

Research Matters

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

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Research on the move...Birmingham

Peter Elliott, the acting Manager of Industry and Employment Research, has recently returned from presenting a paper (co-authored with Prof Kevin O'Connor) to a conference in Birmingham, United Kingdom. This article touches the surface of the ideas and experiences from this travel which will be used in the current and future work of the Department.

The conference was organised by the International Geographical Union's Commission on the topic of the Dynamics of Economic Spaces. The conference brought together economic geographers from around the world for four days to discuss recent research into the economic development of cities and regions. The papers were grouped into 5 major themes:

- Cities and Services
- Information and Communication Technologies and Services
- Sectoral Studies and Economic Development
- Services and Development in Europe
- Internationalisation and Services

Peter and Kevin's paper drew on recent work about the agglomeration of graphic design firms in metropolitan Melbourne as a case study of the location of knowledge industries (see *Research Matters* June 2004). It was noted during the conference that this paper was one of the very few pieces of research that examines the geography of knowledge industries within a metropolitan area.

While in Birmingham, Peter caught up with former Research Unit member Libby Porter who now works for the University of Birmingham. Libby took Peter on a tour of Eastside, an historic industrial precinct that directly abuts the Birmingham CBD. There are plans to redevelop the 440 hectare area into a centre for knowledge industries using the assets of the



One of Birmingham's scenic canals. The narrow boats still ply the canals although now they are used to transport tourists on dinner cruises rather than goods from Birmingham's foundries.

location such as old industrial building and canals (apparently Birmingham has more canals than Venice).

On the way back to Australia Peter met with the Greater London Authority to discuss their approach to monitoring the *London Plan*. Discussions also touched on the monitoring of industrial land. Industrial land availability is an important issue in London where there is great pressure to redevelop industrial land for residential purposes while retaining productive and well located land for industrial purposes.

Peter also talked with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which is the central authority for planning in England, about their research activities, how they undertake research and how they support future researchers. He also visited Prof Mike Batty of University College London and Mark Thurstain-Goodwin of Geofutures Ltd to discuss advanced spatial analysis, particularly geographically weighted regression. Mike Batty described the mathematics involved as "rocket science" although the results provide both a powerful and robust analytical technique and the capacity to visualise results.

Name this building and win a \$50 gift voucher

Answer the following question correctly and you will be in the draw to win a \$50 gift voucher from the DSE Information Centre.

Question: What is the name of the building in this picture and what city is it located in? Hint: It is in the UK



Please email your answer to urbanregional.research@dse.vic.gov.au. Entries close 28th February 2005. Competition winners will be published in the next edition of *Research Matters*.

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The Victoria in Future 2004 Road Show

Many of our readers will be aware that we recently released the *Victoria in Future 2004* population and household projections. The data from the projections is available on the DSE website; however the numbers are only one part of the story. It is the key messages about potential implications of population change over the next 30 years that we are keen to communicate to those who are interested in planning for that change in Victoria. So, over the past month and half, the demographic research team has been out and about presenting a series of seminars covering the key messages arising out of the population projections.

The seminars comprised three parts –

- Firstly, a background to Victoria's population growth trends and the range of demographic and other information used by the demographic research team to produce the population projections.
- Secondly, an explanation of the key messages from the population projections
 - Victoria is experiencing high rates of population and household growth – growth is currently as fast as it has ever been over the past 30 years;
 - We are on the cusp of a major change in one of the source of our population growth rates – natural increase (births minus deaths) is steadily declining and will go below zero in the mid 2030s;
 - Ageing is going to be a major feature of demographic change in Victoria over the next 30 years;
 - There is a geography to these aspects of demographic change – it is important to know your own area as its demographic future may be very different to other parts of Victoria.
- Finally, attendees were given a chance to express their views on the implications of the projections and to ask questions.



The Seminar in Bendigo attracted a full house

The seminars were well attended by wide range of interested people including State and Local government, service providers in sectors such as health and education, consultants, environmentalists, developers and interested members of the public.

Seminars were held in Ballarat, Benalla, Bendigo, Geelong, Glen Waverley, Melbourne and Traralgon. Copies of the presentations from the seminars will soon be available on the *Victoria in Future 2004* website at:

www.dse.vic.gov.au/victoriainfuture



Attendees discuss the future of the Gippsland Region at the Traralgon Seminar

VIF 2004 Competition – Winner

Congratulations to Vivien Williamson from Banyule City Council who correctly answered the question: What is the projected estimated resident population for Warrnambool City (LGA) in 2031? (The answer was 41,612 persons). Our lucky winner will be receiving a \$50 gift voucher from the DSE Information Centre. Thanks to all those who entered.

Don't forget to enter our 'Name this Building' Competition on page 1 for another chance to win

Demography Down Under – the Australia New Zealand Population Workshop

In November 2004 demographic team members John O’Leary and Jeremy Reynolds attended the Australian New Zealand Population Workshop in Adelaide. This is an annual meeting of representatives from each state and territory and key Commonwealth agencies involved in population forecasting, demographic analysis, and land planning. The workshop provides a forum to discuss and share improvements in techniques for developing population projections, discuss the limitations and exchange information about the standard and availability of data used in population projections and share research undertaken into the latest demographic trends.

