



# **NATIONAL CITIES PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK**

**FEEDBACK ON THE INTERIM REPORT**

**AUGUST 2017**

# National Cities Performance Framework

Feedback on the Interim Report

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## ABOUT US



Consult Australia is the industry association representing consulting firms operating in the built and natural environment sectors. These services include design, engineering, architecture, technology, survey, legal and management solutions for individual consumers through to major companies in the private and public sector including local, state and federal governments. We represent an industry comprising some 48,000 firms across Australia, ranging from sole practitioners through to some of Australia’s top 500 firms with combined revenue exceeding \$40 billion a year.

Some of our member firms include:



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### INTRODUCTION

Megan Motto, Chief Executive of Consult Australia, is a member of the Cities Reference Group, and has been an active participant the Group's consideration of the Framework. Consult Australia welcomes the opportunity to review and comment on the Interim Report now that it has been published.

Consult Australia supports a data-driven approach to monitoring the performance of Australia's cities. We believe that such an approach is critical to breaking down siloes providing a holistic and much-needed planning approach to our cities.

City-by-city comparisons will enliven competition, as all seek to attract the best and brightest. Improvements in how data is visualised will increase accountability of decision-makers and engagement with citizens and communities.

We support the six Policy Priorities, and believe that these are the right policy levers to achieving best practice for city development.

Consult Australia does have feedback on the indicators themselves and on the future direction of the Framework, which we would like to see reflected in the final Framework. In drafting this, we have addressed the areas that have been raised on the survey instrument.

### INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT

We agree with the approach taken that the list of indicators reflect the Smart Cities Policy Priorities, and are kept to a small set of accessible, well measured, and well-accepted indicators that go to the core of city performance.

We endorse the decision to keep the Performance Framework as streamlined as possible to avoid a Framework that becomes complex, difficult to measure, and yields little in the way of meaningful comparison data.

We note however, that the Interim Report states,

“Each City Deal is likely to have its own tailored City Deal indicators. These indicators will reflect the individual circumstances of each city and may cover issues not explicitly addressed by the Performance Framework. For example, in negotiating the Townsville City Deal, governments agreed to monitor indicators of overnight visitors and tourism expenditure.”

We are concerned that the introduction of tailored indicators for City Deals could lead to 'indicator creep'. We caution against allowing tailoring because not only will it weaken the ability to compare data, but it also allows cherry-picking of data and results. Without clear guidelines on how these tailored indicators are to be used and interpreted it will undermine the Framework's streamlined approach.

#### Recommendation for indicator development

It is Consult Australia's preferred outcome that City Deals do not include tailored indicators. However, if City Deals are to include tailored indicators there must be additional guidelines on how these relate to the core indicators, and how they are to be interpreted and measured.

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## PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SELECTION

Given the broad range of interests and concerns regarding city growth and development, the number of indicators could be substantial.

We agree that the Civitas criteria should be used to determine whether an indicator is to be included in the Framework. This adds an important level of rigour to the process.

We do believe that there are some gaps in the performance indicators, which relate to the Policy Priorities, particularly the Liveability and Sustainability Indicators. We have set these out below together with our recommendations on how to fill those gaps.

### Liveability and Sustainability Indicators

#### Education

We believe that access to educational facilities should be included as an indicator. Population growth in cities increases demand on school places, as parents struggle to enrol their child into their local school. Increased commute times to schools, and to universities and TAFEs, decreases liveability.

For example, the NSW Government announced that it will spend \$4.2 billion over the next four years building new primary and secondary schools across the state, in order to meet the growing demand<sup>1</sup>.

Access to good educational facilities can have a significant impact on the status and productivity of a city, making it a city of choice not just for Australians, but also for international students.

Planning for new educational facilities to meet demand also impacts infrastructure development. As the population grows we need to ensure that the population has access to the education services they need, which will then not only have a positive impact on liveability, but flow through to the Jobs and Skills Indicators.

The root cause of some sub-optimal indicator results from the Jobs and Skills Indicators could stem from poor access to educational facilities, but unless there is a measure it will be harder to draw conclusions, and remedy the problem.

We believe that education catchment, number of student places, and forecast demand, is data collected by governments across Australia.

### Recommendation re Access to Education Indicator

Consult Australia recommends that, "Access to Educational Facilities" be added to the Liveability and Sustainability Indicators. It could also (as an alternative) come under the Infrastructure and Investment Indicators.

#### Description

The capacity of existing educational facilities (school/higher education/vocational education and training), measured against the number of existing and predicated numbers of students within the catchment areas of those facilities. The commuter distance between students and educational facilities also to be measured.

