

Chapter 2

Our cities in transition

Our cities are complex systems of interacting economic, social and environmental forces that constantly evolve.

Today's cities are strong and growing. Their future is still influenced in a sometimes subtle but constant way by factors that trace back to that first fledgling colony in Sydney, a few tents clustered around a flagpole, precariously perched on a small cove, in a land that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have belonged to for millennia.

2.1 Historical dominance of cities in Australia

The dominance of the city is not a new phenomenon in Australia's history. More than 100 years ago, Adna F Weber in his work, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, noted that

The most remarkable concentration, or rather centralisation, of population occurs in that newest product of civilisation, Australia, where nearly one third of the entire population is settled in and around capital cities.

Weber 1899—1963 reprint edition.

At that time Weber ranked Melbourne as the 22nd most populous city in the world, just 50 years after its establishment.

The early colonial settlements determined the location of our metropolitan areas. Then the trade and manufacturing expansion in the latter part of the nineteenth century consolidated the pattern of Australian urban settlement, and the rail networks centred on the capital cities reinforced their primacy within each state.

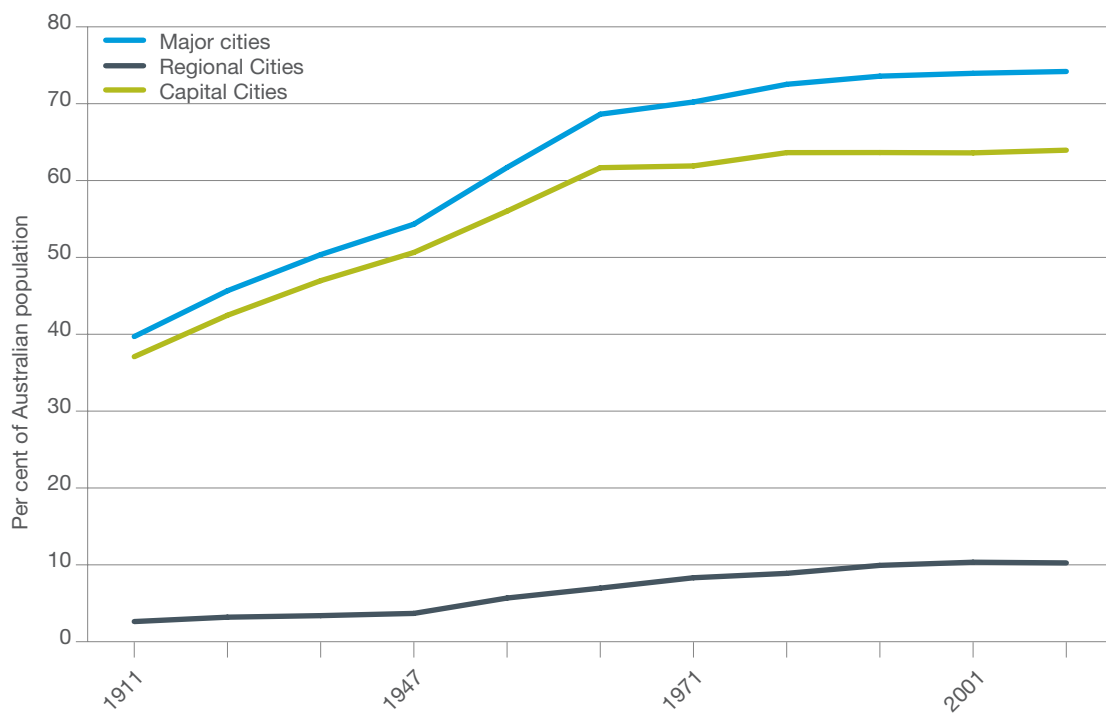
Despite different rates of progress, by 1911 almost half the populations of New South Wales and Victoria resided in Sydney and Melbourne, while Adelaide and Perth accounted for approximately 40% of their respective state populations. Today these capital cities, along with Brisbane, account for 60% of Australia's total population.

Figure 1 shows the growth in the percentage of the population residing in Australia's capital and regional cities over the last century. Figures 2 and 3 show how the different rates of growth are reflected in the changing proportion of the population residing in each capital city and the regional cities respectively.

Following the impetus for national reconstruction after the Second World War, manufacturing expanded dramatically, supported by a large-scale immigration program to supply the labour and build the infrastructure for industry. The combined population and economic growth generated major city expansion. The share of Australia's population in major cities increased from 54% in 1947 to 70% by 1971 (ABS 2008).

Since 1971, the rate of growth in the share of the Australian population in major cities has continued to increase but at a slower rate. However, regional cities have had a proportional increase in their share of the population during this period. Some cities, like the industrial cities of Newcastle, Wollongong and Geelong, reached their population share 'peak' in the 1970s, while others, especially the coastal Queensland cities like the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Cairns, continue to grow. The capital cities are all expected, by mid-century, to further increase their proportion of population within their respective States and Territories. The exception may be in Queensland where regional cities along the coast have experienced a recent surge in growth.

