We have learned to survive in our cities, now we must learn how to live.

These are the words of Gil Penalosa, who is responsible for the transformation of his own city, Bogota, and several others around the world. His words lie at the heart of the Federal Government’s National Urban Policy, which sets out to make our own Australian cities more productive, sustainable and liveable.

All spheres of government know that if we are to succeed as a nation, our cities must serve us better. Congestion, sprawl, housing affordability and growing pressure on our water, waste and energy services are just some of the problems facing those of us living in one of Australia’s 18 major cities. Understanding how to address those problems is the challenge and that is why this publication – State of Australian Cities 2011 – is so valuable.

Not only does it build on the knowledge contained in the first report published last year; it also brings together a raft of new data that compares our cities with each other and similar cities internationally. State of Australian Cities 2011 provides an evidence base for the national urban policy released earlier this year – Our Cities, Our Future – which sets out concrete steps to make our cities better places to live and work.

From 1 January 2012, all of Australia’s capital cities will have in place planning systems to guide their futures and it is these plans that will inform the Federal Government’s infrastructure funding. In this way, our essential social and economic infrastructure will all be funded in a coordinated way that best serves the needs and priorities of the nation.

Let me thank the many officers in my department and stakeholders around the country who have worked so hard to produce this report. With it, and its predecessor, we have the foundations of a solid compendium of knowledge to inform our future decisions and help build Australian cities in which we can truly live.

ANTHONY ALBANESE

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport