct (e.g. inner urban: dense and walkable across all four; remote: few or none nearby, long drives for health and retail).

Q10. Answers vary; award for naming both (i) access to services and (ii) taking part in activities, with a figure-based example and a clear “whose transport” frame (e.g. with frequent trams a 13-year-old reaches school, sport and friends independently; without them every trip needs a lift).

Q11. Answers vary; award for all five checklist points applied to a named locality plus one implication sentence for a car-less resident.

Q12. Answers vary; award for two distinct household frames and a closing sentence that perceptions are response data — both true as reports because accessibility is frame-dependent.

Q13. Answers vary; award for: two contrasting places named; distribution described with at least two sourced data figures (e.g. doctor visits 6.3 vs 3.3, AIHW; or remoteness shares, ABS); accessibility linked to that distribution for named households; perceptions discussed with both frames treated as reasonable; closing sentence on differing household reports.

Fully-worked solutions

Q3 — fully worked

Step	Working	Comment
1	Metropolitan 6.3; remote communities 4.1 (Figure 4, AIHW, 2023–24).	Read both bars before doing any maths.
2	$6.3 - 4.1 = 2.2$	The gap, in visits per person per year.
3	Reason for Figure 5’s gap: with fewer doctors nearby and long trips to reach them, small health problems are not caught early, so more become hospital stays that early care could have prevented.	One cause, stated as a chain: distribution → access → outcome.

Q4(b) — fully worked

Step	Working	Comment
1	Melbourne 5,328,274; Shepparton-Mooroopna 55,332 (Figure 3, ABS, 2025).	Take both numbers from the same source and year.
2	$5,328,274 \div 55,332 \approx 96.3$	“How many Xs fit into Y” is always a division.
3	About 96 Shepparton-Mooroopnas fit into one Melbourne.	Round and say “about” — the data are counts of people, not exact physics.

Q10 — fully worked (model response)

1. *Frame*: a 13-year-old cannot drive, so their transport is walking, riding and public transport.
2. *Services*: on Figure 7’s rings, with a frequent bus or train the 30-minute ring reaches the hospital and station; without one, the same teenager’s world shrinks to the bike ring (the primary school) and the walk ring (the corner shop).
3. *Activities*: Figure 8 shows trams and trains carrying over 330 million passenger journeys a year in Melbourne — that is how teenagers reach sport training, music, clubs and friends without a parent taxi.
4. *Conclusion*: transport does not just move people; it sets the size of a teenager’s accessible world, and therefore shapes how liveable their local area feels to them.

Q13 — fully worked (model structure)

1. *Place A — an inner Melbourne suburb.* Distribution: dense across all four groups (Figure 6's inner panel); transport: trams and trains within a walk (Figure 8). Accessibility for a car-less household: high. Perception: liveability rated high on the services frame.
 2. *Place B — a remote town.* Distribution: few services nearby; health evidence: 3.3 doctor visits per person against 6.3 in metropolitan areas (AIHW, 2023–24), and preventable hospitalisations 67.7 vs 24.3 per 1,000. Accessibility: low without long drives. Perception on the services frame: dragged down.
 3. *Evaluate:* accessibility clearly influences perceptions — View 1 families rate liveability lower where access is hard. But View 2 families in the same remote town rate liveability high on community, safety and cost grounds, so accessibility is one influence among several, not the whole score.
 4. *Close:* two households on the same street hold different frames (car vs no car, pram vs retiree), so both a high and a low liveability report from one place can be true at once.
-

Sources and retrieval dates

- ABS, *Regional population, Australia, 2024–25* (cat. 3218.0), Tables 2 and 3, released 31 March 2026; data cube read from local copy 25 August 2026 (Figures 2, 3; population values in Q1, Q4 answers).
- ABS, *Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3 — Remoteness Structure*: classification made “on the basis of a measure of relative access to services”, using ARIA+ (University of Adelaide); retrieved 25 August 2026 (Figure 1 and Theory text).
- AIHW, *Rural and remote health — access to health services*: GP visits per person 2023–24 and potentially preventable hospitalisations per 1,000; retrieved 25 August 2026 (Figures 4, 5).
- Yarra Trams network facts (24 routes, about 250 km of double track, about 1,700 stops, world's largest urban tram network; 154.8 million journeys 2023–24); retrieved 25 August 2026 (Figure 8).
- Metro Trains Melbourne network facts (17 lines, 227 stations, 405 km; 182.5 million journeys 2023–24); retrieved 25 August 2026 (Figures 8, 9).
- V/Line (13 rail destinations plus coaches; 23.8 million journeys 2023–24); retrieved 25 August 2026 (Figure 8).
- Singapore MRT (246.6 km, 146 stations, six lines, about 3.5 million journeys a day, 2025); London Underground (402 km, 272 stations, 11 lines, 1.216 billion journeys 2024/25); Tokyo Metro (195.1 km, 180 stations, 9 lines, about 6.52 million journeys a day, FY2023, one of several Tokyo operators); retrieved 25 August 2026 (Figure 9).
- *Plan Melbourne 2017–2050* (Victorian Government, 2017) — the “20-minute neighbourhoods” concept; wording in student text paraphrases the concept without quoting it.
- Figures 1, 6 and 7 are original schematics/models generated from primitives by scripts in `src/`; Figures 2–5, 8 and 9 plot the sourced values above.

Environmental quality and people's perceptions of liveability

Curriculum focus — Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Geography, Levels 7 and 8, strand *Geographical Knowledge and Understanding*, sub-strand *Place and liveability*. Content description VC2HG8K08.

Elaborations drawn on: VC2HG8K08.E01 (what environmental quality is and how it gets measured, using EPA Victoria statistics), VC2HG8K08.E02 (surveying people on how they see their local environment, and what that does to liveability), VC2HG8K08.E03 (weighing other people's views of an area's environment against your own assessment).

In this section

In Section 2A you met the three families of liveability measures — environmental, economic and social. This section takes one of those families, **environmental quality**, and studies it closely: what it is, how it is measured in Victoria with real data, and how it shapes the way people *feel* about the places they live.

In this section you will learn:

- what **environmental quality** means, and the six parts we use to describe it;
- the pathways by which the environment touches people's lives — health, comfort, safety, and pride and enjoyment — and so shapes their **perceptions** of liveability;
- how environmental quality is **measured** in Victoria, using real statistics from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA);
- how to **survey** people about how they see the environment of the area where they live;
- how to **compare** other people's perceptions with your own assessment — and with measured data;
- why measured data and perceptions can tell different stories about the same place, and why good geography uses both.

Key words to learn: environmental quality, perception, pollutant, particle, monitoring station, community pollution report, survey, objective measure, subjective measure, liveability.

1. What is environmental quality?

Defining our terms. Section 2A defined *liveability* as how good a place is to live in, judged by what the place offers the people who live there. The curriculum does not define *environmental quality*, so this section uses a working definition: **environmental quality is the condition of the natural surroundings of a place — how clean, healthy and pleasant they are.** Where we use another organisation's figures, we say whose they are.

The **environment** of a place, in geography, means the natural surroundings people live in: the air, the water, the land, the living things, and the sounds and smells of the area. Environmental quality asks a simple question about those surroundings: what *condition* are they in?



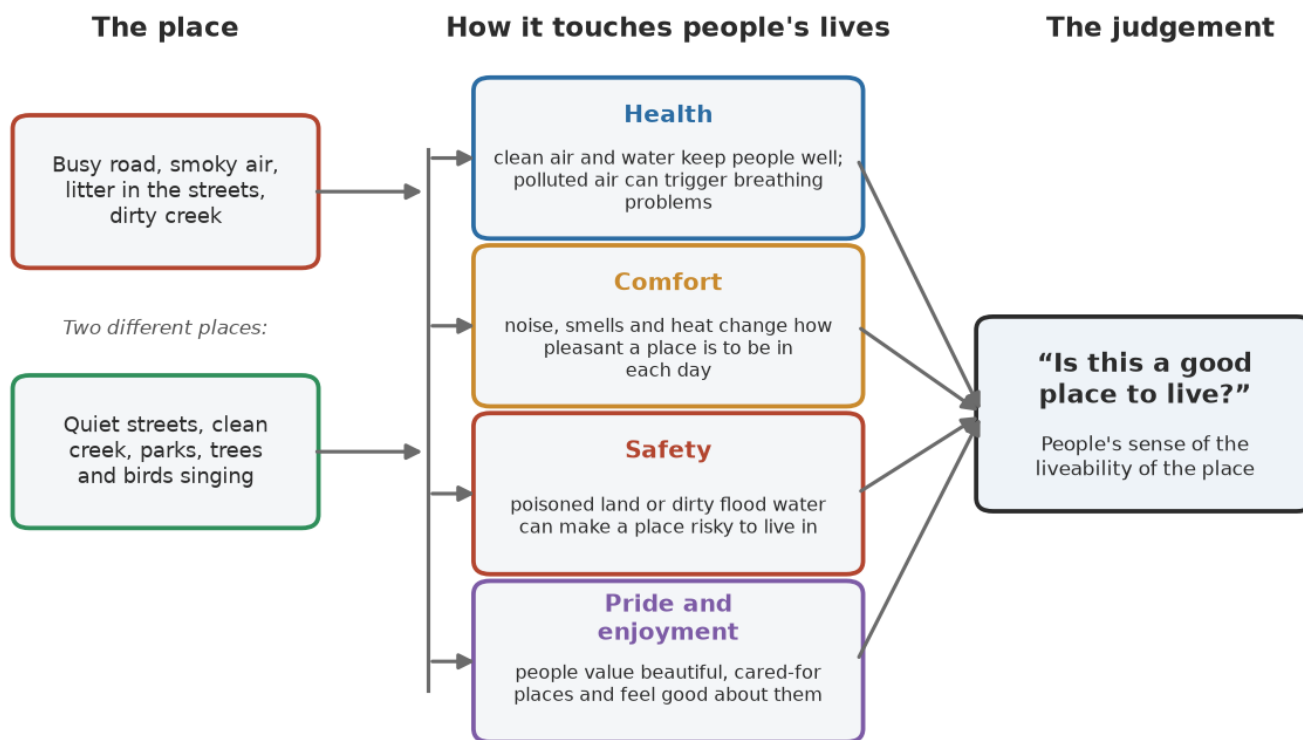
Concept diagram with “Environmental quality of a place” at the centre, joined to six parts: clean air; clean water; healthy land; low noise; green spaces and wildlife; and little litter and waste, each with a short example list

The figure gives the six parts of environmental quality used throughout this section. Notice that each part is something that can be **checked** (counted, tested or recorded) and something that can be **felt** (noticed and judged by the people who live there). Clean air is a fact that instruments can measure — and it is also the difference between a street that feels fresh and one that feels smoky. That double nature, measured and felt, is the heart of this section.

2. How environmental quality touches people’s perceptions of liveability

A **perception** is the way something seems to a person (Section 2A). The content description for this section (VC2HG8K08) is about how the state of the surroundings changes how good a place seems to live in.

The link works through four pathways.



A model: the same environment can touch different people in different ways.

Model diagram with two contrasting places on the left (a busy, smoky, littered place and a quiet, clean, green place), four pathways in the middle (health; comfort; safety; pride and enjoyment), and the judgement "Is this a good place to live?" on the right

The two places in this figure are model examples, invented for class discussion. They show the pathways, not real locations.

- **Health.** Clean air and clean water keep people well. Air full of smoke and fine particles can cause breathing problems, so people judge a smoky place as less liveable — especially people who already have breathing problems, like asthma.
- **Comfort.** Noise, smells and heat change how pleasant a place is to be in each day. A home next to a loud road is harder to rest in, so it *seems* less liveable even if the house itself is fine.
- **Safety.** Polluted land or dirty water can make a place risky to live in, and people perceive risky places as less liveable — whether or not the risk is large.
- **Pride and enjoyment.** People value beautiful, cared-for places. A litter-strewn street and a leafy street can be the same in every other way, yet feel very different to live in.

Because these pathways run through people's bodies and feelings, two people can stand in the same place and perceive its liveability in different ways. The person with asthma notices the smoke; the night-shift worker notices the noise; the parent with a pram notices the litter. The environment is one thing — perceptions of it are many.

3. Measuring environmental quality in Victoria

Perceptions are gathered by asking; environmental quality can also be **measured** with instruments and records. In Victoria, the body that does much of this measuring is **EPA Victoria** — the Environment Protection Authority, the Victorian government authority that protects people and the environment from the harms of pollution. (The elaboration for this section names EPA statistics for Victoria as exactly the kind of resource geographers use.)

What EPA measures. EPA monitors the air at stations across Victoria — including Alphington, Footscray, Brooklyn and Geelong South in Melbourne, Hastings on the Mornington Peninsula, Mooroolbark and Spotswood, and Traralgon and Wangaratta in regional Victoria. The air is checked for **pollutants** — substances that pollute — above all fine **particles**, along with several gases given off by traffic and industry.

Fine particles matter most for health. **PM2.5** means particles small enough to breathe deep into the lungs; the amount in the air is given in micrograms per cubic metre (a microgram is one-millionth of a gram). EPA turns each reading into one of five categories:

EPA Victoria's air quality categories for PM2.5

PM2.5 is very small particle pollution. The amount is measured in micrograms per cubic metre of air.

Rating	Amount of PM2.5 in the air	What EPA advises
Extremely poor	150 and above	Stay indoors as much as possible, with windows and doors shut.
Very poor	50 to 150	Reduce time outdoors. People with heart or lung illness, older people and young children should take action to cut exposure.
Poor	25 to 50	Keep track of conditions. People who are sensitive should think about cutting time spent outdoors.
Fair	12.5 to 25	Keep track of conditions. Most people can keep doing their normal outdoor activities.
Good	Below 12.5	No change needed to your normal outdoor activities.

EPA Victoria rates the other air pollutants the same way, with its own band for each one.

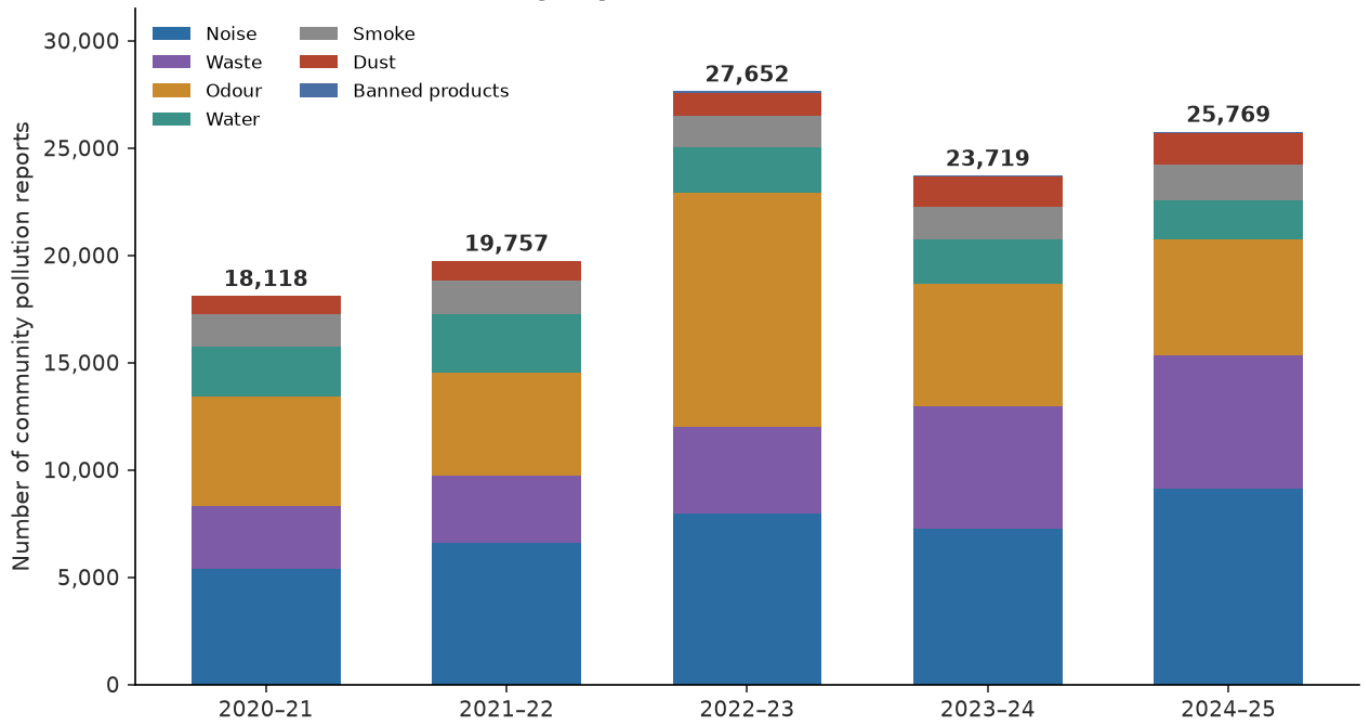
Source: EPA Victoria, Air quality categories (epa.vic.gov.au, retrieved 25 August 2026).

Table-style figure of EPA Victoria's five air quality categories for PM2.5: Extremely poor (150 and above), Very poor (50 to 150), Poor (25 to 50), Fair (12.5 to 25) and Good (below 12.5 micrograms per cubic metre), each with short health advice

Source: EPA Victoria, "Air quality categories" (epa.vic.gov.au, retrieved 25 August 2026). The health advice lines are shortened from the same page.

What the community reports. Measurement is not only instruments. Anyone in Victoria can report pollution to EPA — by phone, online or email — and EPA counts these **community pollution reports** by topic and by region.

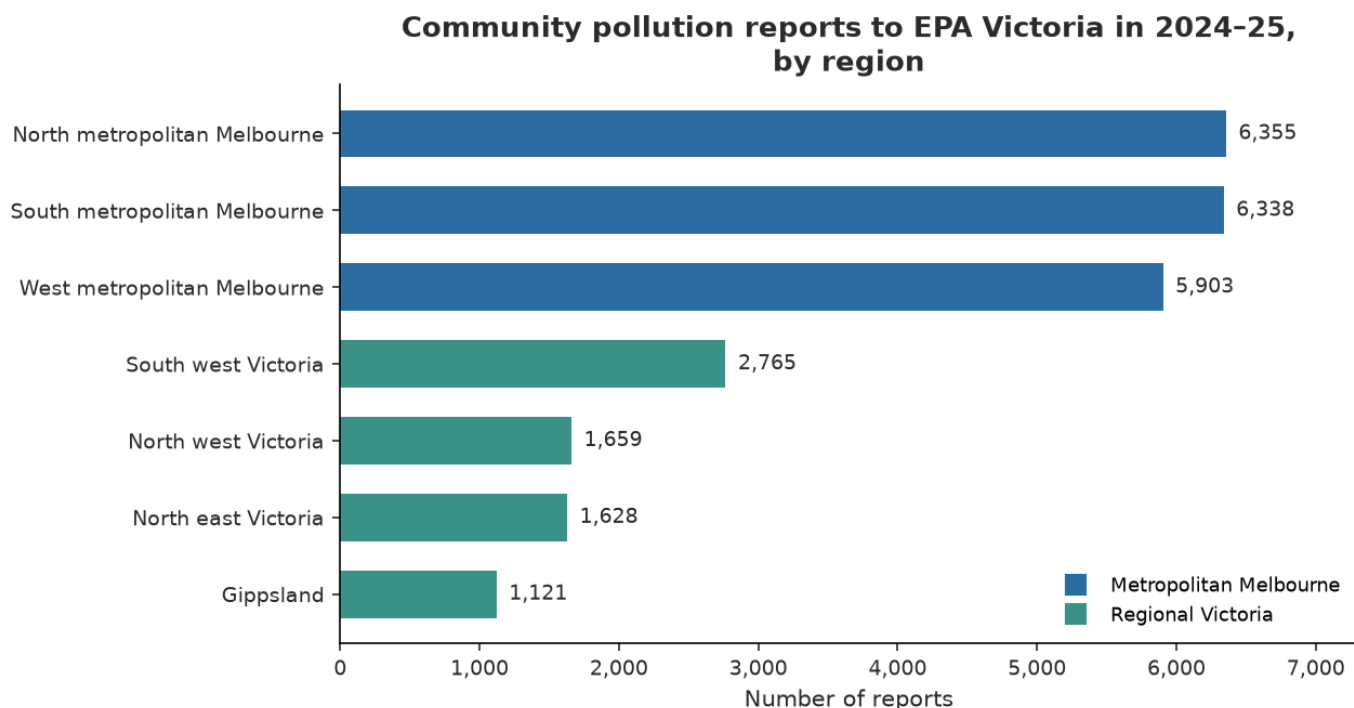
Pollution reports made by the community to EPA Victoria, by topic, 2020-21 to 2024-25



Source: EPA Victoria, Annual Report 2024-25, "Community pollution reports by topic" (retrieved 25 August 2026).

Stacked bar chart of community pollution reports made to EPA Victoria by topic for 2020-21 to 2024-25: noise, waste, odour, water, smoke, dust and banned products, with totals for each year of 18,118; 19,757; 27,652; 23,719 and 25,769

Source: EPA Victoria, Annual Report 2024-25, “Community pollution reports by topic” (retrieved 25 August 2026).



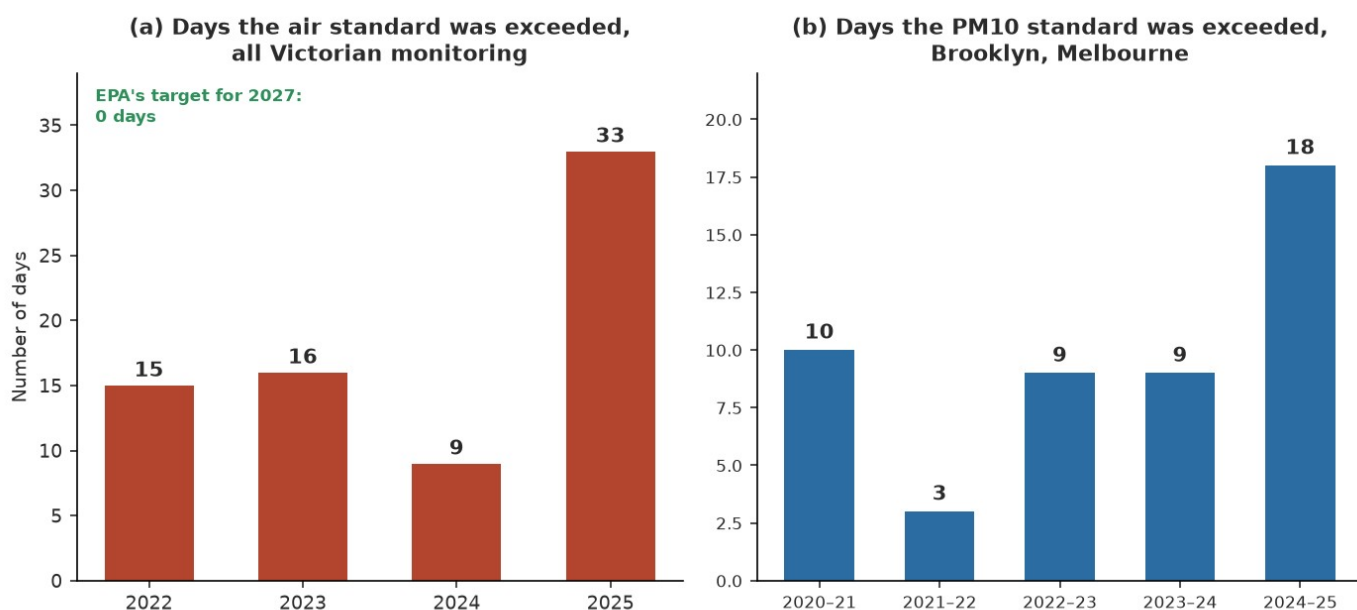
Source: EPA Victoria, Annual Report 2024-25, “Community pollution reports by topic and region” (retrieved 25 August 2026).

