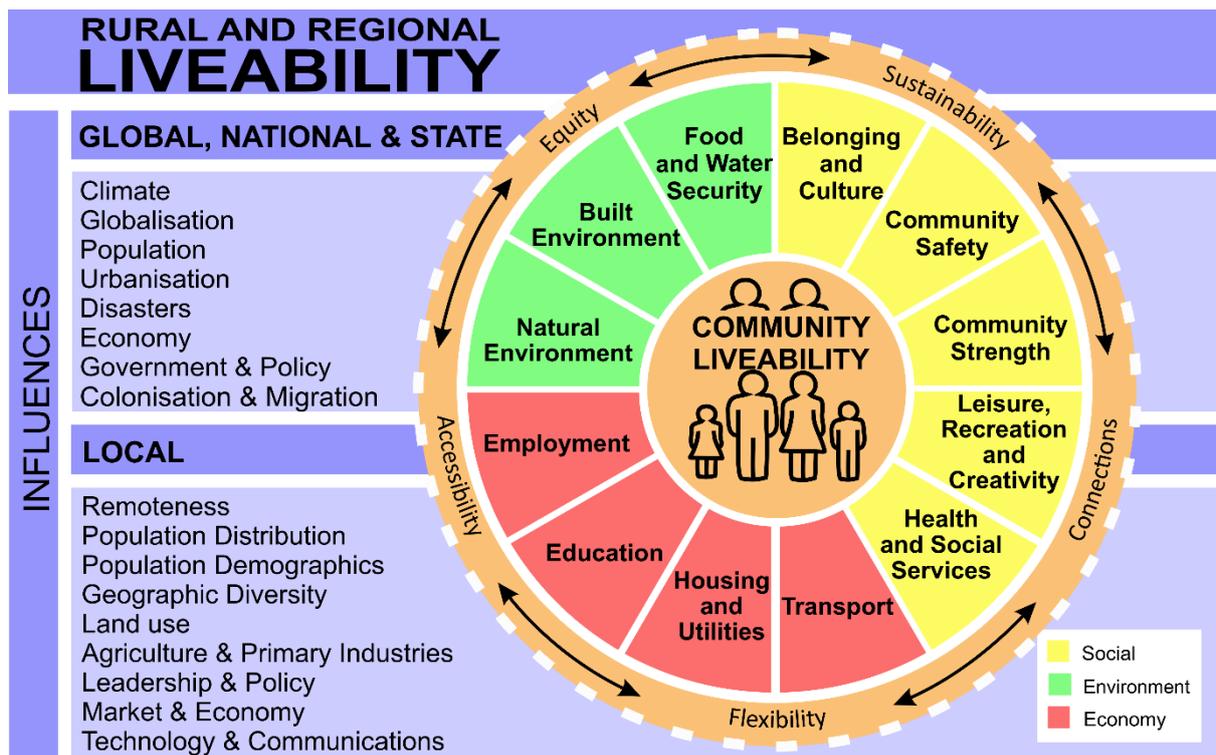
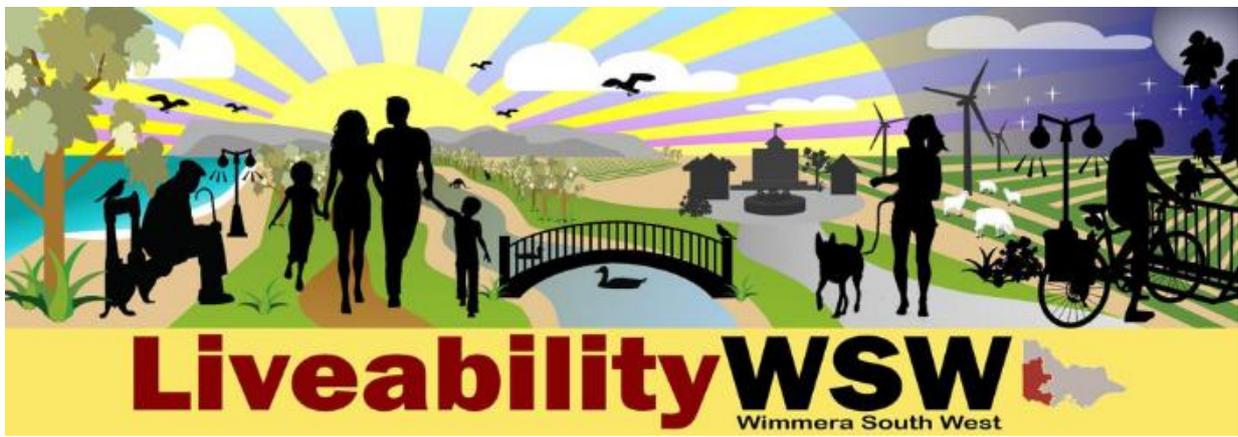


## RURAL & REGIONAL LIVEABILITY ELEMENTS

PRINCIPLES, AND INFLUENCES DEFINED FOR  
WIMMERA SOUTH WEST AND GREAT SOUTH COAST





## THE PRINCIPLES OR 'LENSES' THROUGH WHICH EACH ELEMENT IS VIEWED

All principles should be considered and addressed (where applicable) in the strategic planning, action and implementation processes for the elements of rural and regional liveability. The principles, like the elements, have a high degree of 'cross-over' and are complementary.

