

The service providers interviewed in the Australian Living Standards Study were presented with a list of 12 issues, and asked which ones they thought were important to their areas as far as the provision of services was concerned. Figure 1 shows their responses.

**Issues identified**

• *Outer urban* The major issues affecting service delivery for outer urban areas were: high number of low income families, high cost of travel to work for residents, absence of important facilities from the area, difficulty of attracting services to the area and high number of non-English-speaking residents. For at least one area, the high number of Aboriginal families in the community was seen as important for service delivery issues, but there was very considerable variation between the outer urban areas on this as an issue.

• *Middle urban* The major issues affecting service delivery for middle urban areas were: high number of non-English-speaking residents, high number of low income families, and scarcity and high cost of available land. But, as noted in Kilmartin's article in this issue, providers in the middle urban areas were far less likely than providers located elsewhere to identify issues as being important for their areas.

• *Inner urban* The major issues affecting service delivery for inner urban areas were: high number of low income families, high number of non-English-speaking residents, high number of Aboriginal residents, scarcity and cost of available land, high cost of living, and absence of important facilities.

# Local Factors Contributing to Living Standards

## SERVICE PROVIDERS' VIEWS



• *Rural/remote* The major issues affecting service delivery for rural/remote areas were: high number of low income families, difficulty of attracting services to the area, high cost of transporting goods to the area, high cost of travel (other than to work), high cost of living in the area, absence of important facilities, and the distance from other services and facilities.

**Availability of services/facilities**

Overall, from the point of view of the providers, the outer study areas were underprovided with facilities, some even more so than in the rural areas in the study. The rural areas, though, were the most likely to experience difficulty in attracting services to their areas (an issue which continues to attract policy responses from governments), and were also most likely to be the furthest from other services and facilities. Providers in the inner areas were somewhat

concerned about the absence of facilities, but the inner and middle areas were otherwise far less likely than the outer or rural areas to see availability of or distance from services as an issue.

**Cost of living in areas**

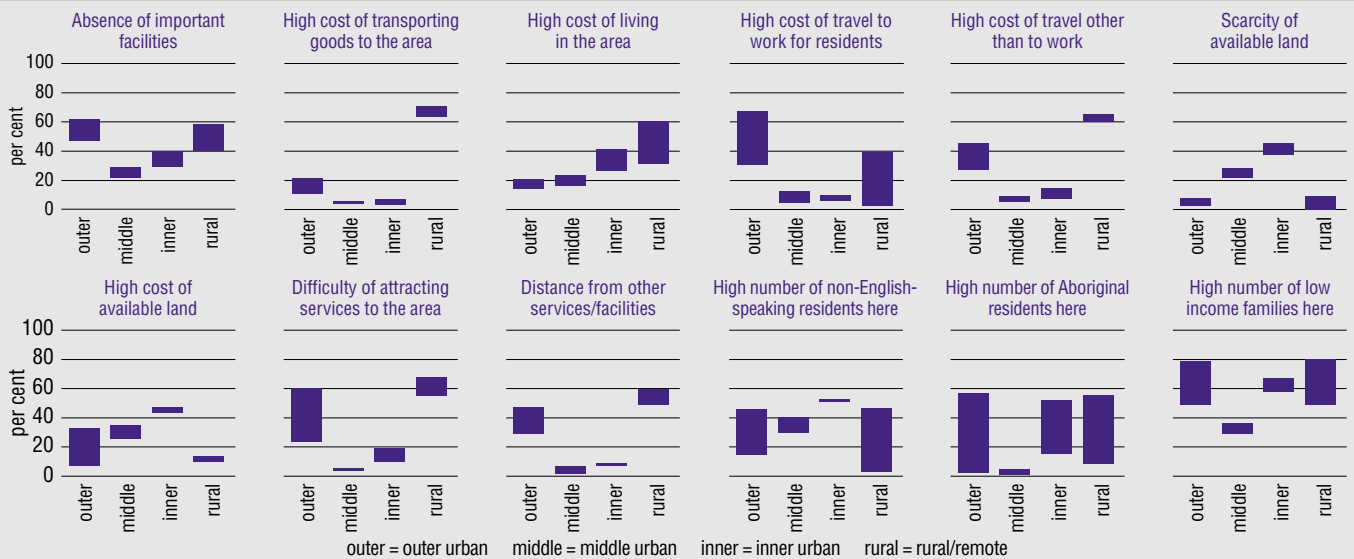
Service providers thought that the cost of living was less of an issue in the outer urban areas and much more of an issue in the inner urban and rural areas, despite the perceived high cost of travel to work for residents in the outer urban areas. Providers in rural areas also thought that the cost of travel other than to work was an issue for families, as was the cost of transporting goods, although land was not seen to be costly in those areas.

**Service delivery to particular groups**

Specialised service delivery to particular groups was an issue for all areas, although the providers in the middle urban areas were the least likely to identify this as an issue. The high number of low income families was seen as the most important issue of all included in the question as far as providers in the outer urban, rural and inner urban areas were concerned. For providers in the middle urban areas, the number of non-English speaking residents was the most important issue. For providers in some areas, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community was seen to be an important issue in terms of service delivery, but in other areas, the low numbers in the area meant that providers were more concerned with other local matters.

– **Christine Kilmartin**  
AIFS Research Fellow

**Figure 1. Issues which service providers identified as being important for their areas, ALSS areas**



Note: Elizabeth/Munno-Para was included in the outer areas for this Figure.  
Source: Australian Living Standards Study, (ALSS) 1991–92, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

The data are presented using a high/low technique – that is, only the highest and the lowest scores are presented for each of the aggregations of areas. Each score represents the percentage of service providers in a particular local government area who identified the item as a relevant issue for their area. Thus, for each zone the two extremes of the bar represent the local government area with the highest percentage of providers and the local government area with the lowest percentage of providers saying the item was an issue.

The length of the bars represents the difference between different local government

areas in the same area group. A very long bar suggests that where one local government area might find the item a significant issue, another does not. For instance, the issues of cost of transporting goods to an area, or the availability of land in an area, produced very little variation between providers within an area group. On the other hand, the impact of particular groups within the community, such as non-English-speaking or Aboriginal residents, varied significantly between areas, with the response of providers being tied closely to the demographic profile of their areas.

A reader therefore can view the charts in

three ways: the overall distribution patterns between the area groups, the highest (or lowest) points in each of the area groups, and the spread or variation within each area group.

Five local government areas form the outer urban group, and three local government areas form the rural/remote group. So for the outer urban and the rural/remote areas, the high and low points are not always represented by the same local government areas. Both the middle urban and inner urban areas have two local government areas only, so that their high and low points will always represent only those two areas.