

Opportunities for the north

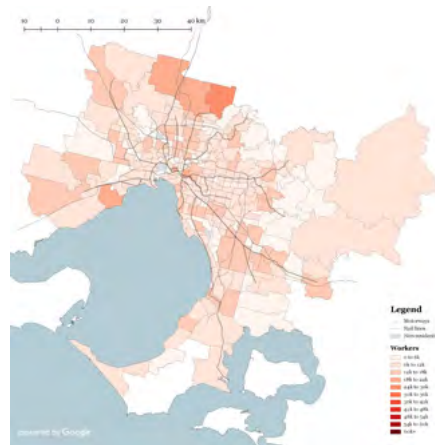


Making liveable, doable.

Melbourne's north is a story of two halves – the inner north and the outer north – with relative rankings for live, work and play generally all higher in the inner north.

This division is a reflection, at least in part, of the higher than anticipated growth that has occurred in the outer north in particular. The suburb of Doreen is in the top 10 locations in Australia in terms of population growth for the decade 2006–16¹, and in general amenity and infrastructure development in the outer north have simply not kept up with the rapid expansion.

Map 1: Melbourne_working population by SA2

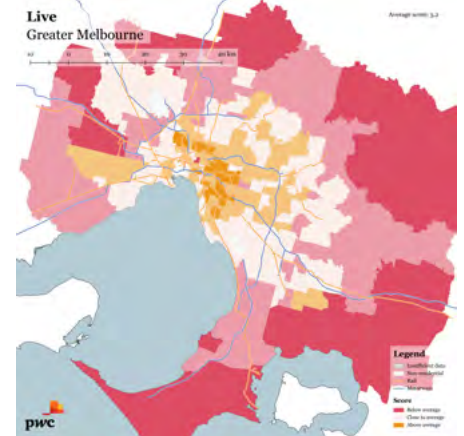


Live

Consistent with the overall picture, results for health, education and amenity access are all relatively high closer to the city, but rate poorly in the north's high population growth areas such as Doreen and Mernda.

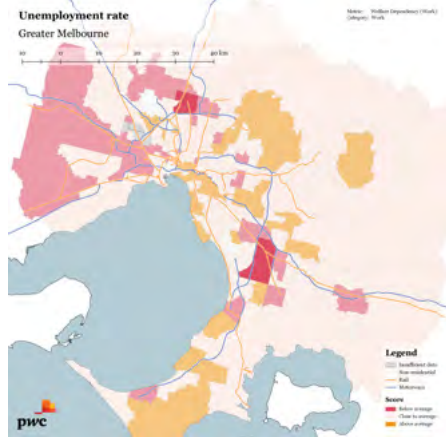
Property prices in the middle to outer north are still affordable by Melbourne standards, and even the inner northern suburbs rate better than many of their peers, particularly those in the east. However, for a large portion of the population, housing affordability remains a challenge in the north due to higher than average welfare dependency and unemployment.

Map 2: Live



¹Australian Bureau of Statistics: 3218.0 – Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2016

Map 3: Unemployment rate



Note: 'above average' means a positive outcome, i.e. low unemployment
 Source: Department of Jobs and Small Business data

Map 4: Jobs accessible by transit



Source: PwC's Geospatial Economic Model, Public Transport Victoria GTFS data

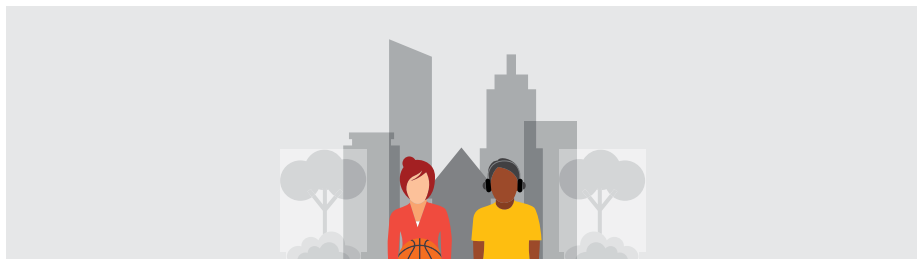


Work

There are significant pockets of welfare dependency and unemployment in the north. Broadmeadows, Meadow Heights and Coolaroo have the highest unemployment rates in Melbourne.

Poor local job access is diminishing options for local work, forcing residents to travel outside the area for employment. In the outer north, this travel is largely by car due to a lack of convenient transit alternatives. While La Trobe University is the largest employer in the north, for the most part the jobs that are accessible via public transport tend to be in the inner suburbs.