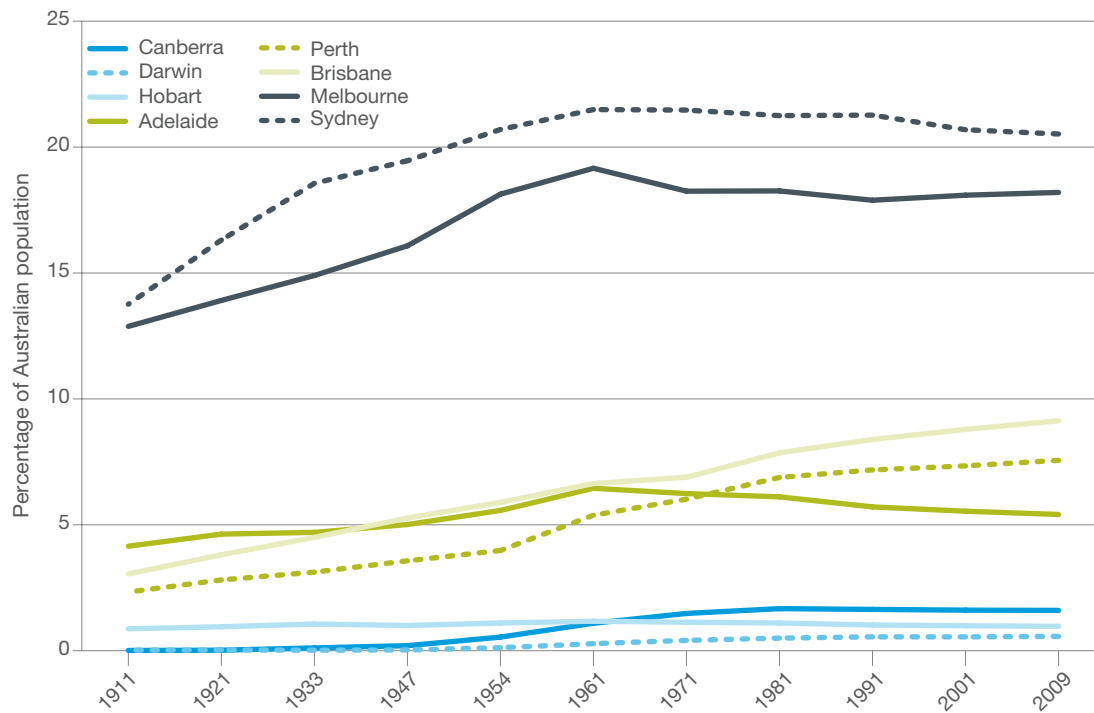
Figure 1 Percentage of population in major cities 1911–2009



NOTE Major cities refer to all cities with a population greater than 100 000 people.
Regional cities refer to non-capital cities with a population greater than 100 000

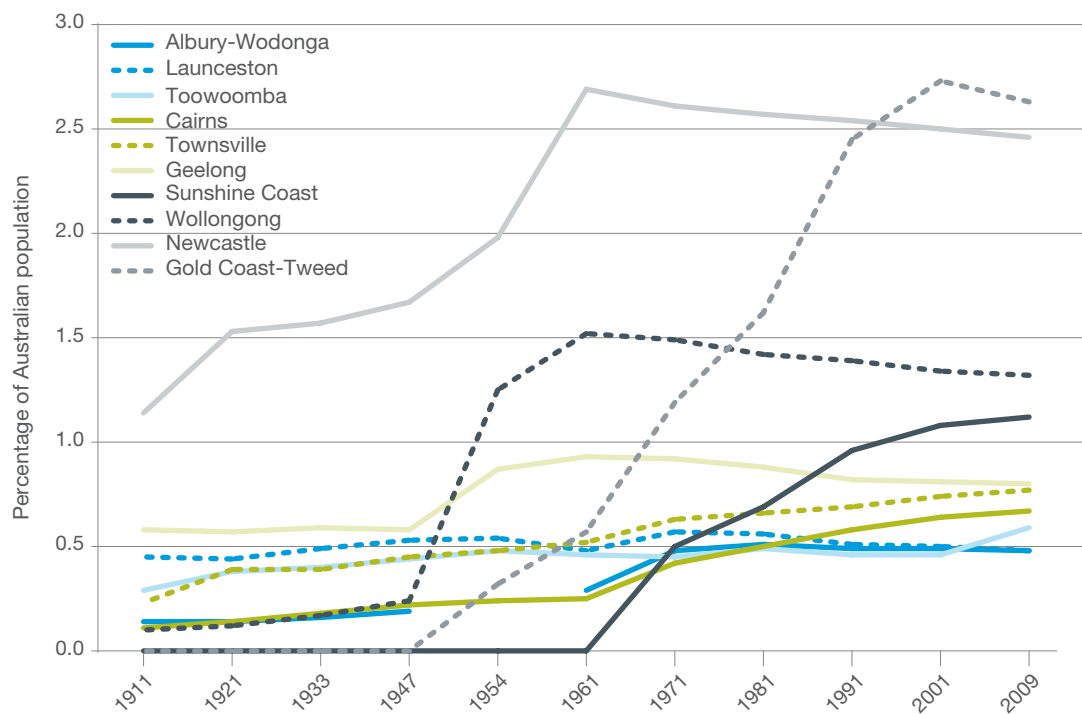
Source: ABS (2008); ABS (2010)

Figure 2 Share of Australia's population in capital cities, 1911–2009



Source: ABS (2008); ABS (2010)

Figure 3 Share of Australia's population in regional cities, 1911–2009



Source: ABS (2008); ABS (2010)

