

Announcer: Welcome to Tram Talks, a little taste of Deakin University here in the world's first mobile lecture theatre. You've chosen to listen to podcast number 3, 'Melbourne's Lovability'. Dr. Fiona Gray speaks about Melbourne's most lovable suburbs and the Melbourne Lovability Index.

Dr. Gray: Welcome aboard this Melbourne tram. Did you know that Melbournians love to take tram trips just for the sake of the ride and looking out the window? Since the first trams began operating in 1884, they have become a distinctive part of the city's character and Melbournians love them. We know this because you told us so in the 2015 Melbourne Lovability Index Survey. The survey captures the views of Melbourne residents from across every sub-region of the city on what they love most about where they live.

Internationally, Melbourne is known as the world's most liveable city, but did you know that until now no one has asked its residents what they think? This is because existing liveability indices that measure a city's performance are largely based on statistical factors, such as education, employment, healthcare, infrastructure, stability, culture, and environment. While these indices are good at measuring the functional aspects of a city, they don't capture the emotional attachment that exists between people and the places in which they live. By measuring this connection through a specific lovability metric, we can provide a more balanced and meaningful picture of the city's overall performance.

The 2015 Melbourne Lovability Index Survey revealed that Melbournians associate love for their city with many different aspects, ranging from the urban laneways and natural parklands to its people and social and community connections. So let's take a closer look at some of the most striking qualities people told us were key to understanding why Melbournians love where they live.

The character and patina of the past is important to Melbournians. Overwhelmingly, the idea of old is associated with architecture and buildings, yet it also relates to other heritage elements, such as trams, laneways, and old-style shops. Participating in old tradition, such as afternoon tea, is another way that people connect with the past, as is being part of established or old communities.

Lovability, according to Melbournians, is also about the feel of a place. The vibrant characters of places and the sense of community and friendliness where people know each other are reasons Melbournians love their city. They make it feel safe. These aspects create an atmosphere that's about more than just the physical environment. It gives it a vibe. Lively, vibrant places are supported by

public communities and commercial precincts where people can gather and get to know each other.

Interestingly, Melbournians told us that beauty is something they love about their city. Aesthetics is not just a consideration for art, it's something that matters for cities too. Even when loved places were described as ugly, Melbournians felt they could be even more lovable if they were made beautiful. Melbournians understand that the practical aspects of a city are important, but that's not enough. Beauty holds tremendous value because it engenders and is also evidence of a connection to place.

The concept of the local is important to Melbournians' love for their city, particularly in regard to local shops, primary schools, markets, street festivals, sporting events, and libraries. Being able to walk through your local residential area or local place of work is appreciated for the opportunities it provides to meet people and to absorb the distinct and unique things about a particular area.

Diversity and variety are further treasured aspects of Melbourne. The contribution of different cuisines, art forms, music, and religions makes Melbournians feel at home and able to be themselves. Diversity is also at the heart of Melbourne's natural and built features, such as beaches, mountains, and urban areas. And Melbournians love all the great activities that the city's laneways are home to.

The 2015 Melbourne Lovability Index Survey tells us that people's connection to the places they inhabit is really personal and subjective, but that it contributes to the liveability of a city. Measuring the way you relate to your city will be a critical tool through which the full complexity of urban environments and places can be better understood and, in turn, better planned for. The lovability index will help to ensure that Melbourne is not only one of the world's most liveable cities, but also one of the most lovable.

Announcer: Thanks to Dr. Fiona Gray. This has been another Tram Talk from the world's first mobile lecture theatre. Just a small sample of what's available at Deakin University. Visit study.deakin.edu.au to learn more.