

2019

# CityPulse Victoria



Giving Victorians  
a voice in shaping  
our great state

October 2019



# Foreword

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As part of PwC's CityPulse project, we surveyed 4,612 Victorians to ask how they feel about where they live, how things are changing, and the key ingredients in making a great place to live. The results give us a fascinating insight into the societal and technological transformations taking place in Victoria, and the impact they have on our day-to-day lives.

Our state is the fastest growing in Australia, and Melbourne is one of the [fastest growing cities](#) in the developed world. This is creating more cultural diversity and a stronger economy, but also more demand for schools, roads, trains, police and hospitals.

Not surprisingly, it is the fastest growing communities across Victoria that feel the pressure of this growth the most. People living in Melbourne's growth corridors were less likely to say they "loved where they live." Of the people surveyed, 68 per cent in the outer east, 58 per cent in the outer west and 65 per cent in the outer north loved where they lived compared with 79 per cent in inner Melbourne and 71 per cent for the state overall.

Although change can bring challenges, Victorians who are seeing improvements in their area love where they live even more - in fact, of Victorians who have seen improvements in their area in the last five years, 83 per cent report that they love where they live. As record investments in new transport infrastructure, schools, nurses, police, parks and community services start to be completed, we can expect this trend to continue.

Technology is revolutionising the way that we live. The rise of online commerce, ride sharing and remote working is only the beginning; the roll out of the 5G network and the expansion of the Internet of Things mean that the current pace of change will continue into the future. Victorians are excited about the potential. PwC's citizen research indicated that the top five areas where Victorians believe technology can improve their lives are:

1. Education and training opportunities
2. Safety of the community
3. The provision of health and wellbeing services
4. Transport services
5. The cost of living.

This optimism might be a reflection of the fact that Victorians are well placed to seize the opportunities that technology brings. We are already at the centre of Australia's knowledge economy, with the most highly-educated workforce of any state. Programs like free TAFE, tech schools and the government's focus on supporting high-tech industries will only strengthen our position.

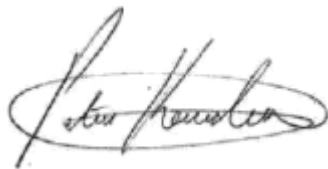
But while a Victorian from 30 years ago might barely recognise some elements of modern Victoria, it's also worth reflecting on some cherished parts of our character that never seem to change. We are still obsessed with sport, cultural events and dining out: access to sporting and cultural facilities was the second most important factor in our view of whether we love where we live.

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This all begs the question: what should we do with all this information? When we are presented with a data source like PwC's citizen research, it can be tempting just to see if we can pick out the winners and losers. We should resist that temptation. It's not particularly helpful, and – frankly – it's a waste of a valuable source of insight.

PwC's citizen research can help government, business and the community by providing greater insight about issues that directly affect our daily lives, and helping us to identify new opportunities to make living in Victoria even better.

I encourage all Victorians to take a look through the following pages and use it as a starting point for ideas to make our community safer, happier and more productive.



**Peter Konidaris**  
Melbourne Managing Partner  
PwC Australia



# Transforming

# Victoria







Victoria is at a tipping point, a victim of our own economic success. Our rapid growth and the transition of our economy from one that is heavily reliant on manufacturing, to one based on services and knowledge-based industries, is having profound implications for greater Melbourne and regional areas. If we are to retain vibrant, connected communities, we must look at how we help these communities evolve so they are able to meet the challenges of the Asian Century. PwC believes the key to achieving this is to foster a thriving ecosystem of interdependent, citizen-centric communities.

## About PwC's citizen research

PwC believes that shaping our cities and our regions is something we need to do together: business, government and the community.

To help get this right, we commissioned a national quantitative survey to find out what it is that Australians love about the communities where they live, what can be improved, and what are their concerns and priorities for the future. The survey was mapped to ABS data to reflect the age, gender and regional/metro breakup of Australia.

Over 4,500 Victorians responded to the survey, which asked them to provide a rating out of 10 as to whether they agreed or disagreed with statements such as 'I love where I live' and rated 'how has my local area changed over the last five years'.

The research used data analytics to explore a range of characteristics of a locality including community safety, job security and availability, education, financial security, access to services including emergency services and health care, transport and infrastructure and cost of living.

PwC's citizen research builds on the foundation laid by our groundbreaking CityPulse project, letting us map the future needs against the current reality and priorities of Victorians so we can better understand the challenges and opportunities for our state.

