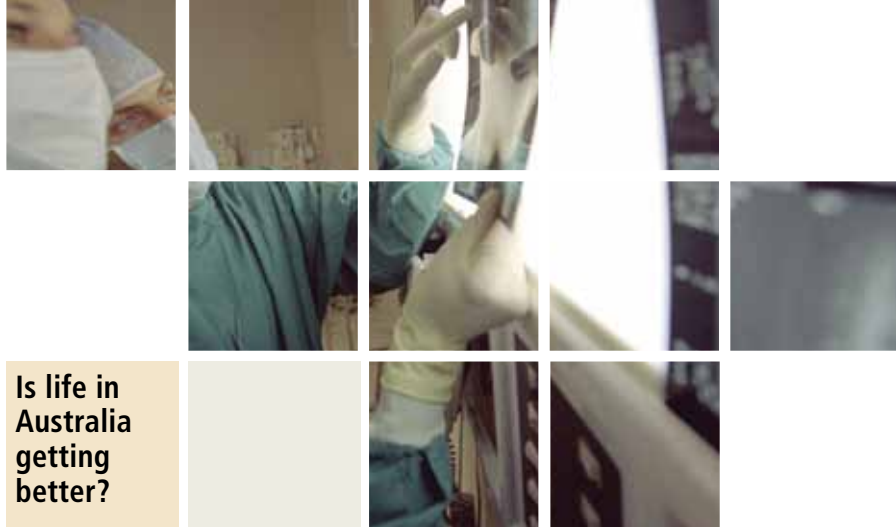


# Measures of Australia's Progress 2012

Is life in Australia getting better?





## Is life in Australia getting better?

*Measures of Australia's Progress* (MAP) presents a suite of indicators to help Australians determine whether life in Australia is getting better.

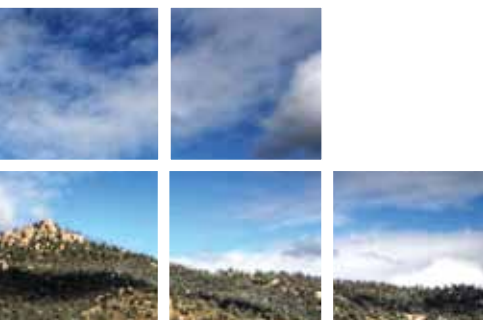
This brochure summarises the 17 headline dimensions of progress which cover major facets of Australian life.

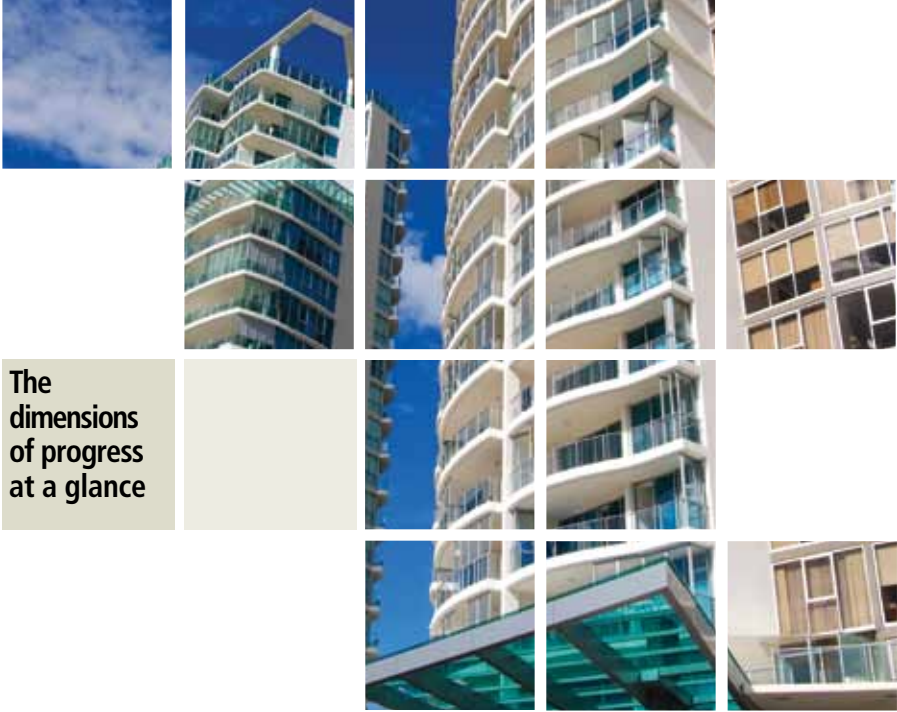
To enable people to quickly assess whether life in Australia is improving, a dashboard display using 'traffic lights' has been provided (see overleaf).

The dashboard display shows, at a glance, whether progress or regress has been made in each key dimension compared with 10 years ago. The subsequent pages explore in more detail the headline indicators for the dimensions on which the 'traffic lights' are based.

For more detailed information about any of the headline indicators and supporting material, visit the Measures of Australia's Progress website at [www.abs.gov.au/about/progress](http://www.abs.gov.au/about/progress)

This will be the last edition of this MAP brochure using the current MAP dashboard. A new MAP framework is currently under development based on the findings of a comprehensive conversation with Australians during 2011–12 about what their aspirations are for our nation. The findings of this conversation will be released in late 2012 and will be used to develop a refreshed set of indicators of whether life in Australia is getting better, for release in late 2013.





**The dimensions of progress at a glance**

**SOCIETY**

- Health
- Education and training
- Work
- Crime
- Family, community and social cohesion
- Democracy, governance and citizenship

**ECONOMY**

- National income
- National wealth
- Household economic wellbeing
- Housing
- Productivity

**ENVIRONMENT**

- Biodiversity
- Land
- Inland waters
- Oceans and estuaries
- Atmosphere
- Waste

**Legend:**

- Progress has generally been made in this headline indicator compared with ten years ago.
- This headline indicator has generally regressed compared with ten years ago.
- There has been no significant movement in this headline indicator compared with ten years ago.
- There is either no headline indicator for this area of progress or no time series.