There are multiple principles that a community might apply to the elements; the following are those most often mentioned: 1) **Accessibility** (incorporating affordability, appropriateness, availability, approachability, and access for all abilities); 2) **Sustainability** (efficient & effective use of resources to ensure long-term effort thereby meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs); 3) **Connections or connectivity** (the ways people, networks, services, facilities, and information link); 4) **Flexibility** (the ability to change or be changed easily according to need and the situation) and 5) **Equity** (being fair/impartial, providing the same opportunities to all).

Below are some examples of how these principles might be applied to an element:

### *Accessibility*

Accessibility means all individuals, from all walks of life and across the life-course, can access and benefit from the element to their fullest potential. Examples of accessibility applied to the liveability elements include:

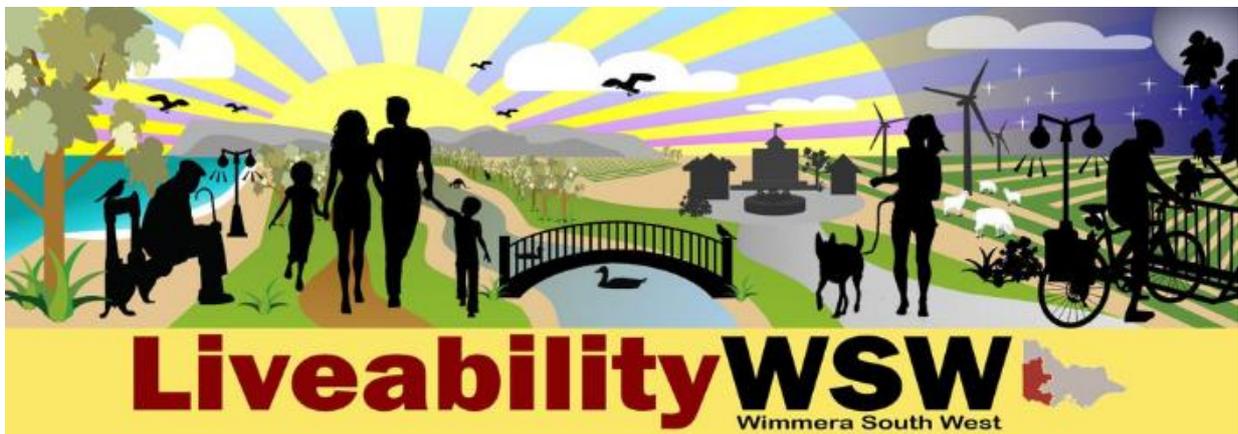
- Affordable services for all. Pricing might be adjusted depending on income.
- Services are available at a range of times and in various places; they may use a range of modes of delivery.
- Approachable, suitable, and culturally safe services for all people including those with a disability and/or infirmity (physical and/or intellectual), LGBTIQ, ATSI, and various cultures.
- Non-judgemental and helpful staff in services - skilled and confident in providing face-to-face and online/virtual services
- Availability of services. (If not available locally, appropriately linked to services in larger communities.)

### *Equity*

Being fair/impartial such as providing the same opportunities to all. This particularly relates to ensuring that services are provided impartially, whether the user is in a rural, regional, or urban area, and regardless of age, gender, social or economic status, etc.

Examples of this applied to the elements may include:

- Higher education courses available within the rural regions, not just in metropolitan areas
- Social housing, health & community services spread across the state, offering choice, etc.
- Equal opportunities for input into decision-making for all



### *Sustainability*

Actions are implemented in a way that considers current and future population needs. The following are aspects of sustainability:

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Waste and resource (including power, land use and water) management
- Continuation of adequate funding to sustain programs, rather than short-term or one-off funding
- Increasing community ownership, capacity and motivation for self-sustaining activities (e.g., walking groups)
- Strengthening and developing skills within the community rather than outsourcing
- Leadership development and succession planning

### *Connections*

Connections refers to people's networks, and links to services, facilities, and information. It includes effective communication - sharing information to enable participation and collaboration. It can also refer to the ability to physically connect - 'getting there' (where desirable).

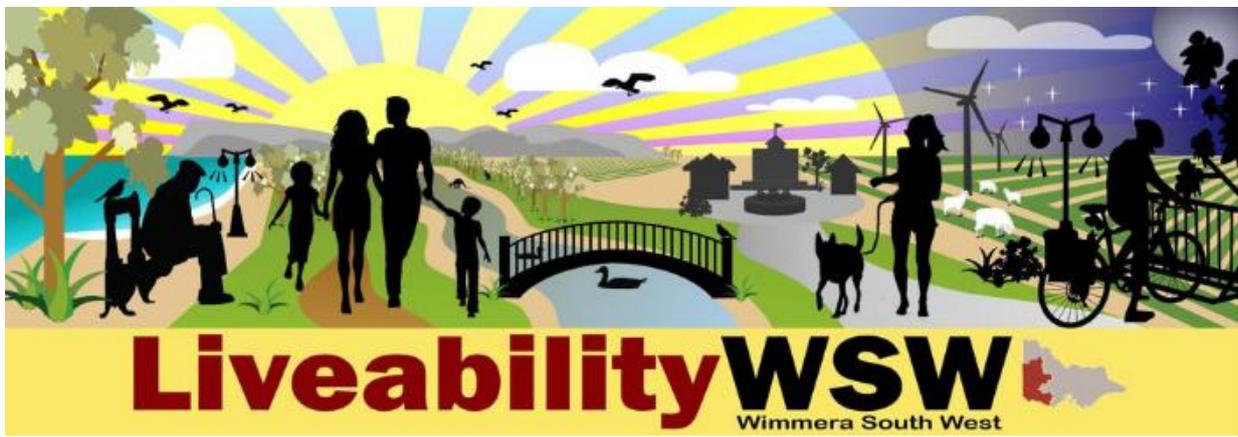
In rural settings, where services might not be available locally, it is about supporting, promoting, and enabling connections to those closest and most appropriate to potential community users. Examples of connections and connectivity applied to the liveability elements include:

