

WA cities shine in UN most liveable community awards

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Geraldton one of the most liveable communities on the planet.

Three WA cities have been shortlisted in a United Nations-backed competition to find the most liveable community.

Mandurah, Joondalup and Geraldton beat hundreds of cities from more than 50 countries to be named finalists in their respective population categories of the **Livcom Awards**.

Joondalup's beach management plan and Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire's 15-year community plan are also in the running for a project award.

The Livcom Awards, initiated in 1997 and endorsed by the United Nations Environment Program, is the only international competition judged on international best practice for managing the environment while improving residents' quality of life by creating "liveable communities".

Only one other Australian city - Port Philip Bay in Victoria - made the finals. Other finalists are from as diverse countries as the United States, Italy, China, South Africa and Korea.

Mandurah City Mayor Paddi Creevey said the awards put weight behind the city's self-promotion as a great place to live and do business.

"Because it's highly regarded and now there's more countries than ever, more communities than ever, going into it we know there's very stringent judging," she said.

"It's a good way to promote ourselves to people who come here and set up business here; we've got some objective criteria ... it's not just putting out a glossy [brochure] and saying come here."

Mandurah was recognised for its natural beauty and high community participation.

Ms Creevey highlighted the city's ability to retain its "relaxed, holiday atmosphere" amid rapid growth as a major sea-change destination.

"Even though we're on the edge of a metropolitan area it's a very strong community feel," Ms Creevey said.

Joondalup City Mayor Troy Pickard said his city had emphasised creating a sustainable community that encouraged healthy and enjoyable lifestyle choices, including an extensive cultural program with free festivals, concerts and art exhibitions.

"Few issues facing our society today are more urgent than creating healthier more sustainable communities that improve the quality of our lives and those of future generations," he said.

Cr Pickard said the city had innovative environmental initiatives, such as the use of renewable energy technologies and internationally-recognised water and biodiversity conservation programs.

Its beach management plan was particularly credited by the judges.

In its submission, Geraldton boasted its strong sense of community, education and health services, diverse employment opportunities, cultural experiences and relaxed, family-friendly lifestyle, all in a pristine coastal environment.

The cities will each make a final presentation at the finals in Songpa, South Korea in October.

There, they will also network with other civic leaders to discuss ideas for liveable communities.

"Participation in the awards is an investment in the future of our community and a kind of self-audit process that could provide a basis for a future plan to create a liveable community," Geraldton's creative communities director Andrea Selvey said.

"[Attending the finals] will be an invaluable way of discovering other countries' best practice for a liveable community."

Cities are judged on six categories: enhancement of natural and built landscapes; arts, culture and heritage; environmental best practice; community participation and empowerment; healthy lifestyle; and strategic planning.

Read more:

The Sydney Morning Herald

<http://www.watoday.com.au/wa-news/wa-cities-shine-in-un-most-liveable-community-awards-20110815-1iunc.html#ixzz1WaNkICJ4>

The Melbourne Age

<http://theage.domain.com.au/real-estate-news/cities-shine-in-un-most-liveable-community-awards-20110816-1ivqb.html>