



Water Sensitive  
Cities Index

# How water sensitive is your city?

The CRC for Water Sensitive  
Cities (CRCWSC) can help  
you answer this fundamental  
question.

**Module 1** of our **Water Sensitive Cities Transition Planning Process** is about **understanding the system (current state)**—and a functional, reliable and scientifically robust way to do that is to use the CRCWSC's **Water Sensitive Cities Index** to benchmark your city's current water sensitive performance.

Through this first step of the process, you will unite all stakeholders in determining how well your city is presently performing and gaining a shared perspective on coordinated action going forward.



CRC for  
Water Sensitive Cities



**Business**  
Cooperative Research  
Centres Programme

# Use the WSC Index to answer: *Where are we now?*

The most useful starting point for your city's water sensitive transition journey is a clear understanding of your city's current water system.

We apply the **Water Sensitive Cities (WSC) Index** to benchmark your city or town against **34 indicators** that characterise a water sensitive city. The Index supplies reliable evidence about your city's strengths and weaknesses for you to use in informing on-ground action, seeking project funding or approval, and tracking progress over time.

For the first time, you can see how your city measures up as a water sensitive city.

The **34 indicators** relate to **seven goals** of a water sensitive city:

- Ensure good water sensitive governance
- Increase community capital
- Achieve equity of essential services
- Improve productivity and resource efficiency
- Promote adaptive infrastructure
- Improve ecological health
- Ensure quality urban space.

*It's such a fantastic process, to benchmark ourselves, to see where we sit on that city-state continuum. But one of the really great things for us is this process of bringing people together and breaking down those silos we're always talking about. People interacting across areas and across departments, getting a real understanding of how they're working with water in their own urban context has been a fantastic process.*

**GILES PICKARD**  
City of Subiaco



# Seven goals and 34 indicators of a water sensitive city

1. Ensure good water sensitive governance	2. Increase community capital	3. Achieve equity of essential services	4. Improve productivity and resource efficiency	5. Improve ecological health	6. Ensure quality urban space	7. Promote adaptive infrastructure
1.1 Knowledge, skills and organisational capacity	2.1 Water literacy	3.1 Equitable access to safe and secure water supply	4.1 Benefits across other sectors because of water-related services	5.1 Healthy and biodiverse habitat	6.1 Activating connected urban green and blue space	7.1 Diverse fit-for-purpose water supply system
1.2 Water is key element in city planning and design	2.2 Connection with water	3.2 Equitable access to safe and reliable sanitation	4.2 Low GHG emissions in water sector	5.2 Surface water quality and flows	6.2 Urban elements functioning as part of the urban water system	7.2 Multi-functional water system infrastructure
1.3 Cross-sector institutional arrangements and processes	2.3 Shared ownership, management and responsibility of water assets	3.3 Equitable access to flood protection	4.3 Low end-user potable water demand	5.3 Groundwater quality and replenishment	6.3 Vegetation coverage	7.3 Integration and intelligent control
1.4 Public engagement participation and transparency	2.4 Community preparedness and response to extreme events	3.4 Equitable and affordable access to amenity values of water-related assets	4.4 Water-related commercial and economic opportunities	5.4 Protect existing areas of high ecological value		7.4 Robust infrastructure
1.5 Leadership, long-term vision and commitment	2.5 Indigenous involvement in water planning		4.5 Maximised resource recovery			7.5 Infrastructure and ownership at multiple scales
1.6 Water resourcing and funding to deliver broad societal value						7.6 Adequate maintenance
1.7 Equitable representation of perspectives	The WSC Index is a proven tool: it's undergone three years of testing and validation with industry partners. It works for small towns as well as cities, in both metropolitan and regional areas.			So far, we have benchmarked municipalities ranging in population size from 10,000 to 600,000, as well as regional towns of 100,000 to cities of five million.		

# Benchmarking your city begins to build a community of practice

Applying the WSC Index is the first step in your city's transition to a water sensitive city, which will require a 'community of practice' based on collaboration and co-delivery. The benchmarking process unites stakeholders and gives them a common understanding and language, to begin the journey and drive the process forward.

Using the WSC Index, you can:

- foster collaboration among stakeholders
- describe the key attributes of a water sensitive city
- benchmark your city's water sensitive performance
- articulate shared water sensitive cities goals
- communicate to a broad range of stakeholders
- access reliable evidence to use in seeking project funding or approval, and to track progress over time
- learn from other cities becoming more water sensitive.



# We support you in using the WSC Index

We help you apply the WSC Index through a collaborative workshop process. An accredited provider delivers a full day workshop to explain and implement the WSC Index for experts, professionals and other interested groups, such as representatives from councils, water authorities, state government agencies, developers and peak bodies. The workshop lays the foundations for the collaborative relationships that are essential to bringing about real change.

The workshop explores perspectives of water sensitive cities concepts and principles for the local area, and then displays the results in several visual formats. The workshops use a voting and discussion process to reach the final indicator scores:

1

**Participants use their own perspective to vote on an indicator score using a live polling system.**

2

**Participants discuss their perspectives and draw out specific evidence and justifications.**

3

**Participants reach a consensus and agree on a final score for each indicator.**

4


**The final scores are displayed by several different measures to show the city's progress towards greater water sensitivity.**

The result is a clear picture of a city's strengths and areas for improvement, to become a more water sensitive city.

*This was the best consultative work that I have witnessed in 17 years. The CRCWSC's professionalism and knowledge showed that the council clearly found the right people for the job. The workshop environment was truly objective, with no bias or pressure. I am very confident that the outcomes will yield the best results for the project.*

**DR HAMID MIRFENDERESK**  
City of Gold Coast





## The benchmarking report is your scorecard and summary

You'll receive a benchmarking and assessment report, which details your city's WSC Index scores against the seven goals and 34 indicators. It will also summarise the workshop discussions and the evidence supporting the ratings. You can access the benchmarking results on a web interface too, for convenience.

Following the WSC Index workshops, you'll have the information you need to continue your water sensitive city transition—and connect to a growing network of Australian and international cities, to share knowledge and learnings that can help in your transition.

**Start your  
water sensitive  
transition  
today**

If you're interested in starting your transition planning process, contact us at [wsc-index@crcwsc.com.au](mailto:wsc-index@crcwsc.com.au).

To discuss a benchmarking workshop, contact a WSC Index accredited provider. They'll explain how the Index works, how long it takes to run and what it costs, and help you get started.

<https://watersensitivecities.org.au/solutions/wsc-index/>



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