Bar chart of community pollution reports to EPA Victoria in 2024-25 by region: North metropolitan Melbourne 6,355; South metropolitan Melbourne 6,338; West metropolitan Melbourne 5,903; South west Victoria 2,765; North west Victoria 1,659; North east Victoria 1,628; Gippsland 1,121, with metropolitan bars in blue and regional bars in green

Source: EPA Victoria, Annual Report 2024-25, “Community pollution reports by topic and region” (retrieved 25 August 2026).

Two patterns stand out. By topic, **noise** was the most reported problem in 2024-25 (9,107 reports), and **odour** spiked sharply in 2022-23 (10,952 reports) before falling back. By region, the three metropolitan Melbourne regions together produced far more reports than all four regional regions together — mainly because more people live there, so more people notice and report.

Days above the standard. EPA also counts days when pollution was above the national standards.



Source: EPA Victoria, Annual Report 2024-25, performance measures (retrieved 25 August 2026).

Two bar charts. (a) Days the air standard was exceeded across all Victorian monitoring: 15 in 2022, 16 in 2023, 9 in 2024 and 33 in 2025, with a note that EPA's target for 2027 is 0 days. (b) Days the PM10 standard was exceeded at Brooklyn, Melbourne: 10 in 2020-21, 3 in 2021-22, 9 in 2022-23, 9 in 2023-24 and 18 in 2024-25

Source: EPA Victoria, Annual Report 2024-25, performance measures (retrieved 25 August 2026).

In 2025 the statewide count jumped to 33 days; EPA links the rise mainly to hotter weather. At **Brooklyn** — a residential area next to an industrial area in Melbourne's west — the PM10 count rose to 18 days in 2024-25. EPA links Brooklyn's particle problem to older industrial sites in the west (Brooklyn and Geelong South) — pollution left over from earlier decades of industry.

Every number in this section so far is an **objective measure** in Section 2A's sense: counted or recorded, so different people who check get the same answer. But remember the other half of the story. These numbers describe the environment; *perceptions* describe how that environment seems to the people living with it.

4. Surveying people's perceptions of environmental quality

To measure perceptions, geographers **survey** people: they ask a set of questions of a group and tally the answers (Section 2A introduced this; Section 5B will build the full method). A perception survey about environmental quality asks people to rate the surroundings as the surroundings *seem to them*.

Why perceptions differ. Before surveying, expect variation — it is the point, not a mistake. People perceive the same environment in different ways because:

- they have lived there for different lengths of time (new arrivals compare it with somewhere else; long-time residents compare it with how it used to be);
- their bodies are different (someone with breathing problems notices air quality more);
- they value different things (a runner notices the park; a worker waiting for the bus notices the traffic noise);
- they have different information (news reports can sharpen or soften a worry);
- they are used to different levels (after years beside a loud road, the noise can seem normal).

Running the survey. A survey is only as good as its questions.

Running a perception survey — the inquiry steps



Each step is checked before moving on; unclear questions are rewritten; results are compared with measured data where it exists.

Flow diagram of the six inquiry steps of a perception survey: 1 pick the question; 2 design the questions; 3 choose who to ask; 4 collect answers; 5 tally and graph results; 6 compare views

The model survey below shows what well-designed questions look like: one aspect per question (never two at once), a clear five-point rating scale, no names collected so answers are honest, and one open question to catch what ratings miss.

Environmental quality of my local area — perception survey

MODEL for classroom use — written for this book. Not real survey data.

MODEL

Purpose: to find out how people PERCEIVE (think and feel about) the environmental quality of this area. Your answers help judge how liveable the area feels to its people.

Do not write your name. There are no right or wrong answers.

About you

How long have you lived in this area?

- ☐ Less than 2 years
☐ 2 to 5 years
☐ 5 to 10 years
☐ More than 10 years

Rating questions

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
1. Overall, how would you rate the environmental quality of this area?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tick (☐) one box for each question.					
2. How would you rate the air quality where you live?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. How would you rate the amount of litter and dumped rubbish in this area?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. How would you rate the noise level where you live? (Excellent = quiet)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. How would you rate the parks, trees and other green spaces near your home?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. How would you rate the creeks, rivers, wetlands or beaches near your home?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Open question

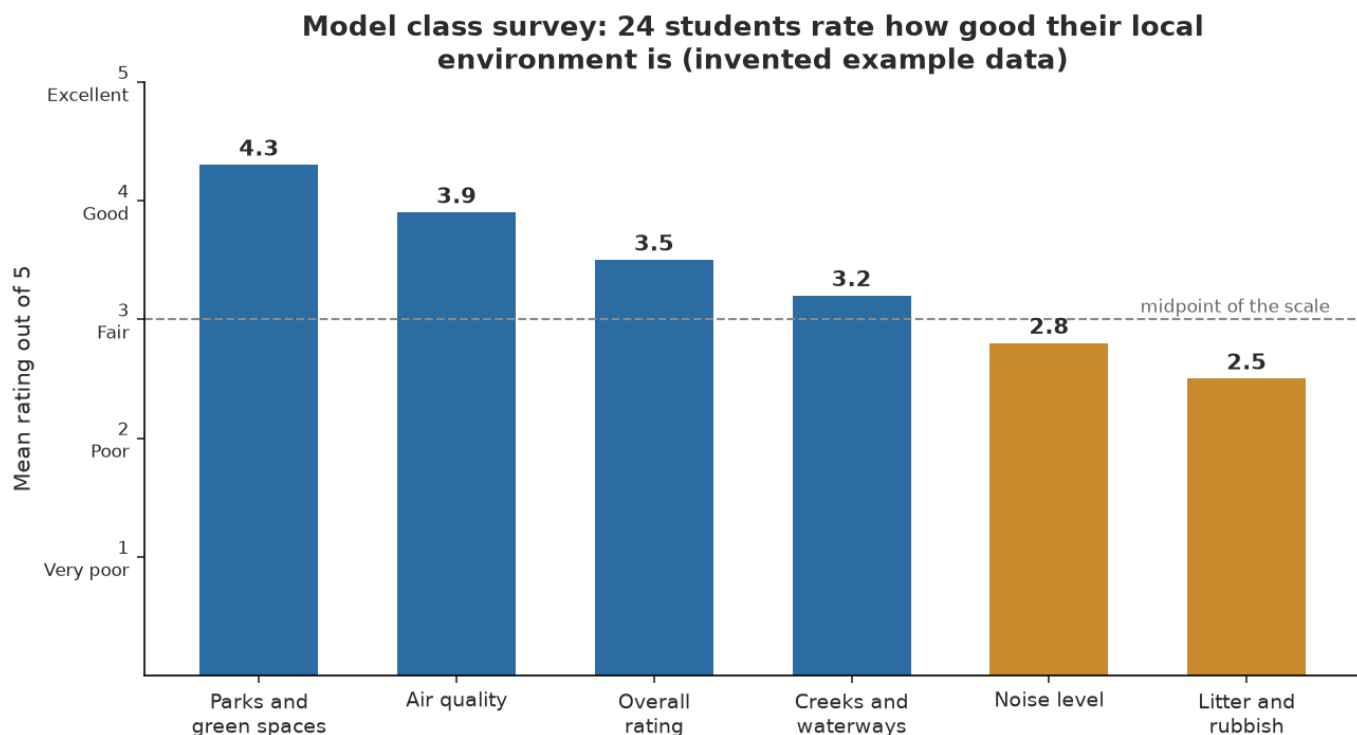
7. What is one thing that would most improve the environmental quality of this area?

Question 6 note: if your area has no creek, river, wetland or beach, leave row 6 blank and say so in question 7.

Model perception survey sheet titled “Environmental quality of my local area — perception survey”, marked MODEL, with an about-you question on years lived in the area, six rating questions on a five-point scale from Excellent to Very poor (overall environmental quality; air quality; litter and dumped rubbish; noise level; parks, trees and green spaces; creeks, rivers, wetlands or beaches), and one open question asking what would most improve the area

This survey is a model, written for this book. It is not real survey data; it shows the shape of a survey a class could run in any local area.

Reading survey results. Suppose a class of 24 runs the survey and graphs the mean (average) rating for each aspect.



Model data created for this book to show how survey results can be graphed. It is not real data.

Bar chart of model class survey results: mean ratings out of 5 from 24 students — parks and green spaces 4.3, air quality 3.9, overall rating 3.5, creeks and waterways 3.2, noise level 2.8, litter and rubbish 2.5 — with a dashed line at the midpoint of the scale

Model data, invented for this book to show how survey answers become a graph. It is not real data.

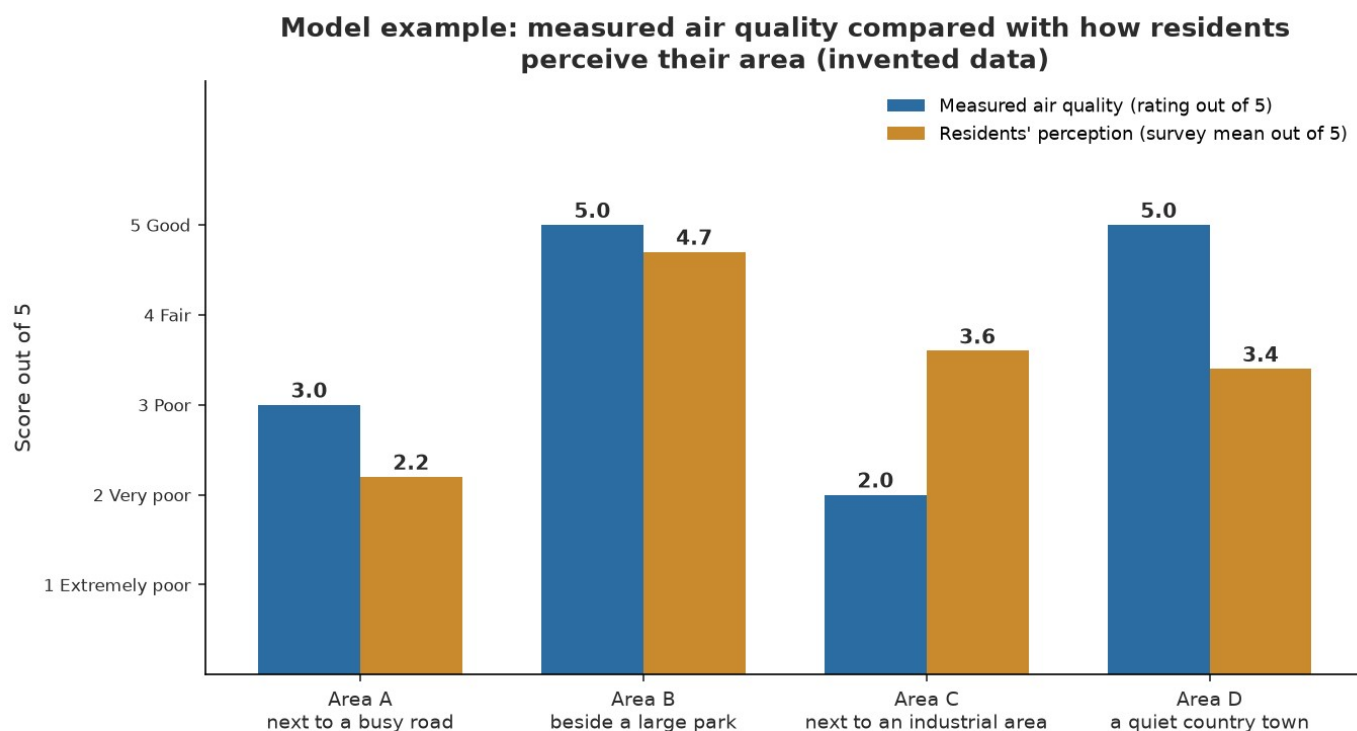
Read the graph the way a geographer would. This class rates its parks well above the midpoint and its litter well below it. The subjective story is: *this area feels green but untidy*. If the class then asked, “How liveable does your area feel overall?”, the overall rating of 3.5 — pulled down towards the litter and noise scores — would be one measure of the area’s **perceived** liveability.

5. Comparing perceptions with each other, and with measurement

The last step is comparison — the skill the third elaboration names.

Comparing perceptions with each other. Run the same survey in two groups (two classes, two streets, two age groups), graph both, and look for gaps. A gap between groups is a finding: it tells you the environment is *experienced* in different ways, and the reasons in Section 4 are your first suspects.

Comparing perception with measurement. The sharpest comparison puts the subjective and the objective side by side.



Model data created for this book. The measured column follows the five-step shape of EPA Victoria's ratings; all readings shown are invented.

Bar chart comparing measured air quality with residents' perception for four model areas, on a 1-to-5 scale: Area A next to a busy road, measured 3.0, perceived 2.2; Area B beside a large park, measured 5.0, perceived 4.7; Area C next to an industrial area, measured 2.0, perceived 3.6; Area D a quiet country town, measured 5.0, perceived 3.4

Model data, invented for this book. The measured column follows the five-step shape of EPA Victoria's ratings; all readings shown are invented.

Look for the gaps. In **Area A** the measurement says “fair” but residents perceive something poorer — perhaps the traffic noise and smell make the air *feel* poorer than the particle count. In **Area C** the reverse: the measured air is poor, yet residents perceive it as better than measured — perhaps they are used to it, perhaps the industry provides their jobs, perhaps they simply do not see the invisible particles. In **Area D** the air measures perfectly, yet perception sits at 3.4 — measurement cannot capture what people miss about their town.

Which should count? This is a genuine debate, and strong geography steelmans both sides before judging.

Two positions, steelmanned. Position A — decisions should follow the measured data. Measurements can be checked by anyone, are the same for everyone, and catch harms people cannot see (invisible particles, slow pollution). Feelings vary from person to person, so basing decisions on them alone would be unsteady. **Position B — decisions should follow people's perceptions.** Liveability is about people's experience of a place, so what people feel *is* the thing we care about. Perceptions also gather knowledge measurement misses — smells, noise at night, the street that feels unsafe — and when people perceive harm, the stress is real even if instruments read “fair”. **Evaluating.** The strongest position uses both. Measurement says what is happening in the environment; perception says what it means for people. When the two agree, we can act with confidence. When they disagree, the gap is itself a finding to investigate — perhaps people need better information (as in Area C), perhaps the instruments need to measure what people actually experience (as in Area A). Ignoring either side loses half the story.

That last move — treating the gap as a finding — is exactly what VC2HG8K08 trains you to do: hold the environment and people's perceptions of it in mind at once.

Worked demonstration 1 — Classifying air readings with EPA’s categories

EPA’s five categories (Section 3) turn any PM_{2.5} reading into a rating and a piece of advice. Let us classify three readings. *The categories are EPA’s real ones; the three readings are model values for practice.*

Reading 1: 8 micrograms per cubic metre.

Step 1 — Find the band. 8 is below 12.5, so the rating is **Good**. **Step 2 — Read off the advice.** “No change needed to your normal outdoor activities.”

Reading 2: 18 micrograms per cubic metre.

Step 1 — Find the band. 18 sits between 12.5 and 25, so the rating is **Fair**. **Step 2 — Read off the advice.** Keep track of conditions; most people can keep doing their normal outdoor activities.

Step 3 — Compare with Reading 1. The reading more than doubled (8 to 18), yet the rating only slipped one band. The bands get wider as the amounts get higher — Good covers 0 to 12.5, while Very poor covers 50 to 150.

Reading 3: 65 micrograms per cubic metre.

Step 1 — Find the band. 65 sits between 50 and 150, so the rating is **Very poor**. **Step 2 — Read off the advice.** Reduce time outdoors; people with heart or lung illness, older people and young children should take action to cut exposure.

The geographic point. The same instrument, three different days, three different perceptions of liveability for the same street. Category systems like EPA’s are how objective measurements are translated into language people can act on — a bridge between the two halves of this section.

Worked demonstration 2 — Why does Melbourne’s west report more pollution?

Now let us reason with real EPA data, the way elaboration .E01 invites.

Step 1 — Read the region chart. In 2024-25, West metropolitan Melbourne produced 5,903 community pollution reports — about five times Gippsland’s 1,121, and more than twice South west Victoria’s 2,765.

Step 2 — Ask whether the environment is poorer, or more people are noticing. More reports can mean more pollution *or* more reporters. The metropolitan regions hold most of Victoria’s people, so part of the gap is simply population size and density: more people, more reports. That is why EPA’s report shows metropolitan regions on top.

Step 3 — Add the measured evidence. The west is not only reporting more; some of its air also spends more days above the standard. Brooklyn (Melbourne’s west) recorded 18 days above the PM₁₀ standard in 2024-25, up from 3 in 2021-22, and EPA links the area’s particle problem to older industrial sites at Brooklyn and Geelong South — pollution left over from earlier decades of industry.

Step 4 — Predict the perception (linking to .E02 and .E03). If we ran the model survey of Section 4 in Brooklyn and in a quiet country town, what would we expect? Residents in Brooklyn would likely rate air quality and overall environmental quality lower — and the gap between their perception and the town’s would be a measurable piece of evidence for VC2HG8K08: environmental quality shaping people’s perceptions of liveability.

The geographic point. Reports (what people notice), measurements (what instruments record) and perceptions (how people feel) are three different windows on the same place. Good geography lines all three up.

Practice — scaffolded

Q1. In your own words, define **environmental quality** and **perception** as this section uses them.

Q2. Copy the six parts of environmental quality from the components figure. Under each, add one example from your own local area (for example, under “Clean water”, name a creek, river or beach near you, or write “none nearby”).

Q3. Classify each of these as an objective measure or a subjective measure: (a) the number of community pollution reports for noise in 2024-25; (b) residents rating the noise level of their street; (c) the number of days the PM10 standard was exceeded at Brooklyn in 2024-25; (d) how fresh the air feels to a resident on a morning walk.

Q4. Use EPA's air quality categories figure. Classify each PM2.5 reading and give the matching advice: (a) 5 micrograms per cubic metre; (b) 30; (c) 120.

Q5. Use the reports-by-topic chart. (a) Which topic was most reported in 2024-25, and how many reports did it receive? (b) What was the total number of reports that year? (c) Which topic spiked sharply in 2022-23?

Q6. Use the reports-by-region chart. (a) List the three metropolitan regions and their 2024-25 report counts. (b) What pattern do you notice between metropolitan and regional regions? (c) Give one reason for that pattern.

Q7. These two draft survey questions are badly written. For each, say what is wrong and rewrite it: (a) "Don't you agree the litter in this area is terrible?" (b) "How would you rate the noise and the air quality where you live?"

Q8. Match each person to the reason from Section 4 that best explains their perception: (a) a new resident who says the area "seems noisy", while a resident of 30 years says it "seems quiet" — both hearing the same traffic; (b) a resident with asthma who rates air quality far lower than the class mean; (c) a resident who rates overall environmental quality lower after a news story about pollution, though nothing locally changed.

Practice — unscaffolded

Q9. Use the pathways figure. Explain how the *same* environmental feature (choose one: a busy road; a creek; a factory; a large park) could raise one person's perception of liveability and lower another's.

Q10. Design three survey questions to find out how people perceive the environmental quality of your local area. Follow the design rules shown in the model survey (one aspect per question; clear rating scale; no leading). For one of your questions, state what a badly written version would have looked like.

Q11. Compare your own perceptions with the model class results figure: rate your local area on the same six aspects, and identify (a) one aspect where you agree with the model class pattern and (b) one where you differ. Suggest one reason from Section 4 for any difference.

Q12. Use the measured-versus-perceived figure. Choose the area with the largest gap between measurement and perception. Explain the gap using at least two ideas from this section, and say whether the people in that area should trust the measurement, their perception, or both — with reasons.

Extended response

Q13. *"A place's environmental quality is what its people feel it to be — the instruments don't get the final word."*

Do you agree? Write an evidence-based response of about 200 words (written or multimodal). The strongest responses will:

- state a clear position (agree, disagree, or agree with limits);
 - steelman the other side — give the best argument *against* your position before you answer it;
 - use at least **one real EPA statistic** from Section 3 and **at least two figures** from this section as evidence;
 - refer to at least one place where measured data and perception diverge (such as the model areas in Section 5);
 - refer to their sources.
-

Teaching notes (for the teacher)

This section delivers VC2HG8K08 and draws on all three elaborations: .E01 (Section 3 and worked demonstration 2 — EPA Victoria statistics: air quality categories, monitoring sites, community pollution reports by topic and region, exceedance days); .E02 (Section 4, Q10, Q11 — the model perception survey and its design rules); .E03 (Section 5,

Q11, Q12 — comparing others’ perceptions with one’s own assessment and with measured data). The First Nations disposition for this CD is *none*; no task or example assumes First Nations content, and all contexts are neutral.

Suggested sequence: define environmental quality and its six parts (Section 1) → the four pathways to perceived liveability (Section 2) → objective measurement with EPA data (Section 3) → subjective measurement by survey (Section 4) → comparison and the steelmanned debate (Section 5) → worked demonstrations → practice. Keep the link to Section 2A explicit throughout: objective/subjective and the three measure families are assumed knowledge from 2A, and the survey *method* (question design, sampling) is deliberately handed onward to 5B (VC2HG8S02), as is the local fieldwork proposal in 2F (VC2HG8K11). Section 2E’s environment lens (VC2HG8K10) reuses this section’s material as one of its three lenses.