### Rating guide:

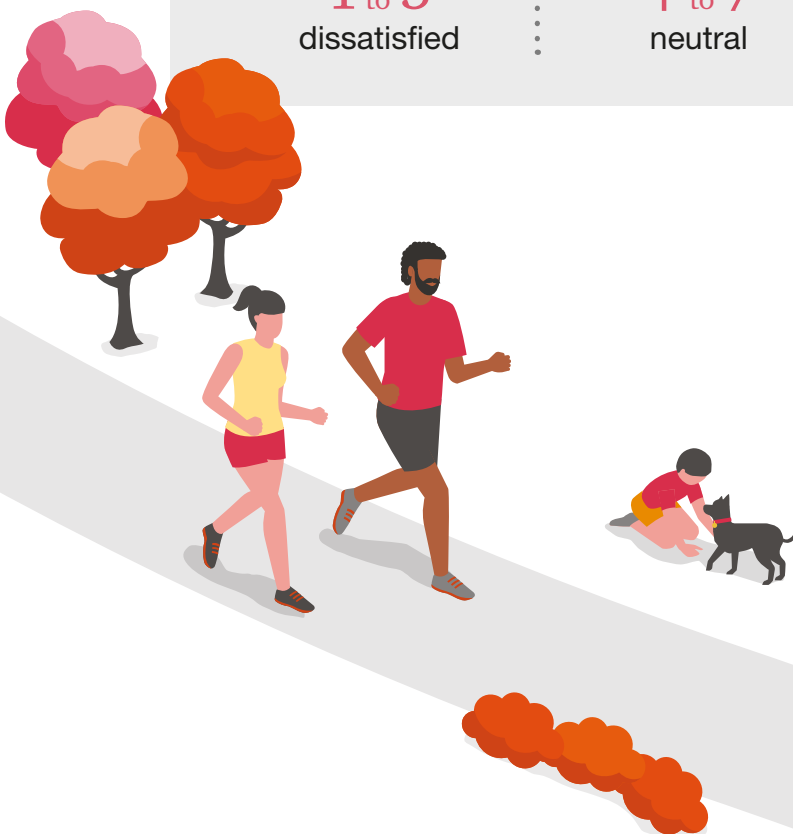
1 to 3  
dissatisfied



4 to 7  
neutral



8 to 10  
satisfied





A connection to your local community – loving where you live – is a central component to experiencing life satisfaction. But Victoria’s recent population growth is placing a strain on our resources and our citizens. If we are to enjoy prosperity as a state it starts within our communities, creating places where Victorians can work, relax and access the services they need. We need to know what this looks like if we are going to engage businesses, the various levels of government and the citizens themselves in creating it. So we started by asking, what do Victorians want to create a better life?

# The key ingredients to creating a better Victoria

- 1 ..... Health
- 2 ..... Education
- 3 ..... Transport
- 4 ..... Cost of living
- 5 ..... Leisure
- 6 ..... Community safety
- 7 ..... Jobs
- 8 ..... Regions

# Health

## A system under strain

Health and wellbeing services are vitally important to all Victorians. Our citizen research results suggest that it is an important factor in determining if Victorians love where they live, and the number one priority for future investment across the state.

The challenges that Victoria currently faces in providing high quality, accessible and affordable health care parallel the challenges faced globally. Population growth, an ageing population, the rise of chronic health conditions (e.g. diabetes, obesity, ongoing mental health issues) and the increasing cost and demand for timely access to best practice care are all putting pressure on health systems and the way we think about health care delivery.

Of the more than 4,500 Victorians surveyed, 55 per cent rate health and wellbeing services available in their area as excellent.

The areas experiencing major growth and those furthest from Melbourne are the ones experiencing the most strain (61 per cent of those living in Melbourne's inner suburbs are satisfied). PwC's analysis found that only 39 per cent of Victorians living in Melbourne's fastest growing outer western suburbs were satisfied with local health and wellbeing services, and that they had the lowest overall satisfaction with access to hospitals compared to other regions. Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs also had comparatively low levels of satisfaction with local health and wellbeing services (44 per cent), as did people in regional Victoria (45 per cent) when compared with those living in Melbourne's inner suburbs (61 per cent).