## Health

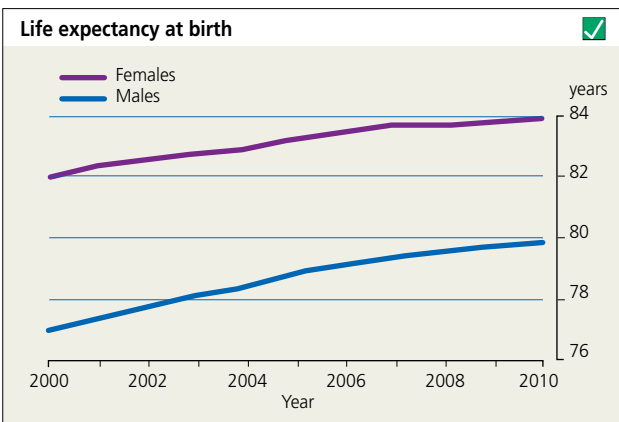
Good health directly, and indirectly, improves the wellbeing of individuals and the broader community.

For an individual, good health means a life free of the burdens of illness (pain, social isolation, financial costs, and restrictions to lifestyle choices).

For the nation, a healthy population is more able to contribute to society in various ways, such as through participation

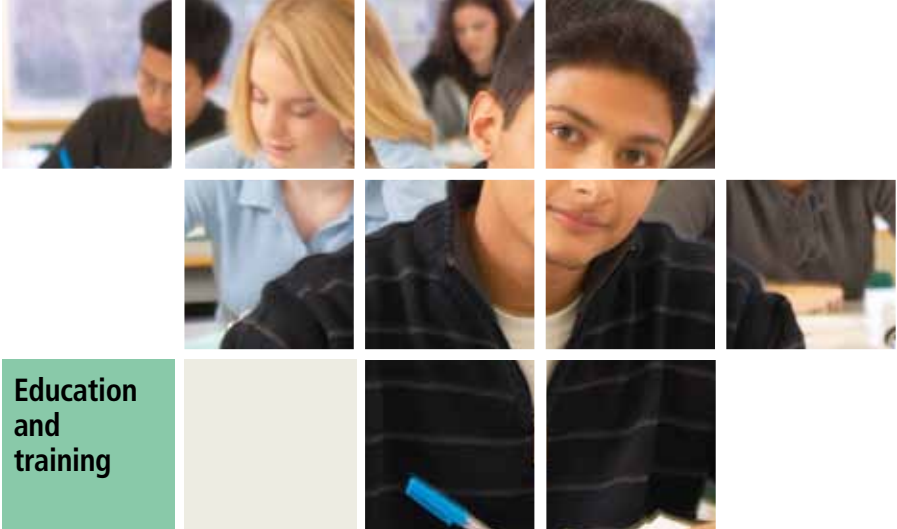
in employment, education and social or community activities.

- Australian life expectancy at birth improved during the decade to 2010. A girl born in 2010 could expect to reach 84.0 years of age, while a boy could expect to live to 79.5 years.
- Over the decade, boys' life expectancy increased slightly more than girls' (2.9 compared with 2.0 years).



Source: ABS *Deaths, Australia, 2010* (cat. no. 3302.0),

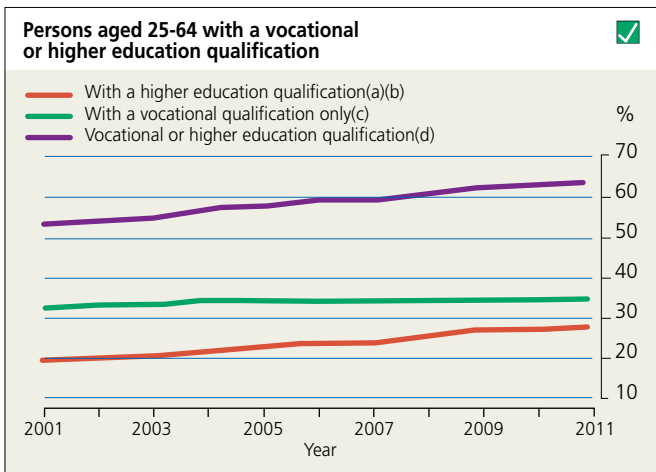
ABS *Australian Historical Population Statistics* (cat. no. 3105.0.65.001)



## Education and training

Education and training help people to develop knowledge and skills that may be used to enhance their own wellbeing and that of the broader community. For an individual, education is widely regarded as a key factor in developing a rewarding career. For the nation, having a skilled workforce is vital in supporting ongoing economic development and in improving living conditions.

- The proportion of 25–64 year olds with a vocational or higher education qualification has risen from 53% in 2001 to 64% in 2011.
- The proportion of people with a higher education qualification increased from 20% in 2001 to 28% in 2011, while the proportion of people whose highest qualification was a vocational qualification was 35% in 2011, a slight increase from 32% in 2001.