- Recognising and supporting people's connection to the land, to their culture and/or to their family members
- Ensuring that people can have access to internet and other communication sources
- Promoting linkages and coordination across support networks, services, and systems
- Supporting and providing physical links across a social system (e.g., signage and walking trails between social venues such as clubs, shops, and municipal services)

### *Flexibility*

Flexibility refers to preparedness and ability of community, organisations, and individuals to adapt to changing circumstances and needs, including external influences. It includes preparation, management and recovery from emergency, short, and long-term crisis including climatic conditions such as drought or global economic stress. It also includes dynamic leadership to identify and appropriately respond to changes. Examples include:

- Ability to maintain service provision in emergency situations such as a pandemic
- Ability to adapt and to cater for community needs during a crisis such as drought
- Preparedness and ability to ensure essential services in sudden condition changes such as a power outage or fire
- The ability to change policy and programs/services as populations shift and needs/tastes change
- Ability to adapt and innovate for the creation of improved services and products



## Liveability Domains

The elements can be classified into three ‘domains’- economy, environment, and social. These three pillars determine liveability, quality of life, health, and wellbeing within a community and are often used in ‘triple-bottom-line’ audits of planning initiatives.



## Liveability Elements Defined

*The elements do not exist in isolation; they all interact and overlap.*

### Economy

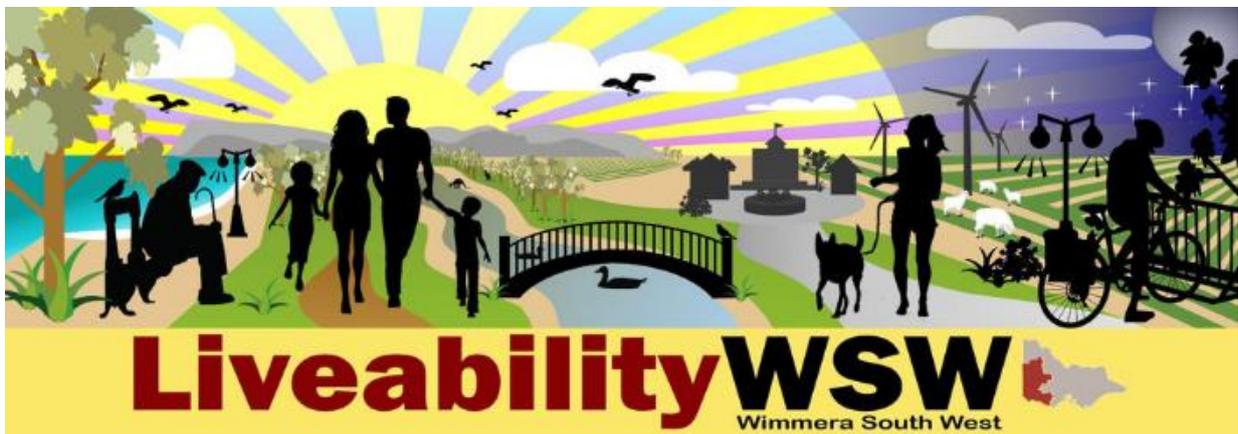
The economy of the region and its rural communities is influenced by external factors, particularly globalisation and urbanisation, government and public policy, population size and spread. Elements include housing, employment, and education:

### Housing and Utilities

Housing refers to the places in which people reside and transact their basic daily activities of life. Housing may be owned, rented, shared, temporary or public; and people may live in them long, medium, or short term. The quality of the structures that house people are important, both to those who live there (in terms of their amenity) as well as to the community as it impacts on perception as to the prosperity of the community.

Utilities are the services connected to housing that provide basic requirements for modern living. These include power, gas, water, sewage, telecommunications and waste removal. Quality and security of housing and utilities are both important.

**Accessibility** (affordability, availability, appropriateness) is the major principle for consideration. For example, 1) the diversity of size, type, zoning, layout, and location of homes and land to meet different needs; and 2) the affordability, availability to everyone (culture, gender, etc.) and proximity to services and resources to allow/encourage **connections**.



## **Employment**

Employment provides income and offers the opportunity to access necessary resources such as housing, food, and clothing. It also can provide the luxuries of life such as recreational, cultural, and leisure pursuits. Furthermore, employment provides opportunity to meet the need for personal growth and achievement and contributes to community and society growth and maintenance.

Conditions that support a healthy balance between work, health, life and family also promote health and wellbeing, and support employment success. Employment sectors such as agriculture, dairy and marine are often vulnerable to many of the influences such as globalisation, climate change, and must engage in **sustainable** practices to survive.

