

# Research Matters

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

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## Housing Decisions of Empty Nesters

The Spatial Analysis and Research Branch is responsible for preparing population projections for use by Victorian government agencies, local government and other stakeholders. A key component of population projections is the choice of where to live made by individuals and households. These choices are often related to a housing choice.

One of the major changes facing families will be when the kids finally move out of home. In fact, this may be a long time after they first move out of home, with adult children often returning home and leaving again several times. Nevertheless, when they are finally gone, the parent or parents may be left in a large family home in the suburbs, designed for bringing up children.

Will these empty nesters move to the country or the coast or stay in the area where they currently live? Will they downsize to a smaller, newer townhouse? Will they keep the family home so the kids and grandkids can come back to visit?

To better understand the housing decisions of empty nesters, the Spatial Analysis and Research Branch of the Department of Sustainability and Environment employed Sweeney Research to conduct a number of focus groups with people who had either just become empty nesters or who are about to become empty nesters.

### Main findings:

Children leaving the parental home marks a time of freedom, spontaneity, time and satisfaction for empty nesters. Nesters don't see the children departing as being a 'life stage' as such, but rather a natural progression, another step forward. There are other events which they believe will trigger real change... retirement, the loss of a partner or financial difficulties are amongst these.

This is a transitional time for this generation... children leaving, grandchildren being born, parents dying, retirement looming and old-age knocking. Like any time of change, there comes the fear of the unknown. The real concerns for this generation relate to finances, health and loneliness.

Their new roles in life and the redefined structure at home have not necessarily resulted in any spare cash. The progression from child to adult has occurred – many costs associated with raising children diminished well before the children physically moved out.

While a number of changes have been brewing over time, the reality is that they now have a house with no kids. The question is – are they ready to move on? To down-size? The answer,



Empty nesters enjoying the freedom of not having kids at home

at this stage, is no. There are many empty nesters who have decided to remain in the family home. The reasons essentially revolve around emotional attachment, security and finances.

Some are happy to sell up, but, invariably want to stay in the same area unless there are compelling reasons to move to another area. Most can visualise their ideal new home and there is a strong consensus on the key features of their new home. It will be as maintenance free as possible, will be modern, on one level, with a small rear garden, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a main open-plan living area plus a second smaller living area and good security. For most, an apartment is not in the consideration set, nor is a retirement village.

A 'sea-change' is not on the list for many – most simply cannot afford it as they would still like a second 'town' house and this is well beyond their means.

The Housing Decisions of Empty Nesters Report is now available online by following the links to demographics at [www.dse.vic.gov.au/research/urbanandregional](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/research/urbanandregional)

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## Regional Atlas Launched

*Regional Matters. An Atlas of Regional Victoria 2005*, was launched in April 2006. This whole of government publication provides a valuable resource for those seeking a more integrated understanding of social, economic and environmental issues within Victoria and its regions. It provides 140 pages of maps, charts and commentary depicting a broad range of issues under the following theme headings:

- Changing Populations
- Community Wellbeing
- Servicing Communities
- Industry and Skills
- Water in a Dry Land
- Land and People
- Coastal Development
- Energy Choices

Since the first edition was released in 2002, *Regional Matters* has been used to inform policy, planning and research at all levels of government as well as being a general resource for community information. The current edition will be of



similar relevance to those working in, or dealing with, regional Victoria.

*Regional Matters* may be viewed online at: [www.dse.vic.gov.au/regionalmatters](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/regionalmatters)

Hard copies of the publication may be obtained from Information Victoria (Phone 1300 366 356) or the DSE Planning Information Centre (Phone 03 9637 8610). Price: \$30.00 (includes \$2.73 GST)

## Regional Atlas Information Sessions

Five information sessions were held in regional Victoria to promote the *Regional Matters* publication. The locations chosen for these sessions reflected the diversity of regional Victoria.

The first session was held on April 26th at a conference centre outside **Traralgon** in the heart of the Latrobe Valley next to key regional infrastructure – airport, hospital and Princes Freeway. Nearby, the power stations at Hazelwood and LoyYang provide the majority of the State's electricity. Because of this, one of the key topics reviewed at the presentation was "Energy Choices" which forms a chapter in *Regional Matters*.



*Ballarat – a contemporary community with a valuable heritage past that supports the tourism industry*

The second regional information session was held on May 3rd in **Ballarat** opposite the Sovereign Hill complex. The goldfields history provides many of the tourism attractions of the region. Small goldfields towns such as Clunes have now become part of the peri-urban development surrounding Ballarat

and this topic was highlighted in the presentation through maps showing commuting patterns and rural population growth.



*Diversity of infrastructure and lifestyles in the Latrobe Valley*

# Matters

## Warrnambool

provided the location for the third information session on May 10th. The local Surf Club gave attendees a broad view of the Southern Ocean, providing a suitable backdrop for discussing the topic of "Coastal Development" which forms a chapter within *Regional Matters*.



*Coastal lifestyles are proving to be an attractor of population growth*



Moving away from the larger regional cities, session four was held at **Milawa** in the King Valley. Again the venue provided a scenic regional backdrop of the vineyards of the lower King Valley for attendees. The Lindenwarrah estate was a suitable location for discussing tourism and rural lifestyle development.