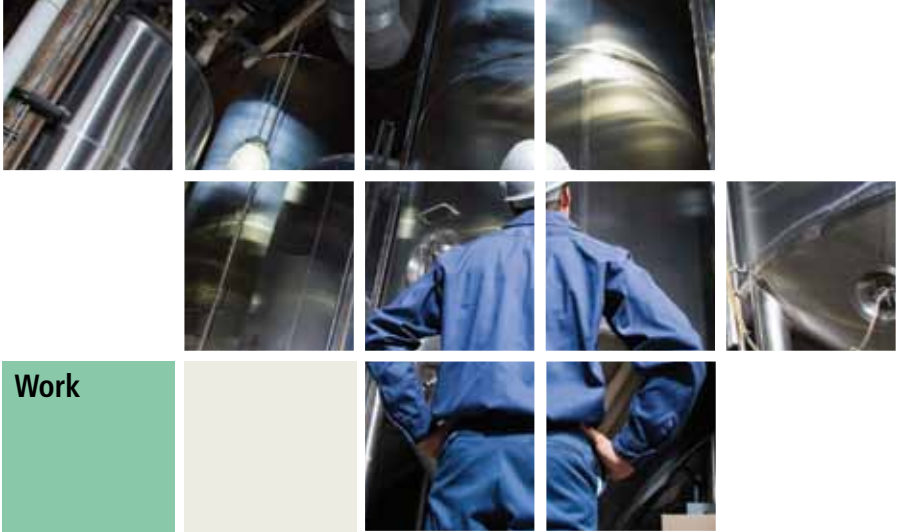
(a) Some of these people may also have a vocational qualification. As the data are based on people's level of highest non-school qualification, it is not possible to give the proportions of people with both types of qualification.

(b) Includes Postgraduate degree, Master degree, Graduate diploma, Graduate certificate and Bachelor degree.

(c) Includes Advanced diploma, Diploma, Advanced certificate and Certificates I to IV.

(d) Includes level not determined.

Source: ABS data available on request, 2000–2001 Transition from Education to Work Survey; ABS data available on request, 2002–2010 Survey of Education and Work

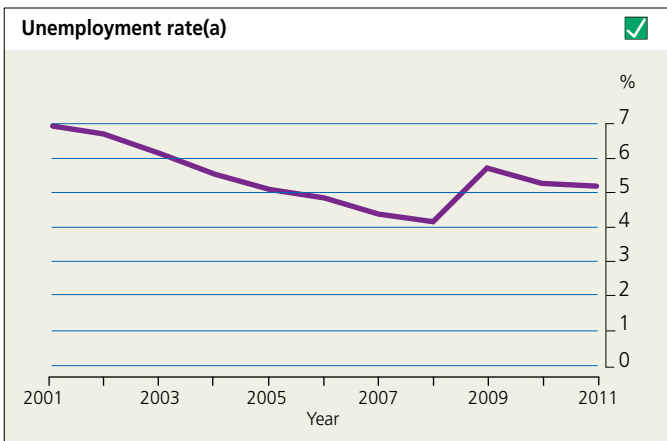


## Work

Paid work is the way in which most people obtain the economic resources they need for day-to-day living.

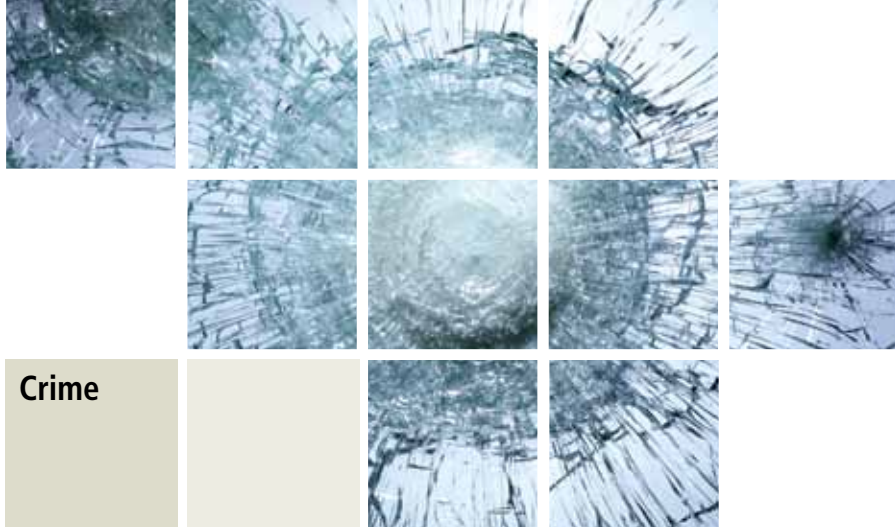
Having paid work contributes to a person's sense of identity and self-esteem, while people's involvement in paid work also contributes to economic growth and development.

- Over the last decade the annual average unemployment rate for Australia has generally declined, from 6.8% in 2001 to 5.1% in 2011.
- Over the last few years the annual average unemployment rate rose from a low of 4.2% in 2008 to 5.6% in 2009 before declining in 2010 and 2011.



(a) Annual average.

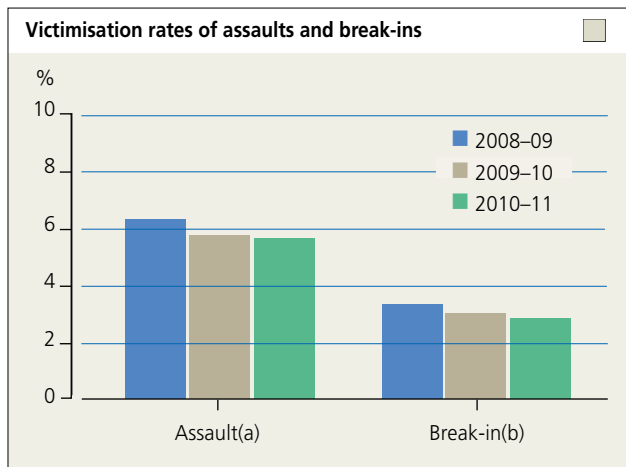
Source: ABS *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery, May 2012* (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)



## Crime

Crime in its many forms can impact the wellbeing of not only victims, but also their families, friends and the wider community. It has the potential to inflict financial, physical, emotional and psychological suffering upon those most directly affected. Fear of crime can affect people by restricting community engagement, reducing levels of trust and impacting on social cohesion.