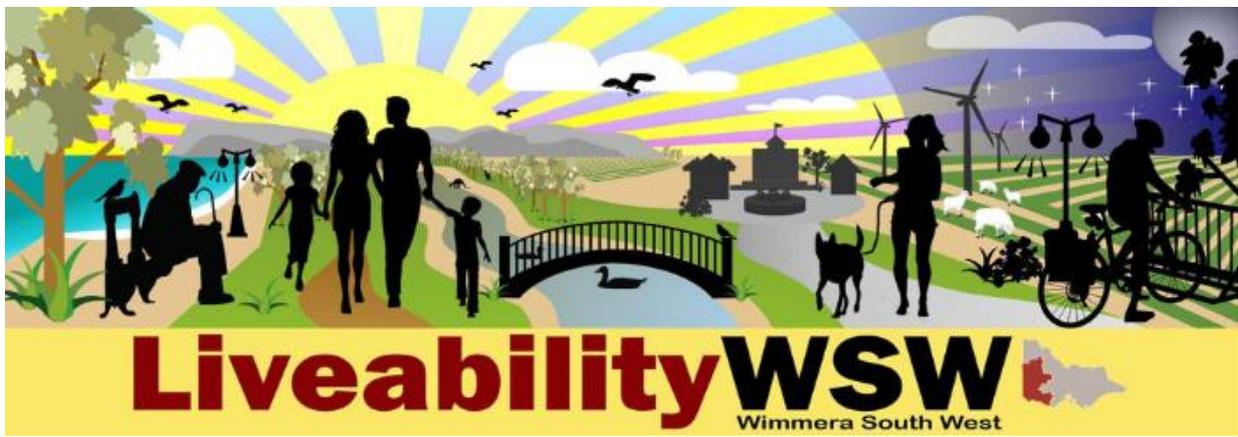
**Accessibility, connections/connectivity, and flexibility** are also major principles, particularly flexibility within the agriculture sector (a major employer in rural areas) which is vulnerable to external influences such as climate and global pricing, requiring flexible approaches to enable it to thrive. Diverse opportunities for a range of employment opportunities and working hours (casual, part time, full time) contribute to a more vibrant and robust employment sector as does the ability to connect through telecommunication platforms making working remotely possible.

Lifestyle is defined as the way people live their lives. This is influenced by the goods and services, facilities, and opportunities in the community. Lifestyle and lifestyle choices are also influenced by community environment, economy and connections, and the principles of connectivity, accessibility, flexibility and sustainability.

Liveable communities provide an opportunity for all people to have enjoyable and healthy lifestyles, and quality of life. They are places where people are respected, can contribute and be included, and within the constructs of their social contracts, peoples' *interactions* and connections, can live diverse lives that meet their social, religious, cultural, physical, and mental needs. Elements of lifestyle include: transport, health & social services, leisure, recreation, and cultural offerings, and food/water security.

## **Education**

Education begins in the early years and may include preparational groups such as preschool through the more formal system of primary and secondary school, as well as tertiary levels, which might be university, TAFE, or apprenticeship training. Furthermore, professional development, short skills and personal interest courses and seminars support essential life-long learning, to ensure continued relevance of skills and knowledge for employability in an environment of constant change.



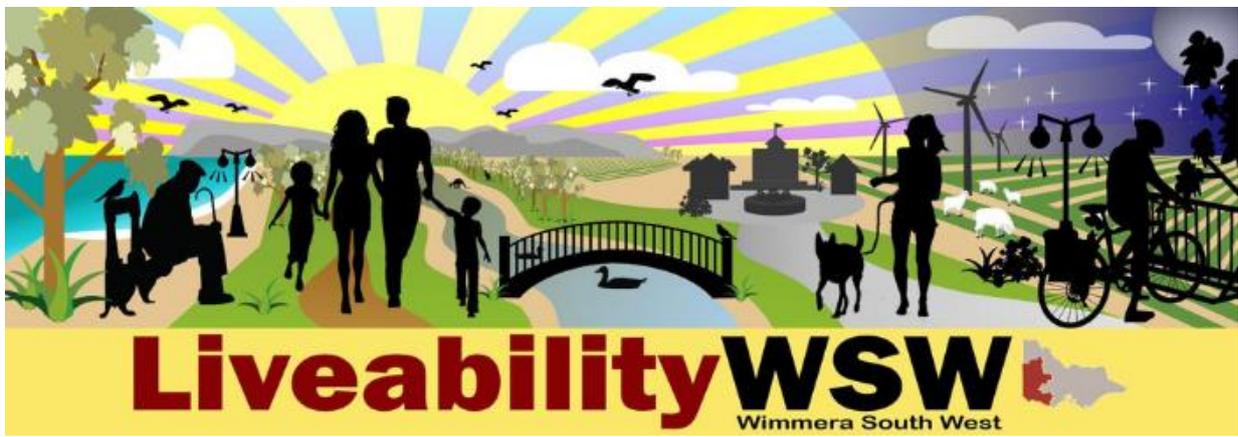
**Accessibility, connectivity, and flexibility** are major principles to support participation in educational opportunities. As public transport (or the lack thereof) is often a factor in the rural areas, accessing training can be more expensive due to having to travel further, also adding to the time commitments for participants. Poor internet connections (or none) can also be a barrier. The economy can be a driver of what educational opportunities are available which may reduce the choices for people and may not match their needs, interests or abilities. Too often educational courses in the rural sector are the first cuts made when education budgets are under stress.

