

Research matters

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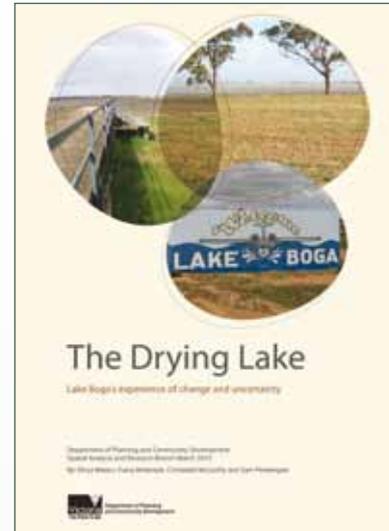
The Drying Lake

Previous editions of *Research Matters* have reported on a qualitative research project which examined the impacts of the drying of Lake Boga on local residents. Findings of this project are detailed in the report *The Drying Lake. Lake Boga's Experience of Change and Uncertainty*, now available online through the Spatial Analysis and Research website.

Key findings

Lake Boga, when full, provided social and economic benefits to the local and regional community. The drying of the lake led to tangible negative impacts such as dying fish, an insect plague and ongoing dust issues. It also led to more subtle impacts such as increased social isolation caused by the loss of a key community meeting place.

In terms of economic impact, lakeside home owners and local businesses have been affected by declining property values and loss of tourist income. An indirect economic cost felt by many has been the additional transport costs incurred when accessing recreational activities such as swimming and boating.



The hope of water returning was an important factor in sustaining the community's morale. Because the lake was recently incorporated into an irrigation project, locals expected water to return to the lake and many are waiting for this rather than adapting to a new situation for a return to normal rather than adapting to a new situation.

The proximity of a regional centre, Swan Hill, has played an important role in limiting the economic impacts of the dry lake, as it continues to provide sources of employment, and hence income, for working-age people.

Out-migration has been a relatively small part of the community response to the drying lake.

Implications for policy

Multiple agencies and multiple responsibilities characterise the management of drying lakes. Lake Boga provides an example of the difficulties that come from such complex management arrangements. Interviewees expressed a desire for simpler, more effective management structures. These findings are important for authorities at local, regional and state levels.

Current water priorities, expressed through government policy and legislation, include consumptive use, irrigation and the environment.

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Protection of recreational values has received less attention. However, this study reveals the range of benefits which Lake Boga provided to its residents in terms of formal and informal, passive and active recreational opportunities. Much of the community's sense of wellbeing came from the lake – not only physical wellbeing but also psychological and spiritual wellbeing.

The drying of the lake is generally not seen by residents as being caused by climate change. In fact there is widespread scepticism about climate change theory and governments' focus upon it. The ways in which people hear and understand the debate and its relevance to them varies greatly.

Uncertainty emerged as a strong theme in the study – not just the inherent uncertainty about future events, but that decisions made about Lake Boga's water allocation carried uncertainty. For many, this meant that planning and decision making became difficult and consequently stressful.

The emotional responses of individuals have been identified as a key determinant of their ability to act and respond to change. This research shows that people move on and resolve to respond at different stages and at different individual rates when confronted by a major negative environmental change. Initial feelings of anger and frustration can take time to make way for an ability to participate in a constructive response. This has implications for how government interacts with communities that are experiencing change.

Value of the research

The report will assist policy makers in testing some of the assumptions that have developed around debates on resilience, vulnerability and community strength in the context of climate change. This research project provides an innovative model which may be applied to other areas experiencing environmental change in Victoria and beyond.

The report also provides an important product for the community of Lake Boga itself. The documentation of their story is a powerful way in which they can share their experience and engage with other communities who may have experienced, or be facing, the drying of their lake environments.

Recent events

In the same week that *The Drying Lake* was published, Lake Boga partly filled. The return of water to the lake has brought a great sense of excitement and relief to the local community. The research report provides permanent documentation of the critical two-year period in which the lake was dry. As such, it can be a reminder of what the locals value about their lake and also a resource for future planning so that they can protect and improve their local environment and community wellbeing.

State of Supply Report 2010

On April 27, the National Housing Supply Council (NHSC) released its second annual *State of Supply Report*. The report covers:

- projections of underlying demand and housing supply from 2009 to 2029
- the gap between housing demand and supply, with particular focus on affordability issues for lower income households
- key indicators of demand, supply and affordability, particularly for low-income renters.

