

Research Matters

News from the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Spatial Analysis and Research

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Highlights of recent population change in Victoria

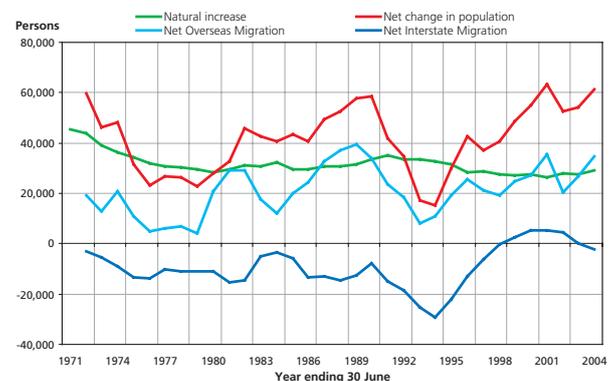
In the year ending 30 June 2004, Victoria's population growth of 60,939 was at its highest level since the start of the 1970s. This information was published by the ABS in the June edition of Australian Demographic Statistics. The publication also shows some interesting recent changes in the composition of Victoria's population growth over recent years:

- Victoria's natural increase in 2004 jumped by over 2,400 over the previous year to be at its highest level since 1994. This was due to (a) a one year rise in the number of births and (b) a drop in the number of deaths. Although the long term fertility rate is going down and the long term crude death rate is going up as the population ages, annual variations such as this are not uncommon.
- Net overseas migration increased, or more particularly, Victoria's share of overseas migration has been increasing in recent years. In 2004 it was over 30% compared with less than 23% in 1999. However the 2004 figure is likely to drop back towards the 26% mark that it was in 2003, once the ABS has made for corrections in estimates due to double counting of some overseas students.



One recent contribution to the high number of births was the addition to the Research Team of Anika Elliott – congratulations to proud parents Farah Bach and Peter Elliott

Population growth, natural increase, interstate and overseas migration, Victoria, 1971 to 2004



Source: ABS

- Net interstate migration was down from -1,453 in 2003 to -2,073 in 2004, but still a far cry from the losses of 30,000 a decade ago.

So the general picture is that Victoria's population growth is buoyant because it (a) still has strong population growth from natural increase, (b) is becoming a stronger destination for overseas migrants and (c) loses fewer people interstate than it did for most of the last thirty five years.

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A different angle on urban development

We're always looking for new directions for our research and one of the best is straight down! In December 2004 the Port Phillip, Western Port Catchments and Geelong region were photographed from the air.

The images were used by Spatial Analysis and Research to assess the residential and industrial land status for the Urban Development Program areas. The imagery can be used for a range of different purposes, from urban growth area planning, property searches and asset management.

In particular, detailed aerial photography allows us to assess on-the-ground changes annually. On the fringes of Melbourne we can see parcels of land that move from green fields, to having infrastructure installed, to being subdivided to being built on with new homes. Using this methodology and comparing to other spatial information, such as the Cadastral Base (which maps all title changes across the State), we can measure changes in land use and assess when Broadhectare land is available, under construction or already used for residential or other urban uses. The aerial photos are also a vital component of the industrial land monitoring, as highlighted in the last edition of Research Matters – issue #34, pg 3.

Spatial Information Infrastructure (SII) manages this data on behalf of DSE and is coordinating licensing and access to the imagery. For more information on aerial photos please contact Acquisition Manager Adam Choma on tel. 03 8636 2355 or email adam.choma@dse.vic.gov.au

A new housing development on the fringe of Melbourne



Inner Melbourne



Small Towns Conference 2005

The 2nd National Conference on the Future of Australia's Country Towns was held in Bendigo on 11, 12 & 13 July 2005. Following on from the 1st national conference in 2001, it brought together practitioners from around Australia and a few key international guests to "...reflect on the achievements and emerging challenges over the past four years, and to continue to build on the strengths of Australia's rural communities."

A number of Spatial Analysis and Research staff attended various sessions and Fiona McKenzie from the Regional Atlas team presented a paper that provided the context and background to the current Regional Atlas project. Apart from providing a sneak preview of content in the 2005 edition, the presentation explored the ways in which the Atlas product had been used to date and ways in which the current edition has extended the model to create greater emphasis on inter-connections and integration of knowledge for policy makers.

Key speakers included Dr Sev Ozdowski – Australia's Human Rights Commissioner who discussed issues of mental illness in regional areas and Dr Bill Reimer, professor of sociology at Concordia University, Montreal who discussed The New Rural Economy – an in depth study into changing roles and economies of towns in rural and regional Canada.