### *Transport*

Transport interacts closely with the built environment, which includes the infrastructure for transport. Transport enables people to achieve access, including access to employment, education, services, leisure and recreation, and social relationships. As a rural liveability element, transport refers to both public transport options and use of personal or commercial vehicles. It also refers to active transport options, such as walking, cycling, and skateboards/scooters. For example:

- Buses, including bus routes and schedules
- Taxis and volunteer drivers
- Trains
- Airports/planes
- Foot and bike paths (which are part of the built environment)

**Accessibility** of transport options for all people supports **connectivity**, and is particularly important where personal transport modes are not an option (e.g. the elderly). The inclusion of active transport supports **sustainability**.



### *Environment*

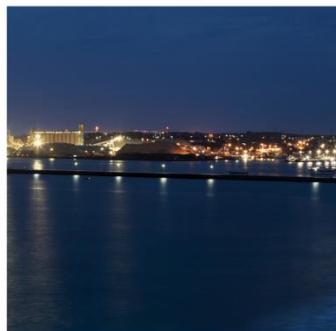
This refers to the physical surrounding of the community. The built and natural environments interact closely and are highly influenced by climate, land use, natural resources, policy and geography.

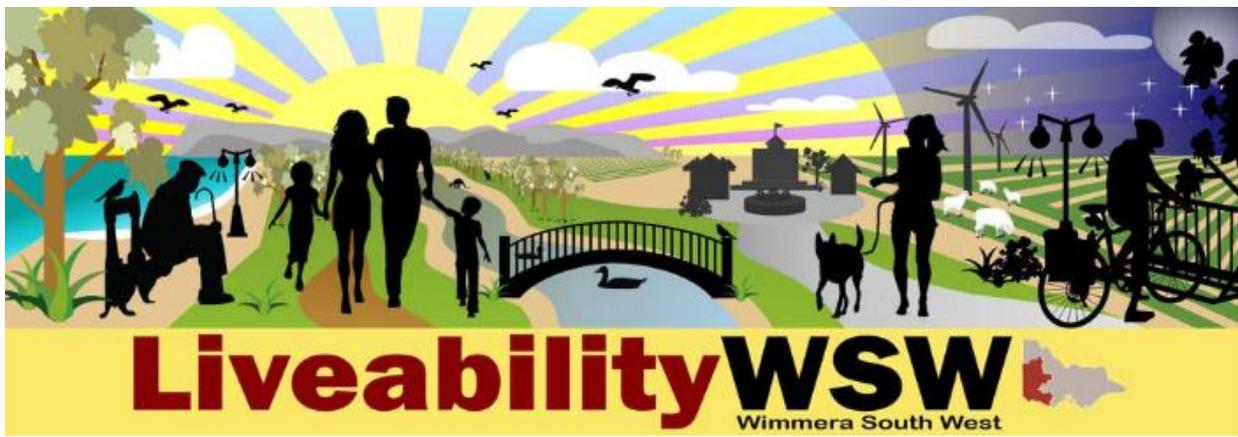
### *Built Environment*

The built environment includes the man-made structures, features, and facilities in the community. The built environment can include natural features, for example, trees to provide shade, but have been planted by community groups/council. Built environment includes:

- Community planning- including land use
- Roads and parking
- Foot paths, crossings, lighting, signage and safety infrastructure. (Crosses over with transport, leisure and crime and safety)
- Neighbourhood and street scape design, including sculptures and art (crossing over with culture)
- Infrastructure in parks, open spaces and interaction with the natural environment
- Public buildings and private buildings for business (not including housing)
- Infrastructure for utilities
- Sanitation infrastructure
- Noise and odour

All principles apply to the built environment. **Sustainability** of resources is key to ensure we are protecting the natural environment so as not to exceed its boundaries. The built environment can be constructed in a way that requires minimal maintenance and is lasting. Planning should consider the relevance of the built environment in the future, for example considering population projections in spatial planning. It enables connectivity, accessibility, and flexibility when facilities are built in such a way as to invite citizens to connect with each other, easily access services, and enjoy a variety of styles and options.





### *Natural Environment*

The natural environment includes all the living and non-living things that occur naturally, not having been created by humans. Built features may help preserve the natural environment or be in place for peoples' access and use (e.g., Car parks, raised paths). The Natural Environment includes:

- Biodiversity of ecosystems
- Air and water quality
- Flora and Fauna
- Parks and Gardens (green spaces)
- Lakes, rivers, beaches (blue spaces)
- National Parks and State Parks
- Agriculture and its impacts on the ecosystem

The natural environment is the support system for all that is human life, thus **sustainability** is the major factor.

### *Food and Water Security*

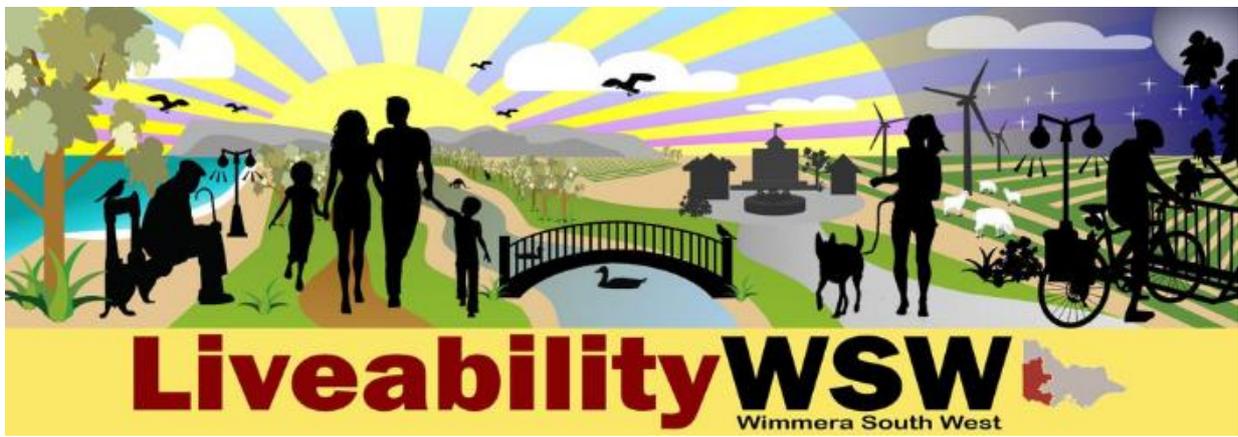
Food security refers to the continuing availability of nutritious food and clean water. It refers to having an appropriate balance of available nutrient dense food businesses (fresh food markets) compared with nutrient poor (take away shops) and includes the opportunity for eating out socially. Food security relies on agriculture/horticulture production, on levels from personal to global. These practices rely on water security and land management, which is impacted by climate variability and climate change. All principles are essential for good health and enjoyment of food.