## Using technology to better apply funding and resources

When people think about health infrastructure, they usually think about what they can see: hospitals and other physical buildings such as clinics and rehabilitation centres. Ten years ago that might have been a fair way to evaluate the quality of the available health services in an area, but now, with the emergence of new models of service delivery enabled by digital technology and smart devices, people can access a wide range of healthcare services from anywhere.

In many ways, the health sector is behind other industries when it comes to embracing modern service interactions. Consumers are moving online for banking, retail and government services rather than travelling to physical locations. There is a clear opportunity for the healthcare sector to make a similar transition, capitalising on the rollout of the NBN and 5G networks to develop new models to help us maintain our health and take care of us when we fall ill.

Victorians think the third biggest impact of advances in technology will improve the provision of health and wellbeing services.

The essence of great health care can be traced back to the medical teams who work in our health system – the doctors and nurses, for example – rather than the physical buildings themselves. In redesigning health care models, we need to make better use of digital tools to better enable medical teams to use their collective expertise to collaborate and more rapidly respond to our needs.





**55%**  
are satisfied  
with the health  
and wellbeing  
services available  
in their area

PwC's citizen research shows that technology is already improving access to health care. When Victorians perceive the availability and quality of digital technology in their area to be 'excellent', they were more likely to rate health and wellbeing services as excellent when compared with Victorians who perceived the availability and quality of digital technology to be 'poor'.

The growing incidence and expense of chronic conditions (e.g. diabetes) as opposed to acute health issues (e.g. a car accident) means that employing a 'health care in the home' model is increasingly a viable option. This model will be particularly beneficial for elderly patients as research has consistently shown this cohort are happier and healthier when they can continue to live in their community. For example, older people (65+)

who have lived in their area for more than 10 years are more satisfied (8.8 out of 10) than those who have not (8.4 out of 10).

For very unwell patients, hospitals will remain a critical part of their care. Hospitals must also embrace digital technology to improve the quality and efficiency of the care provided. Victorian hospitals need to embrace newer electronic medical records (EMR) systems to reduce the time practitioners spend performing data entry so as to enable more efficient, informed and personalised care for patients. Better data management would also enable insights from deidentified 'big data' which could help better determine where, when and which patients should be the focus of spending for preventative services.

# Education

## Education and training are key to life satisfaction, but are the regions missing out?

The world is changing and many of the job skills Victorians will need in the future will be very different to those required today. For some, this presents an exciting opportunity to explore new challenges. However, for others, it creates uncertainty and stress. Of 2,959 working Victorians who completed PwC's recent research, 39 per cent believe they will need to upskill in order to keep up with advances in technology. Victorians who are concerned that they will need to change their job or career path due to the impact of technology have lower levels of life satisfaction (49 per cent compared with 64 per cent across Victoria).

Victorians living in inner Melbourne are more positive about access to a variety of higher education and skills training than Victorians living in the outer east and outer west of Melbourne, and those living in regional

Victoria. Unsurprisingly, respondents' opinions of the education and training options available to them correlate with the distance they have to travel in order to study. Education and training satisfaction is lowest (28 per cent) when people have to travel more than 40 kilometres to study, and highest (52 per cent) when this distance is less than five kilometres.

While the existence of education infrastructure is obviously important to many respondents, of those who are currently studying, 55 per cent said they study remotely either 'always' or 'regularly'. Of those who said they always study remotely, 79 per cent are employed (evenly split between full-time and part-time work), 41 per cent are aged between 18 and 24, and 64 per cent are female.

## Creating a more equitable education system

If Victoria is to maintain its reputation as the 'education state', we need to ensure that all of our citizens can access quality education services, including those living in regional Victoria. We must work together to engage learners from the pre-school years through to post-secondary schooling, removing existing barriers so that regional and remote students are able to achieve the same outcomes as metropolitan students.



39%

of working Victorians believe they will need to upskill in order to keep up with advances in technology

Investing in early learning and life skills is key to increasing productivity while minimising future social, health and justice costs. The Victorian Government has made a great start in this area with the introduction of three-year-old preschool programs in some locations, but what is required is a broader, more concerted effort to build quality early years offerings. This includes developing a workforce with the necessary skills right across our regions to address differences in access, affordability and quality that we

see in existing pre-school offerings between metropolitan and regional areas.

In relation to student engagement, identifying and addressing barriers to learning such as mental health and broader wellbeing issues is critical to ensuring better educational outcomes. The idea is that by focussing on student wellbeing, we can improve both the social and academic outcomes for students, resulting in stronger and more productive communities.