*Autumn in the King Valley*

The final regional information session was held in **Swan Hill**

at the Nalder photographic studio. As well as having the scenic Murray River outside, the venue provided an extensive range of regional photos from around Australia, and highlighted the development of the Arts in regional Victoria.

Being located in an important irrigation region also provided an opportunity to discuss water and land issues which are highlighted in two of the *Regional Matters* chapters – "Water in a Dry Land" and "Land and People".

A total of more than 400 people attended the *Regional Matters* information sessions in regional Victoria. Over 80 organisations were represented including 20 State Government Agencies, 35 Local Government Areas, private businesses, peak bodies, non-government organisations and members of the general community.



*The Nalder Photographic Gallery in Swan Hill*

A final information session, held in

**Melbourne** on June 14th gave a Melbourne-based audience insight into the issues and questions raised at the regional information sessions as well as an overview of the *Regional Matters* publication.

Copies of the presentations are available online at:

[www.dse.vic.gov.au/regionalmatters](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/regionalmatters)

*Special thanks to all those who assisted in making these sessions possible, in particular: Alan Freitag, Ian Voight, Kim McGough, Kevin Ritchie and Chris Halpin who gave introductory speeches; Lea Fisk and Simone Hoey who assisted with organisation and logistics.*



*Fiona McKenzie, Team Leader of the Regional Atlas Project, presents the Regional Matters publication to attendees at the Warrnambool information session*

## Future Summit 2006 Creating a Better Future

The Future Summit 2006 was held in Brisbane in May. Over two days attendees enjoyed wide ranging discussion of issues of the future from a variety of keynote speakers and panellists including:

- Professor Ian Frazer, Director, Centre for Immunology, University of Queensland – Australian of the Year.
- Mr Rui Chenggang, Director and Anchor, China Central Television, People's Republic of China,
- Professor Jonathon West, Director, Innovation Research Institute, University of Tasmania
- The Hon Alexander Downer MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Organised by the Australian Davos Connection (ADC), the Future Summit sought to examine the opportunities and the threats that presently face Australia and the region under the theme "Re-inventing Australia in the Age of Asia".

Discussions were held under six themes:

- National Identity
- Public Health and International Security
- Adapting to Emerging Technologies
- Sustaining Prosperity in a Warming World
- Talent for a Knowledge Economy
- The Globalisation of Asia

You can find out more about the ADC and the Future Summit 2006 and also register to receive the report from the summit at this website: [www.futuresummit.org](http://www.futuresummit.org)

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## Urban Development Program Forums

The Development Forums for the 2006 Urban Development Program (UDP) are now complete. The UDP is one of the primary mechanisms for determining levels of supply, demand and adequacy of residential and industrial land across metropolitan Melbourne and the Geelong region.

Aside from our regular stakeholder engagement and information dissemination, this year the UDP has a new emphasis – the UDP information will be used by the soon to be established Growth Area Authority in its work of advising government about land supply.

It is therefore critical that the information included in this, and each subsequent Urban Development Program, reflects the current status of land supply within each of the growth areas. After extensive consultation earlier this year with the development industry, local government and service providers, the results of these meetings were presented at the Development Forums for confirmation, and identification of site specific issues.

Each of these Forums had good representation from a wide variety of stakeholder groups representing differing areas of land use planning and development industries, and provided useful feedback which will be incorporated into the 2006 Urban Development Program.

The Urban Development Program Report, and on-line information, will be available in the second half of this year. For further information, email your request to [urbandevelopment.program@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:urbandevelopment.program@dse.vic.gov.au), or keep an eye on the Urban and Regional Research section of the DSE website [www.dse.vic.gov.au/urbandevelopmentprogram](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/urbandevelopmentprogram).



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### Residential Land Bulletin

The Residential Land Bulletin has recently been expanded to a 12 page publication. The aim of the Bulletin is to provide an accurate and clear representation of the land development process by monitoring a number of 'pipeline' indicators from the planning application stage through to dwelling approvals. The bulletin now also includes estates sales activity in Growth Area municipalities sourced from Oliver Hume Research and lots sales information by Growth Area regions. For further information please email [christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au)

### Urban and Regional Research online

The Spatial Analysis and Research web page can be accessed at [www.dse.vic.gov.au/research/urbanandregional](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/research/urbanandregional)

Available now:

- The latest editions of *Research Matters*, the *Residential Land Bulletin & Local Connections*
- The *2006 Urban Development Program Forum Presentations*
- *Interstate Migration Special Bulletin 2006*
- *Regional Matters* – [www.dse.vic.gov.au/regionalmatters](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/regionalmatters)
- *Sustainability Analysis* – new content

Coming soon:

- *The Melbourne Atlas*
- *Towns in Time Analysis*

### Know Your Area

*Know Your Area* can still be accessed via [www.doi.vic.gov.au/knowyourarea](http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/knowyourarea) or by visiting [www.dse.vic.gov.au/research](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/research). The product will be moving to the DSE website in July/August and our customers will be notified via email.

Recent data updates include:

- Residential land development data for metropolitan councils for the March quarter 2006
- Unemployment data from Department of Employment and Workplace Relations for March 2006.
- Water Consumption data for metropolitan councils from March 2005 onwards to December 2005.

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 **9637 9570** or by email [christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:christina.inbakaran@dse.vic.gov.au)

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