**Accessibility** to food is influenced by many of the other elements, particularly employment (income), and transport, as well as personal factors such as priority, health literacy, and preference. Diversity is important as it provides the opportunity for choice, including culturally appropriate foods for those from different cultural backgrounds. This in turn encourages a wider diversity of community members.

**Flexibility** is needed to cater for changing circumstances in world and local markets, in tastes and in demand generally. **Sustainability** of environment is crucial to ensure adequate and ongoing supplies of food and water. Growing food at home is an example.

### *Social*

Social factors relate to people's connection to their community.



### *Health and Social Services*

Health and Social Services support people to look after their health and their social lives.

Health Services include preventive health, maintenance, curative (including hospital admissions, medical and surgical) therapeutic, and rehabilitation services. Social Services help promote equity and protect the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of society, such as the elderly, minorities, children, and those with a disability.

While the facilities, equipment, staff and governance of such services are managed at the organisational level, an engaged and inclusive community can support, advocate and influence their quality and processes. The provision of these services invites a more diverse and rounded population and enable a wider recruitment of families with specialist skills.

**Accessibility, Connections/connectivity, and Flexibility** need to be considered for services to be effective in improving population health and wellbeing. Ensuring that services have universal access, are well connected, and integrated into the community, are diverse to meet the broad needs of community members and their ability to respond to changing needs. These principles are all part of ensuring this element is supporting rural and regional liveability.

### *Leisure, Recreation and Culture*

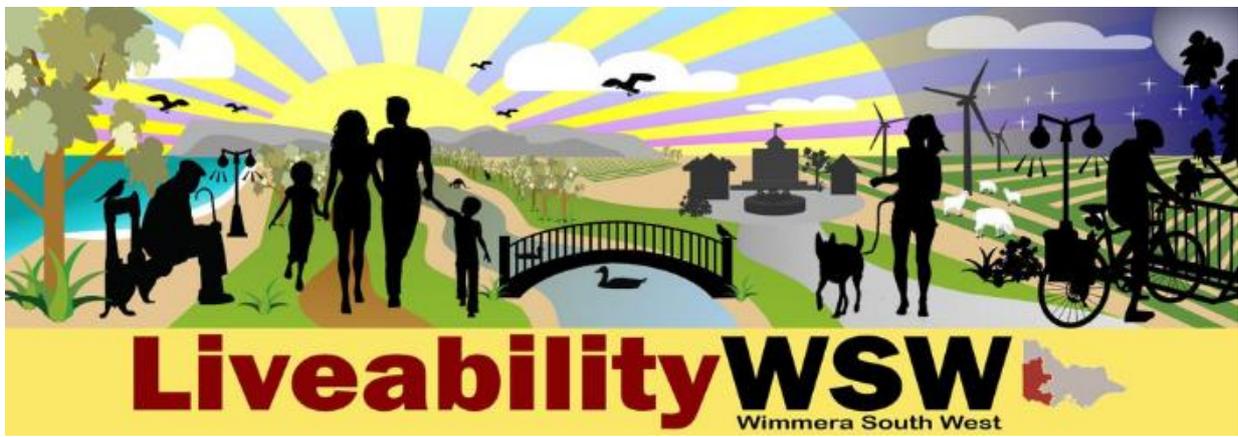
This refers to places to go and things to do outside of work, in daily life and on weekends and holidays. Leisure, recreation, and cultural activities might include entertainment, shopping, local cultural events and galleries, sports, games and physical activities, and hobby and common interest clubs. Cultural activities may also relate to connection with the land and/or one's cultural identity. Colonisation and local history can have a significant impact on a community and sensitive recognition of these events can add or detract from a community's liveability for some members.

**Accessibility** and the diversity of these activities support quality of life and enjoyment in the community. **Sustainability** may be related to market success for businesses, or environmental management for outdoor activities.

### *Social Inclusion and Cohesion*

People are at the heart of community, and need to have opportunities for participating, including:

- Volunteering
- Community decision making and governance
- Community maintenance and growth
- Celebrations and festivals
- Religious Worship Centres
- Relationships & support networks
- Service provision



The above should include options suitable for all people (**accessibility**), and the community should be aware of the opportunities and how to participate (**connectivity**) through diverse and appropriate methods of communication. **Sustainability** of community togetherness should be addressed, with **flexibility** to reflect changing interests of generations, funding, and external forces.