Data sources (all retrieved 25 August 2026; full list under Sources): EPA Victoria Annual Report 2024-25 (community pollution reports by topic and by region; exceedance days; Brooklyn PM10; EPA’s explanation of the 2025 rise and of legacy industrial sites at Brooklyn and Geelong South); EPA Victoria “Air quality categories” (ratings, PM2.5 bands, advice); EPA Victoria “How we measure air pollution” (pollutants and monitoring site names). Model data (pathways places; survey sheet; survey results; measured-versus-perceived) is invented for this book and labelled as such in every caption.

Contested-terms handling: *liveability* carries 2A’s working definition; *environmental quality* is given a working definition at first use (curriculum does not define it); the measurement-versus-perception debate is presented steelmanned on both sides, with the reasoning marked, not the conclusion.

Vocabulary gate: student-facing region (including figure alt text and figure text companions diagrams/2c_*.txt) checked at ceiling rank 7 (Year 7) with `_vocab_gate_2C.py`; exemptions are the curriculum’s own words (CD, elaborations, achievement standard), subject terms defined at first use, and proper nouns. Result: CLEAN.

Glossary

Environmental quality — the condition of the natural surroundings of a place: how clean, healthy and pleasant they are (this section’s working definition). **Perception** — the way something seems to a person. **Pollutant** — a substance that pollutes the air, water or land. **Particle (PM2.5 / PM10)** — tiny pieces of solid or liquid matter in the air; PM2.5 particles are small enough to breathe deep into the lungs. **Monitoring station** — a site where instruments record environmental data such as air quality. **Community pollution report** — a report of pollution made by a member of the public to EPA Victoria. **Survey** — a set of questions asked to a group of people to gather their views. **Objective measure** — a measure that is counted or recorded, so different checkers get the same answer (Section 2A). **Subjective measure** — a measure that reports people’s perceptions, usually gathered by survey (Section 2A). **Liveability** — how good a place is to live in, judged by what the place offers the people who live there (Section 2A).

Sources (all retrieved 25 August 2026)

- EPA Victoria, *Annual Report 2024-25*, “Community pollution reports by topic” and “Community pollution reports by topic and region” (p. 24), performance measures (pp. 12, 16) — epa.vic.gov.au.
- EPA Victoria, “Air quality categories” — epa.vic.gov.au/air-quality-categories.
- EPA Victoria, “How we measure air pollution” — epa.vic.gov.au (pollutants measured; monitoring site names).
- EPA Victoria, “Check air and water quality” — epa.vic.gov.au (hourly readings; 24-hour pollution line 1300 372 842).
- Model data (pathways places, perception survey sheet, class survey results, measured-versus-perceived comparison): invented for this book; not real data.

Social connectedness and community identity as influences on liveability

Curriculum focus — Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Geography, Levels 7 and 8, strand *Geographical Knowledge and Understanding*, sub-strand *Place and liveability*. Content description VC2HG8K09, delivered in this book in its §2A-trimmed form and taught in full under the note at the front of this book about excluded curriculum content. Elaborations drawn on: VC2HG8K09.E01 (ABS QuickStats and other data on local population diversity and lone-person households) and VC2HG8K09.E02 (how connected or isolated people are where they live, and what that does to perceived liveability).

In this section

Chapter 2 has one key question: *How can people influence the liveability of the places in which they live?* Section 2A showed how liveability is measured, and the big split between objective measures (counted or recorded) and subjective measures (people's perceptions, gathered by asking). Section 2B looked at how easy it is to reach services. Section 2C looked at environmental quality. This section adds the social side: the people in your life, and the place you belong to.

In this section you will learn:

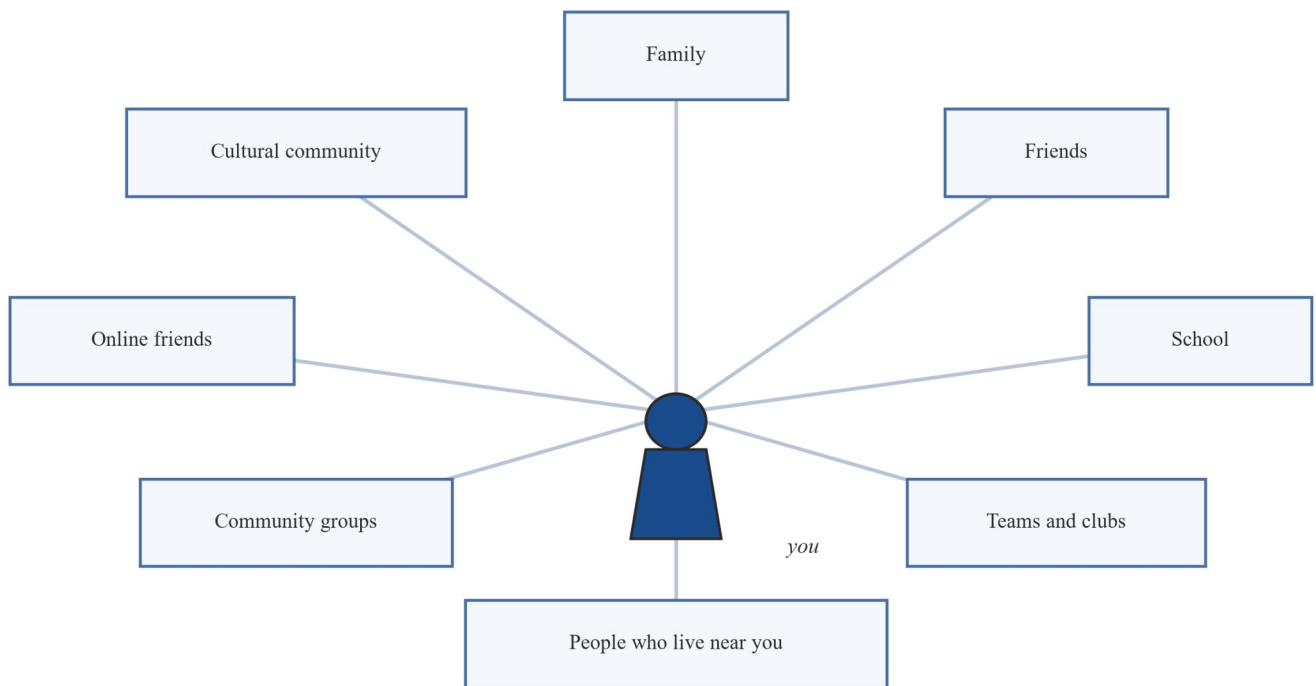
- what **social connectedness** means — the ties people have to family, friends, groups and community;
- what **community identity** means — the feeling that you belong to a place and its people;
- how connectedness and identity shape people's **perceptions** of liveability, through belonging, practical help, safety and trust, and joining in;
- how **census** data in ABS **QuickStats** shows who lives in a place — how households are made up, what languages are spoken at home, where people were born — and the one thing it cannot show: how people feel;
- the difference between **social isolation** (little contact with other people) and **loneliness** (the feeling that something is missing), using real Australian data;
- what builds connection — groups, teams, clubs and **volunteering** — and how to ask people about connection with a **survey**.

Key words to learn: social connectedness, community identity, social isolation, loneliness, perception, liveability, lone-person household, census, QuickStats, diversity, median, survey, volunteer.

1. Two ideas: social connectedness and community identity

Start with a picture of your own life. Think of the people you would wave to, message, sit with, or ask for help. Some are family. Some are friends from school or sport. Some are people who live near you, teammates, club members, people from the same community group, or friends you have only met online. All of these are **ties** — links between you and other people.

The connections around a person



Model diagram. Social connectedness means having ties to the people around you.

Model diagram of a person at the centre with lines running out to eight labelled boxes: Family, Friends, School, Teams and clubs, People who live near you, Community groups, Online friends and Cultural community

Model diagram. Social connectedness means having ties to the people around you.

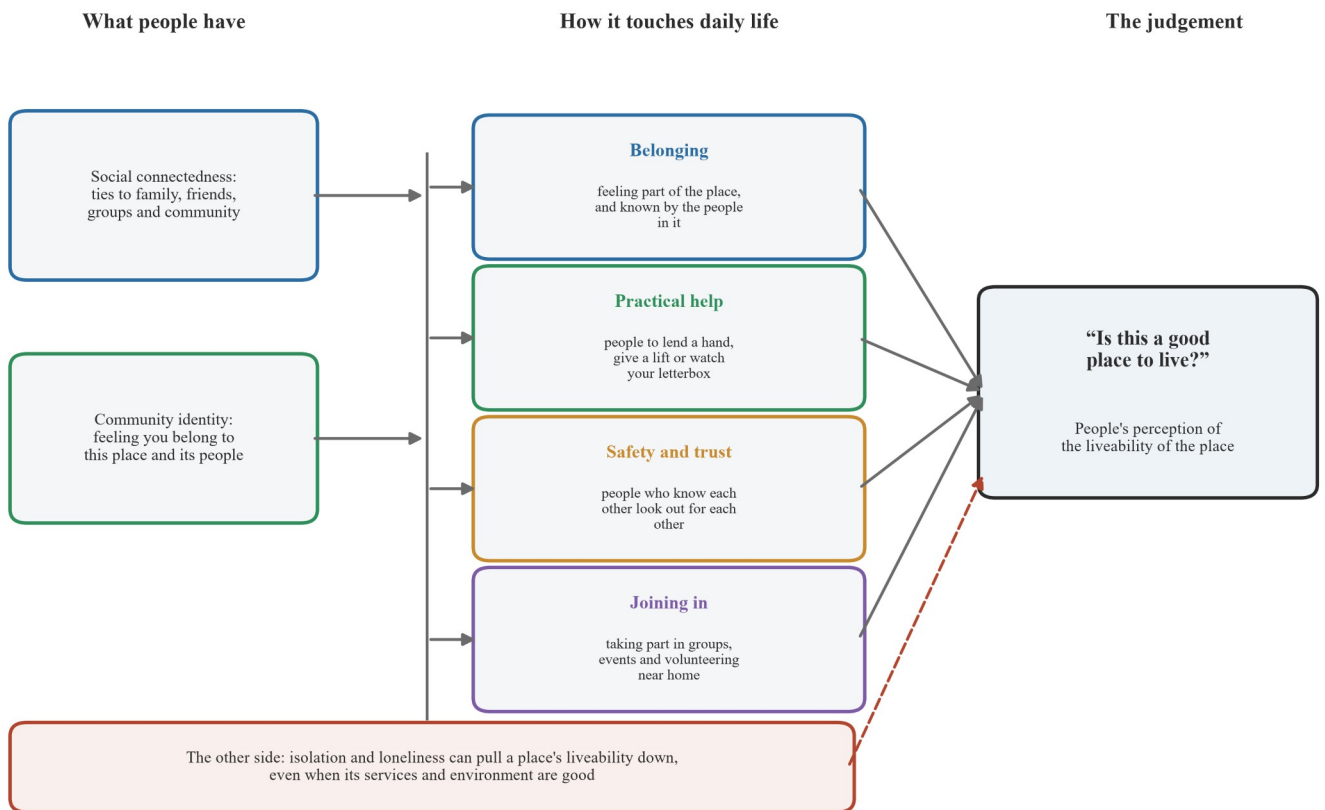
Social connectedness is the whole web of those ties. In this book, as in Section 2E, *social connectedness* means **the ties people have to family, friends, groups and community**. Ties come in different strengths. A parent or a best friend is a strong tie. The person you wave to at the shop is a weak tie — but weak ties still matter: a street where people say hello feels different from a street where nobody speaks.

Community identity is the other idea in this section's title. It is the feeling that you belong to a place and its people, and that the place is part of who you are. Community identity can grow from many things: how long your family has lived in a place, the local team everyone follows, a festival the whole town runs, a language or faith shared with people nearby, or simply the story a place tells about itself — a farming town, a beach suburb, a mining town, a suburb built around a market. Two places with identical houses can have very different community identities, because identity lives in people, not in buildings.

The two ideas are different but they work together. Connectedness is about *your ties to people*; community identity is about *your tie to a place and its people as a group*. You can be well connected (lots of ties) yet feel no identity with the place, and you can love a place (strong identity) even after your closest friends move away.

2. How connectedness and identity shape perceptions of liveability

Section 2A taught the difference between objective and subjective measures. This whole section sits on the subjective side: the content description is about people's **perceptions** — how good a place seems to the people who live there. So the key question is: how do ties and belonging change the way a place feels?



Model diagram in three columns. Left column: two boxes, “Social connectedness: ties to family, friends, groups and community” and “Community identity: feeling you belong to this place and its people”. Middle column: four pathway boxes, *Belonging*, *Practical help*, *Safety and trust*, and *Joining in*, each with a short hint. Right column: one box, “Is this a good place to live? — People’s perception of the liveability of the place”. A red box along the bottom reads: “The other side: isolation and loneliness can pull a place’s liveability down, even when its services and environment are good.”

The model in the figure gives four pathways.

- **Belonging** — feeling part of the place, and known by the people in it. A place where people know your name feels more liveable than an identical place where nobody does.
- **Practical help** — people to lend a hand, give a lift or watch your letterbox. A connected street is a quiet safety net: help is nearby before anyone officially “provides” it.
- **Safety and trust** — people who know each other look out for each other. Section 2A made the same point from the other direction: a suburb can feel safe because people know their neighbours well.
- **Joining in** — taking part in groups, events and volunteering near home. Joining in is where connectedness and identity meet: every club night or festival is both a tie between people and a story about the place.

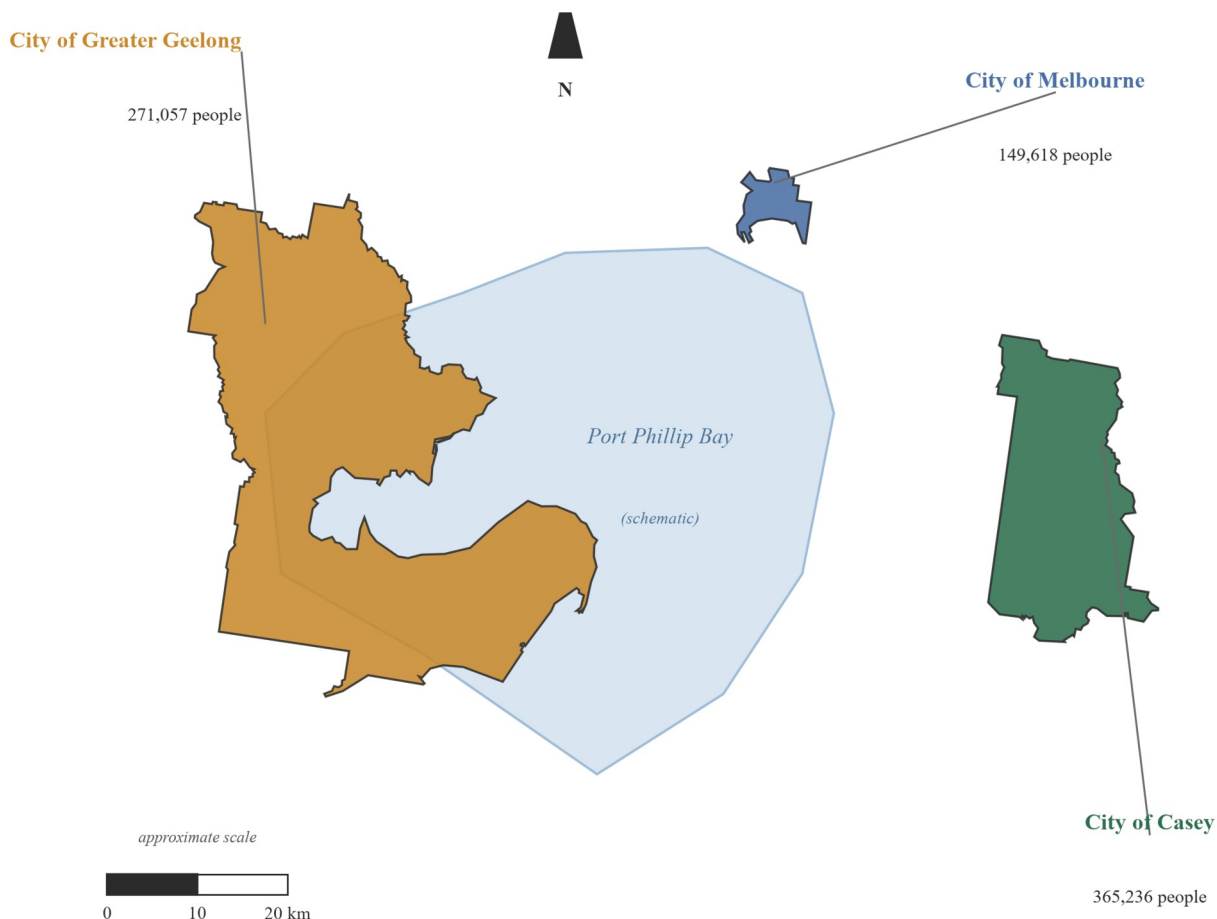
Now the other side, shown in red. **Isolation and loneliness can pull a place’s liveability down, even when its services and environment are good.** A suburb with a new train line, clean parks and good schools still feels poor to live in for someone who knows nobody there. This is why two people in the same street can give opposite answers to the question “is this a good place to live?” — the objective measures are the same, but their ties are not. That is exactly what a subjective measure picks up.

Notice what this model says about people. Liveability is not only what a place *has* (services, environment — Sections 2B and 2C). It is also what a place *has in people*: who is there to belong to, help, trust and join in with. People influence liveability simply by being connected to one another — which is one answer to the chapter’s key question.

3. Counting connection: what the census can show

Ties and feelings are subjective — so how can a geographer measure them? Carefully, and in two layers. The first layer is **counted** data about people and households. Australia's biggest count is the **census**: every five years, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) counts every person and household in the country on census night. From the census, the ABS publishes **QuickStats** — a free summary page for any area: a suburb, a council area, a state or the whole country. QuickStats cannot ask about feelings, but it can count things that hint at how connection is built: how households are made up, how many people live alone, what languages are spoken at home, and where people were born.

This section compares three real Victorian council areas, chosen to be very different kinds of place — the same kinds of place Section 2B compared for services.



Simplified map: only the three council areas and the bay are shown. Council boundaries from ABS ASGS 2021, simplified; bay shape schematic.

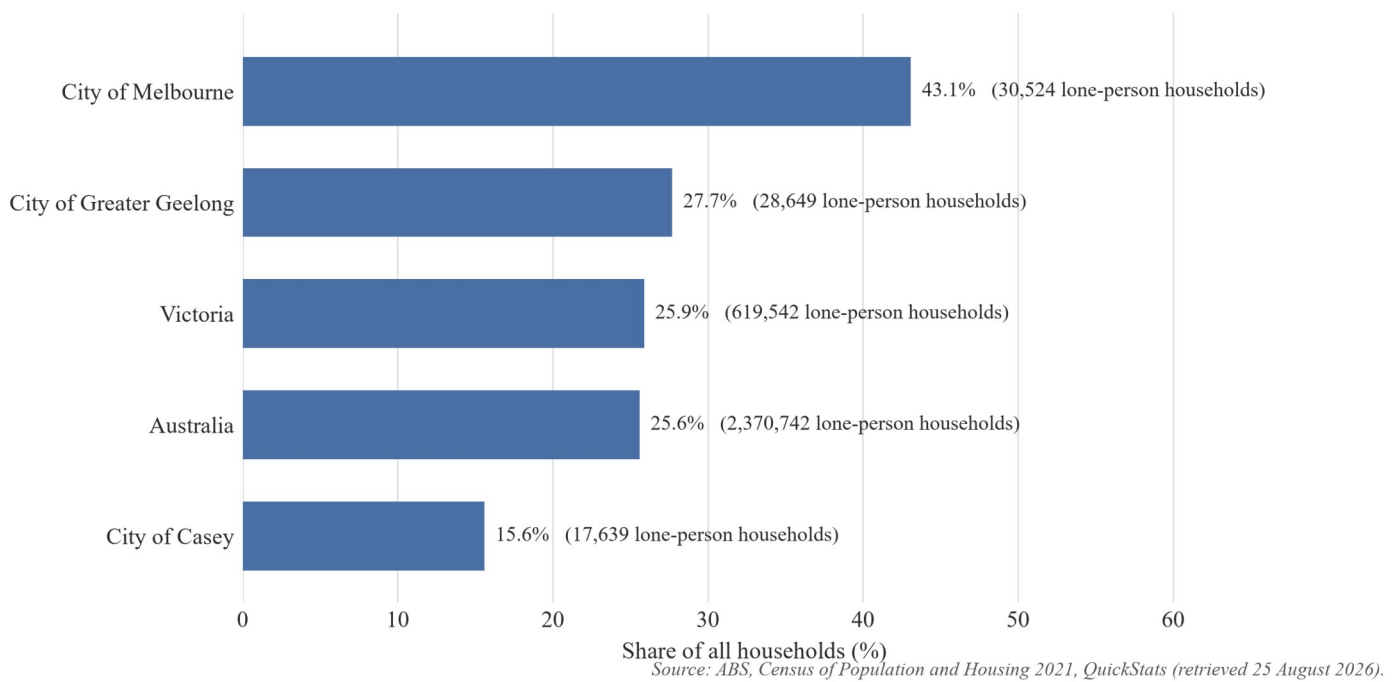
Simplified map of Port Phillip Bay with three council areas shaded and labelled: City of Melbourne (149,618 people) in blue on the north of the bay, City of Casey (365,236 people) in green to the south-east, and City of Greater Geelong (271,057 people) in amber to the south-west; north arrow and approximate scale bar

Simplified map: only the three council areas and the bay are shown. Council boundaries from ABS ASGS 2021, simplified; bay shape schematic. Populations from the 2021 census (ABS QuickStats, retrieved 25 August 2026).

- **City of Melbourne** — the inner city: flats and small dwellings, many young workers and students.
- **City of Casey** — an outer suburban growth area in the south-east: many young families.
- **City of Greater Geelong** — a regional coastal city: an older, more settled population.

People living alone. The census counts **lone-person households** — households where one person lives by themselves. Living alone is one objective fact that can matter for connection: a place with many lone-person households may have more people at risk of isolation, so it is a good place to *start asking questions* (though, as Part 4 shows, living alone is not the same as being lonely).

