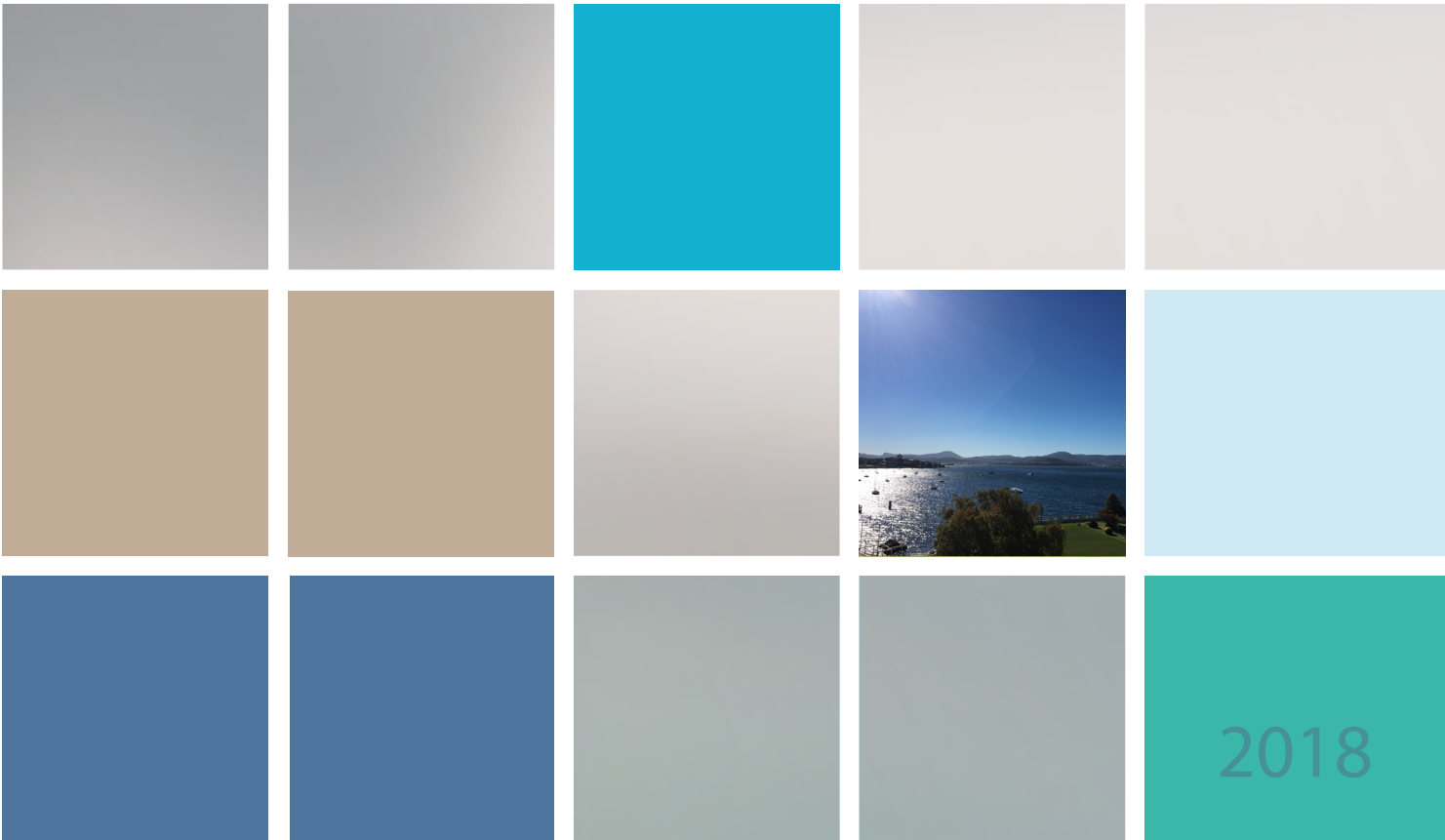


Walkability Factsheet Summary:

Assessing Walkability in Brighton, Clarence
and Launceston for the Local Government
Association of Tasmania

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Introduction to the *Healthy Liveable Cities Group* at RMIT University

The *Healthy Liveable Cities Group* is located within the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT University¹. The research program is led by Professor Billie Giles-Corti, with Co-Directors Dr Melanie Davern, Associate Professor Hannah Badland and Dr Jonathan Arundel bringing together a multidisciplinary research team investigating the influence of urban design and planning on community health and wellbeing. The team's policy focussed research is developed in partnership with stakeholders across industry, state government and local government to inform best practice policy and planning through the creation of liveability indicators. Team expertise has been developed from multiple disciplines, including epidemiology, psychology, spatial analysis, urban planning, computer science, policy analysis and economic evaluation with a strong focus on the application of policy focussed research translation and engagement.