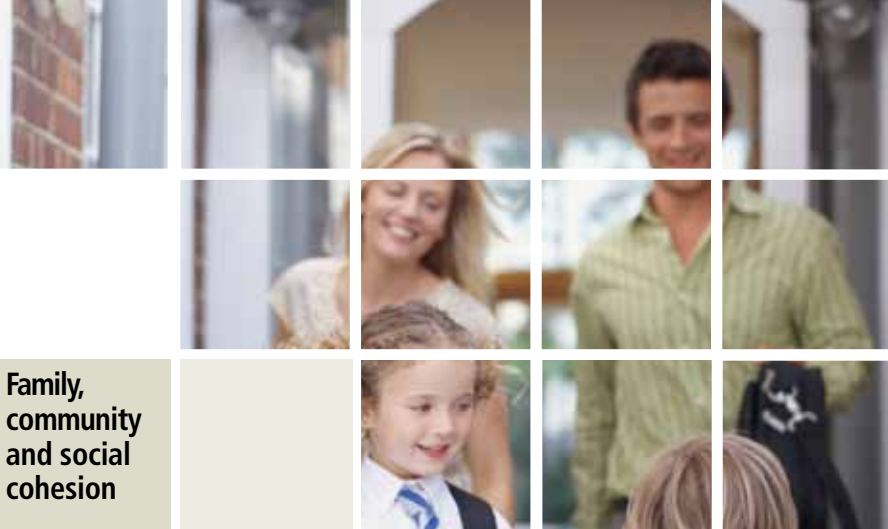
- In 2010–11, 5.6% of all Australians aged 15 years and over were victims of at least one assault in the 12 months prior to interview. This is similar to the 2009–10 rate of 5.7%.
- In 2010–11, 2.8% of Australian households were victims of at least one break-in. There was no significant change since 2009–10.



(a) Proportion of people aged 15 years and over who reported experiencing a physical or threatened assault in the 12 months prior to interview.  
 (b) Proportion of households who reported experiencing a break-in in the 12 months prior to interview.

Source: ABS *Crime Victimisation, Australia, 2010–11* (cat. no. 4530.0)





**Family,  
community  
and social  
cohesion**

Families and communities are the building blocks of society and national life.

The quality and strength of people’s relationships and bonds with others – their family, friends and the wider community – are important ingredients of a cohesive and inclusive society.

Families generate care and guidance which support the development of healthy functioning individuals and the values underlying civil society.

The vast range of services provided within communities by groups, clubs and charitable organisations are a crucial adjunct to support the role of the family.

Currently, there is no one summary measure that adequately captures the way that family and community contribute to progress, nor an agreed summary measure of social cohesion. As such, there is no headline indicator for this dimension.







## Democracy, governance and citizenship

The wellbeing of society depends not only on the wellbeing of individual citizens, but also on the quality of our collective public life: on factors such as the fairness of our political system, the health of our democracy and the participation of citizens in public life.

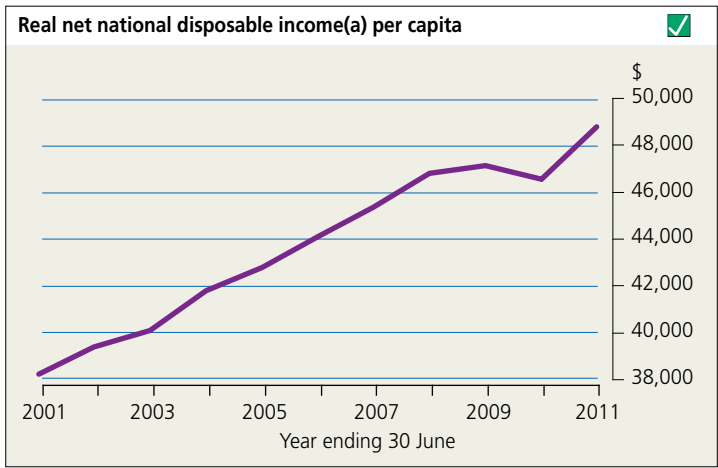
While democracy, governance and citizenship is one of the headline dimensions for assessing whether life in Australia is getting better, it is difficult to find a single indicator that adequately captures this very wide dimension of progress, and consequently there is no headline indicator.



National income is an indicator of Australians' capacity to purchase goods and services for consumption. It is a determinant of material living standards and is also important for other aspects of progress.

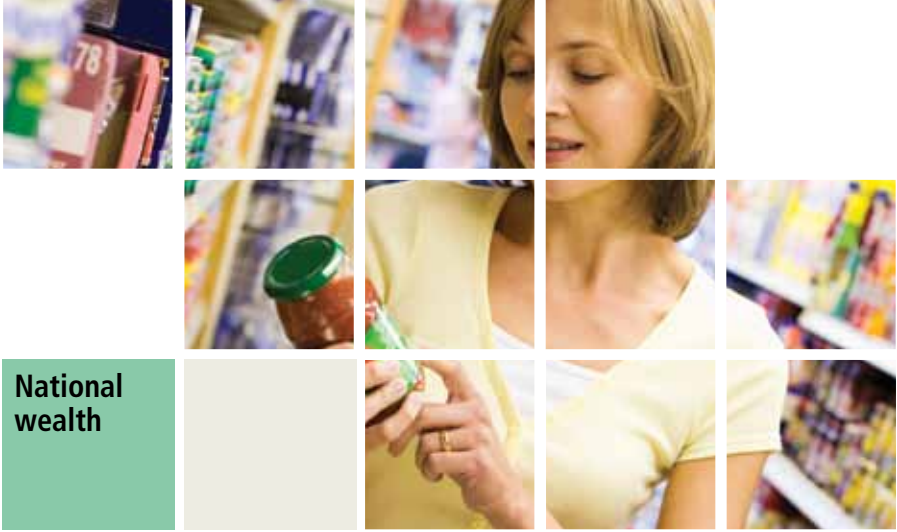
A rise in real income means not only a rise in the capacity for current consumption, but also increased ability to accumulate wealth (e.g. houses, machinery, financial assets), which may be used to generate future income and support future consumption.