The findings of the NHSC for Victoria from the report were:

Current Shortfall 22,700*	The report calculates that there was a shortfall of 22,700 dwellings in Victoria to meet underlying demand in 2009.
Projected demand 764,000*	The report projects demand for 764,000 new dwellings in Victoria (using the medium projection) from 2009 to 2029. This projection roughly accords with the Department of Planning and Community Development's <i>Victoria in Future 2008</i> which projects demand for 742,800 dwellings during this period.
Projected supply 833,700*	The report projects supply of around 833,700 new dwellings in Victoria from 2009 to 2029.
Usable supply 781,200*	However, based on current rates of unoccupied dwellings (vacant houses, holiday homes etc), only 781,200 of the new dwellings will be occupied.
Undersupply at 2029 5,300*	On the basis of its medium projections the NHSC suggests that the shortage of dwellings in Victoria will increase over the medium term to peak at 34,300 before falling to 5,300 in 2029.

This figure of 5,300 dwellings is the equivalent of just a few months housing construction in Victoria and when compared to the NHSC projections for other jurisdictions in Australia, shows Victoria's relatively strong housing demand-supply position.

Projected demand-supply gap (medium projection), '000s of dwellings

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT
2009	57.6	22.7	56.1	0.1	30.2	1.0	10.1	0.5
2029	261.8	5.3	197.7	32.9	85.5	19.7	33.6	1.4

Source: NHSC State of Supply Report 2010 Table A4.2

Full details of the 2010 *State of Supply Report* can be found online at <http://www.nhsc.org.au/>

*Note numbers are rounded and may not sum precisely

Logistics, the hidden employer

Moving freight around, or 'logistics', is an increasingly important function in cities. As manufacturing restructures and the economy becomes more integrated within the global market, a large number of goods required for the city, from socks to computers, are imported from other regions and countries. Figure 1 illustrates this transition with employment declining in manufacturing and increasing in population and commercial services, such as retail, and property and business services. However there has been little movement in the number of people employed in transport and storage, an industry one would expect to have a stronger representation in this changed economy.

Why is it so?

It is a matter of definitions and the way the industry is structured. First, the transport and storage category used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics includes firms involved in passenger transport, holiday bookings, air and space transport, pipeline transport, as well as specialised freight and logistics firms. Therefore the movement of freight is only a portion of this ABS industry category, with road freight transport comprising less than half of total employment in transport and storage employment in 2006 for Victoria. Second, not all logistics activity is carried out by logistics firms; many firms undertake logistics activities that are ancillary to their main use. For example, in 2006 just over 40% of truck drivers and delivery drivers worked for firms outside of transport and storage, such as retail, manufacturing and construction (Figure 2). This has changed slightly from 1996 when the proportion of truck drivers and delivery drivers was evenly split between transport and storage, and other industries. From this, it can be seen that logistics activities are embedded throughout the economy, and as a result, it is a difficult industry to quantify in terms of employment.

Why is this important?

Understanding the current dynamics and future direction of logistics requires the use of a range of indicators, not traditionally associated with employment analysis, such as truck registrations, building approvals and counts of containers. See Figure 3 for the increase in articulated truck registrations in Victoria, reaching over 24,000 in 2009. As the population grows, logistics will continue to be an important and growing sector of the economy that has a significant presence in the urban environment in terms of land use and the use of infrastructure. Understanding this industry and its future requirements is essential for the future economic development of Melbourne and Victoria.

Figure 1 Number of jobs ('000) in metropolitan Melbourne, selected industries, 1971 to 2006