# Transport

## Infrastructure investment is making a difference but congestion is still an issue

As any Victorian knows, there has been significant investment in our transport network lately. Major projects including the Metro Tunnel, Regional Rail Revival, Level Crossing Removal and West Gate Tunnel are all contributing to increase the capacity and accessibility of our road and rail networks.

Victorians are starting to enjoy the benefits of this spending program. A new survey of citizens by PwC shows that many Victorians feel well-connected to jobs, education, healthcare services and leisure pursuits. But some of us are feeling better connected than others. People in inner Melbourne have a range of transport options – both on the road and rail networks. Sixty-eight per cent of inner Melbourne respondents rated their transport options excellent 8 out of 10 or higher.

It is in our outer suburbs and regions where the picture is not so rosy. Residents of outer-suburban Melbourne report frustration with the increasing level of congestion on our roads and the coverage and frequency of public transport services, with 33 per cent in the outer west and 29 per cent in the outer east rating road congestion as dissatisfied and only 53 per cent saying they were satisfied with access to buses and 51 per cent in the outer west saying they were happy with their access to train services (a rating of 8 out of 10 or higher). In regional Victoria, congestion may not be a bigger issue, but only 23 per cent rated transport services as excellent. This suggests that despite the record levels of infrastructure spending, more is still needed, particularly in Melbourne's outer west and in regional Victoria.





## Augmenting the existing transport network

As one of the fastest growing cities in the developed world, Melbourne planners will need to think about transport in a different way if we are to accommodate a population projected to be eight million by 2051. Our citizen research made it clear that people want investment in transport as a priority.

By leveraging the existing transport investment and expanding this with further rail, tram and bus links, we can enliven our suburbs, activate precincts as thriving hubs for jobs and services, and fundamentally change the way Victorians move around our state.

This is the real opportunity (and intent) of projects like the Suburban Rail Loop. Transport should be viewed as an enabler, not an end in its own right. It is an enabler for the creation of communities where people can live closer to where they work, learn and

play. According to the research, responses highlight this sense of 'place' and local community as something people value highly. The survey also reveals that Victorians are becoming less concerned about how they are connected – they just want to get from A to B as quickly and cheaply as possible, noting younger citizens (aged 25-34) rate the cost of transport more poorly.

It may well be time to think differently about how we move around our suburbs, particularly for local trips. Innovative transport options such as 'smart' or on-demand buses and autonomous vehicles offer new ways of moving people from place to place, while other technologies such as drones and enabling new ways of working so people can be better connected and spend less time travelling.

# 53%

say they were satisfied with their access to buses

# 51%

say they were satisfied with access to trains



# Cost of living

## A lack of affordability is threatening our overall liveability

Given the current economic climate, it probably comes as no surprise that Victorians are apprehensive about the increasing costs of daily essentials and basic services such as utilities. Of the Victorians who completed our survey, only 20 per cent rate as excellent the affordability of utilities and 28 per cent with the affordability of everyday expenses.

Overall, just 40 per cent of Victorians reported feeling financially secure.

Unsurprisingly, it is people on low incomes (\$25,000–\$50,000 per annum) who most feel like they are being left behind, reporting lower levels of financial security (30 per cent feeling financially secure compared to 39 per cent for those with incomes \$50,000–\$100,000 per annum and 55 per cent for those with an annual income above \$100,000).

The research found that the dream of owning your own home is still very much alive amongst the majority of Victorians. Young people want to break into the market but are concerned with affordability in the areas they want to live. Overall, only 21 per cent of Victorians surveyed think they have excellent access to affordable housing.

We know from [separate research](#) that aged care and retirement living housing stock across Australia is typically outdated, not fit for purpose and in short supply in areas where elderly Australians want to live. This is the approaching ‘silver tsunami’ that is creating housing demand pressures for young and old. Retirement living and aged care housing stock requires significant

investment and the drivers for investment into the sector should be overhauled. As it stands, the gap between the demand for quality housing stock for older generations versus the supply will continue to widen.

## Affordable housing is key to addressing cost of living pressures

PwC believes a big part of the solution to cost of living pressures lies in housing. PwC’s citizen research shows us that only 21 per cent of Victorians think they have excellent access to affordable housing. There are two key paths worth pursuing to solve this problem. [PwC’s Build to Rent](#) report suggests that firstly, more flexible planning processes could open up new housing solutions. Secondly, functional, affordable and well-located housing needs to be built in areas that are desirable for millennials and ageing Australians.