- During the decade 2000–2001 to 2010–11, Australia's real net national disposable income grew from \$38,500 per person to \$49,100 per person in 2009–10 dollars.
- Year-on-year growth of around 2–3% was consistent for most of the decade, peaking in 2008–09 at \$47,400, followed by a decline in 2009–10, but has since recovered, with growth of 4.8% between 2009–10 and 2010–11.



(a) Real income measure: reference year 2009–10.

Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, 2010–11 (cat. no. 5204.0).



## National wealth

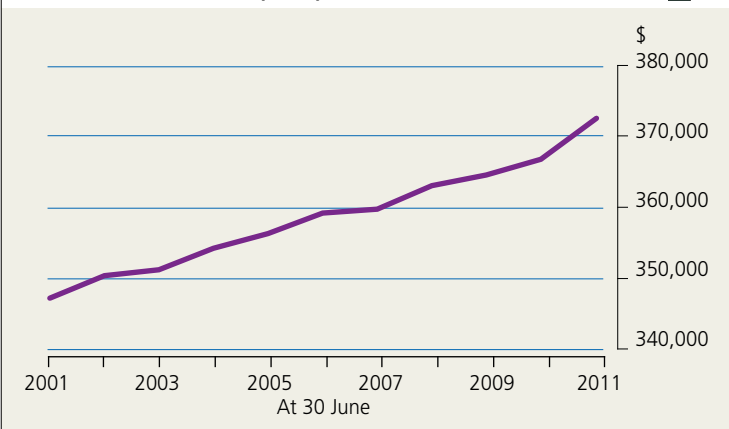
A nation's wealth, along with the skills of the workforce, has a major effect on its capacity to generate income.

Income that is saved rather than spent on current consumption allows for the accumulation of wealth that may generate income and support higher levels of consumption in the future.

- Between June 2001 and June 2011, Australia's real national net worth rose from \$347,800 per person in 2001 to \$373,100 per person in 2011 (in 2011 prices), at an average annual rate of 0.7%.



**Real net national worth(a) per capita**



(a) Reference period is year ending 30 June 2011.

Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, 2010-11 (cat. no. 5204.0).

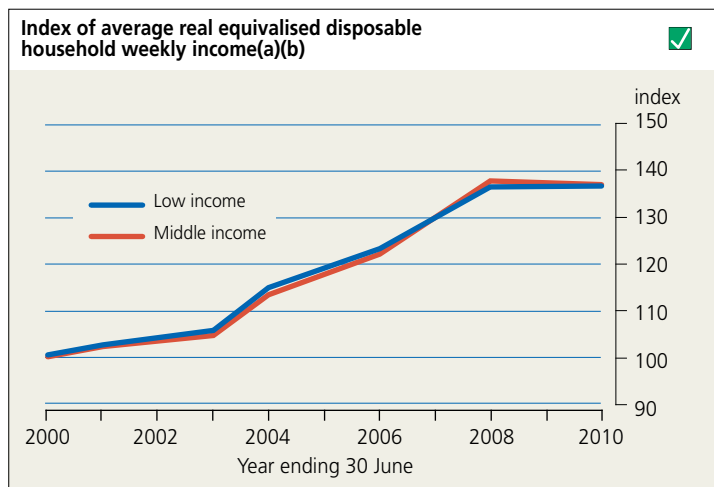


## Household economic wellbeing

Household economic wellbeing is largely determined by a household's command over its economic resources and, in turn, its ability to maintain a minimum material standard of living.

People living in households with low income may be less likely to have sufficient economic resources to support an acceptable material standard of living.

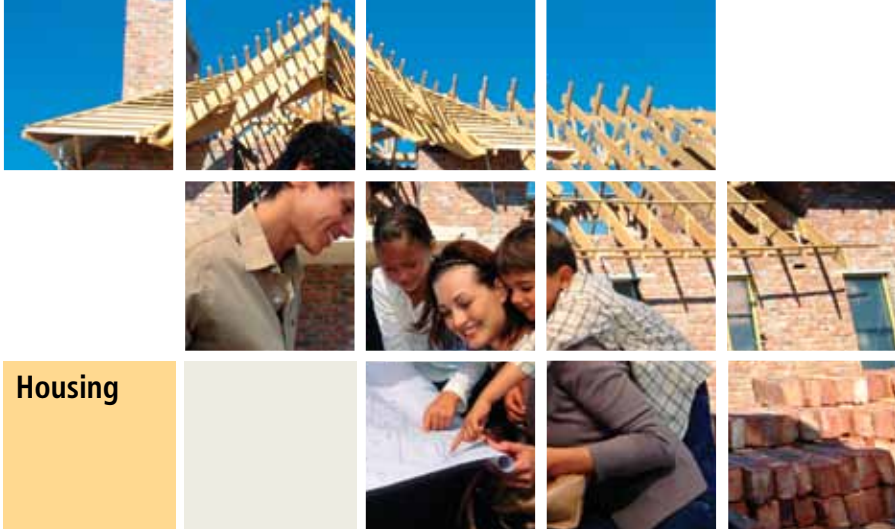
- The average real equivalised disposable (after income tax) household weekly income of low income households and middle income households rose between 1999–2000 and 2009–10, up by 38% for both groups, peaking in 2007–08 and remaining steady to 2009–10.