### *Community Safety*

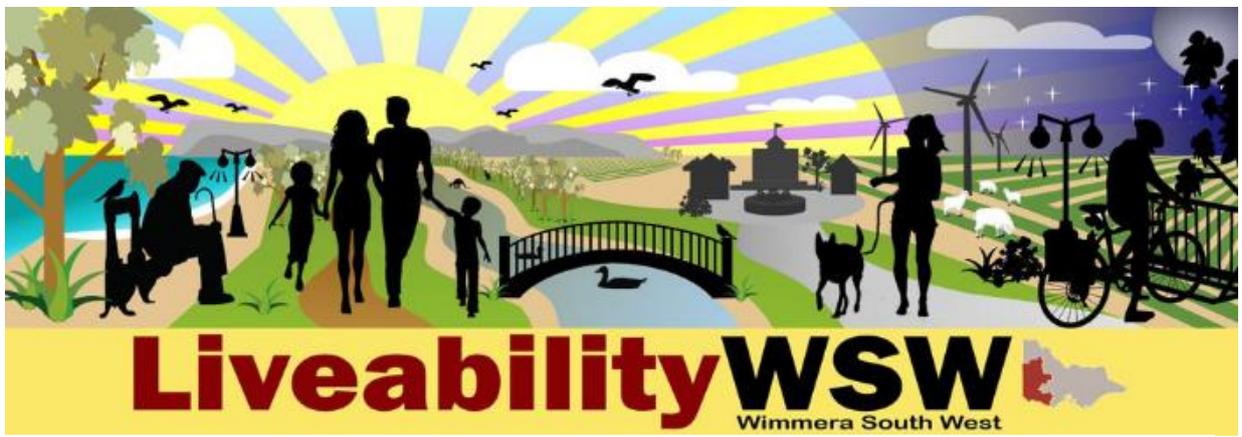
Safety from hazards, security from crime, and crime prevention are high on the list of liveability elements when people are asked what matters to them. Police hold a major role in community safety, however neighbourhood design features, which is part of the built environment, can support a sense of safety and security in the community (e.g., lighting). Community togetherness (social cohesion) is related to reducing crime as neighbourhood trust promotes supporting one another.

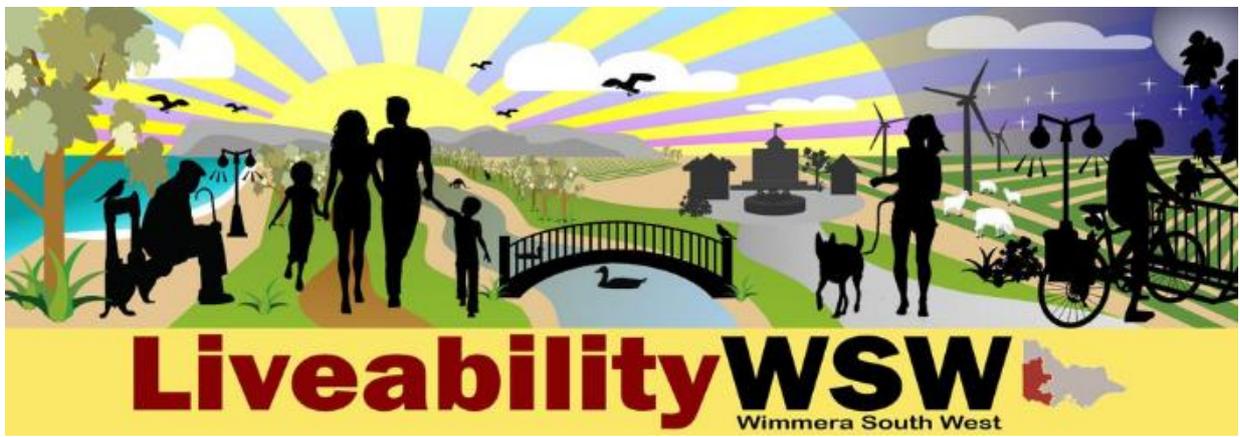
Safety from hazards and accidents requires both good planning and maintenance of the built environment (roads) as well as emergency services - police, SES, CFA, and ambulance- for management when things do go wrong.

**Accessibility and Flexibility** are major principles. For example, all suburbs/streets should be safe for all people, and safety services should be equipped for changing circumstances that might increase likelihood of crime, such as a recession or increased unemployment rates. **Connectivity** helps to reduce crime and improves safety as people quickly access support and monitor behaviour.

### *The Personal Connection*

There is also a personal connection to a place that needs to be acknowledged. People live in communities that their families had connections to through the years, or that has particular meaning for them. As this is significant in the research, it was considered important to include it in the framework as the unique element that is different for different individuals. For Aboriginal respondents, it was their connection to country that held them to a community. Despite being hard to define, it can be a powerful element in determining 'liveability' for an individual or family group and cannot be ignored.

