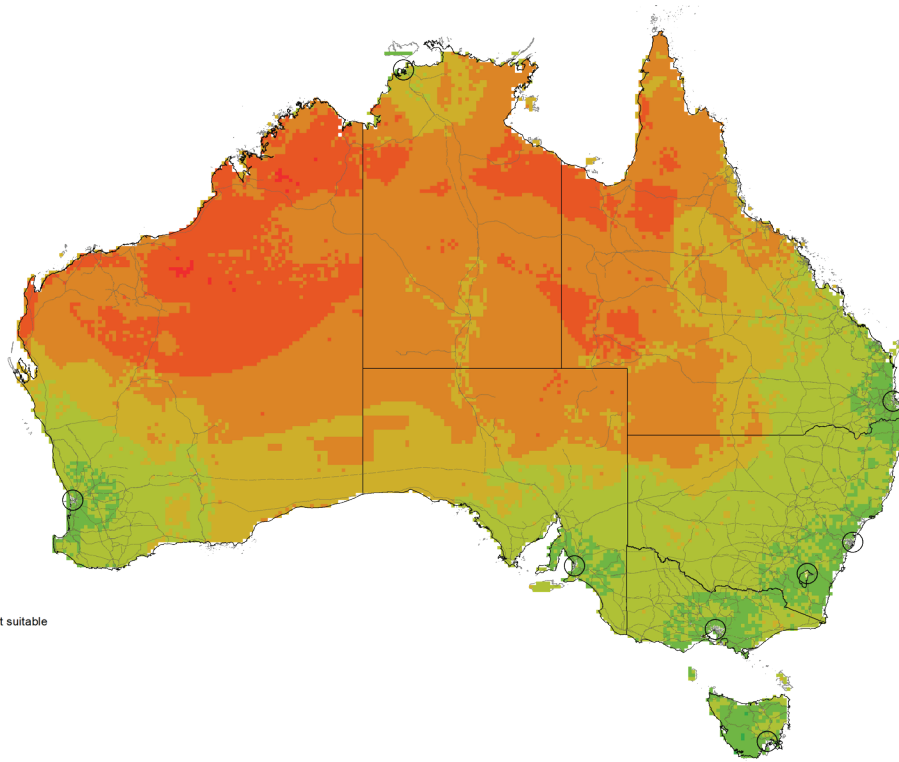


AUDRC Research Note

Informing settlement planning through national-scale suitability analysis



Our population could triple by 2101. Where should this future population live?

Background

- Australia's population is projected to triple by 2101, yet the nation lacks coordinated planning based on systematic regional analysis.
- Accordingly, we asked, 'Where should governments encourage urban development to maximise climatic liveability, protect natural and cultural heritage, capitalise on previous infrastructure investments, and maximise economic productivity?'
- To answer this, we conducted a systematic suitability analysis of the Australian continent to discern, against a set of climatic, natural and cultural heritage, infrastructural and economic factors, which regions are most fertile, feasible and appropriate for urban development to accommodate future population growth.
- Our project is innovative because our analysis is applied at a continental scale. Most suitability analyses have been conducted at the scale of municipalities, cities, or regions.
- The absence of national scale suitability analysis in Australia and elsewhere is noteworthy when the need for urban and regional planning at this overarching scale is consistently identified. Indeed, regional planning decisions not based on comprehensive, evidence-based analysis will incur significant social, economic and environmental costs.

Key findings

- The overall suitability analysis map (pictured) was generated from a weighted combination of the climate,

natural and cultural heritage, infrastructure and economics sub-models.

- This map reveals principal regions, in the east, southeast and southwest, most suitable for twenty-first-century Australian urban development (in green).
- The analysis suggests that future urbanisation should be grafted onto, or restructuring, existing settlement patterns rather than forging major new centres in areas where none currently exist.
- Our analysis calls into question the previous Federal Government's White Paper, which proposed increasing northern Australia's population from 1.3 million to 4-5 million by 2060.
- Our analysis provides a model that the federal or state government should take up as part of a national settlement strategy planning process.

Links to related publications

- Bolleter, J., Grace, B., Freestone, R., & Hooper, P. (2021). Informing future Australian settlement planning through a national-scale suitability analysis. *International Planning Studies*, 1-26. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2021.1899903>

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