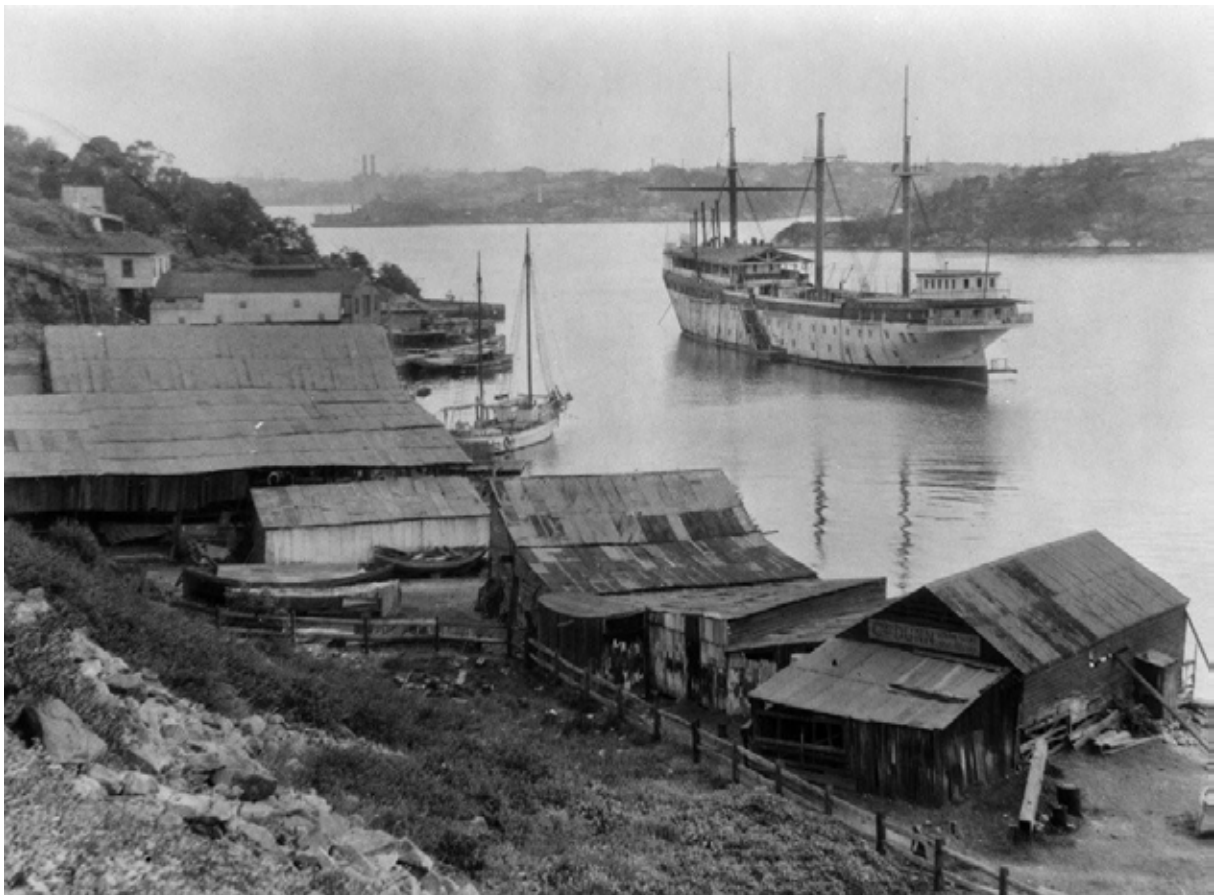
2.2 Transport infrastructure shaping our cities

The growth and change in our cities reflects their geography and resources; technology and innovation; and their social and political past. As our cities evolve, they continue to be shaped by the lasting heritage of buildings, infrastructure, transport networks and land-use patterns constructed decades earlier. The nature and distribution of transportation and housing are primary influences of urban structure (the shape and extent of the urban area) and urban form (the type and density of buildings).

In Australia, safe sea ports located on river mouths, which were critical for trade for the colonies on this isolated continent, were the logical location for establishing Australia's major cities.

The rivers of many cities, both coastal and inland, provided early transport arteries and influenced land-use and land-tenure patterns. The Swan River in Perth was a thriving transport corridor, with landholders needing to access a part of the foreshore in order to trade goods and services. This resulted in narrow blocks of land, each stretching to access the river system. In all the capital cities river geography also influenced the construction of railways and roads, which in turn guided the location of centres of commerce.

Freight and public transport infrastructure, in particular, was a strong force in shaping cities as development followed train and tram lines. This almost spider web-like infrastructure radiating out from the central business districts (CBDs) laid the foundations of the residential development up to the mid twentieth century. Until the 1950s, public transport was the main mode of travel in the capital cities (Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) 2009).



Shipping on Parramatta River, New South Wales, c. 1900

The advent of the motor car freed households from their dependence on fixed transport infrastructure and allowed homes to be built and jobs to be created further afield. What once were quite compact centres clinging to rail and tram networks have, since the 1950s, expanded over large land areas by world standards, as illustrated in Sydney's urban growth (depicted in Figures 4 and 5).

The rapid expansion of private motor vehicle ownership in Australia from the 1950s conferred a new level of personal freedom and independence on the majority of the population. Private motor vehicles became the dominant mode of transport in Australia and the basis for changed urban form, transport networks and provision of services across the nation's cities.

Another major component of city infrastructure is housing. The nature of housing and the design of neighbourhoods have changed over time reflecting, initially: our largely European heritage; changes in planning ideologies; building innovation; availability of resources for construction; networks and modes of transport; levels of affluence; and, more recently, changing demographics and the availability of land.