People living alone, 2021 Census: lone-person households

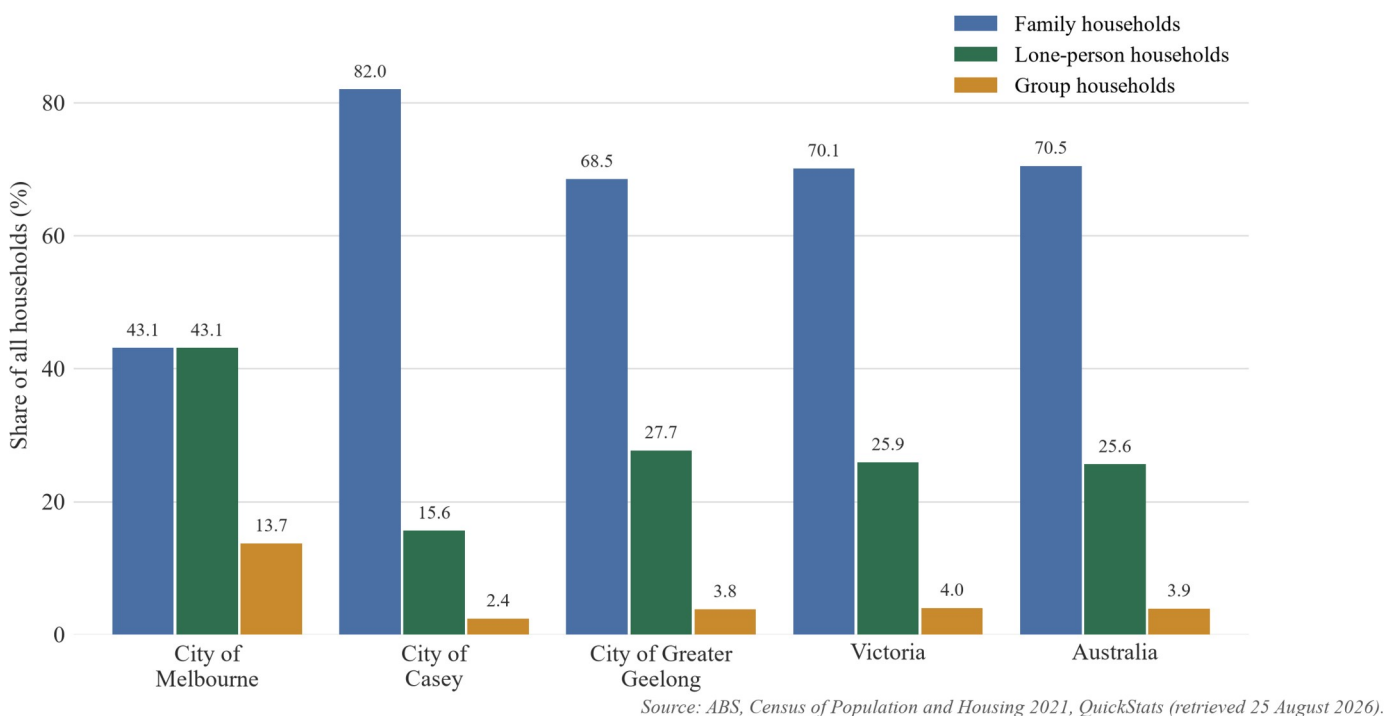


Horizontal bar chart of lone-person households as a share of all households, 2021 census: City of Melbourne 43.1% (30,524 lone-person households), City of Greater Geelong 27.7% (28,649), Victoria 25.9% (619,542), Australia 25.6% (2,370,742), City of Casey 15.6% (17,639)

The inner city stands out: 43.1% of City of Melbourne households are lone-person — well above Victoria’s 25.9%. Casey sits far below it at 15.6%.

How households are made up. The same story appears in the full household mix.

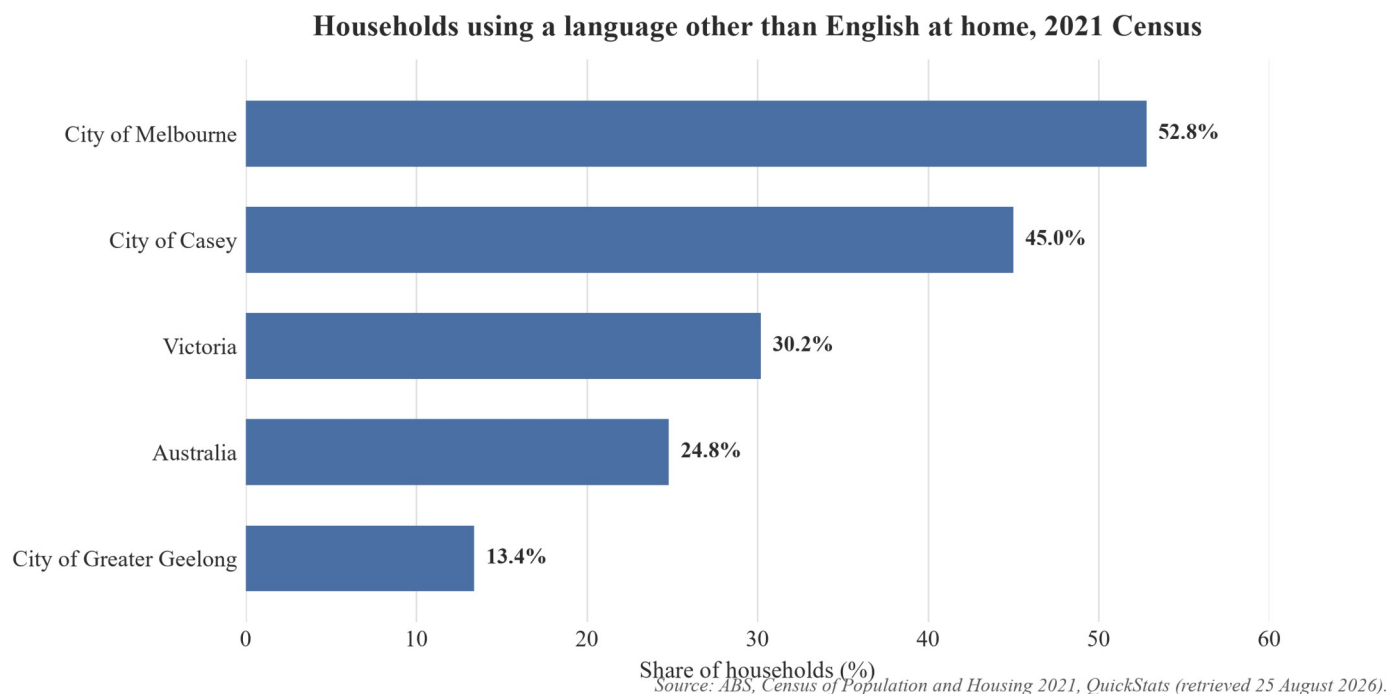
Household types in the five study areas, 2021 Census



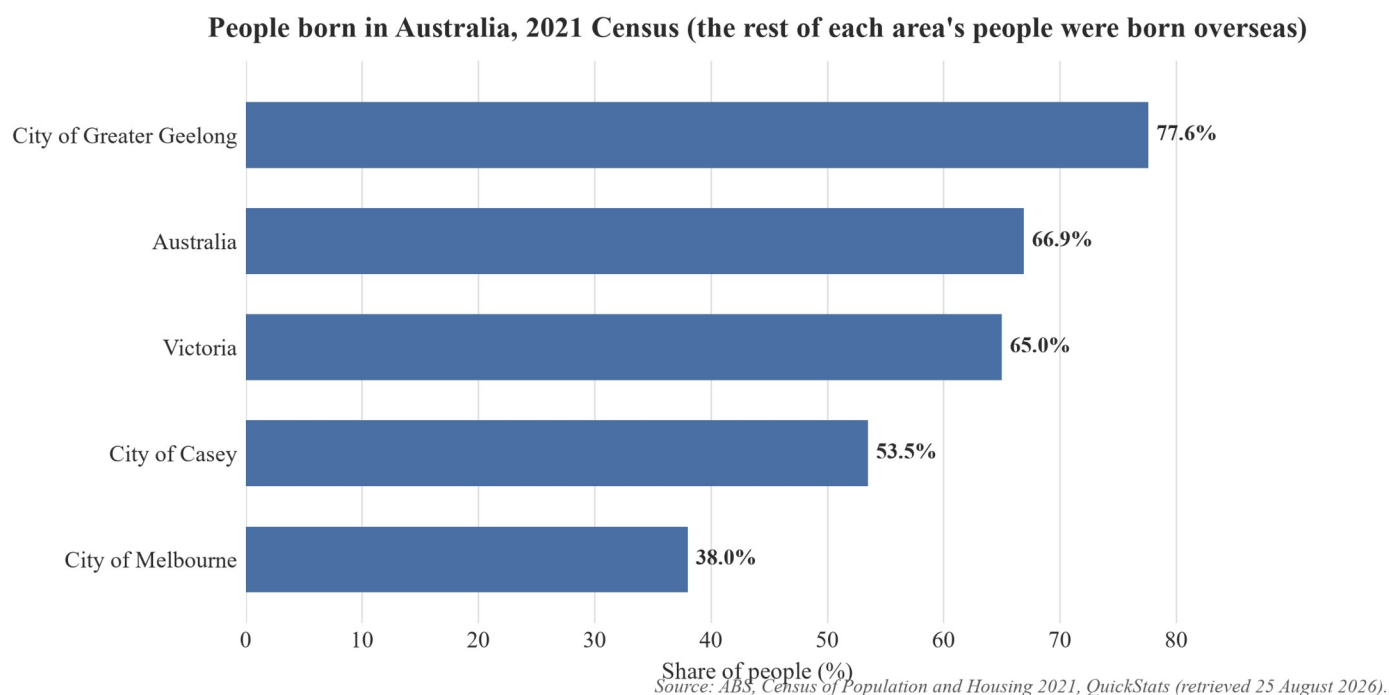
Grouped bar chart of household types (family, lone-person, group) as shares of all households, 2021 census: City of Melbourne 43.1 / 43.1 / 13.7; City of Casey 82.0 / 15.6 / 2.4; City of Greater Geelong 68.5 / 27.7 / 3.8; Victoria 70.1 / 25.9 / 4.0; Australia 70.5 / 25.6 / 3.9

Casey is a family-household place (82.0%); the City of Melbourne is the only area in the chart where lone-person households match family households (43.1% each). Family households usually mean built-in daily contact at home; lone-person households mean contact has to be made outside the front door. Neither is “better” — but they are different starting points for connection.

Diversity: languages and birthplaces. Connection is also shaped by who makes up a place. **Diversity** means the mix of backgrounds in a population — and two of the clearest census measures of it are the language spoken at home and the country people were born in.



Horizontal bar chart of the share of people using a language other than English at home, 2021 census: City of Melbourne 52.8%, City of Casey 45.0%, Victoria 30.2%, Australia 24.8%, City of Greater Geelong 13.4%



Horizontal bar chart of the share of people born in Australia, 2021 census: City of Greater Geelong 77.6%, Australia 66.9%, Victoria 65.0%, City of Casey 53.5%, City of Melbourne 38.0%; the rest were born overseas

In the City of Melbourne, a majority of people (52.8%) use a language other than English at home, and only 38.0% were born in Australia. Geelong is the least diverse of the three on these measures. Diversity matters for community identity in two directions at once. For a newcomer, finding people who share a language, faith or background can be

the fastest way to first ties — which is why cultural communities and clubs appear in the connections diagram in Part 1. For a place as a whole, many backgrounds mean many festivals, foods and groups — a richer menu of ways to belong. (Source for all four charts in this part: ABS, Census of Population and Housing 2021, QuickStats for LGA24600, LGA21610, LGA22750, Victoria and Australia, retrieved 25 August 2026.)

Reading a QuickStats page. Here is what the census layer looks like on a real page, and — just as important — what the layer can and cannot do.

Reading ABS QuickStats — City of Casey, 2021 Census

Real values from the ABS QuickStats page, retrieved 25 August 2026

People and households

People counted on census night: 365,236. Median age: 34 years.

Household types (share of all households)

Family households 82.0% · lone-person households 15.6%
group households 2.4%

Language

45.0% of households use a language other than English at home.
Top non-English languages: Punjabi 4.6%, Sinhalese 3.5%,
Hazaraghi 3.2%, Mandarin 2.2%, Dari 2.0%

Birthplace

53.5% of people were born in Australia. Top overseas
birthplaces: India 8.9%, Sri Lanka 4.1%, Afghanistan 4.0%.
Both parents born overseas: 59.0%

What this CAN tell us

who lives here, where they
were born, the languages
spoken at home, and how
households are made up

What this CANNOT tell us

whether people feel lonely,
or connected to the people
around them — for that,
ask them with a survey

QuickStats is a free ABS summary of census results for any area — a suburb, a council area, a state or the whole country.

Worked card modelled on an ABS QuickStats page for the City of Casey, 2021 census, with real values: 365,236 people, median age 34; household types 82.0% family, 15.6% lone-person, 2.4% group; 45.0% of households use a language other than English at home with top languages Punjabi 4.6%, Sinhalese 3.5%, Hazaraghi 3.2%, Mandarin 2.2%, Dari 2.0%; 53.5% born in Australia with top overseas birthplaces India 8.9%, Sri Lanka 4.1%, Afghanistan 4.0%, and 59.0% with both parents born overseas. Two note boxes: “What this CAN tell us — who lives here, where they were born, the languages spoken at home, and how households are made up” and “What this CANNOT tell us — whether people feel lonely, or connected to the people around them; for that, ask them with a survey.”

Hold that last point carefully: the census **counts**; it does not **ask**. It can tell you that 17,639 Casey households are lone-person, but not one word about whether those people feel lonely or wonderfully company-free. Counted data about connection always needs an asked layer on top. That is Part 4.

Worked demonstration 1 — Two QuickStats pages side by side: Casey and the City of Melbourne

Task. Using the figures in Part 3, compare the City of Casey and the City of Melbourne as two different starting points for social connectedness.

Step	What to do	What we find
1	Read the people and the median age.	Casey: 365,236 people, median age

Step	What to do	What we find
		34. City of Melbourne: 149,618 people, median age 30. The inner city is smaller and younger.
2	Compare household types.	Casey: 82.0% family households, 15.6% lone-person. Melbourne: 43.1% family, 43.1% lone-person. Melbourne has a far larger share of people living alone.
3	Compare diversity measures.	Language other than English at home: Casey 45.0%, Melbourne 52.8%. Born in Australia: Casey 53.5%, Melbourne 38.0%. Both are diverse; Melbourne more so.
4	Say what the differences suggest about connection — without claiming too much.	Casey's connection is likely to start at home (families) and in family-oriented local life; Melbourne's has to be built more outside the home, and its many backgrounds mean cultural communities matter a lot.
5	Name what this comparison cannot tell us.	Nothing about feelings. The census counted households, languages and birthplaces; it did not ask anyone whether they feel connected, lonely, or at home.

Answer. The two areas are different starting points for connectedness — one is not a “better version” of the other. Casey (younger families, 82.0% family households, median age 34) tends toward connection built around home, school and family life; the City of Melbourne (median age 30, 43.1% lone-person households, 62.0% born overseas) tends toward connection built outside the home — friends, groups and cultural communities. Because all of this is counted data, it can only be a starting point: perceptions must be asked, not guessed.

4. When connection breaks down: isolation and loneliness

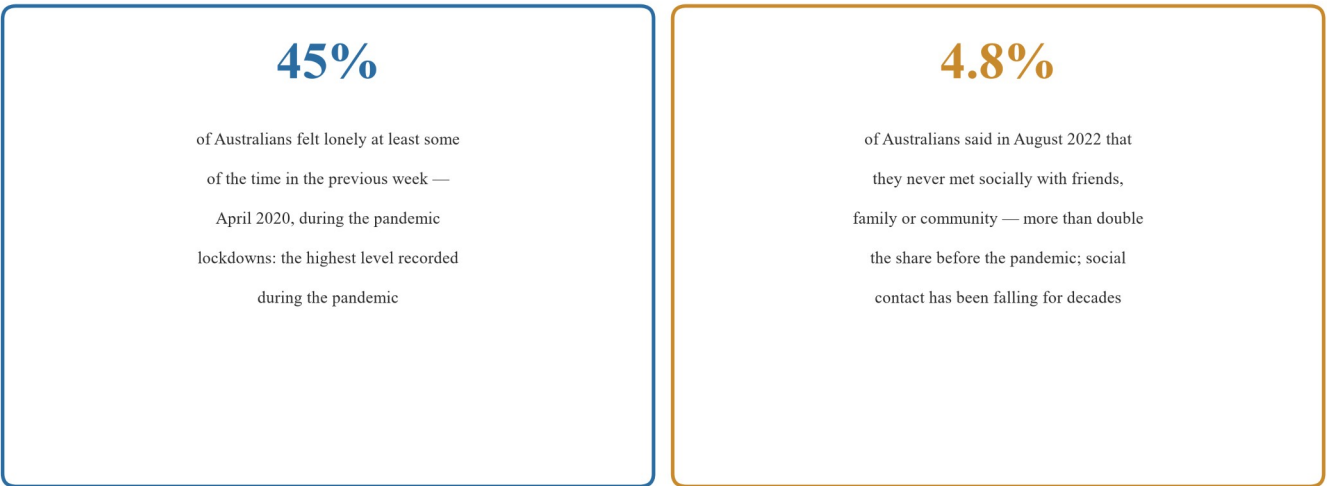
The asked layer is where two easily confused words need careful definitions. They are often used as if they were the same idea; researchers keep them apart. In this section we follow the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), which reports on both for Australia.

Social isolation is about contact: a person is isolated when they have **little contact with other people** — few meetings, calls or messages with friends, family or community. Isolation is closer to the counted side: you can observe and count contact.

Loneliness is about feeling: the AIHW describes it as the feeling people get when the relationships they have are **not enough for them**. Loneliness is on the asked side — the only way to find it is to ask.

Keeping the two apart matters, because they can disagree in both directions: a person can have little contact yet feel fine about it, and a person can feel lonely even while surrounded by people, if those relationships do not feel like enough.

When connection breaks down: loneliness in Australia



Source: AIHW, Australia's welfare 2023: data insights, "Social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing" (retrieved 25 August 2026).

Figure with two large statistic tiles and one line, from AIHW, Australia's welfare 2023: data insights. Tile 1: 45% of Australians felt lonely at least some of the time in the previous week — April 2020, during the pandemic lockdowns, the highest level recorded during the pandemic. Tile 2: 4.8% of Australians said in August 2022 that they never met up with friends, family or community — more than double the share before the pandemic; social contact has been falling for decades. Line below: 18–24 year olds reported the highest loneliness through the pandemic, and loneliness among 15–24 year olds has been rising since 2012.

Read the three findings slowly. First, loneliness is common even in a rich country: at the height of the pandemic, 45% of Australians felt lonely at least some of the time in a single week. Second, by August 2022, 4.8% of Australians said they **never** met up with friends, family or community — more than double the share before the pandemic; and the AIHW notes that the frequency of social contact has been falling for decades across all ages, so this was not only a pandemic story. Third, the highest loneliness through the pandemic was reported by 18–24 year olds, and loneliness among 15–24 year olds has been rising since 2012 — your own age group is one of the important ones in this data.

A fair challenge. Some people would say loneliness is not geography at all: it is a personal and health matter, studied by psychologists and doctors, and two people in the same street can feel it in different ways. That is a fair point — loneliness *is* also a health matter, and this book's definition says it is a feeling, not an address. But the strongest version of the challenge still leaves geography standing, because connection is also about place: who lives near you, whether there is a place to meet, whether transport gets you there, whether a newcomer can find people who share their language or interests, whether a town keeps its clubs and events alive. Those are facts about places — objective facts — and they shape the subjective feelings the AIHW measures. That overlap of counted place-facts and asked feelings is exactly what VC2HG8K09.E02 asks you to investigate.

The effect on perceptions of liveability. Put the two layers together and the pattern is clear: people who are well connected — who know people nearby, join groups and see family and friends — tend to rate their place more liveable, while isolation pulls liveability down. And the reverse trap is real too: a crowded inner city can hold many lonely households, and a small town far from everything can be strong in connection. Section 2E will use this finding as one of its three lenses on liveability.

Worked demonstration 2 — Counted data plus asked data: building a careful claim

Task. A student writes: "The City of Melbourne has 43.1% lone-person households, so most people there must be lonely." Use the counted layer (Part 3) and the asked layer (Part 4) to test this claim.

Step	What to do	What we find
1	Check the counted fact.	It is real: 43.1% of City of

Step	What to do	What we find
2	Ask what the count actually measures.	Melbourne households are lone-person (30,524 households), against 25.6% for Australia (2021 census). A lone-person household counts people living alone. It does not count contact. Someone who lives alone may see friends and family every day.
3	Bring in the asked layer.	The AIHW asked Australians about loneliness and social contact. Even at the height of the pandemic, a majority (55%) did <i>not</i> report feeling lonely in the week asked about; in 2022, 4.8% never met up with others. Living alone and never meeting are different facts.
4	Bring in the other side of connection.	Connection is also built in groups: in Victoria, 58.9% of people aged 15 and over volunteer, and the 15–24 age group is the highest at 69.4% (Volunteering Victoria, 2025). Inner-city areas are full of clubs, teams and cultural communities that tie people together outside the home.
5	Rewrite the claim carefully.	“The City of Melbourne has a high share of lone-person households, which is a flag to ask about connection there — but loneliness is a feeling the census does not measure, so the claim needs survey evidence before it can stand.”

Answer. The student’s claim jumps from a counted fact (living alone) to a feeling (loneliness) with no asked evidence in between. The careful version keeps the counted fact, names it as a starting flag, and refuses the jump: living alone can be counted; loneliness must be asked about.

5. Building connection: joining in, and asking people

Connection is not only luck; places and people build it. The strongest builder in this section is **joining in** — groups, teams, clubs, festivals and volunteering.