Concurrent sessions include a wide range of topics from how locals dealt with massive population turnover in a small community due to a major industry moving in, to high level influences on the future of regional urban populations.

Papers and presentations from the conference are now available on the Latrobe University Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities website – at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/csrc/> – follow the links to Small Towns Conference.

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Melbourne's Outer Growth Areas – a spatial perspective

Since its release in 2002, there has been a large range of media coverage, comment and discussion on Melbourne's Metropolitan Strategy, or Melbourne 2030. One of the key areas of concern for the building and development industry, and local government is focussed on the measures that government has introduced to help ensure that there is adequate broadhectare land in the outer and fringe metropolitan areas, to meet the requirements of Melbourne's future residents.

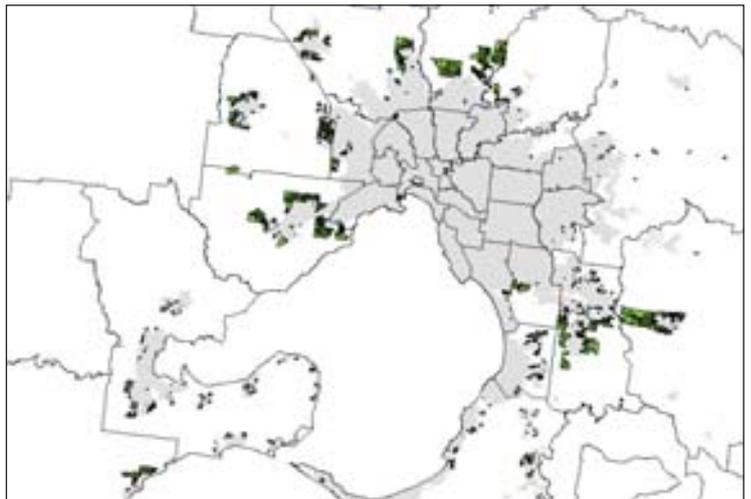
In 2002 the Department of Sustainability and Environment introduced an Urban Development Program (UDP) which was set up to assist in maintaining adequate supplies of broadhectare stocks, specifically 10 years supply of zoned land and 15 years supply total, across Melbourne. The Department's Spatial Analysis and Research Branch undertakes an annual assessment of the supply and take-up of broadhectare residential land stocks for the Melbourne metropolitan and Geelong regions; which provides the basis for the UDP to assess adequacy of stocks on a year-to-year basis.

This land supply assessment has been recently undertaken for 2005 after extensive research and consultation with key players in the land, housing and planning industries. To the upper right is a map of current broadhectare land stocks.

The map shows the distribution of undeveloped residential broadhectare land stocks across the Melbourne and Geelong regions. Over the past 10 or so years, the south-east has been the major growth 'front' of land development; however, in recent times there has been a marked increase in growth in both the west and north of Melbourne. The graph to the right indicates the levels of construction activity in recent years for each of the growth area councils, and the Geelong region (Greater Geelong and Surf Coast councils).

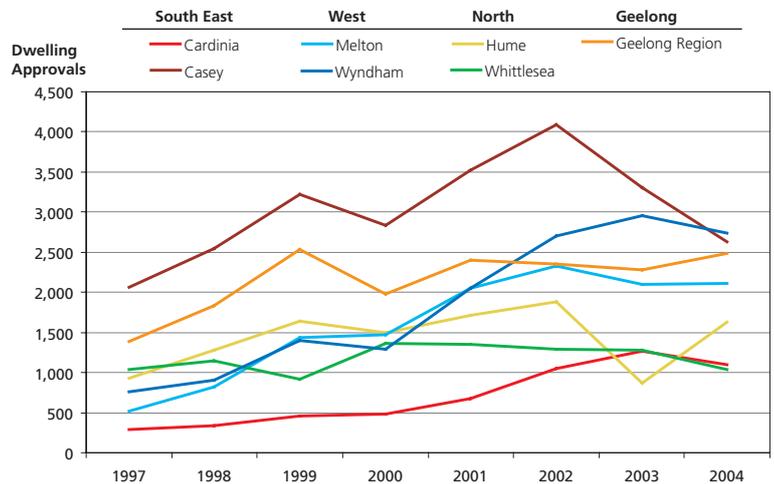
Broadhectare land supply information and analysis is due for release later this year on the UDP website www.land.vic.gov.au/udp and in the 2005 Urban Development Program Annual Report.