Figure 4 Sydney urban area and rail network, 1915–1945

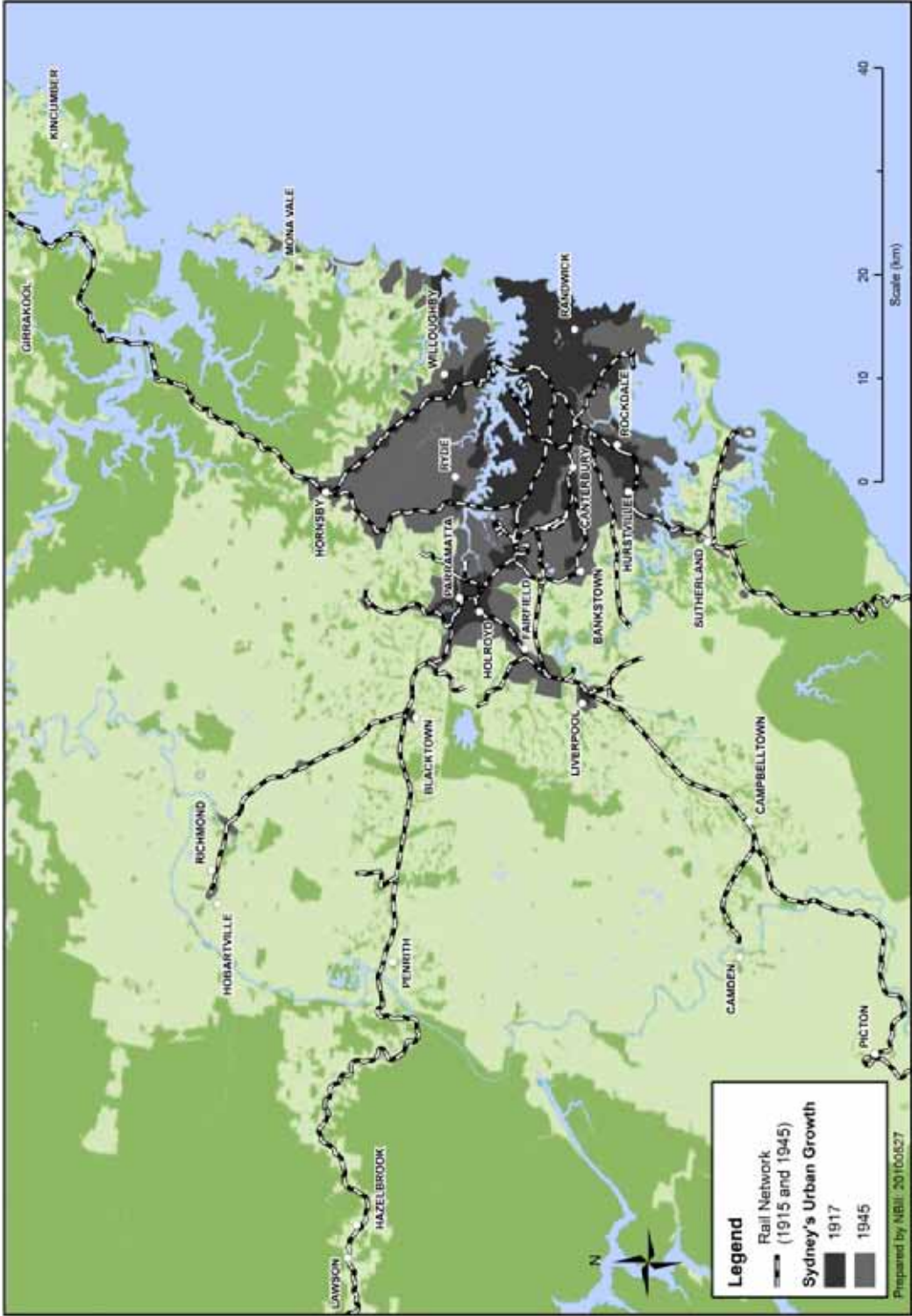
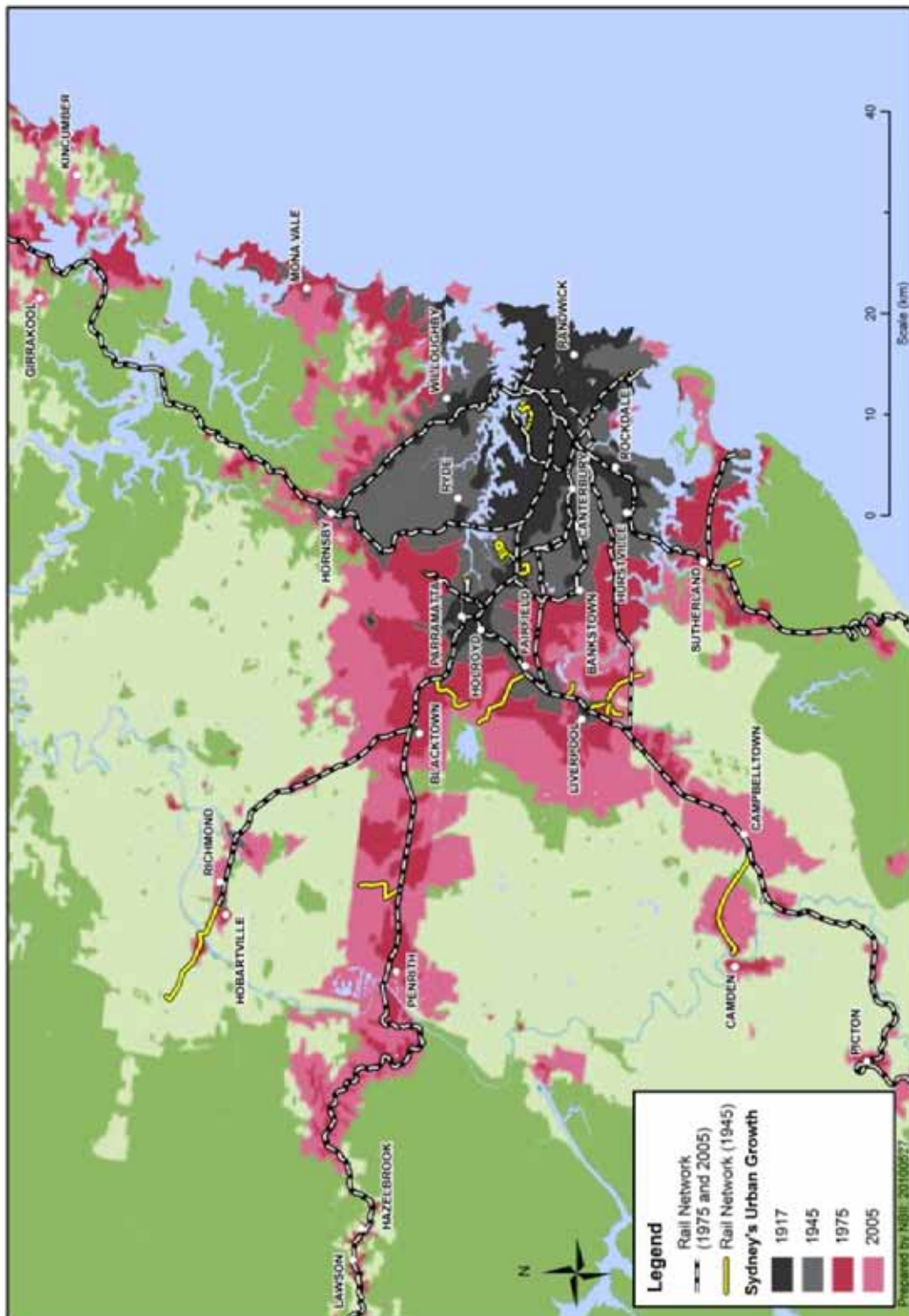


Figure 5 Sydney urban area and rail network to 2005



Source: Department of Infrastructure and Transport with data from New South Wales Department of Planning and Meyer (2010)



Colonel Light Gardens Tram 257, Adelaide, South Australia, c. 1950

2.3 The evolution of national urban policy

The growth of Australian cities has been accompanied by varying levels of involvement by successive Australian governments in the cities. Since Federation in 1901, the Australian Government has invested in the country's cities but the Australian Constitution leaves State and Territory Governments with the principal responsibility for managing them. The States and Territories confer some of this responsibility to Local Government authorities.