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<sup>1</sup> [NSW Government spending announcement 20 June 2017](#)

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### Rationale

The inclusion of this indicator will help users to understand liveability in cities. Access to educational facilities within a reasonable distance, and to facilities with appropriate levels of capacity, are critical to quality of life and productivity.

### Health care

In the same regard access to health care also impacts liveability. If the access to general practitioner health care and hospital health care is not readily available to the community the liveability of an area will be adversely affected. As city population increases so too will the demand for health care, particularly as Australia's population ages, therefore access to age care facilities is also a factor in measuring liveability.

For example, in January 2017 the Western Australia Medical Association issued a statement calling for action to be taken to address the shortage of public hospital beds<sup>2</sup>. The Association stated that,

*“The average available beds has fallen from 2.4 per 1000 people in 2010 to 2.2 in 2015 – a reduction of 8.3 per cent. This reflects a completely inadequate government response to a jump in population of 13.7 per cent over that period.”*

Access to health care facilities also crosses over with the Infrastructure and Investment Indicators. As city populations increase, so too does the demand on our health care infrastructure. The liveability of a city will decrease as waiting lists for doctor/hospital appointments increase. Demand for additional doctors' surgeries, hospitals, and age care facilities will increase, and must therefore be accounted for in any city planning strategy.

Poor access to health care also affects productivity and reliance on social care if people have to be off work for extended periods while waiting for treatment.

### Recommendation re Access to Health Care Indicator

Consult Australia recommends that, “Access to Health Care” be added to the Liveability and Sustainability Indicators. It could also (as an alternative) come under the Infrastructure and Investment Indicators.

### Description

The capacity of cities existing health care facilities, measured against the number of existing and predicted numbers of residents within the catchment areas of those facilities. The commuter distance between residents and health care facilities is also to be measured.

### Rationale

The inclusion of this indicator will help users to understand liveability in cities. Access to healthcare services within a reasonable distance, and to facilities with appropriate levels of capacity, is critical to quality of life and productivity.

### Climate change

Australia is a country that is significantly affected by severe climate events, including hurricanes, flooding, bush fires, and drought.

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<sup>2</sup> Australian Medical Association (WA) Release, [‘More public hospital beds crucial to meet spiralling demand’](#) January 2017

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Given the potential life changing nature of these events, it is a concern that there is no measure included in the Framework to consider how cities might adapt to such events. The inclusion of an indicator would cross over several areas of the Framework, including infrastructure planning, productivity, and the economy.

For example, the 2011 Queensland floods cost the Queensland economy \$5billion<sup>3</sup>, more than halving its economic growth rate and removing approximately 5% of coking-coal exports from the global market.

As cities expand it is essential to understand their vulnerability to climate events, and changes in climate, which ultimately impacts both their liveability and sustainability.

We believe the climate change mapping that has been conducted around Australia will provide adequate data for this measure.

## Recommendation re Climate Change Indicator

Consult Australia recommends that, “Climate Change” be added to the Liveability and Sustainability Indicators.

### Description

The vulnerability of cities to extreme climate events, and climate change to be measured, to include vulnerability to wind, flooding, drought, and fire.

### Rationale

The inclusion of this indicator will help users to understand liveability in cities. Ensuring that changing climate factors, and the vulnerability of populated areas to extreme climate events is considered, as the demand for land for infrastructure increases, is critical to quality of life and sustainability.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Consult Australia believes that an important next step will be to produce guidance on how to organise and interpret the data. There needs to be honest and frank dialogue regarding the data collected. As already mentioned, we are concerned about the risk of ‘indicator creep’, which will lead to different interpretations and ‘cherry picking’ of results.

We would like to see guidance that assists governments, business, and the public to interpret the data. This is essential so that there is:

- Consistency for year on year comparisons;
- Clarity of data, from which governments (in partnership with industry and the community) can develop city plans and strategies;
- Robustness of data, so that governments (in partnership with industry and the community) can make informed decisions in the development of city plans and strategies;

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<sup>3</sup> Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, Interim Report August 2011

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- Trust in the data, which is critical to the success of the Framework;
- No loss of impetus through inconsistent interpretation of the data.

### Recommendation for future directions for the performance framework

We recommend that guidelines are produced to assist in the interpretation of the data, based on the Policy Priorities and the Indicator descriptors. The guidelines should be developed in consultation with the Cities Reference Group.

## CONTACT

We would be happy to discuss the recommendations in this submission. Please contact Megan Motto, Chief Executive at [megan@consultaustalia.com.au](mailto:megan@consultaustalia.com.au) or call 02 8252 6700.