We see a need for a greater degree of nuance in planning around key transport nodes to facilitate development. While a key cost of living pressure relates to housing affordability, the solution is not to continue to expand our growth boundary to free up land for development. When whole-of-life costs of development (e.g. road, transport, community infrastructure) are taken into account, this approach will not serve to maintain the state’s liveability for our rapidly growing population. Instead, we should focus on consolidating our growth boundary and concentrate development around existing infrastructure.



Just  
**40%**  
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feeling financially secure

There is an opportunity to establish an overarching framework (and mindset) to prioritise and incentivise development applications in areas that are located closer to key social infrastructure (and potentially under-utilised assets). Tax breaks could be offered for developments generating affordable housing options in desirable areas, especially if they lead to better utilisation and return on pre-existing assets. A fund from the state government to co-invest in at-scale housing development, while better leveraging the air rights above big state-led infrastructure projects, would help to open up under-utilised land in areas where people want to live.

We also need to do more to encourage a move towards appropriate medium-density apartment living in our cities. Supply is vital, but it must reflect the needs of all in the

community. Local and state governments will need to work together to address concerns of existing residents to create win-win solutions for residents, businesses and developers. Most modern cities promote appropriate medium-scale development, so there's no reason why Melbourne can't too.

Finally, government tenders should promote co-location of retirement living and aged care with health and community services so that future-focused older Victorians can seek out localities offering easy access to the care they need. Older Victorians need affordable accommodation options that offer sustainability, access to services and connection to community and family. When paired with necessary improvements in digital technology, these elements will enable more older Victorians to age well and 'in place'.

# Leisure

## Meeting the different requirements of the younger generation

Melbourne is justifiably famous for its sporting events – everything from the AFL Grand Final, Boxing Day Test, Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix, Australian Open tennis tournament and the race that stops the nation, the Melbourne Cup. The city also boasts a vibrant arts community (Melbourne was the second city in the world to become a [UNESCO City of Literature](#)), world-class food and dining, boutique shopping in laneways and high-end strips, as well as great museums, libraries, parks and gardens. Then there's regional Victoria, offering internationally famous attractions including the Great Ocean Road, Wilson's Promontory, the Yarra Valley and much more. Victoria has it all - beaches, snowfields, rivers, goldfields, spa country, regional arts, wineries and fine dining.

While leisure is important to the community for its own sake, there is also a strong economic logic. Access to leisure facilities and services is a crucial input to the development of a vibrant economy, as well as a healthy and inclusive society. Victorian respondents to our research indicated that leisure and recreational facilities (e.g. parks, recreation areas, cinemas, restaurants, retail outlets) are the second most important feature – after community safety and equal to the inclusiveness of the local area – in determining whether they love where they live.

Looking at Victoria as a whole, more than half (52 per cent) of survey respondents rate leisure facilities and services in their local area as excellent. What citizens particularly love about their communities is the availability of spaces where people can come together, be it in parks and playgrounds, theatres, galleries, restaurants or bars. The concentration of leisure and recreational activities in the Melbourne CBD and inner suburbs does mean that perceptions drop as you move out into the outer suburbs and the regions. While 68 per cent of inner Melbourne residents rate as excellent their access to leisure and recreational activities, only 41 per cent shared this perception in Melbourne's outer west, 48 per cent outer east, and less than 45 per cent in regional Victoria.

Scores for leisure facilities and services were also lower for the younger generation (aged 18–23) across Victoria. Opinions in this age group differed when it came to what mattered most, with adolescents in regional areas citing a lack of retail outlets as their main concern, while those living in Melbourne say their biggest pain point is the availability of entertainment venues.







**68%**  
of inner Melbourne  
residents are satisfied  
with their access to leisure  
and recreational activities

### More precincts and better access beyond the Melbourne CBD

While Melbourne is undoubtedly the restaurant, arts and sporting capital of Australia, these venues are largely concentrated in Melbourne's CBD and inner suburbs. However, to ensure these amenities are enjoyed more evenly across the state we need to focus on closing this gap so Victorians in our middle and outer-suburban growth centres, and those living in regional Victoria, also have great access to leisure activities.

Sporting, cultural and recreational hubs could be developed in Melbourne's middle ring of suburbs, as well as in regional Victoria. The Heide Gallery in Melbourne's north, and Werribee Zoo to the west, are just two examples of potential leisure precincts that are primed for redevelopment to provide jobs and recreational options.