The Australian Government's interest and involvement in cities has been driven by the strong link between cities and the economy. The points of intervention in cities by the Australian Government have generally coincided with the points of transformation in the national economy. The major interventions are summarised in Table 1.

From the period of post-war reconstruction and the rise of the manufacturing sector, through the transformation from a manufacturing economy to a service-based economy, and from an inwardly domestic-oriented economy to an active participant in the global economy, these points of transformation have all been catalysts for Australian Government intervention.

Allied with economic transformation has been the need to renew infrastructure. If Australia is to remain economically competitive, and its population is to continue to reap the benefits of economic growth, the country must have the necessary policy environment and adequate infrastructure.

Table 1 Australian Government involvement in cities since World War Two—a select summary

1920s–30s	Investment in state and territory urban road systems by the Australian Government
1943	Creation of the Commonwealth Housing Commission
1945	Commonwealth – State Housing Agreements
1950s -	Australian Government pressure on states to sell public housing to sitting tenants
1945	Creation of the Commonwealth Department of Works and Housing
1960s -	Implementation of first home owners scheme
1954	Major commitment to building Canberra and establishment of the National Capital Development Commission (1958)
1970s -	Major commitment to building Darwin, reflecting Australian Government responsibility for territories, including the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory
1964	Creation of the Commonwealth Bureau of Roads to examine urban and rural roads needs
1972	Creation of the National Urban and Regional Development Authority, which became the Cities Commission
1972	Creation of the Department of Urban and Regional Development and allied initiatives, including the Area Improvement Program, the Australian Assistance Plan, the Sewerage Backlog Program, local traffic calming programs and the creation of land commissions
1972	Creation of the Department of Environment with urban responsibilities including the development of the Environmental Impact Statement
1973	Expansion of Australian Government assistance to local governments by way of the reconstituted Commonwealth Grants Commission
1975	Creation by the Australian Government of the Heritage Commission which had concern for built (that is, urban) as well as natural heritage
1975–83	Creation of the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development
1991–96	Creation of the Building Better Cities Program
1990	Development of the national Building Code of Australia
1995	Creation of National Competition Policy directions that have restructured urban service provision
1998	Creation of the Development Assessment Forum as part of the micro-economic reform agenda—emphasis on decision-making efficiency and harmonisation of development approval processes across the nation
2008	Formation of Infrastructure Australia, the Major Cities Unit, the Building Australia Fund and the Australian Council of Local Governments
2009	Establishment of the Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government
2009	Agreement by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to a national objective and criteria for the planning of Australia's cities

Source: Augmented from Brendan Gleeson (2006)

2.4 Changing demands on government

Local Government, the tier that most reflects the needs of local communities, is a good example of the changing demands on government over time. Various colonial governments established Local Governments during the nineteenth century to provide services such as road maintenance, drainage and sewage disposal. These services were funded by property rates. As cities grew, so did the number of Local Government areas that surrounded the city centres. The majority of cities retained this patchwork of Local Government jurisdictions into the late twentieth century. This changed gradually with amalgamations which were at times both opposed and supported by communities and political parties. The exception was Brisbane which, in 1925, merged 20 local councils into one large City of Brisbane.

Today there are 157 local government entities in Australia's now 18 major cities. The roles and expectations of Local Governments have substantially broadened over time, yet there remains concern that the prevalence of small Local Governments inhibits both the efficiency of local services delivery and the effectiveness of city-wide governance.

The coming together of communities to form larger and more effective entities, or the grouping of Local Government into regional coalitions, can be the foundation of planning strategies over wider city areas. Regional groupings can also produce economic benefits for constituent entities, through economies of scale, for purchasing and more effective use of capital equipment.

2.5 Settlement patterns of Australian cities

The settlement patterns within Australian cities, including the patterns unique to each city, have implications for how we address current issues and challenges. Government policies have helped to shape these patterns—directly and indirectly. Examining the history of the development of our cities reveals how dramatically they have changed and the effects of different government intervention.

2.5.1 Nineteenth century: City pattern foundations

Founded in 1788, Sydney and, later the same year, Parramatta, were the first locations in Australia to be settled by Europeans. Hobart was established in 1804. This was followed by Brisbane (1824), Perth (1829), Adelaide (1836), Melbourne (1837), Darwin (1869) and eventually Canberra (1901).

Aboriginal tracks, water courses and undulating coastal topography formed the basis of road layouts in Australia's early colonial settlements. The construction of municipal buildings, roads and bridges were constructed by convict labour.

Located as they were on hilly terrain Sydney, Hobart and Brisbane generally took on the layout of the local topography rather than the layout of strictly gridded streets. By contrast, Perth, Melbourne and Adelaide had streets that were, from the outset, planned with a more spacious and regular layout.

The establishment of tram and rail networks in the boom years of the 1870s and 1880s supported the growth of residential suburbs, which featured houses with gardens. These suburbs were served by transport lines radiating from the city centre. There was a dominant middle class with strong aspirations and means for home ownership. By the end of the nineteenth century approximately 50% of Australians were owner-occupiers compared with only 10% in the United Kingdom.

Each of Australia's cities grew in its own unique way. Melbourne and Perth, for example, enjoyed the Gold Rush booms of the 1860s and 1880s. Other cities benefited from agricultural, commercial and industrial expansion throughout the latter half of the century.