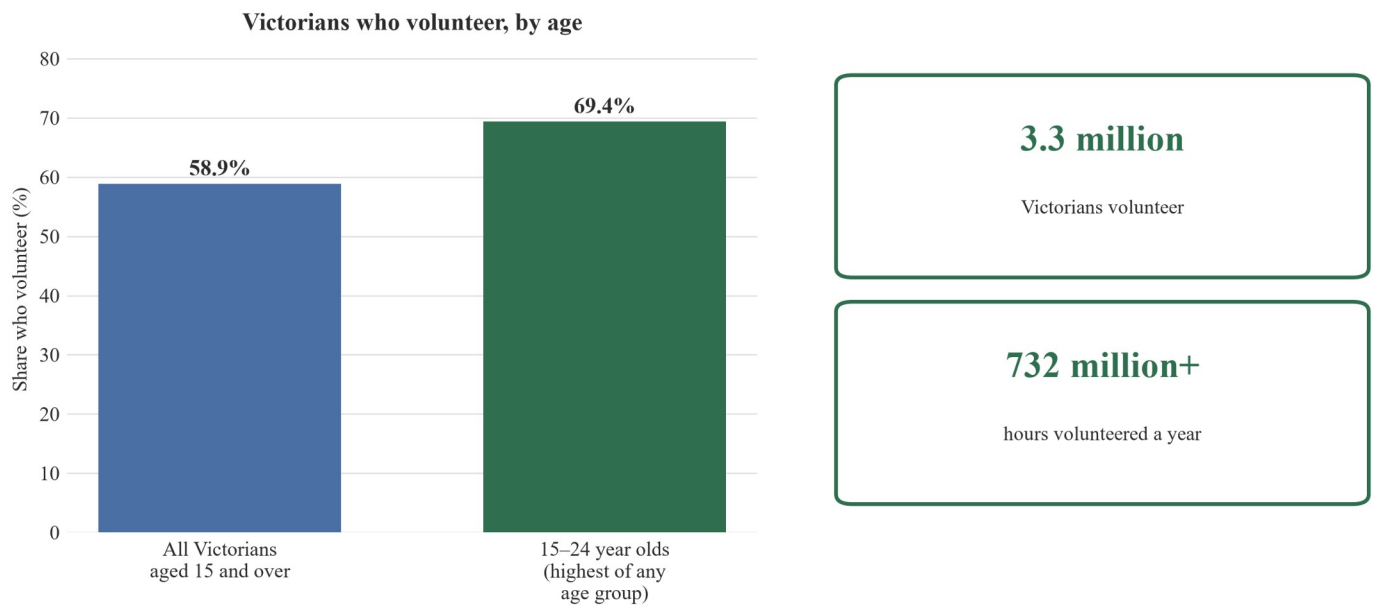


Figure with a two-bar chart and two tiles, from Volunteering Victoria, State of Volunteering Report 2025. Bars: 58.9% of all Victorians aged 15 and over volunteer; 69.4% of 15–24 year olds volunteer, the highest rate of any age group. Tiles: 3.3 million Victorians volunteer; more than 732 million hours are volunteered a year.

Look at the age pattern: 15–24 year olds volunteer at the highest rate of any age group — 69.4%, against 58.9% for all Victorians aged 15 and over. Volunteering is connection in both directions at once: you gain ties to people, and you help build the place’s identity — the club you coach, the festival you crew, the creek you help clean. Across Victoria, 3.3 million volunteers give more than 732 million hours a year; that is an enormous amount of community identity being built every week.

But remember the lesson of Part 4: joining in can be counted (clubs, members, volunteers, hours), while belonging must be asked. So the last tool in this section is the one Section 2A introduced — the **survey**. The model form below works for any Victorian suburb or town.

Social connection survey — my local area

Model form — adapt the questions to your own suburb or town

1. How well do you know the people who live near you?

☐

Not at all

☐

A little

☐

Somewhat

☐

Well

☐

Very well

2. How often do you talk with people who live near you?

☐

Never

☐

Rarely

☐

Sometimes

☐

Often

☐

Most days

3. How often do you see friends or family who live nearby?

☐

Rarely

☐

A few times a year

☐

Monthly

☐

Weekly

☐

Most days

4. Are you part of a local group, team or club?

☐

No

☐

Not yet

☐

Sometimes

☐

Yes

☐

Yes, and I help out

5. If you needed help, is there someone nearby you could ask?

☐

No

☐

Not sure

☐

Probably

☐

Yes

☐

Yes, several people

Record for each question: Who did you ask? How many people answered?

Keep the questions and the scale the same for everyone, so your results can be compared.

Some questions ask about feelings. People do not have to answer, and answers stay private.

Section 5B shows how to turn your answers into numbers and graphs.

Model survey form titled “Social connection survey — my local area” with five questions, each with a five-point circle scale: 1. How well do you know the people who live near you? 2. How often do you talk with people who live near you? 3. How often do you see friends or family who live nearby? 4. Are you part of a local group, team or club? 5. If you needed help, is there someone nearby you could ask? Footer notes: record who you asked and how many answered; keep the questions and scale the same for everyone; some questions ask about feelings, people do not have to answer and answers stay private.

Notice the design choices. Questions 1–3 ask about contact (the isolation side); questions 4–5 ask about ties and help (the connectedness side); a feeling question can be added for the loneliness side. The scale is the same for everyone so answers can be compared and graphed — Section 5B shows how to turn answers into numbers and graphs. And the privacy note is not optional politeness: questions about feelings must be optional and private, or the survey is not measuring anything honest. A survey like this, run in your own local area, is exactly the investigation VC2HG8K09.E02 describes — and the results are the kind of evidence Section 2F uses when it proposes a local improvement to liveability.

Practice — scaffolded

Q1. Use the connections diagram (Part 1). (a) List three ties from the diagram. (b) For each, say whether it is a strong or weak tie in *your* life, and why. (c) Add one tie from your own life that the diagram does not show.

Q2. In your own words, explain the difference between social connectedness and community identity. Use one example for each.

Q3. Use the pathways model (Part 2). (a) Name the four pathways. (b) Choose two and explain, for each, one way it could lift a person’s perception of their place’s liveability. (c) Explain the red arrow: what do isolation and loneliness do to liveability, even in a place with good services?

Q4. Use the lone-person chart (Part 3). (a) Which of the five areas has the highest share of lone-person households, and what is the value? (b) What is the value for the City of Casey? (c) Suggest one reason why an inner-city area like the City of Melbourne has more lone-person households than an outer suburban growth area like Casey.

Q5. Use the household-types chart (Part 3). (a) Which area in the chart is closest to the Victorian average for family households (70.1%)? (b) Describe the difference in household mix between the City of Melbourne and the City of Casey. (c) Which area’s households give more built-in daily contact at home, on average? Explain that this says nothing about contact outside the home.

Q6. Use the two diversity charts (Part 3). (a) Which of the three council areas has the highest share of people born in Australia? (b) 45.0% of Casey households use a language other than English at home, with Punjabi, Sinhalese, Hazaraghi, Mandarin and Dari among the top languages. What does this tell you about Casey’s diversity? (c) Suggest one way a cultural community could help a new arrival build their first ties in Casey.

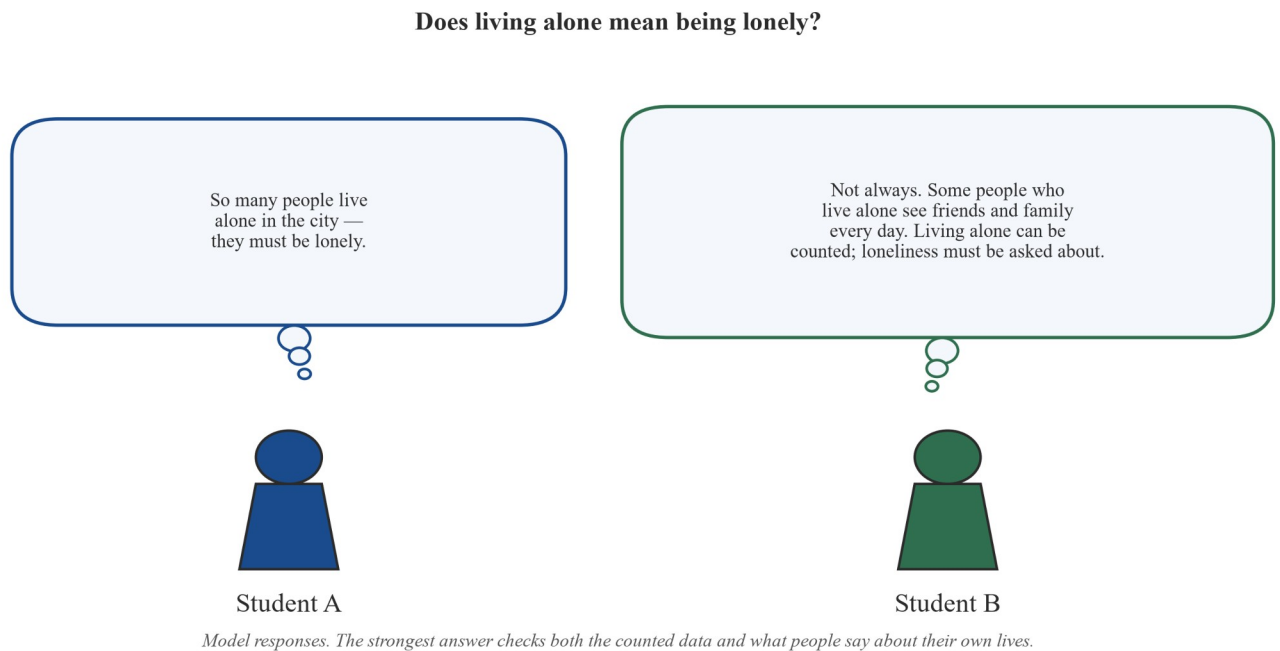
Q7. Use the QuickStats card (Part 3). (a) Give two things the census can tell us about Casey. (b) Give the one big thing it cannot tell us. (c) Name the tool this section uses to find out the thing the census cannot show.

Q8. Use the AIHW figure (Part 4). (a) What does the 45% tile measure, and when was it recorded? (b) The 4.8% tile is “more than double” the share before the pandemic. Roughly what must the pre-pandemic share have been — more or less than 2.4%? (c) Which age group reported the highest loneliness through the pandemic?

Practice — unscaffolded

Q9. A student says: “Casey must be more liveable than the City of Melbourne, because 82.0% of its households are family households.” Evaluate this claim using the objective–subjective distinction from Section 2A and at least two figures from this section.

Q10. The figure below shows two students arguing about the lone-person chart.



Model diagram of two students with thought bubbles. Student A: “So many people live alone in the city — they must be lonely.” Student B: “Not always. Some people who live alone see friends and family every day. Living alone can be counted; loneliness must be asked about.”

Write the **strongest** version of Student A’s case (the best evidence behind it), then the strongest version of Student B’s case. Then say which student is being more careful with the data, and why. You are marked on the reasoning, not on which student you pick.

Q11. Online friends appear in the connections diagram (Part 1). Argue one reason why online ties *should* count as social connectedness, and one reason why they should *not*. Then give your own view with a reason.

Q12. A new housing estate has houses and roads but no community centre, few parks and no cafes or shops within walking distance. Using the four pathways from Part 2, predict two effects on social connectedness and one effect on community identity, and say how this would likely touch residents’ perceptions of liveability.

Extended response

Q13. Compare the City of Melbourne and the City of Casey as places to live for a person who values social connectedness highly. Write about 200–250 words. You must: use at least **three** pieces of evidence from this section (census figures, the AIHW findings or the volunteering figures); name at least **one** thing the data cannot show and say how you would find it out; and end with a careful judgement that says “it depends on...” rather than simply naming a winner.

Teaching notes (for the teacher)

Curriculum trace. This section delivers VC2HG8K09. Per the series content policy and the §2A register in TOC.md, the CD’s First Nations “including...” clause is **cut** and the remainder is delivered in full in neutral context with non-First Nations examples; the student-facing banner above lists the codes only. Elaboration .E03 is **excluded**: do not teach it, gesture at it, or substitute for it. .E01 maps to Part 3 and Worked demonstration 1; .E02 maps to Parts 4–5, Worked demonstration 2 and the survey fieldwork hook.

Sequence (about four lessons). L1 — Parts 1–2: the two definitions, the pathways model, and the link back to 2A’s objective/subjective distinction. L2 — Part 3 and Worked demonstration 1: reading QuickStats; practise the “counted,

not asked” refrain until it is automatic. L3 — Part 4 and Worked demonstration 2: the isolation/loneliness distinction (AIHW), the steelman of “loneliness is not geography”, and the counted-versus-asked reasoning pattern. L4 — Part 5, survey design in pairs (adapt the model form to your own local area), and the extended response begun in class; results feed Section 5B’s data handling and Section 2F’s local proposal.

Assessment notes. Q10 and Q9 apply the house rule of marking reasoning, not conclusion: reward the student who checks what each dataset measures before claiming what it shows. Q13 is the evidence-based response task; the “it depends on...” requirement is the check that the subjective-measure idea has landed. The survey activity carries an ethics step: feelings questions are optional and answers stay private — rehearse this before any fieldwork, and note it on the form itself.

Cross-references. Section 2E §4 draws on this section’s finding that connected people rate their place more liveable while isolation pulls liveability down (“a crowded inner city can hold many lonely households; a small town can be strong in interconnection”). Section 2A supplies the liveability working definition and the objective/subjective distinction; 2B supplies the inner/outer/regional place types reused for the three study areas. No Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content is included, per the series policy.

Glossary

Social connectedness — the ties people have to family, friends, groups and community. **Community identity** — the feeling that you belong to a place and its people, and that the place is part of who you are. **Social isolation** — having little contact with other people; the contact side of connection, closer to what can be counted. **Loneliness** — the feeling that the relationships you have are not enough for you; found only by asking. **Perception** — how a thing seems to a person; subjective measures report perceptions. **Liveability** — in this book: how good a place is to live in, judged by what the place offers the people who live there. **Lone-person household** — a household where one person lives by themselves. **Census** — the official count of every person and household in a country; Australia’s is run by the ABS every five years. **QuickStats** — a free ABS summary of census results for any area: a suburb, a council area, a state or the whole country. **Diversity** — the mix of backgrounds in a population, such as languages spoken at home and countries of birth. **Median** — the middle value when all values are lined up in order; the median age splits a population into two equal halves. **Survey** — a set of questions asked of a group of people, used to gather subjective measures. **Volunteer** — a person who gives unpaid help to a group, club or cause; volunteering builds ties and community identity.

Sources (all retrieved 25 August 2026)

- ABS, Census of Population and Housing 2021, QuickStats — City of Melbourne (LGA24600), City of Casey (LGA21610), City of Greater Geelong (LGA22750), Victoria and Australia (abs.gov.au): people counted, median ages, household types (family / lone-person / group shares and lone-person counts), language other than English used at home, birthplace (born in Australia share; Casey top overseas birthplaces India, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan; both parents born overseas), and Casey top non-English languages (Punjabi, Sinhalese, Hazaraghi, Mandarin, Dari).
- ABS ASGS 2021 local government area boundaries, via the ABS ArcGIS service (geo.abs.gov.au), simplified for the study-areas map; bay shape schematic.
- AIHW, Australia’s welfare 2023: data insights, “Social isolation, loneliness and wellbeing” (aihw.gov.au): 45% felt lonely at least some of the time in the previous week (April 2020, pandemic high); 4.8% never met up with friends, family or community (August 2022, more than double pre-pandemic); social contact falling for decades; 18–24 year olds highest loneliness through the pandemic; 15–24 loneliness rising since 2012.
- Volunteering Victoria, State of Volunteering Report 2025 (volunteeringvictoria.org.au): 58.9% of Victorians aged 15+ volunteer; 69.4% of 15–24 year olds (highest of any age group); 3.3 million volunteers; more than 732 million hours a year.
- Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Geography, Levels 7 and 8 — content description VC2HG8K09 and elaborations .E01–.E03 (VCAA, 2026-07-29 export).

Judging liveability through three lenses: space, environment and interconnection

Curriculum focus — Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Geography, Levels 7 and 8, strand *Geographical Knowledge and Understanding*, sub-strand *Place and liveability*. Content description VC2HG8K10.

Elaborations drawn on: VC2HG8K10.E01 (why we put accessibility under space), VC2HG8K10.E02 (what environmental quality contributes to a place's liveability) and VC2HG8K10.E03 (using interconnection as an evaluating tool). This section brings together the ideas of Sections 2A–2D — measures of liveability, accessibility, environmental quality, and social connectedness — and teaches students to apply three of geography's concepts as evaluating tools. No new content is introduced.

In this section

Chapter 2 has one key question: *How can people influence the liveability of the places in which they live?* So far the chapter has built the pieces. Section 2A looked at how liveability is measured. Section 2B looked at how far people are from the services and facilities they need. Section 2C looked at environmental quality. Section 2D looked at social connectedness and community identity.

This section turns those pieces into a method. You will learn to **evaluate** a place's liveability — to make a careful judgement about how good a place is to live in, backed by evidence — using three of geography's seven concepts as your lenses:

- **space** — where things are, how far apart they are, and who can get to them;
- **environment** — the natural and built surroundings of a place;
- **interconnection** — what joins a place to people and to other places.

The evidence you will use is the evidence you already have from Sections 2A–2D. The new skill is the *reasoning*: naming the lens you are looking through, giving evidence for it, and defending your judgement.

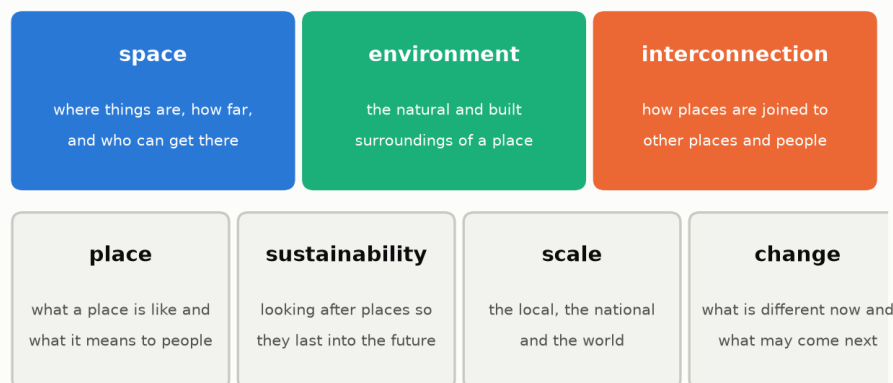
Key words to learn: evaluate, concept, space, environment, interconnection, liveability, accessibility, environmental quality, social connectedness, straight-line distance.

1. The toolkit: geography's seven concepts

A **concept** is a big idea that helps you organise what you see. The Victorian Curriculum for geography is built around **seven concepts**: place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change. You have been using them quietly since Chapter 1. From here on they become your working tools: an answer that names a concept and uses it is a geographer's answer.

Geography's seven concepts — your toolkit

The coloured three do the evaluating work in this section. You will use all seven across the year.



Space, environment and interconnection are the lenses of Section 2E. Place, sustainability, scale and change stay in the toolkit: Sections 2F, 3F, 4E and 6A use them again.

Seven labelled boxes for geography's concepts — place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change — with space, environment and interconnection coloured to show they are the three used in this section

Space, environment and interconnection (coloured) are the lenses of this section. The other four concepts step forward as the book goes on — in Section 2F and in Chapters 3, 4 and 6.

Three words in this section’s title need careful definitions before we use them.

Liveability. The curriculum uses the word *liveability* but does not give one fixed definition, and different rankings and measures choose different ones. In this book, as in Section 2A, *liveability* means **the mix of environmental, economic and social qualities that make a place good to live in**. Every task in this section can be answered on that definition alone. You met one famous index in Section 2A: the Global Liveability Index rated Melbourne the world’s most liveable city for most of the 2010s — but one number like that cannot tell you whether a family in Mallacoota can reach a major hospital quickly. For that, you need to evaluate, and evaluating needs concepts. Notice what follows from the definition: reasonable people can weigh those qualities in different ways — and weighing them is exactly what evaluating is.

Evaluate. To *evaluate* is to judge how good or suitable something is, using evidence and stated reasons. An evaluation is more than a description. “Mallacoota is 422 km from Melbourne in a straight line” is a description. “That distance lowers Mallacoota’s liveability for a family that needs a major hospital nearby” is an evaluation.

Concepts as lenses. A lens is a way of looking. Looking at one place through three lenses gives three different — and together, fuller — views. Figure by figure, that is how the rest of this section works.

Three lenses for evaluating liveability

Each lens asks one big question. The evidence comes from what you already studied in Sections 2B, 2C and 2D.

Lens 1: space	Lens 2: environment	Lens 3: interconnection
The big question Where are things, how far apart, and who can get to them? Evidence you already have • Section 2B: how far people are from services and facilities • distance and travel time to shops, schools, hospitals, transport • crowding and open space also belong to space	The big question What are the natural and built surroundings like? Evidence you already have • Section 2C: environmental quality and how it is measured • clean air and water, greenery, pleasant climate • safety from environmental problems such as smoke or pollution	The big question What joins this place to people and to other places? Evidence you already have • Section 2D: social connectedness and community identity • roads, rail, flights, phone and internet links • flows of people, goods, money and ideas — in and out

A complete evaluation looks through all three lenses — then says which one matters most, and for whom.

Three side-by-side cards: the space lens asks where things are and who can get to them; the environment lens asks what the natural and built surroundings are like; the interconnection lens asks what joins the place to people and other places; each card lists the evidence from Sections 2B, 2C and 2D

2. Lens 1 — Space: where things are, and who can get to them

The concept of **space** is about location, distance and arrangement: where things are, how they are spread out, and how people and goods move between them.

This is why **accessibility** sits under the concept of space. Accessibility means how easily people can reach the things they need — schools, hospitals, shops, jobs, transport. You cannot talk about accessibility without talking about *where things are* and *how far apart they are*: those are facts about space. When Section 2B compared services in inner-city, outer-suburban, regional and remote places, it was doing the geography of space.

Space works in two directions. Being close to services makes a place easier to live in. But space is also room: crowding, traffic and noise can pull liveability down, while open, quiet country can lift it up. A good evaluation through the space lens looks at both sides.

The table below puts four real Victorian places side by side — one inner-city, one outer-suburban, one regional, one remote — the same kinds of places you compared in Section 2B.

