

# Suburban bonanza: life's good

Phillip Hudson

FORGET a sea change or even a tree change. The best quality of life is to be found in the suburbs, particularly those in the Ku-ring-gai and Hunters Hill local government areas.

The BankWest quality of life index to be published today says aspirations to leave behind the stress of modern living in the suburbs for a better life on the coast or in the country are a myth.

Based on an analysis of information drawn from the census, the Bureau of Statistics, the Tax Office and health agencies, the report ranks the nation's 590 local government areas by comparing such factors as health, home ownership, employment, earnings, education, crime rates, internet access and volunteering.

The bank's chief executive of retail, Ian Corfield, said the Ku-ring-gai local government area on the North Shore topped the list, followed by Hunters Hill, the north-eastern Melbourne shire of Nillumbik, Perth's Peppermint Grove and Sydney's Mosman.

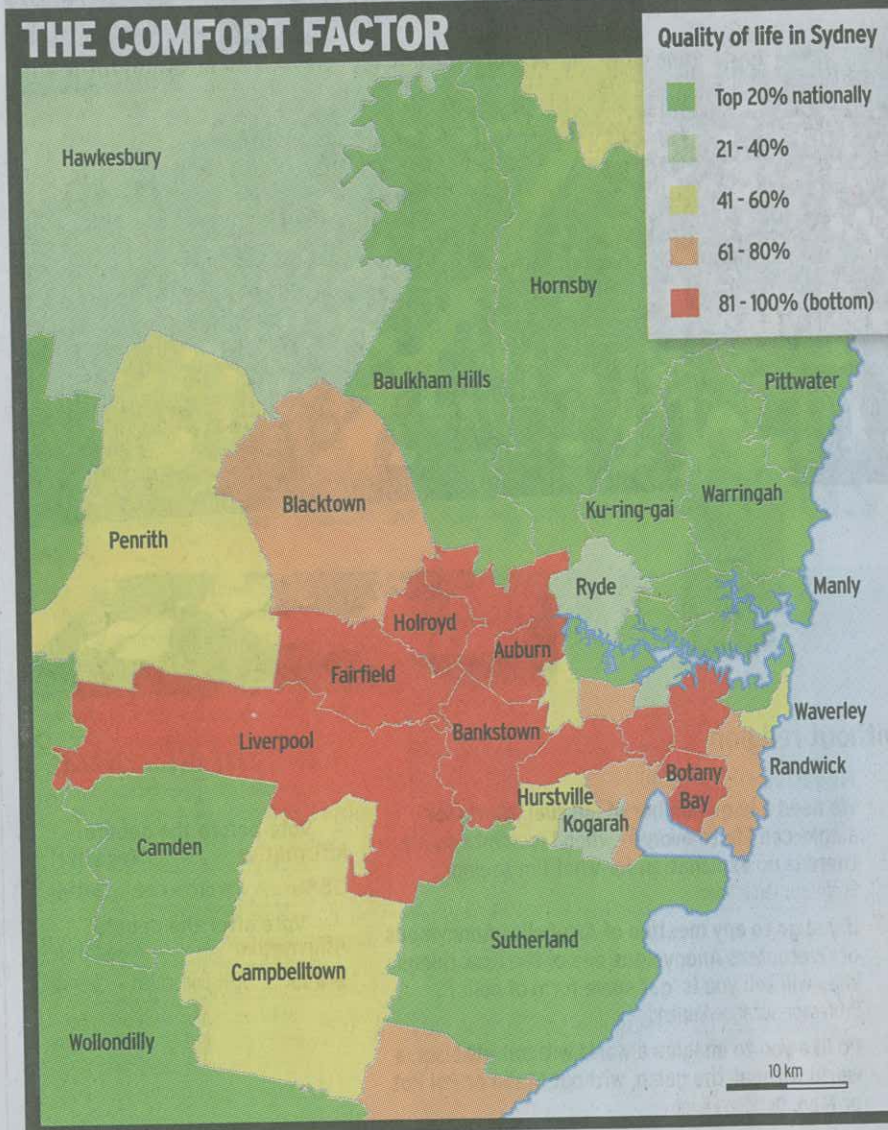
Other parts of NSW to rank highly were Baulkham Hills (12th), Pittwater (14th), Lane Cove (17th), Hornsby (18th) and Woollahra (21st).

In contrast, the Blue Mountains came in at number 75, Snowy River at 134, Lake Macquarie at 335, the Bega Valley at 356, Byron at 421 and Coffs Harbour at 493.

"Although many Australians dream of living on the coast or in the country, in reality the best quality of life in Australia is found in the suburbs, particularly in Sydney's north, Melbourne's east and western Perth," Mr Corfield said.