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the colonial capitals underwent a transition from being compact walking cities, where housing was clustered within walking distance of the commercial centres and port docks, to public transport cities.

In 1901, the Australian colonies were united into a single Federation. Before Federation each of the colonies was governed like a small country with its own government, railway gauges and even their own military. Governance was two tiered—an administration for the colony and an administration for the local, with the latter responsive to street-by-street or ward demands and biases and the will of a few individuals often paramount. Wider community considerations, much less than colony-wide considerations, were the exception rather than the rule. Effective planning was often a similar casualty.

Colonial politicians such as Alfred Deakin, Henry Parkes and Edmund Barton waged a long campaign to turn the six colonies of 3.7 million people into a country in its own right.

At the turn of the century Sydney and Melbourne each had a population of more than half a million, while Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth were each in excess of 100 000.

In spite of their individuality, the colonial capitals shared common characteristics, namely:

- high levels of urbanisation and metropolitan primacy
- residential suburbs
- high levels of home ownership
- transport-led development
- transport infrastructure directed to hinterland and export activity
- population growth primarily from immigration rather than natural increase.



Melbourne, Victoria, c. 1935

2.5.2 Early twentieth century (1901–1945): A burgeoning Federation

Federation created a national governance structure. In the early post-Federation years, however, the States gave little of themselves to the national government. While the First World War may have forged an Australian ethos, the leaders of the Australian States thought of their States first and the Federation second. Local Government was even more remote. Planning for the cities in a national context was never a consideration.

Post-war, the cities experienced the growth of manufacturing, which became an economic force during the 1920s. The need for domestic markets and labour supply reinforced both the primacy and growth of major cities like Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

The factors behind population growth in the cities altered with more than 40% resulting from natural increase. The biggest growth factor (53%) was, however, migration from rural areas caused by rationalisation of the agricultural sector.

The major technological advance in the cities was the expansion and electrification of public transport systems and the widespread provision of domestic electric power. Brisbane led the way as the second city in the world to install electric lights.

While the quality of life for residents changed, and improved, the transport city pattern of the nineteenth century remained with residential suburbs extending like the arms of a star-fish along the train and tram routes radiating from the city centre. This residential spread reinforced the division of the cities between established working class in the inner-city and the middle-class suburbs spreading outwards along transport routes.

The Great Depression of the early 1930s hit the traditional working class inner areas severely with widespread unemployment and reduced housing conditions. An outcome of the poor housing conditions of the inner suburbs was the establishment of housing commissions—Victoria in 1938, and New South Wales in 1942. These followed the South Australian Housing Trust, which was set up in 1936. Public housing created new suburbs on the urban edge.

The growth of manufacturing continued and was rapidly expanded during the Second World War leading to a major change in Australian employment patterns. In 1947, the Australian Census showed, for the first time, that more Australians worked in manufacturing than in primary production.

Governance also changed, but overarching national planning still did not replace State and Local planning. The war-time transfer of income taxing powers from the States to the Australian Government laid the basis for Federal – State financial relationships into the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. It also laid the foundation (though not immediately used) for Australian Government planning in the national good.

Local Government still reflected local issues and aspirations, although in Brisbane the larger city-wide Brisbane City Council was established through amalgamation. Queensland was alone in taking this step in 1925.

2.5.2.1 Early Australian Government involvement—linking the cities

In the country's early years, direct Australian Government intervention in the cities was generally limited to roads and inter-city transport. The emphasis was on cities as distribution centres for Australia's agricultural produce, both domestically and internationally, rather than on cities as centres of workforce and residence.

With the development of the manufacturing sector, particularly resource-processing, population centres grew steadily around urban manufacturing locations so that by the Second World War just over half of Australia's population was located in the current listing of most populous cities.

2.5.3 Mid twentieth century (1945–1971): Post-war reconstruction and economic boom

Following the Second World War, Australian cities underwent a period of dramatic change that resulted in extensive physical expansion. The physical expansion of the largest cities was associated primarily with the interrelated factors of rapid population growth, economic development, housing investment and the emergence of the car as the primary mode of transport.

Post-war immigration and the high birth rates that signified the 'baby boom' saw the population of Australia's five largest cities double in 24 years from 1947 to 1971 as they absorbed 89% of the country's population change over that time.

With stable economic conditions and high levels of employment, natural increase accounted for between one-third and one-half of total growth in capital city populations.



Migrants arriving in Australia, 1962

However, immigration was an equally significant component of population growth and vital to ensure there was an adequate labour supply to underpin economic growth. Net immigration comprised more than 55% of the growth in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, 48% in Perth and 33% in Brisbane and Hobart.

This level of migration, principally from war-torn European countries, dramatically altered the ethnic composition of the already diverse city populations. Net internal migration was much less than the pre-war period, except in Brisbane and Sydney.

The second major change in cities was the continued development of the manufacturing industry, supported by capital inflow from overseas and tariff protection. Expansion in the manufacturing sector was underpinned by the substantial immigration program. Almost three-quarters of the increase in the labour force in the 1950s were provided through immigration.

The automotive, iron and steel, as well as other electrical and chemical industries, spearheaded Australian manufacturing growth during the 1950s and 1960s. Productivity increases from economies of scale saw manufacturers increasingly locate expansion in major urban centres where the labour force lived.

The strongest beneficiaries were Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, which had the highest share of jobs in manufacturing. However, all of the largest centres benefitted from this economic transformation of the Australian economy. In 1971, manufacturing represented more than 30% of all jobs in Melbourne; about 30% in Sydney and Adelaide and around 20% in Brisbane and Perth.

2.5.3.1 Government investment in housing

The abundance of labour-intensive manufacturing jobs in the cities had the effect of concentrating and retaining population growth from migration in the cities.

The need for housing for growing populations was a primary concern for all governments at this time. Immediately following the war, there was considerable interest by the National Government in urban and regional development. The end of wartime austerity created new and growing demands by Australians.