The population in the north has a lower-than-average level of educational attainment, particularly in the more welfare-dependent outer suburbs.²

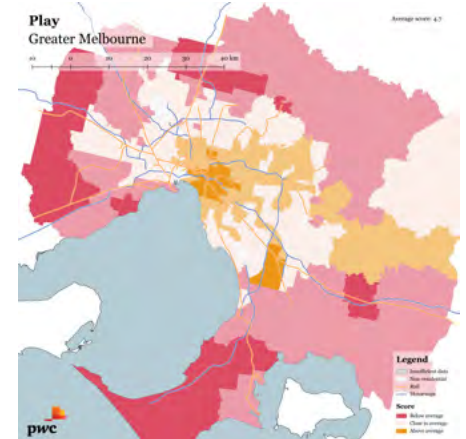


Play

The inner north has good access to entertainment and culture, as well as options for active living, particularly when compared to the western suburbs. Northcote in particular is a standout, rating as a great place to play, despite its only moderate access to open areas.

Consistent with the broader narrative of the rate of growth outpacing infrastructure and amenity development, the outer northern suburbs also have less access to play opportunities, including active living and entertainment options.

Map 5: Play



²Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census

The opportunities

There are a number of opportunities to redress the inner/outer split in Melbourne's north to provide better live, work and play outcomes, particularly for residents in the outer north and disadvantaged middle suburbs where infrastructure and amenity has not kept pace with population growth.



Stimulating the economy to provide local job opportunities for all residents will help to strengthen the case for investing in infrastructure and better amenity in the north. Measures such as facilitating investment in target industries and supporting infrastructure will help attract new businesses to the area, while supporting the growth of existing businesses.



Educational attainment for residents can also be improved by providing access to a range of education options, including training and higher education that is aligned with growth industries in order to assist with the transition from declining industries (including traditional manufacturing) to the service sector and knowledge jobs in the new economy.



The creation of a corridor connecting the state's agricultural production areas (in the north and east) would leverage the north's close proximity to the state's agricultural production areas to take greater advantage of local food manufacturing, the fruit and vegetable wholesale market in Epping and key transport hubs including Melbourne's air and sea ports. With growing demand from Asian markets, agribusiness has the potential to provide long-term employment and prosperity opportunities for the north.



Linking the universities more strongly with industry will further stimulate employment growth beyond campus boundaries and attract and retain knowledge workers in high value and high skilled areas such as advanced manufacturing and food technology.



The La Trobe National Employment and Innovation Cluster (NEIC) has already been earmarked by the Victorian Planning Authority (source: VPA website) as a key zone for economic growth and stimulus in the north. La Trobe University is the region's largest employer and a leader in agricultural biosciences and allied health, able to provide to link world-class research and training to attract jobs and industry-applied research to the north. RMIT University (just north of the NEIC) has complementary strengths in food and fibre, advanced manufacturing and allied health. RMIT's Food Research and Innovation Centre has recently jointly announced their Sector Growth Program grant with the Victorian government to begin capitalising on these opportunities (source: <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/creating-food-and-fibre-jobs-in-melbournes-north/>).



Maximising opportunities in the allied health sector in particular has the potential to foster employment growth in the north, as the industry responds to an increase in demand due to our ageing population. The Austin, Mercy and Northern health services are already significant employers in the north, so strengthening the links with training, research and development activities at the universities is likely to result in further opportunities for local residents beyond increased employment and prosperity – including better access to social infrastructure and services for some of Melbourne's most disadvantaged suburbs.



Complementing the emerging employment proposition in innovation and knowledge work with co-investment in diverse residential development is required to ensure access to education, health care, retail, cultural and sporting opportunities keeps pace with population growth. Providing appropriate live and play amenity in the north will ensure the benefits of innovation and industry development flow directly into the economy of the north, rather than being disbursed to other regions of Melbourne and beyond. Additionally, improving access to and promoting the utilisation of the natural assets in the middle and inner suburbs, including the creek trails and eco-corridors, will provide greater opportunities for play.



Finally, planning well in advance for true greenfield sites in the outer north expected to experience substantial growth and requiring the next phase of jobs, amenities and support over the next 10–30 years (areas such as Wallan), will ensure there are not significant disparities with the rest of Melbourne, while helping to provide renewed choices for liveability and affordability.



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