"The aspiration to move to the coast or the country is part of the Australian psyche, but what we're showing is a lot of that is built on sand.

"People are better off in the suburbs. In Sydney's suburbs



Top spot ... Daniel Bacon is a resident of Pymble, in the heart of Ku-ring-gai, the nation's number one ranked area. Photo: Ben Rushton

**THE TOP NSW AREAS**

Local government area	Australian quality of life ranking
Ku-ring-gai	1
Hunters Hill	2
Mosman	5
Baulkham Hills	12
Pittwater	14
Lane Cove	17
Hornsby	18
Woollahra	21
Willoughby	29
Greater Hume Shire	34

**QUALITY OF LIFE RANKINGS - best performer by category**

Quality of life variable	LGA	State	Result
Average annual taxable income	Mosman	NSW	\$126,884
Employment rate	Barcoo	QLD	100%
Owner-occupation rate	Golden Plains	VIC	92%
Detached houses	Broomehill	WA	100%
Crimes against property per 100,000	Golden Plains	VIC	1269
16-year-olds enrolled in secondary school	Jerilderie	NSW	100%
Households with broadband	Ku-ring-gai	NSW	69%
Population in good health	Snowy River	NSW	88.4%
Vacant houses and apartments	Brighton	TAS	3.5%
Over 15-year-olds who volunteer	Kimba	SA	54.5%

residents often have the best of all worlds, with access to good schools, modern hospitals and reliable jobs, but also large houses, fast internet connections and low crime rates."

Daniel Bacon, of Pymble, is well aware of the perks offered in his local area. The father of three works in the pharmaceutical industry in Ryde and moved to

the area two years ago after returning from overseas.

He said he and his wife chose the area because they wanted to minimise his commuting time and be close to the northern beaches.

Good local facilities, especially the schools, were a bonus. "Even the public school up here has a swimming pool. I think it's one of

only six in the state," Mr Bacon said. "For two terms a year the kids can go swimming at school."

An abundance of good shopping precincts and health facilities contributed to the family's satisfaction, but the spaciousness and greenery of the area contributed most to the high quality of life for residents.

"The main thing is the amount

of space we've got," Mr Bacon said. "There aren't many places in Sydney where you can live close to the city on a 1000-square-metre block."

His only complaint? The same as every other Sydneysider: house prices.

The report shows 21 of the 25 most liveable communities in Australia are in the suburbs. Ku-

ring-gai's top ranking was underpinned by the findings that 87 per cent of its residents were in good health, its home ownership rate was 86 per cent, it had the highest rate of broadband access, with 69 per cent of households connected, and 92 per cent of 16-year-olds were at school.

Three of the top five most liveable areas were in Sydney,

but the study declared Melbourne to be Australia's most liveable city because it had four in the top 10 and 21 in the top 60, as against 14 in NSW.

The shire of Halls Creek in the heart of the Kimberley in Western Australia, was ranked as having the lowest quality of life among the 590 local government areas, with Josephine Tovey

## FIGURES OUT City the honeypot for young

Jessica Irvine  
Economics Correspondent

YOUNG adults continue to flock to the bright lights of Sydney for work, education and play, while older people are more likely to live by the sea, population figures released yesterday by the Bureau of Statistics show.

People aged between 20 and 45 comprise nearly 40 per cent of the city's population, compared with 30 per cent in the rest of NSW.

Sydney has the lowest median age in NSW - about 35. The state average is 37.

Supporting the idea of a "sea change" trend for older people, more than half of all NSW residents aged 65 and over living outside of Sydney live in a local government area with a boundary adjoining the sea.

The NSW coast is an almost uninterrupted line of areas with a high proportion of older Australians. Those with the highest proportion of people aged 65 and above include Great Lakes, Eurobodalla, Port Macquarie-Hastings and Nambucca.

At the other end of the life cycle, Sydney's south-western and north-western suburbs remain prime child-rearing territory. Children aged under 15 account for nearly a quarter of residents in Camden, compared with an average across NSW of about one in five. Liverpool, Blacktown and Campbelltown also have above-average child populations.

But the inner city has a dearth of children, with North Sydney and central Sydney recording the lowest proportion of those aged under 15.

The statistics show females outnumber males in nearly all parts of Sydney. Of the 43 local government areas in Sydney, Mosman and Woollahra are the most female-dominated. The bureau said longer life expectancies were largely responsible for higher average number of females.

Central Sydney has the highest proportion of male residents, followed by Auburn. Sydney's female majority is

## Children thought to be sleeping in a bin

## Mayor persists with ugly duckling advice

Marissa Calligeros



and they can't get over it so they attack me," he said. Cr Molony said the protesters