The development of regional tourism 'circuits' would assist in making Victoria the next global tourism destination of choice, as would further development of the existing arts precinct to the south of the Melbourne CBD.

# Community safety

## Connected communities the answer to Victorians feeling safe

The results of PwC's citizen research suggest that perceptions of community safety are the single most important factor in whether Victorians 'love where they live'. This is not a particularly surprising finding; nor is the fact that, on the whole, Victorians feel safe in their local communities. However, unpacking the results reveals variations between different age groups, genders, communities and other demographics within our state. Exploring the nature of these variations can give us valuable insights about how we may be able to improve our overall perceptions of safety going forward.

Across all age groups, levels of income, education and geographic locations, women feel less safe than men. This should not be surprising, but it is vital that we do not lose sight of this fact. Victoria is leading the nation, and is one of the world leaders, in taking action to address violence against women through initiatives like the Family Violence Royal Commission and the implementation of recommendations from this, and the Gender Equality Strategy.

When we look at the age demographic of respondents, those over 65 years' old reported the perception of community safety, with an average rating of 7.4 out of 10, compared with the Victorian average of 7.1. People in inner Melbourne reported the highest overall perception of their own personal safety out of everyone in Victoria (7.8 out of 10 compared to 7.3 out of 10 in outer east and 6.7 in outer west) ahead of those in outer-metropolitan Melbourne. This may correlate with the findings that those who have lived in their local area for longer than two years are more likely to love where

they live and have a greater perception of community safety.

From the data, it also appears that the most fortunate in our community, including those with higher incomes or higher levels of education, also enjoy greater perceptions of personal safety. The question is – what is driving that difference, and how can we reduce the gap?

Part of the answer seems to be services. There is a distinct correlation between how well established communities are, and how safe their residents feel. It is in the growth corridors, where communities have only recently begun to be established, where people reported feeling the least safe. Respondents placed greater emphasis on the quality of the community safety infrastructure near where they live, and quick access to emergency services in their local areas. When it comes to our future, Victorians would prioritise investment in emergency services and infrastructure. This is aligned with many of the state government's recent and planned investments.



Looking forward, Victorians are optimistic about the potential for technology to enhance the safety of their communities (the second biggest opportunity behind education and training). Importantly, the communities that feel relatively less safe than the state as a whole, tend to be the most optimistic about how technology can improve their safety. This highlights the opportunity to leverage technology to improve our emergency services and connectedness within our communities. Technology provides the opportunity for members of the community to play a greater role in reporting crime and connecting with each other.

So perhaps, some of the biggest opportunities to ensure we feel safe where we live lie in thinking of new ways to improve a greater sense of connectedness. To focus on how all of us can drive a greater sense of community, welcome new neighbours and look out for one another.



# Jobs

## Technology to revolutionise the modern workforce

Around the world, there are an ever-increasing number of factories where lights are always turned off. So is the heating, air conditioning and anything else that would assist factory workers do their jobs. This is because there are no factory workers. They're called dark factories and all the work is done by robots.

It might seem scary for those of us who are worried about being replaced by a machine. But the good news is that, for every story about a dark factory, there is a tale about the new and exciting jobs being created as the world goes through a period of unprecedented change.

Technology has the potential to create many more jobs than it will ever take away. Whole new categories of work are coming along every day, solving problems that didn't exist before. Even five years ago, meeting someone who told you they were a drone pilot or holographic technician would have prompted incredulity.

As long as we get the settings right and people across the community are supported to adapt through lifelong education and training, we've got nothing to worry about - in fact, a technology backed future of work is something to get excited about.

The results from our survey of more than 4,500 Victorians on why they love where they live, shows that when it comes to work, a large proportion of Victorians are looking at the horizon and feeling positive.

Sure, 56 per cent of Victorians who are working full-time or part-time said technology would have an impact on their jobs in the next 5-10 years. But 46 per cent also said these changes would provide more and better job opportunities for them.