(a) Base year is 1999–2000 and equals 100. Based on 2009–10 dollars, adjusted using changes in the Consumer Price Index.

(b) Data have been interpolated for years ended 30 June 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2009.

Source(s): ABS data available on request, 1999–2000 to 2009–10 Survey of Income and Housing



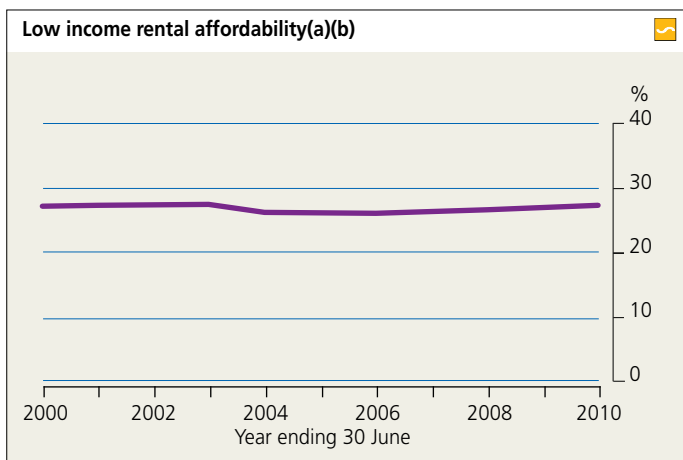
## Housing

Housing provides people with shelter, security, and privacy. Having an adequate and appropriate place to live is fundamental to people's wellbeing. Improvements to the overall accessibility of appropriate housing for Australians is important in determining whether life in Australia is getting better.

Most Australian households are able to exercise a significant degree of choice over housing when making their decisions about the cost of living, savings and

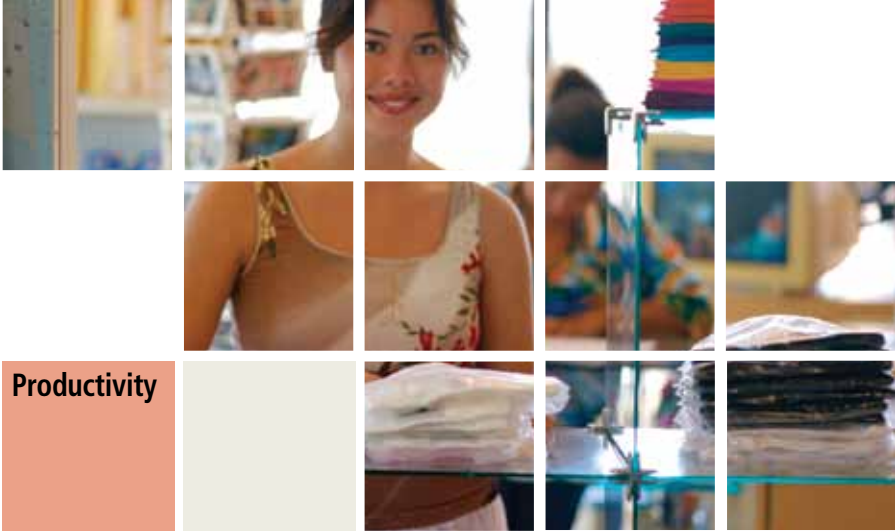
investment. But for many low income households, renting is often the only affordable option, and suitable rental dwellings can become less accessible when rents rise faster than incomes.

- Rental affordability for low income households (that is the proportion of housing costs to gross income for low income renters) has remained constant over the past 10 years (28% in 1999–2000 and 28% in 2009–10).



(a) Data unavailable for years 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2009 and have been interpolated.

Source(s): ABS data available on request, Survey of Income and Housing



## Productivity

Productivity is the efficiency with which an economy transforms inputs (such as labour and capital) into outputs (such as goods and services). Improved production efficiency can generate higher real incomes and lead to long-term improvements in Australia's living standards.

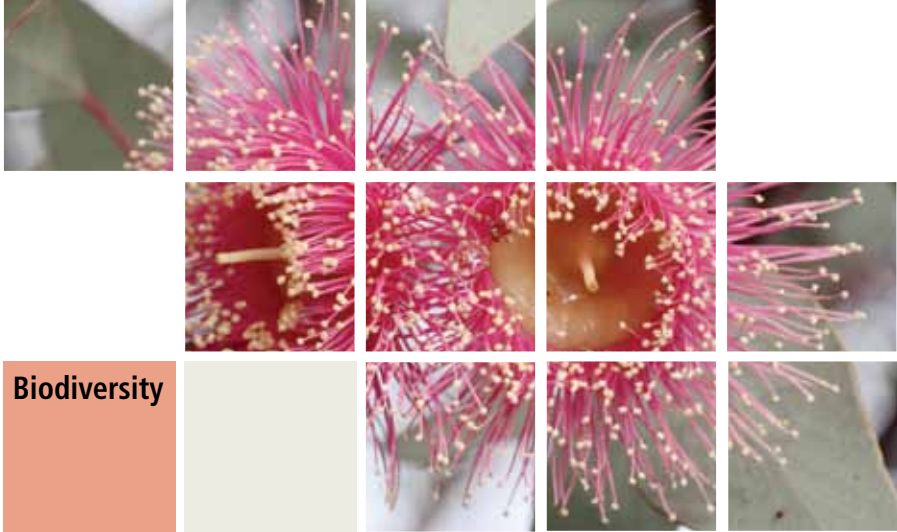
- Australia's multifactor productivity performance has varied over the last decade.
- For the productivity growth cycle of 1998–99 to 2003–04, real output growth (3.6%) exceeded growth in inputs (2.7%) resulting in positive growth in multifactor productivity (0.7%).
- In the most recent productivity growth cycle, 2003–04 to 2007–08, growth in inputs (4.5%) exceeded growth in outputs (3.7%) and multifactor productivity therefore experienced negative growth (–0.8%).



