

Research Matters

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

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Population Matters

The Australia New Zealand Population Workshop – Christchurch

The 29th Australian New Zealand Population Workshop was held in Christchurch, New Zealand in the last week of October. The workshop is the annual meeting of demographers working in State and Territory Government agencies, Commonwealth Government agencies and Statistics New Zealand.

Given both Australian and New Zealand Censuses were held during 2006, the main agenda items were Census related and in particular around the issue of what agencies could expect from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) during 2007.

The three main points that the State Government agencies stressed to ABS was that:

- State, Territory and Local government level data matters
- ABS processes need to be more transparent
- there is concern over the potential confusion when Census data is released by usual residence rather than place of enumeration.

The importance of local estimates

The ABS has in the past treated the accuracy of the national total population figure as the highest priority while State, Territory and Local Government Area statistics were given a lower priority. However, as the State Government agencies have been pointing out to ABS for some time, under the Commonwealth State Financial Arrangements ACT 1999, Commonwealth funding of State and Territory Governments is based on the official population estimates released by ABS. Ensuring the national population estimates are correct does not result in any changes in funding. However, incorrect State and Territory estimates can have major financial implications for State and Territory Governments. Similarly, a large proportion of Commonwealth and State Government funding of Local Governments is based on the official Local Government Area population estimates published by ABS. Incorrect LGA population estimates can have major funding implications for Local Government.

Transparency

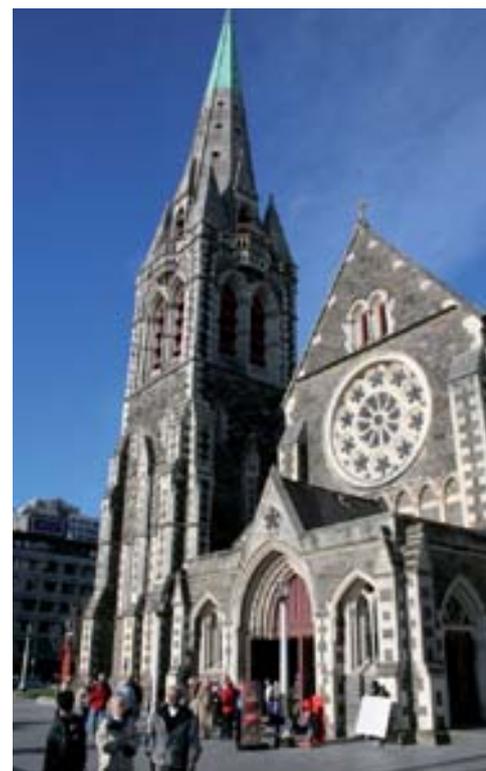
Issues relating to the transparency of the process ABS use to calculate some of their key data were also discussed. One example is how the ABS adjusts Census counts (or enumerated populations on Census night) by Local Government Area (LGA) to obtain Estimated Resident Population (the official measure of population in Australia) as at 30th June in a Census year. While ABS releases details of these adjustments at a State level, they have never publicly released them at an LGA or Statistical Local Area (SLA) level. The State Government agencies argued

that it is often State Government agencies that have the most day to day dealings with Local Governments rather than ABS, and hence it is usually State Government Agencies that have to defend the official population estimates published by ABS. This is often hard to do, when it is not clear how ABS has arrived at these official population estimates at the LGA or SLA level.

Comparing apples with apples

Another major issue relating to release of the 2006 Census results that was discussed at the workshop was the decision of ABS to release Census data on a place of **usual residence** rather than

place of **enumeration** as the main form of data dissemination in the basic community profiles. In the past, Census data has been released on a place of enumeration basis. Although, the change to usual residence is welcomed, the State and Territory Government agency representatives advised ABS that there will be great confusion when the 2006 Census results are released and many users incorrectly start to compare 2006 place of usual residence data with 2001 place of enumeration data for the same spatial area. It was stressed that ABS will need to educate users in the difference between place of usual residence and place of enumeration data before the 2006 Census results are released.



Christchurch Cathedral

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Melbourne & Regional Atlases recognised with Planning Institute Australia (Vic) 2006 Awards For Planning Excellence

The Melbourne and Regional Atlases were recently recognised by the Victorian Division of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) annual awards as unique, the panel of judges were *unaware of any equivalent atlases in other parts of the world*. Submitted in the category of "Planning Scholarship Research & Teaching" the products were unanimously voted as winners. The Atlases were commended for providing planners and policy makers with an important resource – a resource which encourages them to *grapple with emerging issues in creative ways*.

The Atlases encourage people to think spatially and provide the basis for a more informed debate about the future of Melbourne and Victoria. Presented as a compilation of maps, charts and commentary, the Atlases also act as a directory highlighting the research capabilities of the Spatial Analysis and Research Branch.

The awards were the culmination of the annual Planning Week program organised by PIA. Most team members were able to attend the Awards ceremony on the Friday evening of Planning Week and a most enjoyable evening was had by all, (as the photo shows).



To view the Atlases online visit:
www.dse.vic.gov.au/research/urbanandregional

To purchase the Atlases:
DSE, Planning & Information Centre, Ground Floor
8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne
Tel: (03) 9637 8610,
Email: planning.info@dse.vic.gov.au

For assistance with maps or data in a format which suits you, contact:
Regional Atlas – fiona.mckenzie@dse.vic.gov.au
Melbourne Atlas – anne.barlow@dse.vic.gov.au
Enquiries – Tel. (03) 9637 9441

Melbourne Atlas Competition Winners!

Congratulations to Melissa Ashby from AV Jennings Ltd, Siva Sivagnanam from the Building Commission and to RMIT student, Melanie Hearne; the winners of our *Melbourne Atlas* competition. Our lucky winners will receive an A3 copy of the *Melbourne Atlas*. Thanks to all those who entered.