How far to what you need? Four Victorian places

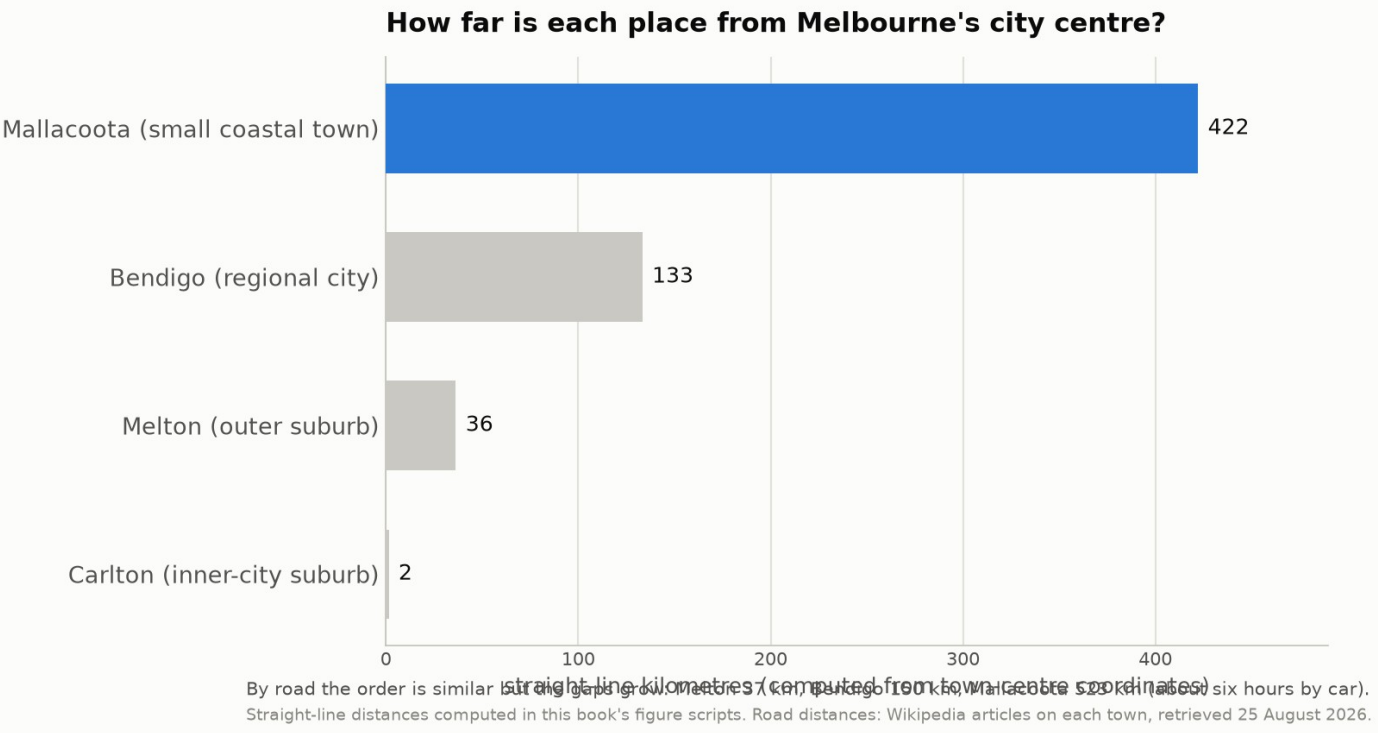
Place	Settlement type	Population (2021 census)	Straight-line distance to Melbourne's city centre	Nearest major hospital
Carlton	Inner-city suburb of Melbourne	16,055	about 2 km	Royal Melbourne Hospital (Parkville) (about 1 km away)
Melton	Outer suburb on the edge of Melbourne	70,956	about 36 km	Sunshine Hospital (St Albans) (about 22 km away)
Bendigo	Regional city	103,034	about 133 km	Bendigo Health (Bendigo) (about 1 km away)
Mallacoota	Small, far-east coastal town (East Gippsland)	1,000	about 422 km	Bairnsdale Regional Health Service (Bairnsdale) (about 190 km away)

Table comparing Carlton, Melton, Bendigo and Mallacoota by settlement type, 2021 census population, straight-line distance to Melbourne’s city centre, and nearest major hospital with its distance

Source: populations from the ABS 2021 census as published in each town’s Wikipedia article (retrieved 25 August 2026). Distances are straight-line, computed from town-centre and hospital coordinates in this book’s figure scripts; road distances are longer.

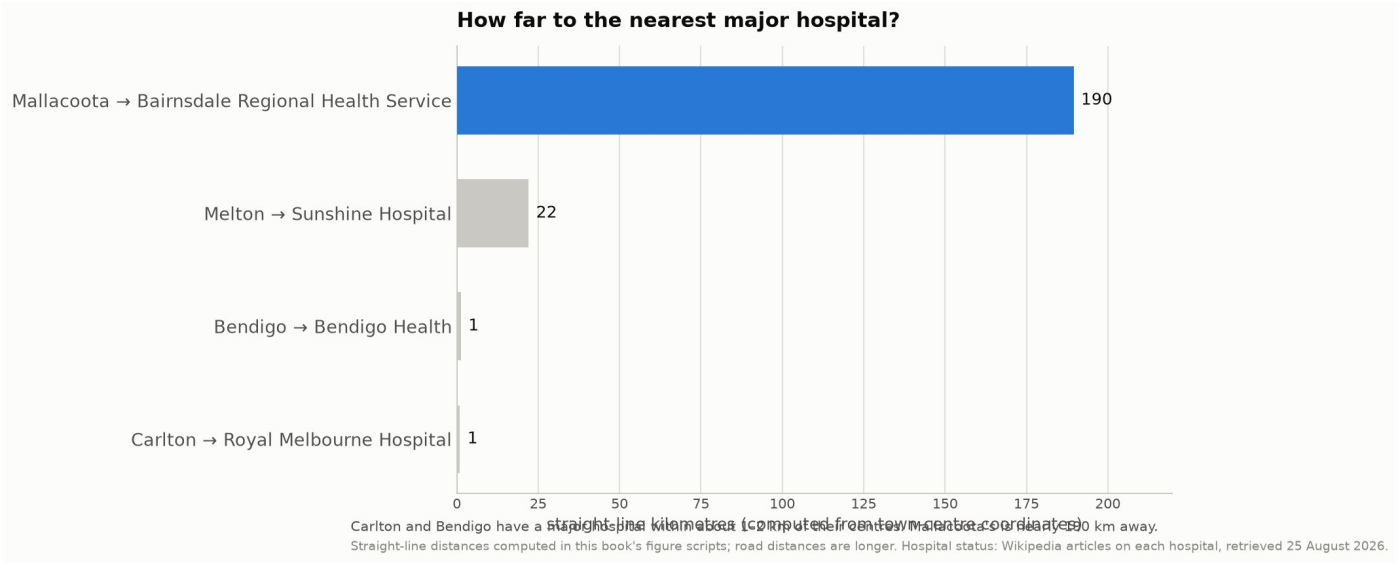
Straight-line distance is the distance between two points “as a crow flies”, ignoring roads. It is computed from the places’ coordinates. Road distances are always at least as long: Bendigo is 133 km from Melbourne in a straight line but 150 km by road, and Mallacoota is 422 km in a straight line but 523 km by road — about a six-hour drive.

Now look at the two charts. The first measures each place against Melbourne’s city centre. The second measures each place against its nearest major hospital.



Horizontal bar chart of straight-line distance from each place to Melbourne’s city centre: Carlton 2 km, Melton 36 km, Bendigo 133 km, Mallacoota 422 km, with Mallacoota highlighted

Source: straight-line distances computed from town-centre coordinates in this book’s figure scripts. Road distances from each town’s Wikipedia article, retrieved 25 August 2026.



Horizontal bar chart of straight-line distance from each place to its nearest major hospital: Carlton 1 km to the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Bendigo 1 km to Bendigo Health, Melton 22 km to Sunshine Hospital, Mallacoota 190 km to the Bairnsdale Regional Health Service, with Mallacoota highlighted

Source: straight-line distances computed from town-centre and hospital coordinates in this book’s figure scripts. Hospital locations checked against Wikipedia articles on each hospital, retrieved 25 August 2026.

Two observations to hold for later:

- **Carlton and Bendigo** each have a major hospital about 1 km from their centre; **Mallacoota’s** nearest major hospital is about 190 km away in Bairnsdale.
- **Distance to Melbourne** grows from 2 km (Carlton) to 422 km (Mallacoota). The things a capital city holds — major hospitals, universities, big employers, airports — sit further away with every step.

Through the space lens, then, accessibility works strongly for Carlton and Bendigo over Melton, and for Melton over Mallacoota — for the services that big places hold.

3. Lens 2 — Environment: the quality of the surroundings

The concept of **environment** means the natural and built surroundings of a place: its land, air and water, its plants and animals, its climate — and what people have built on top of all that.

Section 2C showed that **environmental quality** — how clean, safe and pleasant those surroundings are — shapes how people feel about where they live. Clean air, safe water, greenery, a comfortable climate and quiet streets all lift liveability; pollution, noise and environmental danger pull it down. Environmental quality is measured as well as felt: in Victoria, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) runs air-quality monitoring around the state, so claims about air can be checked against data rather than guesses.

Environmental quality can also change fast. Two real Victorian events show how quickly the environment lens can turn a place’s liveability down.

When environmental quality drops, liveability drops with it

Two real Victorian events, seen through the environment lens.

Morwell (Latrobe Valley) — Hazelwood mine fire, 2014	Mallacoota (East Gippsland) — summer bushfires, 2019–20
9 February 2014 A fire starts in the disused Hazelwood coal mine, next to town for about four weeks smoke and ash hang over Morwell, especially Morwell South during the fire people most at risk are advised to move out for a while because of very small smoke particles (PM2.5) 2016 official inquiry finds the fire harmed people's health; it links the smoke to 11 people dying earlier than they otherwise would have	December 2019 A fire lit by lightning spreads toward the town 31 December 2019 The fire reaches the town; more than 135 homes are destroyed New Year's Eve many residents shelter by the water; navy ships helped people leave after the fires no people died in the town, but homes, businesses and trust in a safe summer were lost

Both towns recovered, but for months — and in Morwell's case, for years — the event changed how good a place was to live in. That is the environment lens at work.

Two panels of dated facts. Left: Morwell and the 2014 Hazelwood mine fire — the fire began on 9 February 2014, smoke and ash hung over Morwell for about four weeks, people most at risk were advised to leave for a while because of very small smoke particles, and the 2016 official inquiry found the fire harmed people's health and linked the smoke to 11 people dying earlier than they otherwise would have. Right: Mallacoota and the 2019–20 summer bushfires — a lightning-lit fire spread toward the town in December 2019, reached it on 31 December with more than 135 homes destroyed, residents sheltered by the water while navy ships helped people leave, and in the end no people died in the town, but homes, businesses and trust in a safe summer were lost

Source: Hazelwood mine fire facts from the Wikipedia article “Hazelwood Power Station”, including the findings of the 2015–16 Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Inquiry; Mallacoota facts from the Wikipedia article “Mallacoota”. Both retrieved 25 August 2026.

Notice what these events mean for evaluation:

- **Morwell** (population 14,389 in the 2021 census) is a Latrobe Valley town with its own schools, shops and services. For four weeks in 2014, though, its air was the town's biggest liveability problem. Through the environment lens, Morwell's liveability carried a real cost that year — one an official inquiry later confirmed.
- **Mallacoota's** setting beside Croajingolong National Park is a large part of why people live there and visit: clean air, coast and forest are liveability gold. The same environment brought the 2019–20 fire season to the town's edge. A place's environmental strengths and risks often live together.

Through the environment lens, a place scores well when its air, water and greenery are clean and safe — and an honest evaluation also names the environmental risks the place lives with.

4. Lens 3 — Interconnection: what joins a place to people and other places

The concept of **interconnection** is about the ties between places and between people: the roads, railways, flights, phone lines and internet links, and the flows of people, goods, money and ideas along them. It also covers the social ties you studied in Section 2D — family, friends, clubs, community groups and the sense of belonging they bring.

We can use interconnection to evaluate liveability, because ties work in both directions:

- **Ties that bring things in.** A place joined strongly to other places can reach services, jobs, education and help when something goes wrong. Mallacoota is a small town, yet it has its own airport with flights from Melbourne — a lifeline interconnection for a place 523 km by road from the city. Its abalone industry sells to customers far away, and the national park brings visitors in.
- **Ties that can fail or harm.** Mallacoota sits 25 km off the Princes Highway along smaller roads; in the 2019–20 fires, those few links were threatened, and people had to shelter by the water until they could leave. When a place's ties are few, one broken tie is a big problem. Morwell's ties to Melbourne by road and rail bring jobs and services — and the same coal industry that built the town's working life also produced the 2014 smoke.

- **Social ties close to home.** Section 2D found that people with strong social ties — who know neighbours, join groups, see family — tend to rate their place more liveable, while isolation pulls liveability down. A small town can be strong in this kind of interconnection even when it is far from everything; a crowded inner city can hold many lonely households. Interconnection is about more than distance.

Through the interconnection lens, ask three questions of any place: *What joins this place to other places? What flows in and out along those ties? And are its people connected to each other?*

5. Putting the lenses together: making an evaluation

One lens gives one view; an evaluation needs all three. A **scorecard** keeps them organised: one row per lens, a verdict for each place, and the evidence under each verdict. Here is a model scorecard for Carlton and Mallacoota.

Evaluation scorecard (model): Carlton vs Mallacoota

Each lens gets a verdict and the evidence behind it. Verdicts are judgements, not facts — you must be able to defend them.

Lens	Carlton (inner-city Melbourne)	Mallacoota (far-east coastal town)
space	Higher Almost everything is close: major hospitals, university, museums and the city centre are within about 1–2 km.	Lower Nearest major hospital about 190 km away; Melbourne 422 km by straight line (523 km by road). One main road out.
environment	Mixed Parks and gardens (Carlton Gardens) but a busy built-up city: noise, traffic and less wild nature.	Higher Clean coastal setting beside Croajingolong National Park — but bushfire smoke can strike hard, as in 2019–20.
interconnection	Higher Trams, trains, flights, fibre internet and thousands of neighbours; family and friends are easy to reach.	Mixed Strong local community ties, an airport with flights from Melbourne — yet few services and long gaps between them.

Overall: which place is 'more liveable'? That depends on what you weigh. A student who loves city life weighs space and interconnection highest; a student who loves wild coasts weighs environment highest. The concepts give you the reasons — not just the answer.

Model evaluation scorecard comparing Carlton and Mallacoota. Space: Carlton higher, with hospitals, university and museums within 1–2 km; Mallacoota lower, with its nearest major hospital about 190 km away and one main road out. Environment: Carlton mixed, parks but a busy city setting; Mallacoota higher, a clean coast beside a national park but exposed to bushfire smoke. Interconnection: Carlton higher, trams, trains, flights, fast internet and thousands of neighbours; Mallacoota mixed, strong local ties and an airport with flights from Melbourne but few services. A note explains that the overall winner depends on what you weigh

Each verdict here is a judgement, not a fact: each one must be backed by evidence, and you may argue back if you have better evidence.

Read the bottom note of the scorecard again, because it is the heart of evaluating:

1. **State your weights.** Which lens matters most, and why? A student who needs specialist medical care weighs the space lens hard. A student who loves the beach and hates traffic weighs the environment lens.
2. **Say for whom.** Liveability is not the same for everyone. An evaluation that says “liveable for most families with young children” is stronger than one that says “liveable”, full stop. Section 2A’s finding still stands: objective measures and people’s own feelings do not always agree.
3. **Hold both sides.** Every place scores well on some lenses and badly on others. The strongest evaluations name both, like the model paragraph below.

A model evaluation paragraph, taken apart

One sentence does one job. Every coloured sentence names a concept AND gives real evidence. Use this shape, with your own place.

claim	Morwell's liveability shows how the three concepts work together.
space lens	Through the lens of space, Morwell sits in the middle: its town centre is about 134 km in a straight line from Melbourne's city centre, so big-city services are far away — but schools, shops and its own services sit inside the town itself.
environment lens	Through the lens of environment, air quality has hurt liveability here: in 2014 the Hazelwood mine fire covered parts of Morwell in smoke for weeks, and an official inquiry later found the fire harmed people's health.
interconnection lens	Through the lens of interconnection, Morwell is tied to nearby valley towns and to Melbourne by road and rail; those links bring jobs and services — but the coal mining that shaped the town also brought the smoke.
judgement	Overall, Morwell scores well on everyday access and community ties, but its environment has carried a real cost. A fair evaluation names both sides.

■ Claim — what you will show ■ One sentence per concept lens ■ Overall judgement — answers the question

Notice: no sentence says 'Morwell is bad'. Each sentence weighs one lens, and the judgement holds both the good and the bad together.

Model evaluation paragraph about Morwell, taken apart and colour-coded: a blue claim sentence, a blue space-lens sentence, a green environment-lens sentence, an orange interconnection-lens sentence and a purple overall judgement sentence, with a legend

The paragraph's shape is the one you will use:

- a **claim** that names the place and the three concepts;
- **one sentence per lens**, each naming the concept and carrying real evidence (a distance, an event, a tie);
- an **overall judgement** that holds the good and the bad together instead of picking a side and pretending the other side does not exist.

Worked demonstration 1 — The space lens: ranking four places by accessibility

Task. Use the access table and the two distance charts to rank Carlton, Melton, Bendigo and Mallacoota for accessibility, and explain your ranking in two or three sentences.

Step	What to do	What we find
1	Pick the evidence that belongs to the space lens.	Distances to Melbourne's city centre and to the nearest major hospital; settlement types.
2	Read the hospital chart first — health access is a strong test of liveability.	Carlton and Bendigo: major hospital about 1 km away. Melton: Sunshine Hospital about 22 km away. Mallacoota: about 190 km to Bairnsdale.
3	Check the distance-to-Melbourne chart.	Carlton 2 km, Melton 36 km, Bendigo 133 km, Mallacoota 422 km (straight line; by road, 523 km).
4	Rank, then explain the ranking with the evidence, not with opinions.	Carlton first (almost everything within 1–2 km), Bendigo second (a full regional city's services, including its own hospital, about 1 km from the centre), Melton third (everyday services at home, major

Step	What to do	What we find
		hospital 22 km away, city 36 km away), Mallacoota fourth (nearest major hospital about 190 km away; one main road out).
5	Add the other side of space — room.	Mallacoota ranks last on reaching services, but its open coastal setting is the space-side benefit that many of its residents chose it for.

Answer. For accessibility, the ranking is Carlton, Bendigo, Melton, Mallacoota: hospital access falls from about 1 km (Carlton, Bendigo) to 22 km (Melton) to about 190 km (Mallacoota), and distance to Melbourne’s services grows from 2 km to 422 km. Through the space lens, remoteness lowers liveability when the test is reaching services — even though the same remoteness gives Mallacoota the open, quiet space that its residents value.

Worked demonstration 2 — Writing an evaluation through all three lenses

Task. Morwell is a Latrobe Valley town of 14,389 people (2021 census), about 134 km from Melbourne in a straight line. Write an evaluation of Morwell’s liveability using all three lenses. Build it the way the model paragraph was built.

Step	What to do	What we find
1	Claim: name the place and the method.	“Morwell’s liveability shows how the three concepts work together.”
2	Space lens: one sentence, with evidence.	Morwell is 134 km from Melbourne in a straight line, so big-city services are far — but schools, shops and its own services are inside the town.
3	Environment lens: one sentence, with evidence.	In 2014 the Hazelwood mine fire covered parts of Morwell in smoke for about four weeks; the 2016 official inquiry found the fire harmed people’s health. Environmental quality dragged liveability down.
4	Interconnection lens: one sentence, with evidence.	Road and rail ties join Morwell to nearby valley towns and to Melbourne: they bring jobs and services — and the coal industry behind those ties also produced the smoke.
5	Judgement: hold both sides; say what you weigh.	Morwell scores well on everyday access and community ties; its environment has carried a real cost. Which side matters more depends on who is judging and when.

Answer. The finished paragraph is the colour-coded model in the last figure of Part 5. Notice three things about it that earn the marks: every lens sentence names its concept; every lens sentence carries evidence you could check; and the judgement does not pretend the costs are not real.

Practice — scaffolded

- Q1.** Using the seven-concepts figure: (a) list all seven concepts; (b) name the three that are the lenses of this section; (c) in one sentence, say why using concepts makes an evaluation stronger than just giving an opinion.
- Q2.** Using the three-lenses figure, match each lens to the section where its evidence was built: space, environment, interconnection → Sections 2B, 2C, 2D. Then write the “big question” for the environment lens from memory.
- Q3.** Using the access table: (a) which place is a regional city, and what was its 2021 census population? (b) which place is smallest, and what settlement type is it? (c) which two places have a major hospital about 1 km from their centre?
- Q4.** Using the hospital chart: (a) how far is Melton from its nearest major hospital, and which hospital is it? (b) about how many times further is Mallacoota’s nearest major hospital than Melton’s? (c) Give one reason why distance to a hospital matters for liveability.
- Q5.** Using the Melbourne-distance chart: (a) which place is about 36 km from Melbourne’s city centre in a straight line? (b) Why is Mallacoota’s road distance to Melbourne (523 km) longer than its straight-line distance (422 km)? (c) Name two things a capital city holds that get further away as this distance grows.
- Q6.** Using the environmental-events figure: (a) what happened at Morwell in 2014, and for roughly how long? (b) What did the 2016 official inquiry find? (c) Which lens are both events evidence for, and why?
- Q7.** Using the scorecard: (a) On which lens does Mallacoota score higher than Carlton? (b) Give one piece of evidence from the scorecard for Carlton’s interconnection verdict. (c) Why does the scorecard say there is no single “winner”?
- Q8.** In your own words, define *liveability* the way this book does. Then give one reason why two people can honestly give the same place different liveability scores.
-

Practice — unscaffolded

- Q9.** Write two or three sentences evaluating **Melton’s** liveability through the space lens only. You must use at least two numbers from the access table or the charts.
- Q10.** “Mallacoota has low liveability because it is so far from Melbourne.” Test this claim from both sides: give one piece of evidence that supports it and one piece of evidence that challenges it, then write your own balanced conclusion in one or two sentences.
- Q11.** Choose one of the three lenses. For the town or suburb where you live, list two pieces of evidence you could collect for that lens — one by observing it yourself and one from a second source (such as the ABS census, the EPA, or your local council’s website).
- Q12.** Write the strongest case you can for each of these: (A) *Carlton is more liveable than Mallacoota*. (B) *Mallacoota is more liveable than Carlton*. Use at least one piece of evidence for each side, then say which case you find more convincing and why. You are marked on the fairness and strength of your reasoning, not on which side you pick.
-

Extended response

Q13. *Evaluate the liveability of the place where you live through three lenses: space, environment and interconnection.* Write about 200–250 words, and include:

- one sentence per lens, each naming the concept and carrying real evidence about **your** place (a distance you can check, a feature of the environment, a tie that joins your place to others — observed yourself or found in a source such as the ABS census, the EPA or your council’s website);
- an overall judgement that holds at least one strength and one weakness of your place;
- one sentence saying **who** your judgement is most true for and who it may not be true for (a young family? an older person living alone? a teenager?);
- a list of the sources you used, with their names.

Tip: the model paragraph in Part 5 is your shape. Do not copy its facts — use your own place’s.

Teaching notes (for the teacher)

This section delivers VC2HG8K10 as the Place and liveability sub-strand’s concept application: it draws its evidence entirely from Sections 2A–2D (measures of liveability, accessibility, environmental quality, social connectedness) and introduces no new content; the elaborations are drawn on as linkage (VC2HG8K10 .E01 → Part 2, .E02 → Part 3, .E03 → Part 4), not as a teaching order. Suggested sequence (about four lessons): L1 — the seven concepts, the definition of *evaluate*, and the liveability working definition (Part 1); L2 — the space lens and the four-place Victorian comparison, with the distance calculations shown (Part 2 and Worked demonstration 1); L3 — the environment and interconnection lenses with the Morwell and Mallacoota evidence (Parts 3–4); L4 — the scorecard method, the model paragraph, Worked demonstration 2, and the extended response begun in class. The extended response (Q13) is the evidence-based task the content description’s “evaluate” calls for; it feeds directly into Section 2F’s local proposal and into the skills of Chapter 5. Straight-line distances are computed in the figure scripts from town-centre coordinates so students can reproduce them; road distances are given beside them so the two measures are not confused. Q12 applies the house rule of marking reasoning, not conclusion. No Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content is included, per the series policy.