The report of the Commonwealth Housing Commission, formed in 1943, included a number of statements on national regional and city planning. For the first time, the need for a national strategy was recognised.

We consider that national, regional and town planning is an urgent national need.
Commonwealth Housing Commission, 1943

The same report urged governments to decentralise industry and create ‘satellite towns’ because of the deteriorating living conditions in the major cities. It also gave rise to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement Act, 1945, which provided the States and Territories with low-cost housing programs to be financed by the National Government.

2.5.3.2 Urban expansion around car-based transport

The investment in housing to support population growth coincided with the other key factor in the city expansion in the post-war period: the advent of the car. Growth in ownership and use of private motor vehicles led to dramatic change in how urban transport systems were planned, funded and managed. Public transport cities became car-dependent cities, enabling residential development to spread further outwards creating new low-density suburbs.

The growth of car ownership in Australia was rapid—from 100 cars per 1 000 persons in 1945 to almost 500 cars per 1 000 persons in 1971. During this time, 78% of households in Sydney and Melbourne owned at least one car.



Cars sales, Brisbane, Queensland, c. 1960

The growth of the motor vehicle also marked the dilution of the star-shaped public transport city. Tram and train tracks radiating along residential corridors from a dominant city centre, were transformed and engulfed by the automobile. So too were the areas of previous inaccessible land between public transport routes. These were acquired and developed for housing to meet the needs of new migrant and baby boom households. Extended and wide planning, much less the provision of infrastructure, was not a recognisable aspect of these developments.

During the latter part of this period, the areas on the outskirts of the larger cities made accessible for development by the car, experienced rapid residential development, often in advance of necessary infrastructure. It also began the genesis of new forms of retailing as local, large shopping centres vied for customers with the established central city retailers. The suburban mall was born.

This structural shift, with important impacts on urbanisation patterns, was strongly influenced by federal economic policies, particularly import controls, tariff and immigration policies. The more direct involvement by the Australian Government in the cities was through home-ownership schemes, which supported the supply of the single detached dwelling as the predominant type of housing for Australian families for decades.

2.5.4 Late twentieth century (1971–1991): Economic restructuring and globalisation

By the 1970s, more than 60% of Australia's population lived in the capital cities, compared to 50% in 1947. However, growth also occurred in particular non-metropolitan areas such as Newcastle, Wollongong and Geelong taking the total share of the population in major cities to 70% by 1971.

The economic transformation resulted in a long boom in economic activity, which saw incomes rise steadily; unemployment levels remain low and economic growth remain at historically high levels. This economic security, combined with the growth in the use of the motor vehicle, had a profound impact on the nature of our cities.

Car ownership meant people felt less location-bound by existing public transport infrastructure, and, with incomes more secure, home-ownership 'dreams' became a reality. This resulted in a dramatic expansion of development in new areas of the major cities—the era of 'suburbanisation'.

The result was a more dispersed employment and residential pattern for the major cities, which became increasingly car-dependent.

Most cities had rudimentary plans to guide suburban and urban development but little in the way of strategic integrated planning of development and infrastructure requirements. Federal involvement was still limited to roads and home ownership incentive schemes.

However, the rapidity of suburban development resulted in a significant backlog of infrastructure. Many new suburbs did not have sewerage or basic amenity such as sealed roads or footpaths, so city issues came to the forefront of policy discussion, including at Federal level.

Particular attention was placed on sewerage—or the lack of it. In 1971, less than half of Perth's population was connected to mains sewerage. For the other major cities, connected houses and flats ranged between 56% (Wollongong), 76% (Brisbane), 84% (Sydney) and 87% (Melbourne) (ABS 1971).

In mid 1972, the Australian Government established the National Urban and Regional Development Authority to advise the government and the Grants Commission on funding to the States and Territories for urban and regional development issues.

After the 1972 elections the incoming government created the Department of Urban and Regional Development to develop and implement a national urban and regional development strategy and a host of urban policy initiatives, including the establishment of Australian and State and Territory land commissions and the administration of a new cities program.

2.5.4.1 Urban impacts of economic restructuring

The 1970s and 1980s were characterised by considerable economic and community restructuring. Australia entered the global economy at a time when its national government began to be active in the country's cities.

Australia faced the realities of globalisation with the rise of multinational corporations and a new trade regime associated with reduced levels of tariff protection.

During this period of adjustment, Australia lost several hundred thousand manufacturing jobs in the 1970s. This sectoral shift was, however, accompanied by a rise in employment in the service sector, particularly in business, finance and community services. Part-time employment in the retail and wholesale industries also grew.

Unemployment rates rose and many Australians suffered a loss in real income when jobs in manufacturing, construction, transport and storage, utilities and communications fell sharply. Some regional cities that had primarily relied on manufacturing industries—like Newcastle, Wollongong and Geelong—experienced significant economic decline.

Demographically, substantial changes occurred which affected the characteristics of cities. These included a decline in fertility rates associated and birth rates, an increase in the participation of women in the paid workforce and a decrease in household size.

Immigration underwent resurgence, but unlike previous periods when immigration was sourced in Europe, the new wave saw refugees, family reunions and a rise in settlers from South-East Asia and the Middle East. The population within Australian cities became even more culturally diverse.

A change of government in 1975 saw a less interventionist approach to cities. Responsibility for programs aimed at infrastructure provision and strategic planning were left to the States and Territories.

During the 1980s, the growth of the manufacturing sector waned and was replaced by an increasingly service-oriented economy, which slowed population growth in the major cities.

Microeconomic competition reform and the increasing global influence of the world economies through reductions in trade barriers saw the Australian economy transformed again to be more globally competitive.

However, cities could not match the pace of this economic transformation due to the longevity of the built environment. Buildings have life spans of decades and with cities physically very much a product of the past, as of the present, change is gradual. The decline of manufacturing did, however, create opportunities for urban renewal as factories and industrial areas, especially in inner-city areas, were converted to, or replaced by, residential development.