Matters

Come rain, hail or shine (and snow!)

Regional population consultations continue...

Like the proverbial postman, DSE Demographic Researcher, Dee Johnson travelled through snow, rain, sleet and hail to consult with Pyrenees Shire and the City of Ballarat. It was well worth the effort with information gathered adding to the story of population change throughout Victoria. The input from consultations will inform a review of the State Government Population and Household projections by the Spatial Analysis and Research Branch. Other Councils recently visited in more temperate conditions, include Bendigo, Central Goldfields, Geelong, Corangamite, Colac Otway and Moorabool. Population influences are proving to be many and varied with a few interesting ones highlighted below.

Doctors and population

The shortage of doctors in regional Victoria is an issue highlighted in *Regional Matters: An Atlas of regional Victoria 2005*. Movement of older people from country towns to regional centres with medical facilities is a common trend. In the City of Greater Geelong a new Rural and Regional Medical School has been approved at Deakin University. This will have impacts right across regional Victoria as the innovative program aims to produce GPs and specialists committed and skilled to practice in country areas. This could influence the timing and size of migration of older people out of rural areas as well as making towns more attractive to young families wanting the security of local medical services.

'Seachange'/'Treechange'

Home of the original 'Seachange', the inflow of baby boomers cashing in on property equity continues in the City of Greater Geelong. The area provides lifestyle features coupled with cheaper house prices than Melbourne and good employment opportunities. The Shire of Pyrenees is also attracting 'treechangers' including people moving from Ballarat where the



Arrival conditions Shire of Pyrenees.

Photo: Andre Dalton, Town Planner, Shire of Pyrenees

housing market is tight and alternative lifestyle farmers. Snake Valley is a popular tree change location.

Are these issues impacting on permanent or temporary populations in your Shire or City? If so in what way? Please direct comments to Dee Johnson (email dee.johnson@dse.vic.gov.au).

Local Government Research Network & Local Connections

The *Local Government Research Network* (LGRN) is coordinated by Spatial Analysis and Research and endeavours to support links between local government, research and policy. The December 2006 Issue of *Local Connections*, available at www.dse.vic.gov.au/lgrn, welcomed a variety of contributions. We have also resumed a hard copy version of the document. Articles ranged from:

- Social Impact Assessment Policy in Frankston
- Development Bulletin – City of Whittlesea
- Surf Coast Shire local area planning
- Planning to Age Well in Whitehorse

- Local Area Planning Support Program – DVC
- Buyers in Growth Area Estates – DSE

The LGRN web page has provided a useful forum for sharing Council projects and housing strategies for some time. The list of sustainability and transport projects and strategies continues to be updated every quarter. In the meantime, Councils are encouraged to continue emailing details of datasets, any issues Councils face, and the details of the nominated contact person for housing strategies, council projects, sustainability strategies and transport strategies. For further information please email christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au

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Client Survey Feedback

Thank you again to those people who participated in the Spatial Analysis and Research Branch Client Survey. Your feedback indicates that we are providing a good service; we intend to build on this base and will continue to improve our research and publications. A summary of the key findings is now available on our website at www.dse.vic.gov.au/research/urbanandregional and follow the links to Research Matters.

The 2006 census results will start to be published around mid 2007, with most of the data on occupation and industry of employment, household structure and internal migration not coming out until November / December 2007. We intend to provide an expanded range of products and services reflecting both the increased demand for existing products, together with your ideas for new ones.

We have already commenced work on the geographical concordances to update the *Towns in Time* and *Suburbs in Time* databases to 2006. Almost as soon as the 2006 census results are published this updated data will appear on our website. Your feedback shows that there is a strong increase in demand for such local area data.

As soon as the second release census data is published on internal migration, we will commence a new set of *Victoria in Future* population projections. But these must be based on a good understanding of trends and their drivers as well as an appreciation of foreseeable local changes. So before finalising projections, we will produce research reports on change around themes such as 'seachange', 'treechange' and internal migration. We will also consult with local government to build local change factors into the projections.

As census release time draws closer and we have a firmer view about resources and priorities, we will provide a more concise timetable of products and services.

Know Your Area

Know Your Area (KYA) is an online database that provides information about the people of an area and how they live. KYA can be accessed via www.dse.vic.gov.au/research.

Recent quarterly data updates include:

- Residential land development data for Metropolitan councils to September 2006.
- Unemployment data from Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to June 2006.
- Water Consumption data for Metropolitan councils to June 2006.

We are implementing some minor enhancements to the database such as improved navigation and charting functionality. If you would like to be notified when new data sets are added to *Know Your Area* or if there are any further improvements that you would like please contact Christina Inbakaran on 9637 9570 or email christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au.

Residential Land Bulletin Survey

To help us evaluate recent changes to the *Residential Land Bulletin*, a survey examining the usefulness of the content and the overall presentation/layout of the document was sent to our mailing list. We received 110 responses including detailed comments relating to how the document meets stakeholder requirements.

The majority (85%) of survey respondents had subscribed to the *Residential Land Bulletin* for more than a year. While a third of respondents accessed the Bulletin via the web most people (89%) received a hard copy version. Over 80% of respondents found the quality of data useful and that the bulletin assisted with their work. Survey respondents found the content of the bulletin useful and most rated the content for all sections to be good or excellent.

Feedback on the Bulletin layout was positive, with the majority of respondents (over 80%) rating it as good or excellent. More than 30% of survey participants did not give feedback on the online PDF versions which would correlate to the lower numbers of respondents who access the bulletin via the web. Over a third of survey respondents identified as operating within multiple sectors while the largest single sector was land development and town planning. Further comments relating to improvements can still be emailed to christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au.



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