

# Sustainable Cities and Regions Strategy

The *Sustainable Cities and Regions Strategy* outlines **eight recommendations and actions** with an implementation roadmap for federal, state, territory, and local governments to partner with stakeholders, communities and researchers on urban systems transformation. It is the result of extensive cross-sector consultation from diverse cities and regions across Australia to offer a **systemic, collaborative and community-engaged approach to urban development**.

## Opportunities

Australia can be a leader in the space of urban development, by adopting an **integrated systems approach** to transition towards sustainability. Innovation within the circular economy, environmental resilience and digital technology present new systemic and institutional approaches to achieving improved mental and physical health, wellbeing, economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes. **Acknowledging the extensive interconnectivity of cities and regions will encourage the coupling of these goals towards creating more affordable, accessible, sustainable and positive spaces.**

*“Our natural environment, and the changes it is experiencing, will play a central role in forcing our transition towards sustainability. A critical question is whether Australia will be reactive to these changes, or proactive”*

## Key Challenges

**90 per cent of Australians live in urban places, highlighting the importance of sustainable, equitable and innovative development.** Urban challenges such as climate change, decarbonisation, social inequities, housing, transport, employment and education interact in complex ways and have direct implications for the natural environment, social wellbeing and national productivity. Urban development issues disproportionately effect systemically marginalised and disadvantaged communities and exacerbate environmental consequences that are not adequately accounted for, or prioritised during planning stages. **Cities and regions are often isolated and siloed in their actions**, reducing the potential for transformational change. The fragmentation of initiatives limit the knowledge sharing, capacity building and innovation that facilitate larger-scale positive impact.

Future Earth Australia’s 2024 Sustainable Cities and Regions Update comprises four key strategies and related actions for urban transformation:

1. Consistent and sustained urban **leadership and governance** across sectors and levels
2. More inclusive and effective **stakeholder and community engagement**
3. Extensive urban **innovation and knowledge** co-development, sharing and uptake
4. Enhanced **policy-practice-research** collaborations and capabilities



# OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND REGIONS STRATEGY



The updated strategy considers the **diverse needs** of Australian urban and regional communities to provide an **integrative and collaborative approach** to development across all sectors of government. Decision-makers should consider **livability, productivity, resilience, equity and sustainability as important positive indicators** of thriving urban systems. A Roadmap for Implementation was created to maximise the impact of these four primary strategies and highlight their coordinated approach whilst offering a practical way forward.



## Opportunities for Australia in the Belmont Forum

Established in 2009, the Belmont Forum is a partnership of funding organisations, international science councils, and regional consortia committed to the advancement of transdisciplinary science. **The Belmont Forum is one of the globe's largest and most influential research networks, membership of which is a tremendous opportunity for Australia.** As the member for Australia, **Future Earth Australia (FEA)** is the vehicle through which Australian Government Departments, agencies and scientists can access and be awarded funding for projects from the Belmont Forum.

## Relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals



The interconnected nature of the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework is important in enabling the transition to sustainable urban systems

## References, Acknowledgements and Further Reading

- Download the full report: Webb, R., Dodson, J., Steele, W., Stafford Smith, M., Pradhan, A., Nairn, K. 2024. Sustainable cities and regions: 10 year strategy to enable urban systems transformation. 2024 Update to the 2019 Strategy, Future Earth Australia, The Australian Academy of Science. Canberra, Australia
- A special thank you to the contribution of our reference working group
- Also read Future Earth Australia's National Strategy for Just Adaptation 2022 and Our Sustainable Oceans and Coasts National Strategy 2021-2030.



Future Earth Australia is the Australian arm of Future Earth, a global sustainability, research, and innovation network. Future Earth Australia connects, convenes, and coproduces solutions to the sustainability challenges facing Australia, our region, and the globe. We achieve this by coordinating, enabling, performing, and promoting research and practice to address our most pressing sustainability challenges.