Broadhectare Land Stocks by Local Government Area, 2005



Source: Spatial Analysis and Research Branch, DSE

Recent Dwelling Approvals by selected areas, 1997 to 2004



Source: ABS dwelling approvals

What's in a name?

In keeping with true bureaucratic spirit we have undergone yet another, albeit slight, name change. We are now known as the Spatial Analysis and Research branch. (Seriously – if you, like many others, still want to call us "the Research Unit" we're fine with that too).

However our email remains unchanged as urbanregional.research@dse.vic.gov.au

Research Matters is a quarterly newsletter from Spatial Analysis and Research
Department of Sustainability and Environment, Level 20, Nauru House
80 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 3000

Tel (03) 9655 8814 Fax (03) 9655 8811
Email urbanregional.research@dse.vic.gov.au
Internet www.dse.vic.gov.au

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Lies, damned lies and fertility statistics!

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"Generally data are used to prove a point or sell a message...It is important to recognise how much power the editor has when presenting and manipulating data...data should be used with integrity and in such a way that the meaning is not undermined" (Department of Infrastructure, 1998).

- Two excerpts from recent press articles hypothesising a "baby boom" in Australia provide illustrations of the above (note that these articles contain many valid points and the following have been extracted purely for their statistical content and interpretation).

Statement 1

"Exactly 9 months after Peter Costello announced his \$3,000 baby bonus, Australia produced its first mini baby boom in nine years. The figures, unveiled at Easter by the Bureau of Statistics, were embraced by a beaming Treasurer who was not only snapped in a maternity hospital with a flurry of newborns but also declared himself to be as "proud as a new father" over the lift in birth rates" (Sydney Morning Herald 12/04/2005).

- Birth statistics referred to were for the September quarter, 2004;
- The baby bonus was announced May 2004, therefore any impact of the policy shift would not occur until 2005;
- It is difficult to isolate one reason – ie the baby bonus – for a change in fertility.

Statement 2

"Population figures released over Easter reveal ...[that] for the past two consecutive quarters, about 67,000 babies were born in Australia, almost 10,000 more than for the March quarter, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The surge has resulted in about 255,000 births over the past year – the largest 12-month total in nine years" (The Australian 30/03/2005)

- Quarter by quarter comparisons are not valid for most statistics.
- Quarterly statistics are preliminary and are subject to revision. Calendar year data are more reliable.
- ABS data footnote actually explained that the 10,000 "surge" from March to June due to a lag in registration processing. The backlog was cleared and included in June quarter.
- Nevertheless it is true that estimates for 2004 indicate Australia will have its largest number of births since 1995 as stated in the article.
- This, however, is a minor fluctuation in fertility. Such annual fluctuations are not uncommon. A "boom" would be a sustained increase over several years.

Next edition: the latest fertility data and trends.

The Story Behind the Numbers: A guide to using population statistics (1998) helps users of population statistics to understand how data is collected and how to analyse and present it effectively. It is available for free on request: 9655 8814.

Urban and Regional Research online

Know Your Area

Know Your Area (KYA), is an online database that provides information about the people of an area and how they live. It can still be accessed via www.doi.vic.gov.au/knowyourarea or by visiting www.dse.vic.gov.au and clicking under the heading of online services or going to Research. Recent data updates include residential land development data for the March quarter 2005 for metropolitan councils and unemployment data from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to March 2005 for Victorian Statistical Local Areas. The revised residential property prices for 2004 & 2005 will be updated in September.

If you would like to be notified when new data sets are added to Know Your Area join the mailing list by contacting Christina Inbakaran on tel. 9655 6054 or christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au.

Urban and Regional Research –
www.dse.vic.gov.au/research/urbanandregional

The Urban and Regional Research site has undergone some minor reworking to reflect feedback that we gathered from our annual useability testing. The home page now has direct access to all our products under headings such as **Statistics**, **Major Projects & Publications** and **Key Sections**.

- Other standard sections like Publications, Glossary, Related Sites and Contacts remain with the addition of a new section called "Upcoming Research".
- The Victoria in Future 2004 section has also been reorganised with the use of simpler headings: Data & Analysis, Reports and Presentations.
- Upcoming content includes the September 2005 Residential Land Bulletin and the Atlases (Metropolitan & Regional) later this year.
- The Transport Strategies and Sustainability Strategies pages within the Local Government Research Network section are still in draft form and will be completed by October 2005. Please email your comments, questions and suggestions to christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au.

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