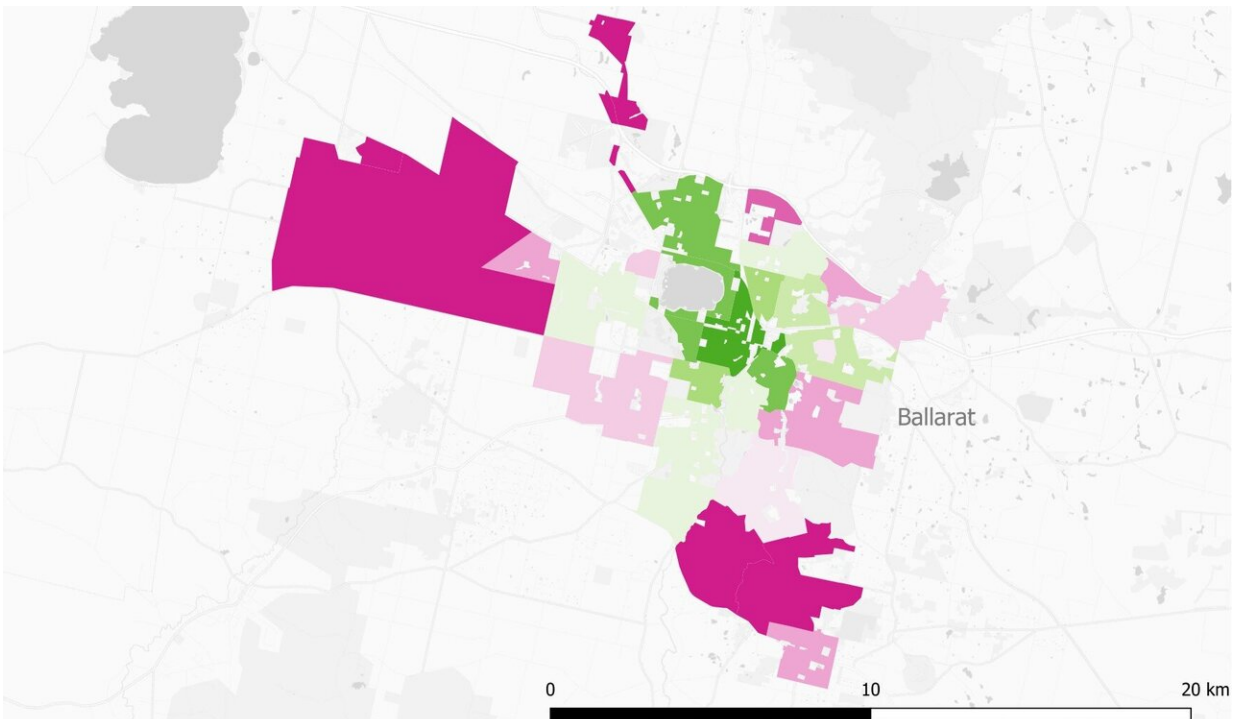


# Australia's most livable regional cities revealed

March 16 2020

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Liveability indicator map of Ballarat. Credit: RMIT University

Victoria is home to Australia's most livable regional cities—Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong—according to new research that for the first time maps health and livability across the country's 21 largest cities.

Ballarat performed best for access to public transport and public open

space in the analysis by RMIT University and ranked in the top five for access to supermarkets, local employment and services, and housing affordability based on the summary measures.

Geelong ranked highly together with Bendigo performing strongly across four of the livability measures.

In other states, the most livable regional cities are Wollongong (NSW), Toowoomba (Queensland) and Launceston (Tasmania).

With Australia's capital cities booming due to our growing population, lead researcher Dr. Lucy Gunn from the RMIT Centre for Urban Research, said regional cities were often missing from the conversation because national livability data has not been available.

"One of the key benefits of living in a regional [city](#) is that people tend to live close to where they work," Gunn said.

"Ballarat and Bendigo performed well on this indicator, as well as access to public transport, which our research shows has major health and wellbeing benefits because it allows residents the opportunity to be more active.

"The benefit of looking at these livability measures separately is you can see where each city is performing well and where improvements can be made."

## **livability tipping point**

But Gunn said that some regional cities were at risk of making the same mistakes as the nation's capitals.

"Ballarat, Bendigo and other similar-sized regional cities are at a tipping

point," she said.

"We can see this clearly in the maps and data that they are starting to look like larger cities.

"Equitable access to key infrastructure such as [public transport](#), [healthy food](#) and [community services](#) is better in the central, more established areas. This declines as you move to the edge of the city.

"As we've seen in the capital cities, residents on the urban fringe have less access to these services which can impact their health and wellbeing."

To maintain livability in regional cities, Gunn suggests careful planning for population growth and recommends avoiding more urban growth on the fringe.

"The good thing about our regional cities is there is still time to avoid the problems that come with our sprawling capital cities," she said.

"There is an opportunity here for regional cities to capitalize on what makes them great and to recognize where they can improve to sustain their livability for years to come."

Provided by RMIT University

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