(a) Quality adjusted hours worked basis. Gross domestic product per combined unit of labour and capital.

(b) Reference year is 2009–10 = 100.

Source: ABS Australian System of National Accounts, 2010–11 (cat. no. 5204.0)

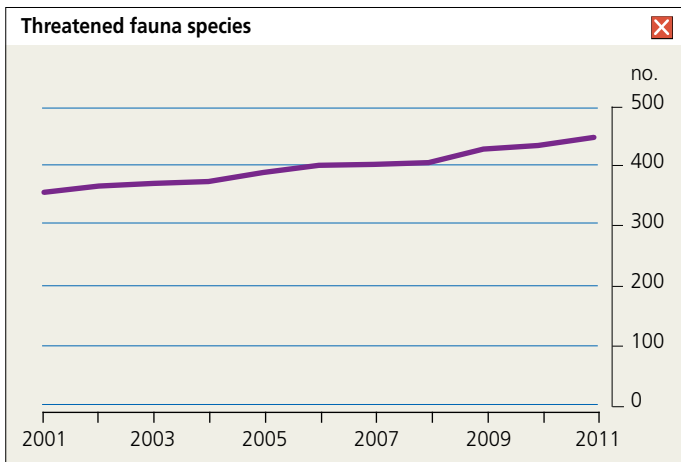


## Biodiversity

Biodiversity is essential to the wellbeing of Australia and its people, with native plants, animals and other organisms contributing to a healthy environment.

Aside from aiding the maintenance of clean water, clean air and healthy soils, they also provide significant economic benefits, for example, through tourism, agriculture, and a variety of cultural and recreational services.

- Over the past decade, the number of threatened fauna species has increased from 353 in 2001 to 439 in 2011.
- Of these threatened fauna species, just under half (45%) were listed as vulnerable, around two-fifths (41%) were listed as endangered or critically endangered, and just over one in ten (13%) were listed as extinct.



Source: Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 'EPBC Act List of Threatened fauna'.

Current list is available on-line, although historical data is sourced directly from SEWPaC, [www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au).





**Land**

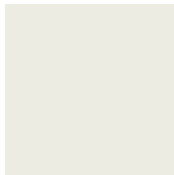
The land on which Australians live is essential for their wellbeing. It provides the foundation for animals and plants to flourish, with functioning ecosystems providing clean water, clean air and healthy soils as well as maintaining our unique biological diversity.

There is currently no headline indicator for the land dimension that adequately summarises landscapes, biodiversity and ecosystem services.





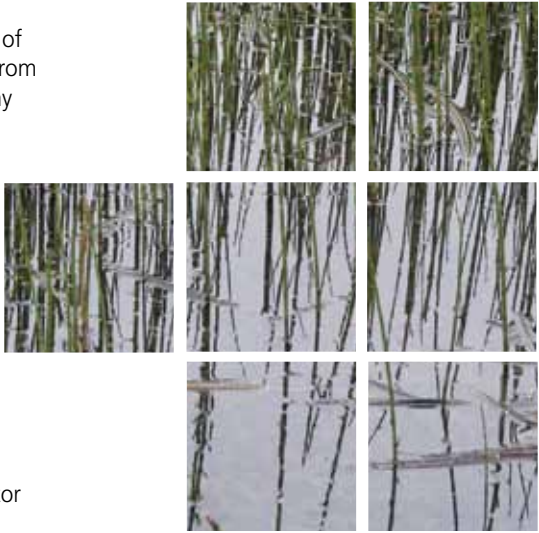
## Inland waters

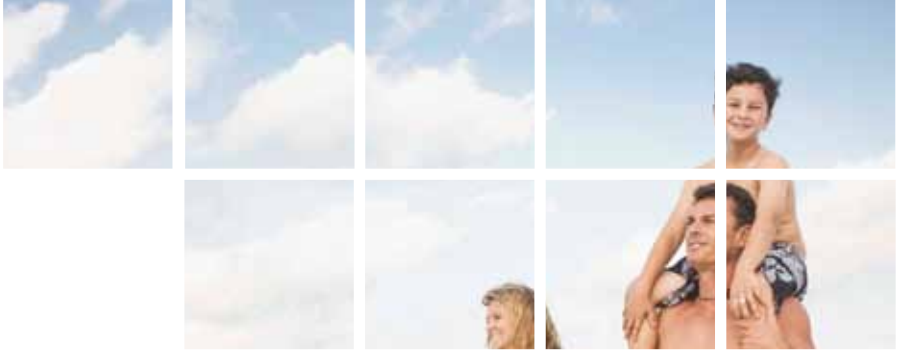


Water is fundamental to the survival of people and other organisms. Apart from drinking water, much of our economy (agriculture, in particular) relies on water. Furthermore, the condition of freshwater ecosystems has a critical impact on the wider environment.

