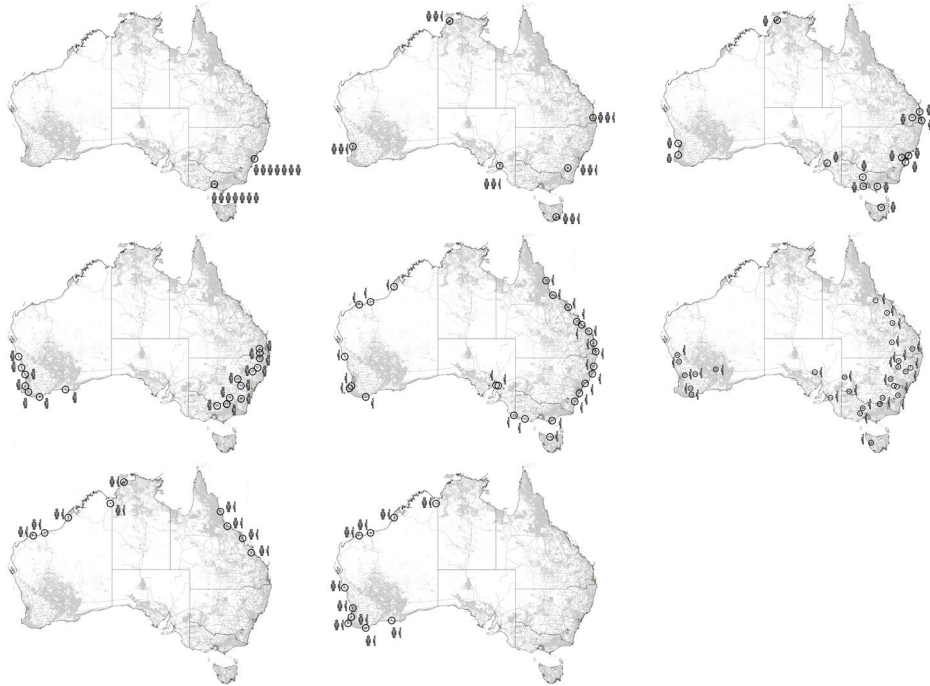


AUDRC Research Note

The 'Plan My Australia' community survey



What continental-scale settlement patterns do the Australian community support?

Background

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics' mid-range projection for 2101 is for the Australian population to effectively double, reaching over 53 million, an increase mostly stemming from net overseas migration. The projected growth of Australia's population raises implications for long-term infrastructure planning and preserving the nation's prized liveability. Moreover, support for population growth through immigration is wavering.

- Given Australia's growth pressures, the benefits from a national plan for cities and regions identifying areas with the highest urbanisation capacity are readily apparent, especially where these are informed and supported by citizen opinion. Our research contributes to the debate by factoring population distribution into the equation.

- The central research question guiding our enquiry was: What hypothetical settlement patterns to accommodate substantial population growth would the Australian community support?

- Through a novel nationwide survey, we tested a range of national-scale settlement pattern scenarios against community sentiment. The Plan My Australia community survey achieved over 1,000 responses. It provided unprecedented insights into community opinion about the most suitable settlement patterns for accommodating population growth.

Key findings

- The responses indicate a preference for 'visionary' schemes for population

decentralisation from state capital cities to regional areas and resonate with urban-to-regional migration kindled by the pandemic.

- The results indicate that the Australian public favours three possible settlement patterns – satellite cities orbiting the state capital cities, regional cities on rail links connecting the capital cities, and cities in inland regions.

- Compounding population growth in the major capital cities is regarded as problematic. Indeed, the two scenarios that adopted this approach – one growing Sydney and Melbourne into megacities and the other boosting secondary capital cities – were ranked last and second-last, respectively.

- Policymakers should consider the findings in the context of a re-emerging national urban policy needed to integrate a mosaic of fragmented and un-coordinated plans for sustainable population decentralisation.

Links to related publications

- Bolleter, J., Edwards, N., Freestone, R., Nichols, D., Oliver, G., & Hooper, P. (2021). Long-term settlement scenarios for Australia: a survey and evaluation of community opinions. *Urban Policy and Research*, 40(1), 15-35. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/08111146.2021.2006175>

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