Glossary

Evaluate — to judge how good or suitable something is, using evidence and stated reasons. **Concept** — a big organising idea; geography’s seven are place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale and change. **Space** — where things are, how they are arranged, and how far apart; includes how people and goods move between places. **Environment** — the natural and built surroundings of a place: land, air, water, living things, climate and what people have built. **Interconnection** — the ties between places and between people — transport, communications, trade, travel and social ties — so that what happens in one place affects others. **Liveability** — in this book: the mix of environmental, economic and social qualities that make a place good to live in. **Accessibility** — how easily people can reach the services and facilities they need. **Environmental quality** — how clean, safe and pleasant a place’s surroundings are. **Social connectedness** — the ties people have to family, friends, groups and community. **Straight-line distance** — the distance between two points measured directly, ignoring roads; computed from coordinates.

Sources (all retrieved 25 August 2026)

- Populations (ABS 2021 census): Carlton 16,055, Melton 7,953, Bendigo 103,034, Mallacoota 1,183, Morwell 14,389 — as published in the Wikipedia articles “Carlton, Victoria”, “Melton, Victoria”, “Bendigo”, “Mallacoota” and “Morwell” (underlying source: Australian Bureau of Statistics).
- Melbourne rated the world’s most liveable city for most of the 2010s in the Global Liveability Index (Economist Intelligence Unit): Wikipedia article “Melbourne”; index category weights taught in Section 2A.
- Road distances and settlement descriptions: Wikipedia articles “Melton, Victoria” (37 km west of the CBD), “Bendigo” (150 km north-west of Melbourne) and “Mallacoota” (523 km, about six hours, from Melbourne);

25 km off the Princes Highway; airport with flights from Melbourne; Croajingolong National Park; abalone industry).

- Straight-line distances in all figures: computed in this book's figure scripts from town-centre, hospital and city-centre coordinates (great-circle method) using coordinates published in the same Wikipedia articles; coordinates for the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Sunshine Hospital and Bendigo Health from their Wikipedia articles and the Bendigo article.
- Hazelwood mine fire (9 February – 10 March 2014; smoke over Morwell; advice for people most at risk over very small smoke particles (PM2.5); 2016 inquiry findings, including harm to health and 11 people dying earlier than they otherwise would have): Wikipedia article "Hazelwood Power Station".
- Mallacoota 2019–20 bushfires (lightning-lit fire; reached the town 31 December 2019; more than 135 homes destroyed; residents sheltered by the water; navy ships helped people leave; no deaths in the town): Wikipedia article "Mallacoota".
- Air-quality monitoring in Victoria: Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria, air quality monitoring services (epa.vic.gov.au).

Responses that enhance liveability at the local scale

Curriculum focus — Victorian Curriculum 2.0, Geography, Levels 7 and 8, strand *Geographical Knowledge and Understanding*, sub-strand *Place and liveability*. Content description VC2HG8K11.

Elaborations drawn on: VC2HG8K11 .E01 (studying a liveability plan made by a local government — for example for traffic flow or recycling centres) and VC2HG8K11 .E02 (building a specific proposal to lift one aspect of local liveability, weighing what diverse groups in the community need — young people, elderly people and people with particular needs).

In this section

In Section 2A you learned what **liveability** means — how good a place is to live in, judged by what the place offers the people who live there — and how it is measured. In Section 2E you looked at how places change. This section is about what people do next: the **responses** that make a place better to live in, at the **local scale** — the scale of your street, your suburb or town, and your council area.

In this section you will learn:

- what a **response** is, and the six-step cycle geographers see in most responses;
- who responds at the local scale — households, community groups, local councils and the Victorian Government;
- how one real local government planned to improve recycling, and how councils and the Victorian Government plan for safer traffic flow;
- why the same place can work well for one group of people and less well for another — young people, older people and people with particular needs;
- how to build your own **proposal** to improve one aspect of the liveability of your local area, based on **evidence**.

Key words to learn: response, local scale, council, community, proposal, evidence, trade-off, diverse, give way rule, circular economy.

1. What is a response?

In earlier levels of geography you looked at how people respond to changes in places — how a community or a government notices something and then acts. This section puts that idea to work at the local scale.

A **response** is an action taken to deal with an issue, or to make something that is already good even better. A response can be big — a new train line — or small — a new shade tree and a bench at the bus stop. What makes it a response is that someone noticed something about a place and then did something about it.

A response **enhances liveability** when it makes a place better for the people who live there. In Section 2A you met the three families of liveability measures — environmental, economic and social. Responses usually aim at one or more of those families: a cleaner park (environmental), a better bus route to work (economic), a safer crossing outside the school (social).

Two ideas from earlier levels are assumed in this section, so we use them without stopping to re-teach them: that places can be managed and responded to (the management-and-response idea from Level 6 geography), and that the **local scale** means the scale of your everyday life — your street, suburb or town, and your local government area.

2. What do local responses look like?

Here are some real kinds of response you might see in any Victorian suburb or town, grouped by the family of liveability they aim at.

Local-scale responses that can enhance liveability

One response can sit in more than one group — shade over a playground helps the environment and helps people.

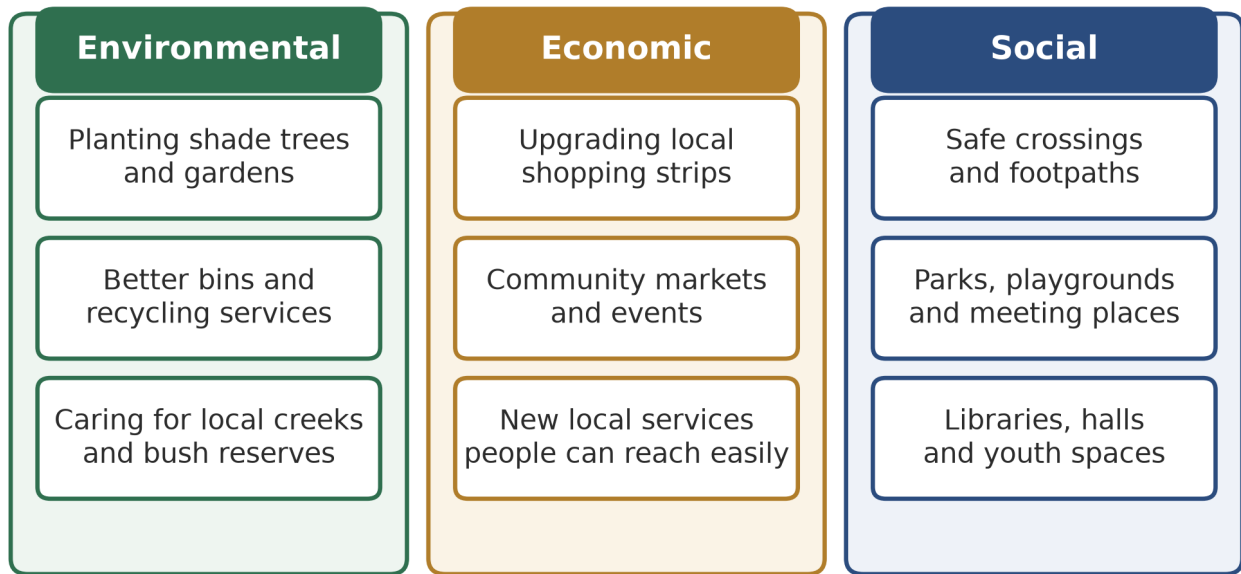


Diagram with three columns labelled environmental, economic and social, each holding three example response cards: environmental holds new shade trees and planting, cleaner parks and streets, and quieter calmer streets; economic holds better bus and train links, jobs close to home, and local markets and shops; social holds safer crossings and footpaths, seats shade and toilets in public places, and places to meet such as libraries and community halls

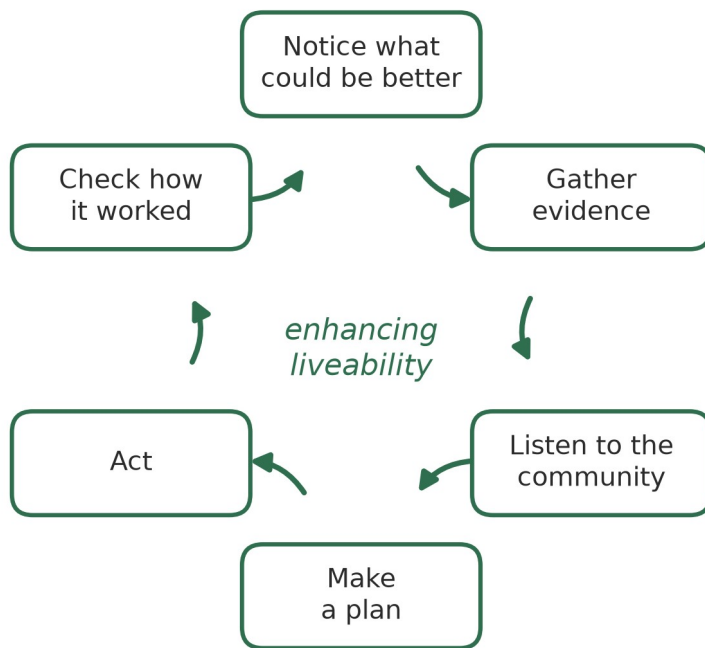
The examples are original teaching examples drawn for this section; they are the kinds of response found in many Victorian localities.

Notice the footer of the figure: one response can sit in more than one group. New shade trees are environmental (cooler, greener streets) and social (a more pleasant place to meet). A weekend market is economic (local sellers) and social (somewhere to bump into people). When you study a response, ask: *which families of liveability is it aiming at?*

3. The response cycle

Most responses, from a new bench to a new train line, follow the same shape. Geographers call that shape a cycle because the last step feeds back into the first.

The local response cycle



Cycle diagram with six steps arranged in a circle around the words enhancing liveability: notice what could be better, gather evidence, listen to the community, make a plan, act, and check how it worked, with arrows leading from each step to the next and back to the start

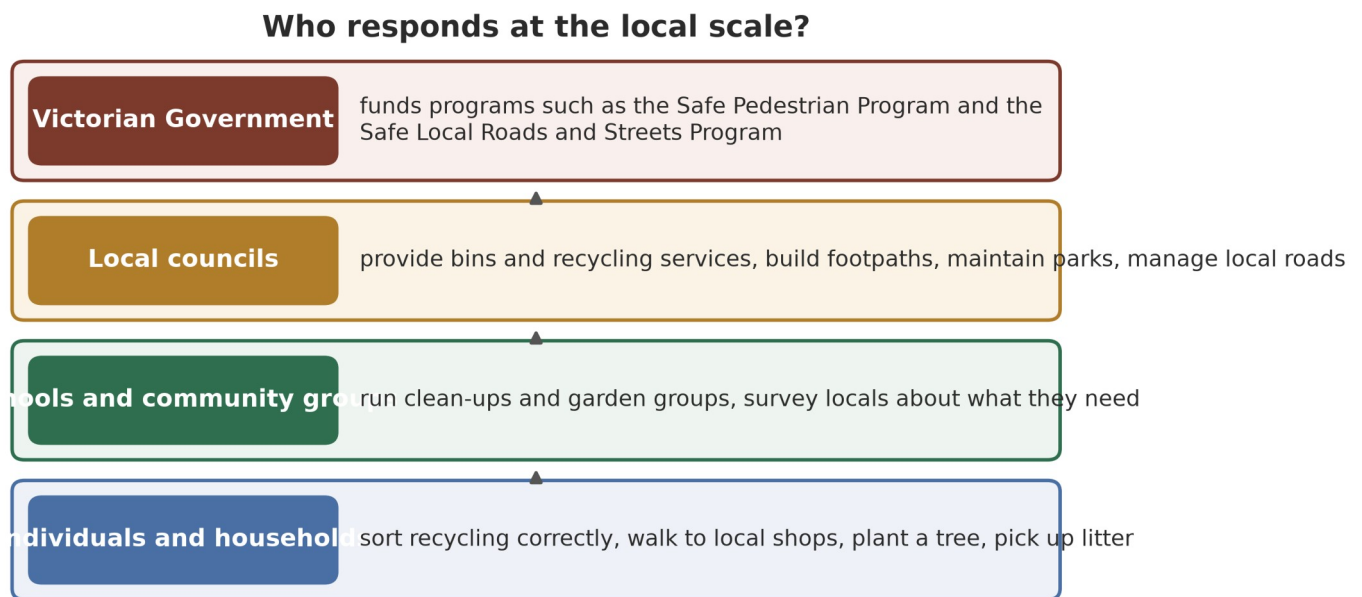
Original diagram drawn for this section.

- **Notice what could be better.** Someone sees an issue — a park with no shade, a dangerous crossing, bins that overflow.
- **Gather evidence.** Count, measure, photograph or look up facts, so the issue is described with evidence, not just opinion. (The skills for this — surveys, counts and other fieldwork methods — are taught in full in Section 5B. Here we just name the step.)
- **Listen to the community.** Different people need different things from a place, so ask them.
- **Make a plan.** Say exactly what will change, who will do it, and what it needs.
- **Act.** Build, fund, change the rule, run the service.
- **Check how it worked.** Look again — count again, ask again — and see whether the response did what it meant to do. (How geographers report that checking is covered in Section 6C.)

The cycle matters because it turns “someone should do something” into a process that can be checked. Worked demonstration 1 follows a real plan through this cycle.

4. Who responds at the local scale?

Different responses happen at different levels. At the local scale, four kinds of responder do most of the work.



Responses can start at any level — councils are the level of government closest to where you live.

This section is about responses at the local scale: your street, your suburb or town.

Diagram of four horizontal bands from top to bottom: the Victorian Government, which sets laws and funds programs such as the Safe Pedestrian Program and the Safe Local Roads and Streets Program; local councils, which run bins and recycling, footpaths, parks and local roads; schools and community groups, which run events, planting days and local projects; and individuals and households, which sort their bins, volunteer and speak up at community meetings

Source for the two named Victorian Government programs: Victorian Government, Department of Transport and Planning (vic.gov.au), page updated 10 November 2025, retrieved 25 August 2026.

Victoria is divided into **79 council areas**, each served by a **council** — the level of government closest to where you live. What you can put in your recycling bin, how often it is collected, and which footpaths and parks get renewed are all decided at council level, which is why services differ from one council area to the next. The Victorian Government sits above councils: it sets laws and funds programs — for example the **Safe Pedestrian Program** and the **Safe Local Roads and Streets Program**, which give councils money and guidance to make local streets safer for people walking and driving.

Most local liveability responses begin or end with a council, because councils run the everyday services that shape how a place feels: bins, footpaths, parks, libraries, local roads. That is why the worked demonstration below looks closely at council plans.

Worked demonstration 1 — How a local government planned to improve recycling and traffic flow

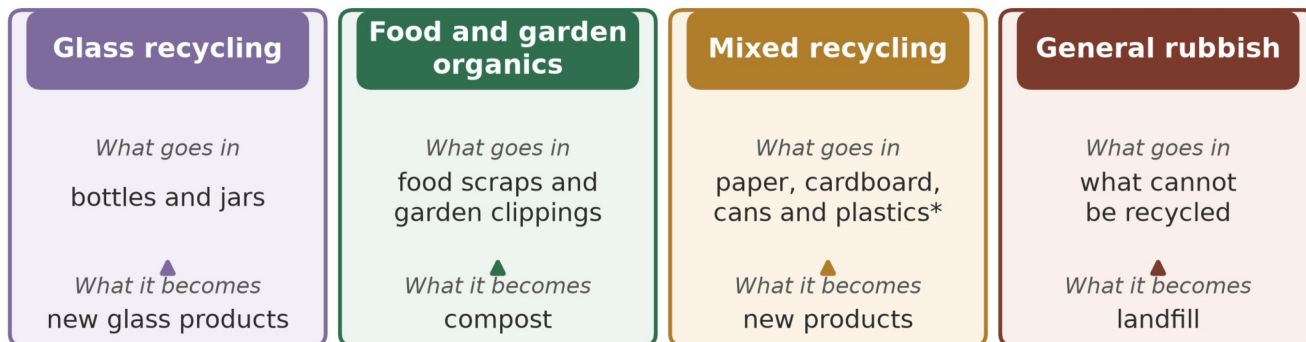
Elaboration .E01 asks us to investigate a plan made by a local government to improve liveability in an area; traffic flow and recycling centres are the curriculum's example kinds. Here is one real Victorian story about recycling, followed by a traffic-flow example.

Step 1 — The issue. The average Victorian household throws out about \$2,200 worth of food each year, and much of what else we call rubbish could be used again. Services also differ from place to place: with 79 council areas in Victoria, what you can put in your recycling bin depends on your local council.

Source: Sustainability Victoria, 'Small Acts, Big Impact', and 'Council waste and recycling services' (page updated 2 June 2025), retrieved 25 August 2026.

Step 2 — The plan for recycling. Victoria’s plan is to move every household to **four-stream recycling**: four separate bins, one for each kind of waste.

Victoria's four-stream kerbside system



* Check with your council — what goes in each bin can differ between Victoria's 79 council areas.

Batteries and electronics do not go in any bin — they can start fires. Take them to a drop-off point.

Why a stream just for food? The average Victorian household throws out about \$2,200 worth of food every year. An organics bin keeps that food out of landfill and turns it into compost.

Source: Sustainability Victoria (pages retrieved 25 August 2026). Lid colours vary between councils.

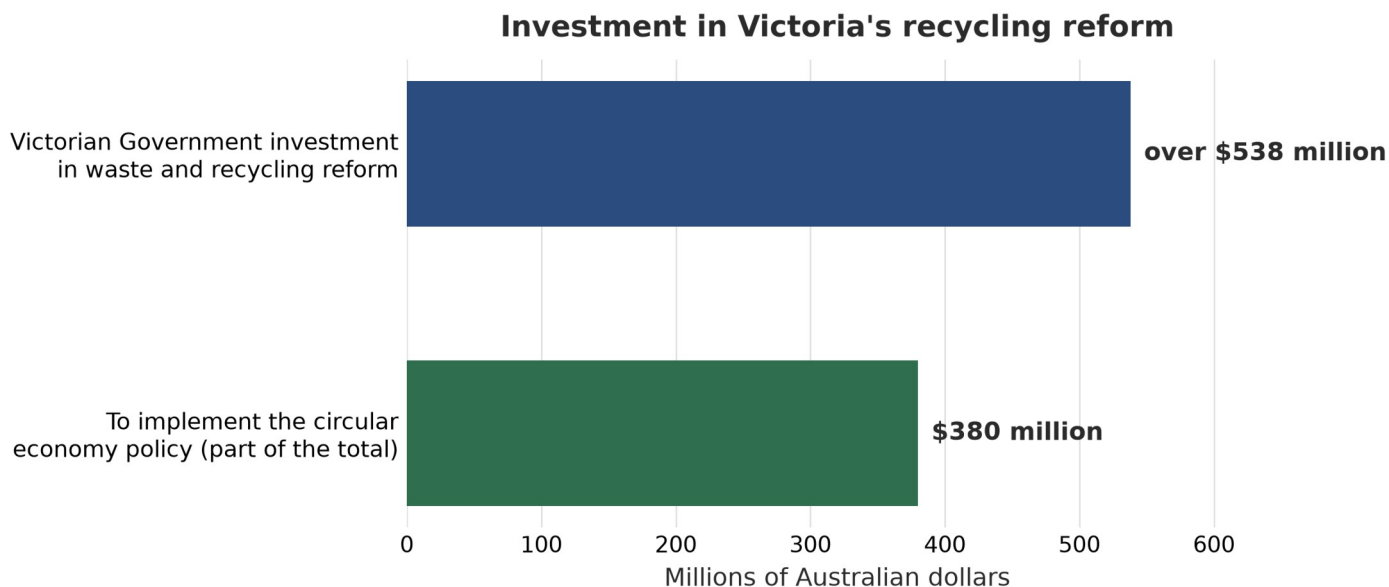
Diagram of the four household waste streams in Victoria: glass recycling, taking bottles and jars and turning them into new glass products; food and garden waste, taking food scraps and garden clippings and turning them into compost; mixed recycling, taking paper cardboard cans and plastics and turning them into new products; and general rubbish, taking what cannot be recycled and going to landfill, with a note that batteries and electronics must not go in any bin because they can start fires, and a note that lid colours vary between councils

Source: Sustainability Victoria, 'Household education for 4-stream recycling' (page updated 18 February 2025), retrieved 25 August 2026.

Separating glass from the other recycling keeps it clean, so more of it actually becomes new bottles and jars. Councils rolled the change out at different times with government grants: **Merri-bek City Council**, an inner-Melbourne council area, began its separate glass collection in **July 2023** with a **\$102,000** grant.

Source: Sustainability Victoria, 'Household education for 4-stream recycling', retrieved 25 August 2026.

Step 3 — The money and the policy behind the plan. The plan is backed by real money. The Victorian Government has invested **over \$538 million** in waste and recycling changes, including **\$380 million** to deliver its **circular economy** policy, "Recycling Victoria: a new economy". A circular economy is a system in which materials are used again and again — bottles into bottles, food scraps into compost — instead of being thrown out after one use.



Source: Sustainability Victoria, 'Small Acts, Big Impact' (page retrieved 25 August 2026).