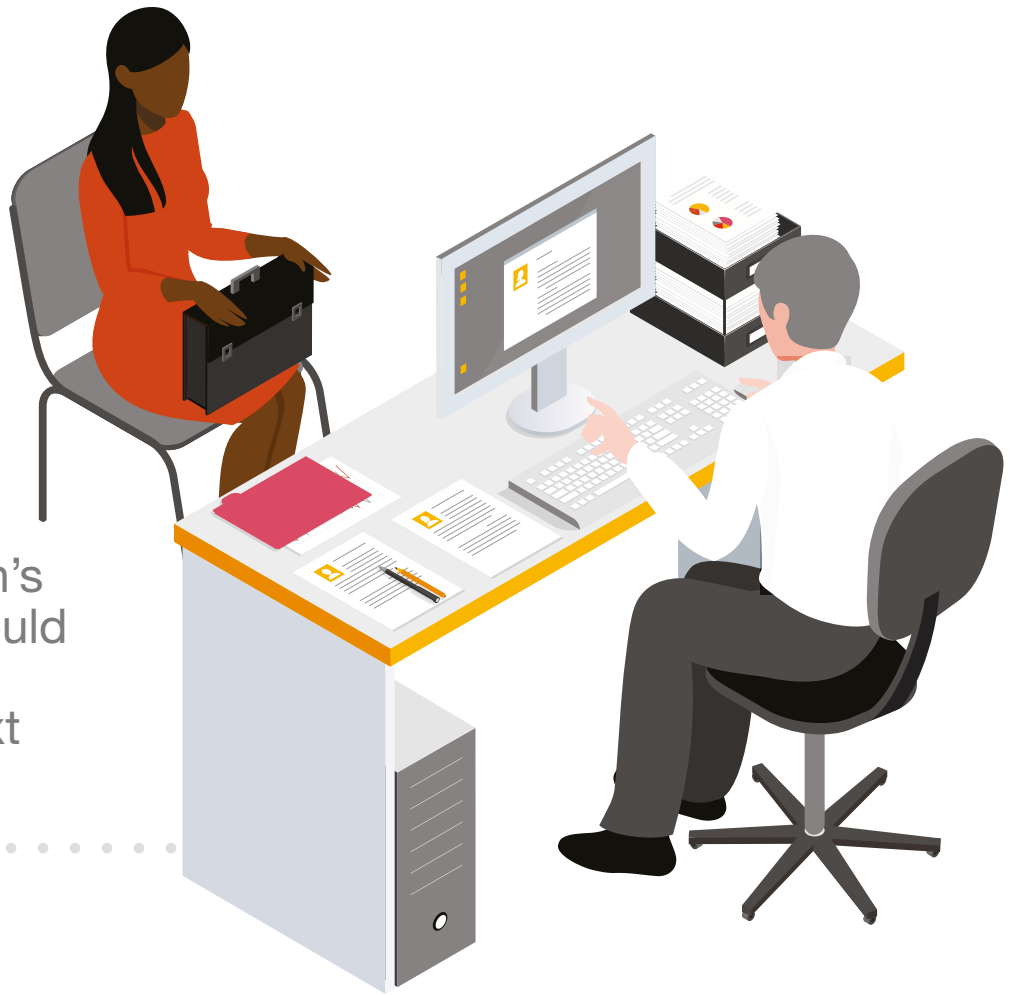
Tellingly, young people are more likely to feel comfortable about these changes. 55 per cent of Victorian's aged 18-24 and who are currently working agree technology will provide more or better job opportunities, compared to 32 per cent of those aged 55 and over.

New concepts like the gig economy - far from being feared - are being embraced by young people. They are attracted to a 'portfolio' way of working: being able to work for somebody for a couple of days a week on a part-time basis and then run their own business or moonlight.

And this leads us to another cause for hope and optimism - the survey results also tell us that the closer people work to their home, and the longer they have lived in one place, the better they feel about where they live. Technology, and the flexibility that comes with it, can be an enabler for this. People have the ability to commute less, and not have to move to find work.

An important task now is to support older Victorians to feel safer about this new future. The best way to not just support mature aged workers through this period of disruption, but everyone else as well, is to redefine the way we see education and training.





56%

of working Victorian's said technology would have an impact on their jobs in the next 5-10 years

46%

also said these changes would provide more and better job opportunities for them.

In the past, 80 per cent of your learning was done by the time you left school or university and only 20 per cent in the rest of your life. However that is set to reverse and we will need to have a continuous learning mindset if 80 per cent of our learning is going to take place after we leave education. We need new models of upskilling and reskilling for our workforce to ensure everyone is positioned well to adapt and thrive.

It's important to recognise that the old linear way – where you went to school, then went to university or got an apprenticeship, then started your career – worked when we had one or two jobs over our lifetime. But it falls flat in a world where individuals might have 10 or more jobs before retirement.