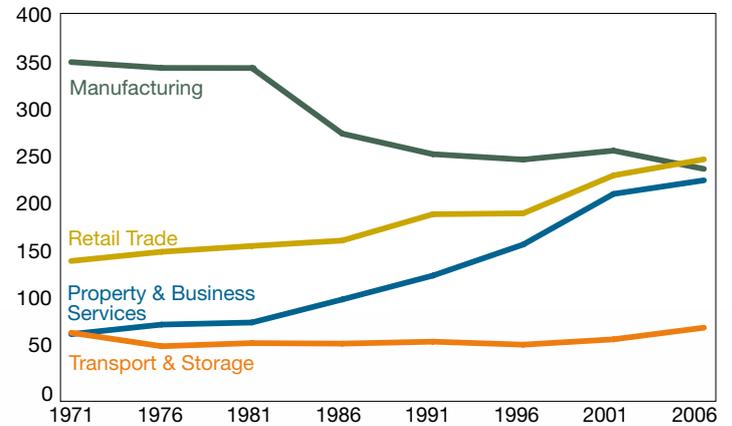
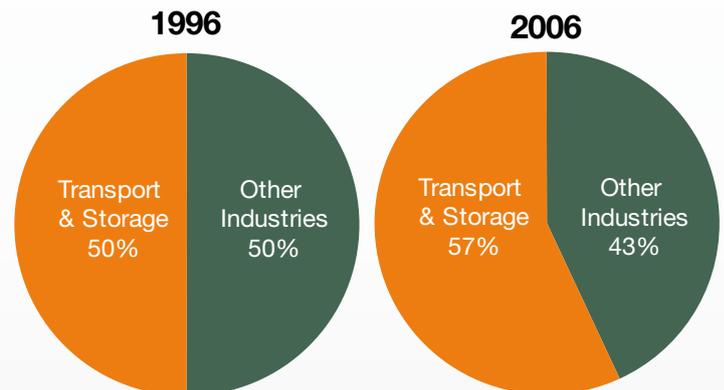
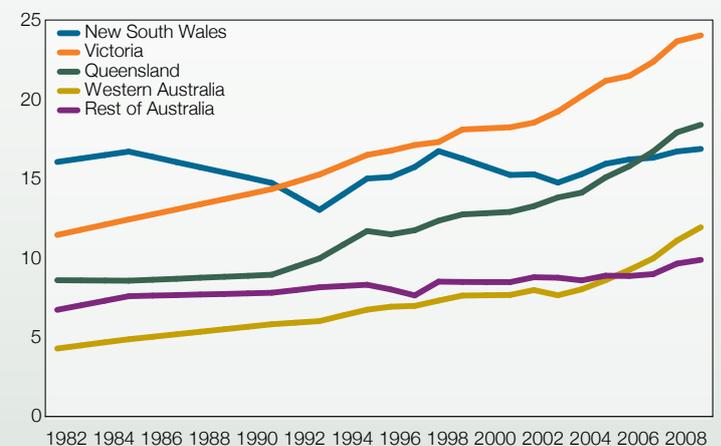


Figure 2 Proportion of truck drivers and delivery drivers by industry in Victoria, 1996 and 2006.



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing

Figure 3 Number ('000) of truck registrations, 1982 to 2009



How has your suburb changed over time? Let us know!

Suburbs in time is a compendium of Census statistics covering 25 years from 1981 to 2006, enabling analysis of data over time. The 2006 version covers almost 400 suburbs within Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo. For each suburb, a wide range of variables are included, such as total population, age structure, income, household size, dwellings, labour force, industry of employment and birthplace.

In preparing our analysis of Melbourne's data, we are also looking at qualitative information about the city's suburbs. This example below is from one of our colleagues and focuses on change over time in Broadmeadows.

Broadmeadows

My mother, Anna, lived in Broadmeadows from when she was born in 1950 until 1966 when the family moved to Canada. At that time, Broadmeadows was full of new Australians, mostly from Eastern Europe with many Ukrainians, Poles and Russians. My mother, despite being born in Australia, first learnt English at school in 1955. Her parents were European immigrants, Austrian and Russian, who moved to Australia in 1949.

As part of their visa/immigration requirements, they had a two-year work contract upon arriving in Australia. Her Russian father, Alexander Abramov, worked as a driver/assistant for a British officer at the army camp on Camp Road in Broadmeadows. She believes her Austrian mother, Maria, may have helped one of the ladies at the homestead, also on Camp Road, where they originally boarded. After finishing the initial two-year contract, Alexander worked for a construction company (Reid and Sons) building roads all over Melbourne, before getting a job at the Ford factory in Broadmeadows. Maria worked for a woollen mill in Brunswick, before working for other clothing and textile manufacturers, including Yakka, in Broadmeadows.

Blocks of land sold for £50 in 1950. The Abramovs bought a block on Blair Street and, as was common practice of the time, Alexander then built their family home. Despite being on a standard size block, they had a vegetable patch, a pet goat, ducks, chickens and rabbits in hutches. She said this was normal at the time, with the neighbours having much the same. Some from the neighbourhood also kept cows and tethered animals in nearby open fields. She said that up the hill from Blair Street were wild horses and pasture land, before factories were built there in the 1960s. They used to travel to Bell Street, Coburg for shopping, or caught the train to the city for a weekend outing. Local shops did not open in Broadmeadows until around 1958.

We would greatly appreciate our readers' own observations of the Melbourne suburb where they grew up or now live. How has the suburb changed in terms of the type of people who live there – families, couples, the elderly, etc.; how has the character of shopping areas shifted over time; what has happened to schools, libraries, public pools, etc.; and how has the housing stock changed? All contributions will remain anonymous, unless you request otherwise.

Please send your 250 words (or more) to spatialanalysis.research@dpcd.vic.gov.au

What's new online

www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/research/urbanandregional

Recent updates to the website include:

- The Drying Lake. Lake Boga's experience of change and uncertainty;
- the Annual Victorian Population Bulletin for 2010 which provides a valuable snapshot of information on population change and the basic drivers behind that change.

For further information on articles in Research Matters, please contact spatialanalysis.research@dpcd.vic.gov.au



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