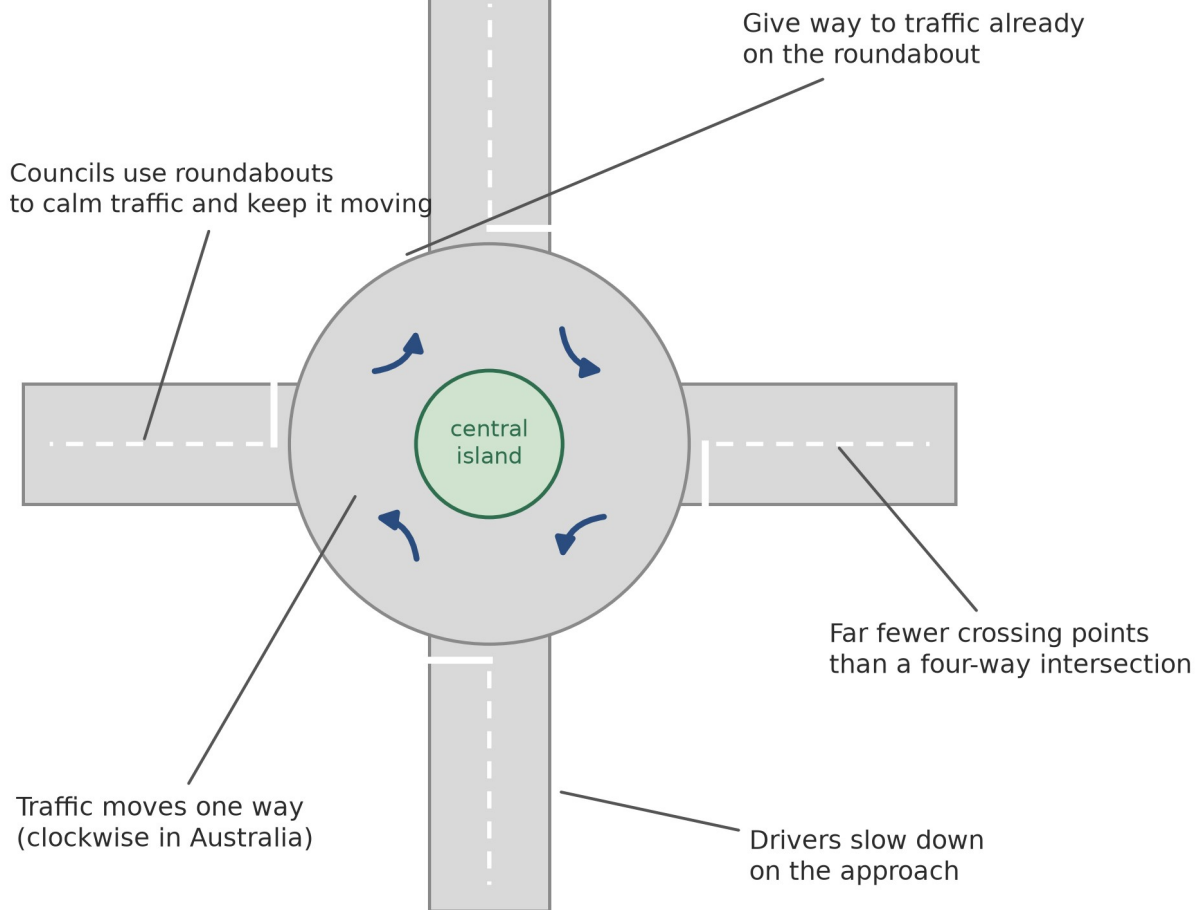
Bar chart with two bars: total Victorian Government investment in waste and recycling changes, over 538 million dollars, and the part of that investment going to the circular economy policy, 380 million dollars

Source: Sustainability Victoria, 'Small Acts, Big Impact', retrieved 25 August 2026.

One safety rule sits inside the plan: **batteries and electronics must not go in any household bin**, because they can start fires in collection trucks and at recycling sites. They have their own collection points. A response is often like this — a main plan plus rules that protect the people who run it.

Step 4 — A plan for traffic flow. .E01 also names traffic-flow plans. One response councils use at the local scale is the **roundabout**, which replaces a four-way crossing of two streets.

A roundabout: one traffic-flow response at the local scale



Plan view of a single-lane roundabout with a central island and four approach streets, showing traffic circulating one way clockwise as it does in Australia, give-way lines on the entering half of each approach, and labels: give way to traffic already on the roundabout, drivers slow down on the approach, far fewer crossing points than a four-way intersection, and councils use roundabouts to calm traffic and keep it moving

Original diagram drawn for this section; the give-way rule shown is the Australian rule for roundabouts.

Read the figure like a geographer. Drivers must slow on the approach and **give way** to traffic already on the roundabout, so speeds stay low. People walking cross one stream of slow traffic at a time instead of a wide open crossing. Where a four-way crossing has many conflict points where vehicles can collide, a roundabout has far fewer. Calmer, slower traffic outside homes and schools is a direct gain in liveability.

The Victorian Government backs council traffic responses through the two programs named in Section 4 — the Safe Pedestrian Program and the Safe Local Roads and Streets Program — which fund safer crossings and calmer local streets.

Step 5 — Who the responses help. The recycling plan helps households sort waste easily, and protects collection workers from bin fires. The traffic responses help everyone who crosses a local street — and some groups gain most: children crossing to school, older people who walk more slowly, and people with particular needs who use wheelchairs or walkers and need time and space to cross.

Geographer's conclusion: a local government plan names the issue, the action, the money and who does what — and each of those parts can be checked against a source. That is what turns “the council is doing something” into a response we can study and judge with evidence.

5. Why different groups need different things

Section 2A ended with a caution: a place’s averages can look good while some residents still do not thrive there, because their needs are not reflected in the averages. That is why .E02 says a proposal must weigh what **diverse groups in the community** need, naming three: **young people, elderly people, and people with particular needs**. The same local place can serve those groups in very different ways.

	Getting there	Using the space	Feeling comfortable	Being safe
Young people	A safe way to cross busy roads	Play equipment and open grass	Somewhere to meet friends	Lighting and clear sight lines
Older people	Seats to rest along the way	Shade, toilets and smooth, level paths	Signs that are easy to read	Rails to hold and paths that do not slip
People with particular needs	Ramps instead of steps	Wide paths for wheelchairs and walkers	Quieter areas away from noise	Equipment everyone can use

These are example needs only — your job is to find out what the groups in your place actually need.

Table diagram with three rows, young people, older people and people with particular needs, and four columns, getting there, using the space, feeling comfortable and being safe, with example need cards in each cell, such as seats to rest along the way for older people and ramps instead of steps for people with particular needs, and a footer saying these are example needs only and your job is to find out what the groups in your place actually need

The needs shown are original teaching examples for a model park upgrade, invented to show the kind of thinking a proposal needs.

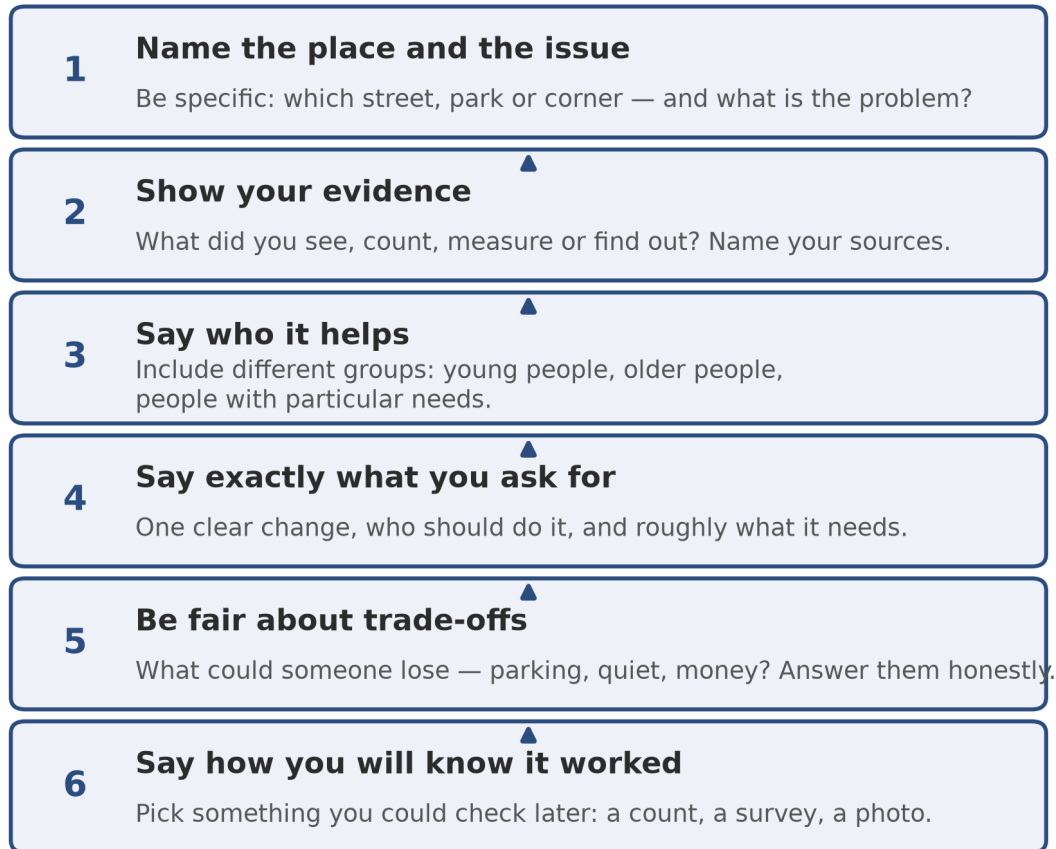
Read one row to see the method. For older people, “getting there” may mean seats to rest along the way; “using the space” may mean shade, toilets and smooth, level paths. For people with particular needs, the same park may call for ramps instead of steps and wide paths for wheelchairs and walkers. The park is one place; the needs are three different lists. A response that only hears one list will serve one group.

That is also why evidence matters. You might assume your suburb is “full of young families”, but the census may show something else — and the mix of groups decides which needs a proposal should weigh most heavily. Worked demonstration 2 shows exactly that, with real census numbers.

Worked demonstration 2 — A model proposal: a park upgrade in the City of Yarra

Now the .E02 task, worked as a model. The place is a local park in the **City of Yarra**, an inner-Melbourne council area. The census numbers are real; the park, the observations and the count are **model data**, invented to show the kind of evidence you could collect in your own place. We follow the six-step scaffold in the figure, the same one you will use in the extended response.

A scaffold for your liveability proposal



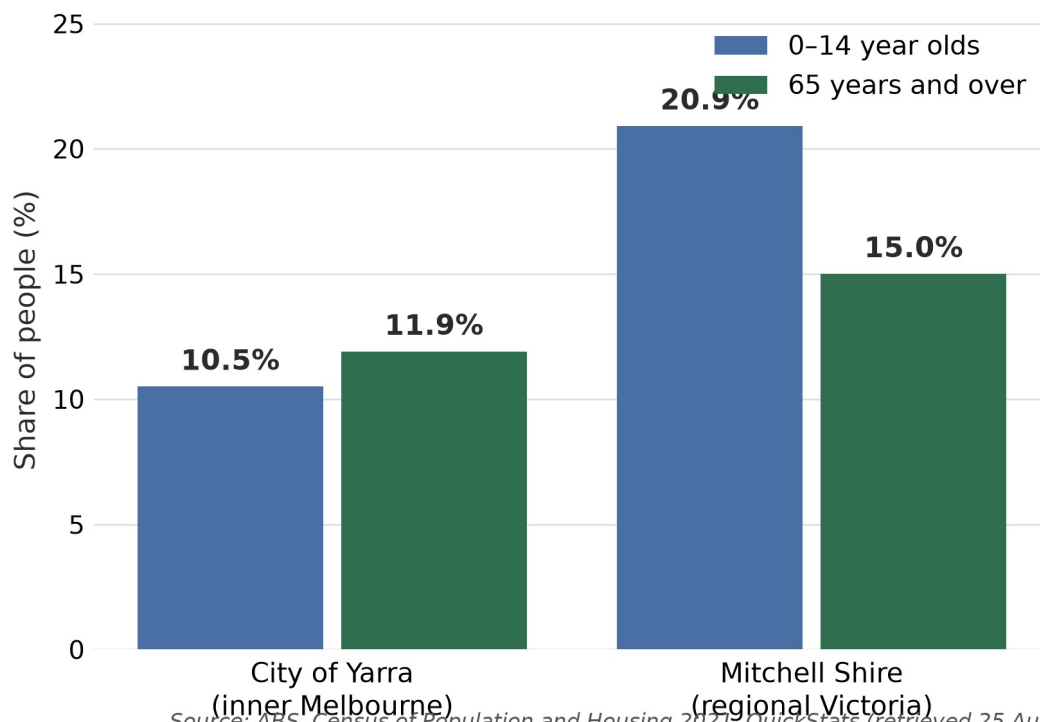
Scaffold diagram with six numbered steps stacked top to bottom: 1 name the place and the issue, be specific about which street park or corner and what the problem is; 2 show your evidence, what you saw counted measured or found out, naming your sources; 3 say who it helps, including different groups such as young people older people and people with particular needs; 4 say exactly what you ask for, one clear change, who should do it and roughly what it needs; 5 be fair about trade-offs, what could someone lose and answer them honestly; 6 say how you will know it worked, pick something you could check later such as a count a survey or a photo

Original diagram drawn for this section.

Step 1 — Name the place and the issue. A local park in the City of Yarra. On hot days much of it has no shade, and the path loop is cracked and hard to use with a wheelchair, a walker or a pram. (Model observation.)

Step 2 — Show your evidence. First, real census evidence about *who* lives here.

Age groups in two Victorian council areas, 2021 Census



Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing 2021, QuickStats (retrieved 25 August 2026).

Grouped bar chart comparing age shares from the 2021 Census: City of Yarra, 10.5 per cent aged 0 to 14 and 11.9 per cent aged 65 and over; Mitchell Shire, 20.9 per cent aged 0 to 14 and 15.0 per cent aged 65 and over

Source: ABS 2021 Census of Population and Housing, QuickStats for the City of Yarra and the Mitchell Shire, retrieved 25 August 2026.

Read the chart. In the City of Yarra, only **10.5%** of residents are aged 0–14, while **11.9%** are 65 or over — more older residents than children. Compare the **Mitchell Shire**, a growth area north of Melbourne, where **20.9%** are 0–14. The two places would weigh the same park upgrade in different ways: Yarra’s mix gives extra weight to shade, seats and smooth paths, while still keeping play space for the one-in-ten residents who are children. The census also recorded that **8,464** Yarra residents aged 15 and over — **10.5%** — provide unpaid assistance to someone with a long-term illness or disability, or who is older: direct evidence that many households here live with particular needs.

Second, a simple count (model data): on a Saturday morning we counted **42** people in the park — 11 older adults using the two benches, 6 children at the play equipment, and the rest walking through without stopping. The benches and the play equipment are the parts that make people stay.

The park and the count are model data, invented for class discussion. The census numbers are real.

Step 3 — Say who it helps. Using the needs table from Section 5: young people gain safe, shaded play space and a safe way to cross the nearby street; older people gain seats, shade and a smooth loop to walk; people with particular needs gain ramps, wide level paths and rails to hold. One change, three groups considered.

Step 4 — Say exactly what we ask for. We ask the City of Yarra to renew the 400-metre path loop smooth and level, add four benches and two shade sails over the seating and play edges, and leave the open grass as it is. One clear change, named place, named council.

Step 5 — Be fair about trade-offs. Council money is limited, so spending here may mean waiting somewhere else — we answer: renew the path first and stage the rest. Two garden beds make way for the wider path — we answer: replant them at the other entrance. Works bring noise and a closed path for some weeks — we answer: keep one clear route through the park the whole time. And the strongest argument against us: *“The park is fine as it is; the money should fix ordinary footpaths outside the park first.”* That is a fair point — so our answer is that the park loop is part of the same walking network as those footpaths, and renewing it fixes both at once. Answering critics honestly is part of a proposal, not a weakness in it.

Step 6 — Say how we will know it worked. Repeat the same count at the same time next year, and ask ten park users the same three questions about shade, paths and seats (the survey and count methods are taught in Section 5B). If more older people and more children stay, rather than walk through, the response is working.

Geographer’s conclusion: a strong proposal is specific, evidence-based, considers the named groups, and answers its critics honestly. Real census numbers told us *who* the park serves; a simple count told us *how* it is used; the scaffold turned both into one clear ask. That is the task you now do for your own place.

Practice — scaffolded

Q1. Define **response** as it is used in this section.

Q2. Use the three-columns figure from Section 2. Put each of these responses into one or more families (environmental, economic, social), with a reason for each choice: (a) a new recycling drop-off point; (b) a weekend community market; (c) brighter lighting along a lane.

Q3. Match each action to the step of the response cycle it belongs to: (a) asking twenty residents what they think of the park; (b) counting cars at a crossing at 3 pm; (c) the council building a new shade sail; (d) repeating the count a year later; (e) a resident noticing the bins overflow every week; (f) writing down exactly what should change and who should do it.

Q4. Use the who-does-what figure. (a) Which level of government runs your household bin and recycling collection? (b) Which level funds the Safe Pedestrian Program? (c) Name one thing your own household does that helps the liveability of your street.

Q5. Use worked demonstration 1. (a) Name the four household waste streams. (b) Why must batteries and electronics not go in any household bin? (c) Which stream takes bottles and jars, and what do they become?

Q6. Use the census age chart. (a) Which of the two areas has the larger share of children? (b) What share of City of Yarra residents are aged 65 and over? (c) For each area, name one park feature it might need more of, with a reason linked to its age mix.

Q7. Use the group-needs table. Choose one group and name two needs from its row. For each, describe one change to a local park that would meet it.

Q8. Use the roundabout figure. Give two reasons a roundabout is a liveability response for people who live near the crossing, and name the rule a driver follows when entering.

Practice — unscaffolded

Q9. Compare worked demonstration 1 and worked demonstration 2. How is the scale of the two responses different, and what is similar about the steps each one follows?

Q10. Choose one response from the three-columns figure in Section 2. Explain which of the three groups named in .E02 it helps most — and one way it could disadvantage someone else.

Q11. “A response that helps one group always helps everyone.” Do you agree? Argue your view using two groups and one named example from this section.

Q12. In your own local area, name one response already in place that enhances liveability and one issue that no response has yet addressed. Give one piece of evidence (something you observed, counted or looked up) for each.

Extended response

Q13. *Develop your own proposal to improve one aspect of the liveability of your local area.*

Follow the six-step scaffold from worked demonstration 2. Your proposal must:

- name a specific place and issue in your own suburb or town — a street, park, crossing or corner;
- include at least **one piece of evidence you collect yourself** (a count, a photo record, or observations made on a visit) and **at least one sourced fact** (for example, a census figure for your local government area or your council's own service guide) — name each source and the date you retrieved it;
- take into account the needs of **young people, elderly people and people with particular needs**, using the group-needs table to organise your thinking;
- steelman the other side — give the strongest argument someone who disagrees with your proposal could make (about money, space, quiet, parking or anything else), and answer it honestly;
- say how you would check, later, whether the response worked.

Write about 300 words, or present the same content as a poster or slides. Simple counts, photos and observations are enough here — full fieldwork methods are taught in Section 5B, and ways to report your findings in Section 6C.

Teaching notes (for the teacher)

This section delivers VC2HG8K11 and draws on elaborations .E01 (whole, in worked demonstration 1: a local government recycling plan plus the traffic-flow example the elaboration itself names) and .E02 (trimmed, in worked demonstration 2 and Q13). Per §2A of this build's TOC and the series content policy, .E02 is quoted with “and Traditional Owners” cut from the diverse-groups list; the retained groups are young people, elderly people and people with particular needs. Nothing in this section teaches, illustrates or assumes the excluded material: no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content appears, and no task assumes prior learning about it (Rule 1; §4).

Per §4, two Level 6 ideas are assumed and used without re-definition: the management-and-response framing (VC2HG6K01) and the local scale (VC2HG6K03). The working definition of liveability and the three families of measures are recapped from Section 2A, not re-taught. This section is the sub-strand's designated local liveability investigation, but the *methods* of fieldwork (survey design, count technique) belong to Section 5B (VC2HG8S02) and reporting to Section 6C; accordingly, 2F's tasks require only simple observations, counts and photos that need no taught method, and the forward-pointers to 5B/6C are kept light. Section 2E's closing task feeds into this section's proposal.

Suggested sequence: 1 (response, assumed frames) → 2 (examples by family) → 3 (the cycle) → 4 (who responds) → worked demonstration 1 (recycling plan, then traffic flow) → 5 (diverse groups) → worked demonstration 2 (model proposal) → practice → Q13 as the section's assessment task. Q13 works as a draft in class and a final version after 5B if the program prefers, since 2E also ends by feeding into it.

Data sources, all retrieved 25 August 2026 unless stated: Sustainability Victoria, ‘Household education for 4-stream recycling’ (page updated 18 February 2025; four streams; Merri-bek City Council glass collection from July 2023 with a \$102,000 grant); Sustainability Victoria, ‘Small Acts, Big Impact’ (over \$538 million invested in waste and recycling changes including \$380 million for the circular economy policy “Recycling Victoria: a new economy”; ~\$2,200 of food thrown out per household per year; batteries/electronics bin-fire risk); Sustainability Victoria, ‘Council waste and recycling services’ (page updated 2 June 2025; 79 council areas; recycling rules vary by council); Victorian Government, Department of Transport and Planning (vic.gov.au; Safe Pedestrian Program; Safe Local Roads and Streets Program; page updated 10 November 2025); ABS 2021 Census of Population and Housing, QuickStats, City of Yarra (LGA27350: 10.5% aged 0–14; 11.9% aged 65+; 8,464 residents aged 15+ providing unpaid assistance) and Mitchell Shire (LGA24850: 20.9% aged 0–14; 15.0% aged 65+). Note: Sustainability Victoria closed on 30 June 2026; its pages were retrieved for this section on 25 August 2026 and are cited as retrieved. All figures are original diagrams drawn for this section from these sources or from clearly-labelled model data; no commercial publisher's material is reproduced or named.

The contested-terms rule is applied to *response* (used, not re-defined, per §4), to *liveability* (working definition recapped from 2A) and to proposals generally: Q13 and worked demonstration 2 step 5 both require a steelman of the opposing view. Vocabulary sits at or below the Year 7 ceiling except curriculum vocabulary (the terms *elderly people* and *people with particular needs*) and subject terms defined at first use.

Glossary

Response — an action taken to deal with an issue, or to make something good even better; in this section, actions that enhance the liveability of places. **Local scale** — the scale of everyday life: your street, suburb or town, and your local government area. **Council** — the level of government closest to where you live; in Victoria, one council serves each of the 79 council areas, running local services such as bins, footpaths, parks and local roads. **Community** — the people who live in, and feel part of, a place. **Proposal** — a written plan that asks for one specific change, backed by evidence and reasons. **Evidence** — information that can be checked: counts, measurements, photos, records and sourced facts. **Trade-off** — what someone gives up or loses when a choice is made; a good proposal names its trade-offs and answers them honestly. **Diverse** — made up of different kinds of people, with different needs. **Give way rule** — the rule that a driver entering a roundabout must give way to vehicles already on it. **Circular economy** — a system in which materials are used again and again (bottles into bottles, food scraps into compost) instead of being thrown out after one use. **Waste stream** — one separated flow of waste, such as glass recycling or general rubbish, with its own bin and its own destination.