The benefits of compact cities, particularly in terms of infrastructure provision, over the earlier concepts of 'sprawl' and decentralised 'new cities', began to be acknowledged. There was renewed emphasis on revitalising existing cities and the need to create better cities rather than just 'new' cities.

The environmental consequences of increased car-dependency also began to be recognised. Increasingly, environmental concerns and resource-use began to influence thinking and the increasing awareness of the role of the cities in meeting national goals (related to efficiency, equity and environment), led to renewed interest in cities.

2.5.5 Turn of twenty-first century (1991–2010): Into the Information Age

The last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century saw all of the influences on the way of life for city dwellers that were at play during the 1970s and 1980s expand in an almost incomprehensible manner. This included economic change, corporate restructuring, technological change, the early stages of globalisation, environmental concerns and cultural diversity.

Across cities, the way of life in local communities has been altered by global forces including the impacts of climate change, the increasing reliance on high speed Internet-fostered communications, the transition to a service-based economy with information technologies, and finance services and trade which were becoming a non-stop operation in world markets where trade and business never sleep.

Inner-city suburbs were rejuvenated and housing replaced almost the last of the old factories. Inner-city resident populations grew and so did the aspirations of the residents. Agitation for street closures, traffic calming, cycle ways, green spaces and noise reduction grew between 1991 and 2010. At the same time cities also expanded in outer areas.

Cities themselves have been injected into international competition where one city vies with others to be the home base for global operations spread throughout the world in areas such as finance, information technology, trade, insurance, transport and manufacturing. New jobs in new industries have replaced those in manufacturing, necessitating changes in the personal and employment lives of growing numbers of people.

Population growth has brought increased demand on services and infrastructure. It has also created congestion and put pressure on the natural environment.

In the two decades, cities also experienced demographic changes which created more pressure on the health services. This includes an ageing population, a decline in the proportion of families with children, a reduction in household size, and changes in ethnic composition.

What did not change was the primacy of the cities. Indeed, this became more entrenched, although the core national cities increased population shares while other traditional or established cities, especially those with an industry base impacted by the decline in manufacturing, fell. There was also a rise in population moves to 'sunbelt' or 'sea-change' creating new coastal areas of urbanisation.

2.5.5.1 Building Better Cities

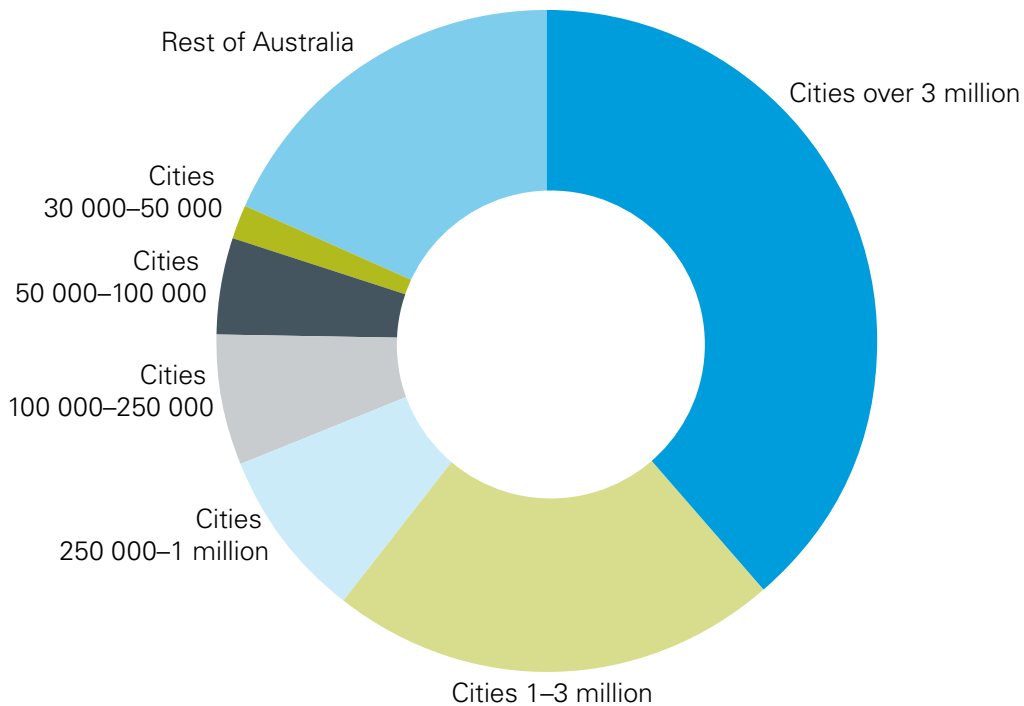
In 1991, the Australian Government introduced the *Building Better Cities Program*, a joint initiative with the States and Territories for urban redevelopment in the nation's cities. The overall purpose of the program was to promote improvements in the efficiency, equity and sustainability of Australian cities.

In many ways the *Building Better Cities Program* anticipated and mirrored a renewed interest in cities by national governments worldwide in response to the need for increased competitiveness in the increasingly global economy. In particular, with its explicit emphasis on innovation and the productivity advantages of clustered developments such as the Australian Technology Park, the program demonstrated a shift in attitude towards cities as contributors to national objectives and not merely as entities creating problems. Cities were increasingly recognised as part of the solutions to the economic, environmental and social challenges.

2.6 Australian cities: 2010 and beyond

The *State of Australian Cities 2010* report provided substantial detail on the growth and change that had been occurring in the 17 Australian cities that had populations greater than 100 000 at the 2006 Census.

Figure 6 Population distribution in Australia, 2009



Source: ABS (2010)

The *State of Australian Cities 2010* report confirmed how urbanised a nation Australia has become, with 75% of our community living in cities with populations greater than 100 000 people. Less than 20% of Australians live in smaller communities or rural and regional areas with populations less than 30 000 (Figure 6).

Outside of Australia’s capital cities, our population is distributed mainly within larger regional cities and centres. Intercity and regional transport networks and infrastructure service these cities. Figure 7 shows how Australia’s population is distributed and concentrated along the eastern seaboard.