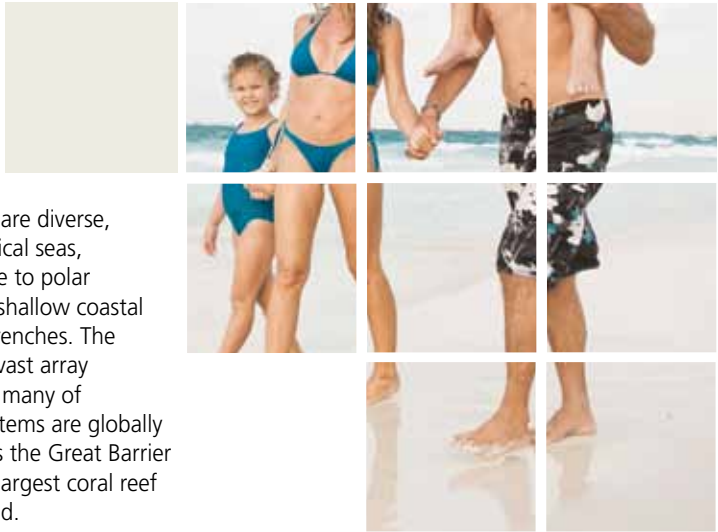
Fresh water is a finite and scarce resource in many areas of Australia. Consumption of fresh water potentially depletes water storages in dams and reduces river flows, which can be environmentally and economically detrimental.

There is currently no headline indicator for the inland waters dimension that takes into account the quantity and the quality of water available, and the health of Australia's inland water ecosystems. Measuring inland water use is also problematic due to fluctuating weather patterns and resulting inconsistent user demands. For these reasons there is currently no headline indicator for this dimension.



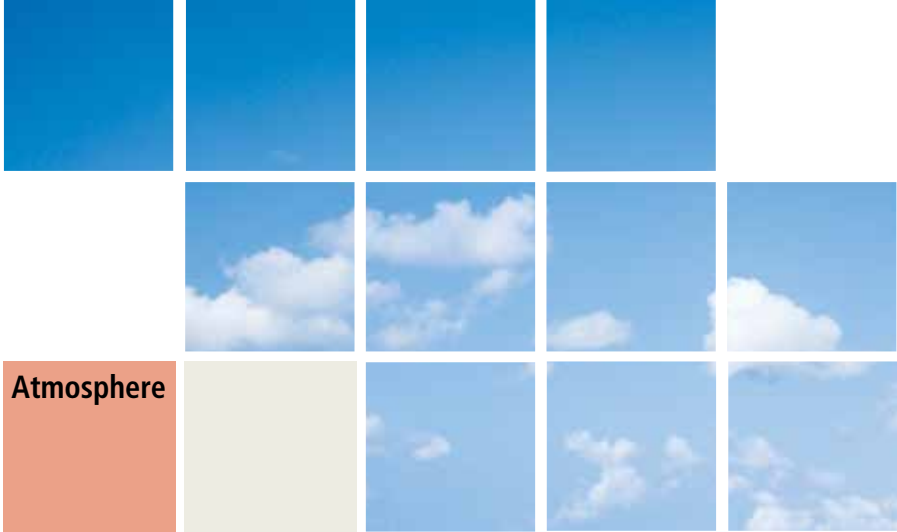


## Oceans and estuaries



Australia's oceans are diverse, ranging from tropical seas, through temperate to polar waters; and from shallow coastal waters to ocean trenches. The oceans support a vast array of marine life and many of our marine ecosystems are globally important, such as the Great Barrier Reef which is the largest coral reef system in the world.

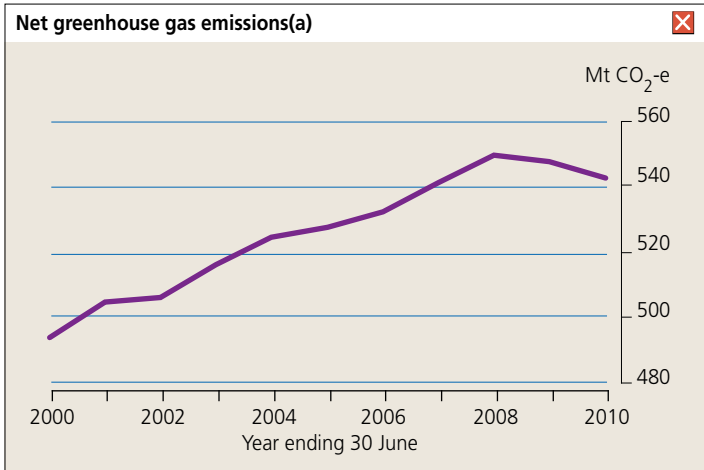
Despite its importance to Australia, there is no comprehensive and nationally consistent system for measuring the condition of Australia's ocean and coastal ecosystems. For this reason, there is currently no headline indicator for this dimension.



The atmosphere is an essential component of all ecological systems on Earth. The atmosphere plays a critical role in regulating global, regional and local climate and is essential in supporting life on Earth. Greenhouse gases occur naturally in the atmosphere, trapping the sun's warmth to enable the Earth's surface temperature to support life. Human activities have increased the atmospheric concentrations

of these gases, thereby contributing to climate change.<sup>1</sup>

- In the decade to 2010, Australia's greenhouse gas emissions increased by 10%, rising from 494.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent gases in 2000 to 542.7 million tonnes in 2010.
- There was a decrease in 2009 and again in 2010 from a peak of 549.5 million tonnes in 2008.



(a) Excludes emissions from land use, land use change and forestry sector.

Source: Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, 2011, *National Greenhouse Gas Inventory*, [www.climatechange.gov.au](http://www.climatechange.gov.au).

1. CSIRO 2009, *The Science of Tackling Climate Change*, CSIRO, Melbourne, [www.csiro.au](http://www.csiro.au), last viewed September 2012.



Waste generation accompanies all human activities in the form of solid, liquid and gaseous waste and comes from households, building and demolition sites and the industrial sector.

Waste is expensive to deal with and has a damaging impact on the environment, affects people's health and can even influence trade in the economy.

The volume of waste that a society produces is an indicator of resource use and of the by-products of consumption, determined by production and consumption patterns.

Currently there is no headline indicator available for this dimension.



Measures of Australia's Progress 2012

