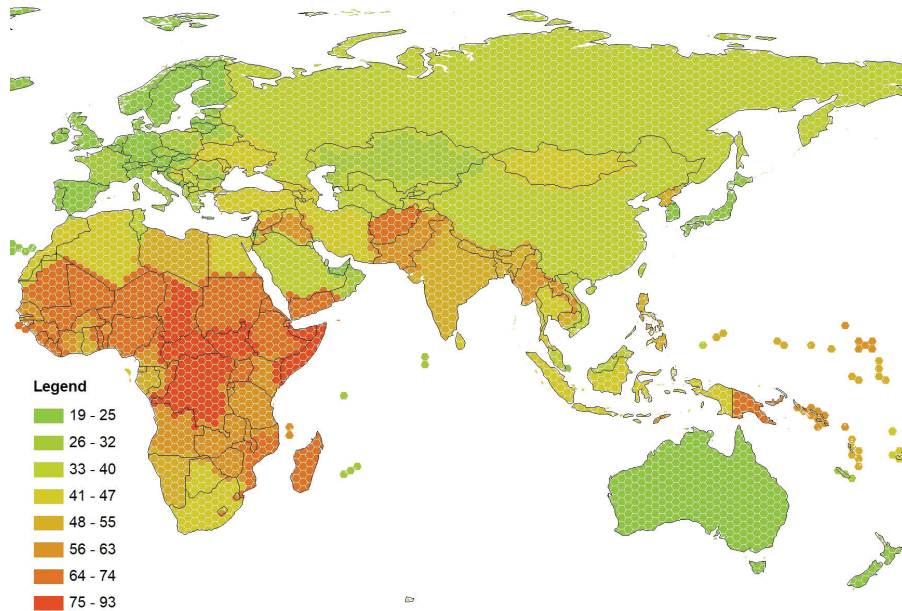


AUDRC Research Note

Preparing Australia for a potential surge in environmental migration



Are Australian cities prepared for a potential surge in environmental migration?

Background

- Projections for the number of people displaced by climate change globally are startling and vary from 20 million to 1 billion; however, a widely repeated prediction is for 200 million by the mid-twenty-first century. Although difficult to estimate, some proportion of these people will cross borders and end up in Global North countries.
- This paper offers a provocation on the implications for Australian cities. It reviews Australia's significant strategic planning policies in light of a possible mid-future surge in environmental migrants and considers how such policies could better prepare Australian cities.

Key findings

- Our analysis reveals that Australia's planning strategies for capital cities, states, and the nation often do not have substantial capacity for accommodating surges in environmental migration and are not factoring in climate change disruption to any significant degree – if at all.
- Moreover, they offer little guidance to planners regarding reconciling increasing multiculturalism with spatial planning. As to the former, this is understandable because projections for environmental migration are both politicised and uncertain. However, there are considerable risks to perpetuating such models.
- Key literature suggests that 'forward-looking' National Urban Policies (NUPs) can help cities and nations be more resilient by responding to a crisis and

preventing or preparing for future crises. A NUP would seek to distribute a future Australian population (including that through environmental migration) to areas with the highest carrying capacity and existing residents who welcome population growth

- Australia's planning for its major cities celebrates cultural diversity yet is mainly mute on how diversity should find expression in strategic planning, a need that is increasingly recognised by government. As such, urban planners would benefit from more spatial guidance, ideally provided at the Federal Government level, about planning for diverse communities.

Links to related publications

- Bolleter, J., Grace, B., & Freestone, R. (2022). Preparing Australia for a potential surge in environmental migration. *Australian Planner*. doi:10.1080/07293682.2022.2116061

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