There needs to be a new focus on foundational skills and behaviours that can be applied across all the different jobs the average Victorian will have in their career. We should be aiming to produce modern workers who possess a lifelong bedrock of 'soft' skills like critical thinking, communication, teamwork, resilience and flexibility, and harder skills like digital literacy and cybersecurity awareness.

It's yet another cause for optimism, if we get this right. Why? Because these skills will continue to set us apart from the growing army of robots.

# Regions

## Is regional Victoria the state's best-kept secret?

Better public transport links and accelerating technology should make a move to the country more appealing than ever for young Victorians tired of city congestion and record house prices. But the relentless lure of Melbourne and an ongoing perception that the 'best' jobs are still in the city is working against genuine interest in getting more people out into the regions.

There are exciting new investments in business hubs, innovation precincts and the new GovHub centres in Ballarat, Bendigo and Latrobe Valley. However, the appeal of our regional cities continues to also be influenced by perceived shortcomings in the reliability and cost of public transport, access to regional education and the availability of well-paying jobs.

PwC's citizen research shows that 69 per cent will definitely or probably be living in their local area in five years time. Work opportunities remain the biggest concern across the state, with 54 per cent of respondents rating job prospects as 'average'.

The fact is that some of Victoria's regional cities show some of the highest scores from citizens when it comes to overall liveability. In Bendigo, where there has been significant investment in social infrastructure, residents are particularly satisfied with where they live, with 76 per cent of respondents rating their love for their area as 8 out of 10 or higher. That's because, although transport and work opportunities are perceived to be poorer than in either inner or outer Melbourne, Bendigo residents have a high regard for the level of

safety and inclusiveness the city offers, along with the quality and accessibility of its health services and leisure facilities.

Much of Bendigo's success comes down to location and investment, with millions of dollars spent on new roads, schools, sports infrastructure and the [\\$630 million Bendigo Hospital](#).

## Leveraging our secret weapon: thriving regional cities

Victoria's unique point of geographical difference is a cluster of rich, developed regional areas located adjacent to a thriving capital city. It provides the perfect platform to create a state of interconnected and interdependent regional cities, linked to a metropolitan centre.

We must put people at the heart of the creation of regional precincts, give them access to the essential elements of 'live', 'work' and 'play'. The most challenging of these is 'work': how do we enable the workforce of the future for regional Victoria? According to research respondents, the further people are from Melbourne's CBD, there is a tendency for a higher feeling of unavoidable change and stronger feelings of challenges about job opportunities. Victoria is the perfect candidate to attract global talent alongside intra and interstate immigration. With international fame, seasonal weather, fantastic culture which is in equal parts unique and internationally influenced, and outstanding access to a range of leisure and sports opportunities.



# 69%

of Victorians expect to continue living in their local area in the foreseeable future

The Victorian Government's recent announcements on the [Suburban Rail Loop](#) (which will connect key outer Melbourne precincts) and [Western Rail Plan](#) are welcome investments to help turbocharge regional growth. [Western Rail Plan](#) offers the opportunity to promote the integrated development of Australia's cities and regions by improving access to employment, community services and more affordable housing. Better transport connectivity improves economic and social ties and brings people and jobs closer together. At the same time, faster rail connections can create broader economic benefits for regional centres by boosting demand for local services and attracting businesses to local areas. This may relieve pressure on the Melbourne CBD while creating opportunities for more Victorians – regardless of where they choose to live.

However, it can't just be about transport. While it may be a critical enabler of connected places, faster rail alone cannot fully realise these benefits for regional communities without quality local services and amenities. Improving connectivity between Victoria's major centres (better facilitating the mobility of people and goods across regions) will support economic growth and lead to better community outcomes. Regional planning and sufficient provision of services and amenities is also needed to ensure regional Victorians don't rely on Melbourne to access the services they need.









## Building a thriving Victoria, together

Overall, Victorians told us they love where they live, but that there's room for improvement, particularly for the things that are most important to citizens' sense of place: access to health care and emergency services, transport links, the level of inclusiveness, community safety, access to jobs and facilities to learn, rest and be entertained.

PwC understands the urgency around tackling these challenges, and we are playing an active role in bringing people together to help solve the issues that matter most to Victorians. This starts with conversations supported by CityPulse, working together with government, business and our community – to achieve successful outcomes. Great states don't just happen by chance. They take the collective to create vibrant, connected communities.

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