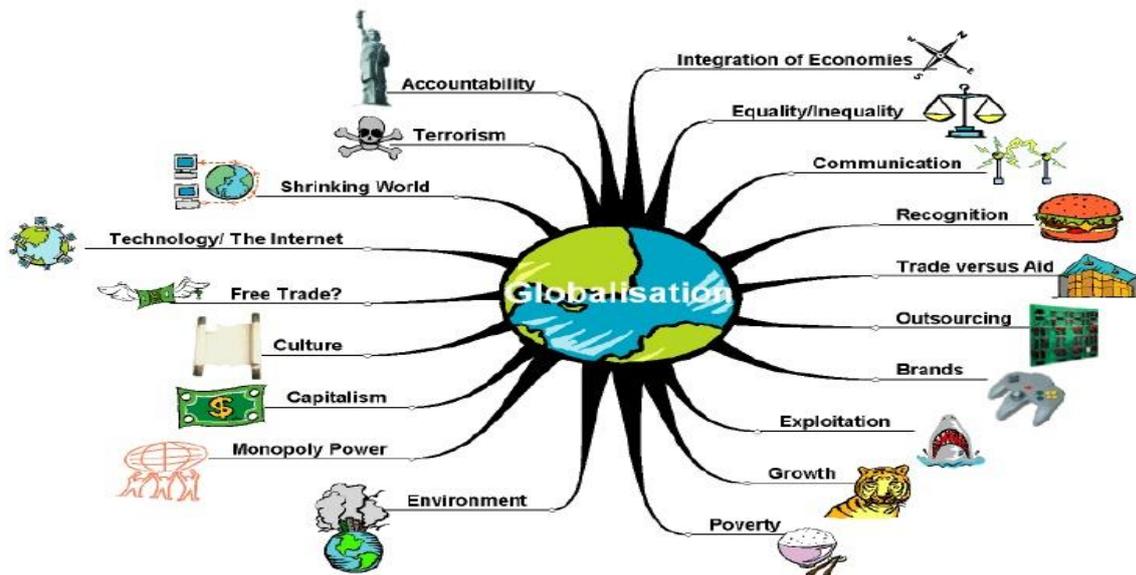




Liveability Influences Defined – (not a definitive list, but indicative)

**Climate** - The long-term changes in weather patterns caused by biotic processes, solar radiation, plate tectonics and human activity

**Economy, Markets & Globalisation** -

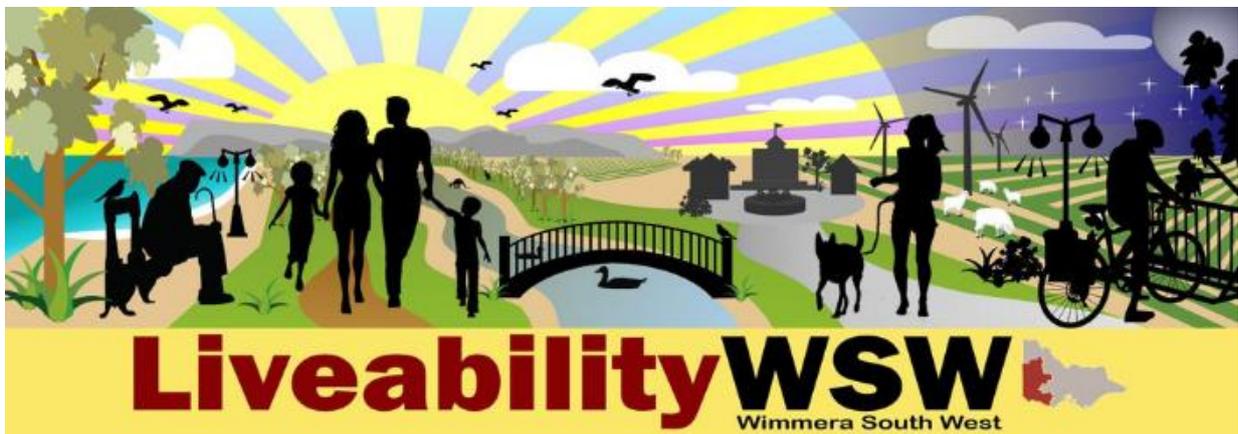


International commodity markets, labour markets, and capital markets make up the economy and define economic globalization. Globalisation is also about interconnecting people around the world beyond the physical barrier of geographical boundaries.

**Population, Culture, & Demographics** – demography (the study of human population change in geographic locations) demonstrates the effect human migration has on regions

**Wars, Disasters & Pandemics** – The impact of unforeseen events, such as a local, state or national natural disaster (bushfires, floods, disease, etc.), or world event (war, depression, etc.) can have dramatic impacts on local liveability, depending on its resilience and resources.

**Government, leadership, & policy** – at national, state, and local levels, these influence a community’s ability to focus on local issues, mobilise joint initiatives and to attract resources. Clear and strong leadership (local champions) have been shown to be the single most important factor in successfully achieving health & well-being outcomes at community levels.



**Land use and Urbanisation** - Urbanization is one of the most important human factors that directly and indirectly affect land use change and as a result of the change in landscape patterns. The use of land for urban purposes inevitably infringes on its “value” in other (mainly environmental) respects; but urban land use change is essentially a by-product of demographic change and economic growth, so is to a degree inevitably part of successful change.

**Geographic Diversity** – geographic diversity can add to a region’s attraction, but at the same time it can also diminish its ability to generate protections against natural disasters or to general agricultural or mineral wealth.

**Remoteness** – the distance to regional or urban centres can have a great deal of impact on a community’s liveability, adding to the cost of accessing services, amenities, and supports that might not be locally provided. Feelings of personal safety and well-being may also be impacted as fewer connections are available. Conversely, a remote, small community may feel more connected and cohesive, depending on the leadership, social interactions, etc.

**Historical events** – these can have a lasting impact on the culture and identity of a region. The colonisation of a country and its impact on first nation peoples can have significant input into the liveability of their communities and culture.