Background Understanding of Liveability

Liveability is becoming an increasingly popular construct and well known to a range of different stakeholders within government, planning, property, health and the general community. In 2012, the *Healthy Liveable Cities Group* at RMIT University completed a thorough review of both academic and grey literature on the topic of liveability (Badland et al, 2014). This led to an international review of liveability indicators and development of a new definition of a liveable community as:

safe, attractive, socially inclusive and cohesive, environmentally sustainable with affordable and diverse housing, linked by convenient public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to employment, education, local shops and community services, leisure and cultural opportunities and public open space (Lowe et al., 2013).

Liveability is an easily understood interpretation of the social determinants of health which are elegantly described in the Dahlgren and Whitehead's (1991) rainbow model of health provided in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Dahlgren and Whitehead's (1991) Rainbow Model of the social determinants of health

¹ <http://cur.org.au/research-programs/healthy-liveable-cities-group/>

The upstream determinants or conditions that surround people are influential on long term health outcomes and these conditions are easily assessed and interpreted using small area liveability indicators. The Walkability for Transport Index provides a useful measure to assess how the built environment supports sustainability and active transport consistent with the definitions of liveability and the social determinants of health. Furthermore, walkability for transport has been validated internationally and in Australia with improved health outcomes (Frank et al., 2005; Müller-Riemenschneider et al., 2013; Saelens et al., 2003) and applicable across life stages and age groups (Villanueva et al., 2014). The Index is a useful indicator for identifying areas requiring future intervention to encourage active transport, provides a practical evidence-based tool for policy and planning review and results should be used in accordance with best practice principles of indicator applications (Davern et al., 2017).

Objectives of the Walkability Project led by the Local Government Association of Tasmania in partnership with the Department of Health Tasmania

The *Liveability Assessment for Walkability* Project was led by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) and funded under the Liveable Communities Grants Program 2017-18, Department of Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania, within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. RMIT University partnered with the lead agency to provide walkability assessments of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Launceston and Brighton at the neighbourhood level. The LGA of Clarence was also included later in the project through in-kind contribution from RMIT University.

The main objectives for RMIT University were:

1. To complete neighbourhood level Walkability Assessments for the LGAs of Launceston and Brighton, and Clarence ;
2. Provide Walkability Assessment maps to LGAT for these identified areas.

Calculating Walkability

Neighbourhood level analyses were completed based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) geography of Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) in accordance with ABS meshblock assessments. These meshblocks had to include at least 1 or more dwellings and be defined as an “urban” or “other urban” area according to the ABS Section of State classification. ABS SA1 Australian Statistical Geography Standards (Edition 2016) Digital Boundaries were used to model area boundaries. These SA1 neighbourhood level boundaries typically include between 200-800 people with an average of approximately 400 people.

An area that is walkable for transport is one that consists of three key factors: Land Use Mix and services of daily living (*something to walk too*); Road Connectivity (*a way to get there*); and Housing Density (*housing and population density needed to supply services and different land uses*) (Giles-Corti et al., 2014). Areas that are walkable influence how people move around their neighbourhoods to undertake daily activities which reinforces the importance of services of daily living that include access to supermarkets, convenience stores, petrol stations, newsagents and public transport stops in community design.

In the assessments of walkability provided for the 3 Tasmanian LGAs, walkability was calculated using the following key criteria:

- I. **dwelling density** within a walkable distance from each residential address (within 1600 m along the street network);
- II. **street connectivity** measured as the number of intersections of three or more streets per square kilometre; and
- III. **access to daily-living destinations** that include a convenience store (including petrol stations and newsagents), a public transport stop, and a supermarket.

In previous research the *Healthy Liveable Cities Group* used Land Use Mix as a key factor in calculating walkability but this has now been refined (through empirical testing) to include services of daily living. One of the driving factors behind this decision was the established importance of local destinations and difficulty in sourcing reliable mixed-use land use variables in national applications.

Interpreting Walkability Results

Walkability for Transport Index results are provided for each LGA according to decile rankings for areas ranging from lowest walkability to highest walkability.

Between LGA comparisons are not appropriate because ranking are calculated as decile rankings within each separate LGA. Detailed Walkability assessments have also been calculated for the Australian capital cities of Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane and Sydney in the *Creating Liveable Cities in Australia* report (Arundel, et al. 2017) and provide useful context for these results.

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