Policy implications of demographic change were a major topic at the workshop. The South Australia Government has introduced a state population policy, while Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory are in the process of preparing state (or in the case of the ACT, Canberra) population policies.

The relationship between demographic change and metropolitan planning policy was also a major item of discussion. The New South Wales representatives reported that population growth continues to be a major focus of the NSW government with work well underway to develop a new metropolitan strategy to plan the future growth of the Sydney region. The *South East Queensland Regional Plan* which aims to focus future population growth in the South East of Queensland away from the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast to the west of Brisbane was reported on. The Western Australian representative gave an account on his involvement in the *Future Perth* planning process.

Issues associated with coastal urbanisation and the seemingly never ending media attention on the “sea-change phenomenon” were raised by both the Queensland and New South Wales representatives, while mention was made that the

future development of regional Victoria was a critical issue for the Victorian Government.

Concern with the quality of the national and State population estimates being produced by the ABS were one of the more important, but technical, matters discussed at the workshop. The ABS used the opportunity of the workshop to hold a one day Population Estimates Technical Workshop where it reported on its review into measuring net overseas migration in Australia. As a result of this review, overseas migration estimates revised back to the September quarter 2001 are expected to be released with the December 2004 quarter publication of Demographics Australia in June 2005.

In Australia, Medicare data is used as the basis of preparing the quarterly interstate migration estimates. After years of discussing the Medicare data at these workshops, a representative of the Health Insurance Commission was invited to the workshop to explain how the Medicare data was collected. Unfortunately, this session resulted in many unanswered questions which reinforced concerns regarding the quality of the Medicare data being used to prepare the interstate migration estimates. For example, a child can be on the Medicare card of both the mother and the father and this occurs in the case of the parents being divorced and both having some responsibility for the child’s care. If the father notifies Medicare of a change of his address, is the child’s address also changed since the child is on the same card as the father, although technically the child lives with the mother? Workshop participants are waiting for an answer to this and other important questions regarding the Medicare data raised at the workshop.

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The workshop allows participants to observe and discuss what other agencies are doing well and where agencies can improve.

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ANZ Population Workshop *continued*

At the workshop ABS reported on investigations it is making to find alternative sources to Medicare for estimating interstate migration. However, an issue which has been raised over a number of workshops is an interest in the reasons for migration as well as an estimate of the numbers migrating. As a result of these previous workshop discussions, Professor Graeme Hugo from the University of Adelaide has been approached to devise a methodology for conducting a national qualitative survey of the reasons why people move interstate and between regions within States. The hardest part of such a study is finding a large enough random sample of people who have made such a move. At this year's workshop Graeme reported on the progress he has made to date with developing a sampling framework for the proposed study which appears quite promising. If successful, a further report on the progress of this study will be made in *Research Matters*.

Graeme Hugo, one of Australia's most prominent and distinguished demographers, attended one of the sessions and gave a presentation of what he saw as the main research and policy questions in Australian demography. Issues associated with the ageing of the population, including the spatial distribution of the aged, and how the baby boomers will behave in their retirement years were seen as key research and policy topics. According to Graeme, Australia 'punches above its weight' in demographic research, but he raised concerns about whether this



Demographers out-and-about in Glenelg, Adelaide

will continue to apply in the future and hence the need to develop a national approach to the teaching of demographic skills in Australia, rather than a piecemeal university by university approach as is the present case.

Techniques for undertaking population projections were a core agenda item for the workshop. Heather Booth (Australian National University - demography program) and Rob Hyndman (Monash University - Statistics) presented on stochastic (or probabilistic) population projections. The advantage of probabilistic projections is that they provide a statistical confidence range for the projections, rather than one deterministically established projection. Heather and Rob's work to date has concentrated on fertility and mortality, but including migration into stochastic projections was seen by many of the workshop participants as the major hurdle this approach needs to clear before the method is likely to gain more general acceptance. Another session of the workshop was devoted to techniques for undertaking household projections.

One of the advantages of these workshops is to observe and discuss what other agencies are doing well and where agencies can improve. In this respect the South Australian website www.planning.sa.gov.au/pop_land_monitor is worth a look in terms how they present demographic data on their website.

Local Government Research Network in 2004

The *Local Government Research Network* (LGRN) has continued to expand its membership during 2004. *Local Connections* is available on line with input from the Department of Infrastructure, La Trobe University, and a number of Councils including Moreland, Boroondara, Maribyrnong, Darebin, Melbourne, and Manningham. The Housing Strategies (39 of Victoria's 79 Councils have contributed) and Council Projects (with 9 councils on board so far) sections of the LGRN website have continued to be updated.

In May 2004, the LGRN hosted Seminars on Mesh Block design for the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in Melbourne & Wodonga. These provided a forum for local government and the ABS to discuss Mesh Block design to recognise requirements for the planning of small areas. In mid 2005 draft Mesh Blocks will be released and we will support further consultation with the councils by hosting workshops on the design of Census outputs.

Any ideas or suggestions are welcome.
Please email comments to network co-ordinators
christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au or
christine.kilmartin@dse.vic.gov.au.

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