

Towns in Time 2001 Analysis



Population change in Victoria's towns
and rural areas, 1981–2001

Incorporating the Study of small towns in Victoria revisited



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1 Introduction

Towns in time 2001 – Analysis is a key publication in a series of publications designed to provide easy access to a range of demographic data and analysis. Each publication includes basic census data (*Regional Victoria in fact* and *Melbourne in fact*); population projections (*Victoria in future 2004*); and time series data and analysis based on census information (Towns in Time). These publications (which were previously produced by the Department of Infrastructure) are prepared by the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Towns in time 2001 is designed for users in non-metropolitan areas of Victoria, and for those wanting to consider the unique character of one or more Victorian towns.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment has previously produced simple one-page data profiles of 396 towns, 57 rural balances of Victorian local government areas (LGAs) and eight New South Wales LGAs that border Victoria to the north. This information has been available on the department's website since late 2003.

Towns in time 2001 Analysis takes the next step by analysing some of this data and attempting to build the 'big picture' around some of the key demographic trends affecting towns and cities in regional Victoria.

The 1999 edition of Towns in Time covered the period 1981–96 and gave a comprehensive analysis of demographic change in regional Victoria. Rather than

reproduce much of this information and simply include the changes that occurred from 1996–2001, this document presents an overview of the changes between 1981 and 2001, and provides further analysis of four key elements of demographic change in:

- regional centres
- coastal areas
- exurban areas
- the changing dynamics of small towns

The *Study of small towns in Victoria revisited* has also been updated to provide more detailed analysis that goes well beyond the scope of the census variables available in the Towns in Time database.

Revisiting the *Study of small towns in Victoria*

In 1987, the then Ministry for Planning and Environment co-commissioned and published (in 1988) the *Study of small towns in Victoria*. This highly successful and seminal work focused on a detailed study of six diverse regional Victorian towns—Murtoa, Camperdown, Stanhope, Beechworth, Ouyen and Swifts Creek. Revisiting each of the towns was critical to update this important work and to complement the development of *Towns in time 2001*.

The department engaged Professor John Martin (from La Trobe University Bendigo), John Henshall (a consultant involved in the original 1988 study) and a group of researchers from five universities that are part of the Victorian Universities Regional Research Network (VURRN) to undertake this research. The consortium revisited the six towns in late September 2005 to analyse how each have fared over the 17 years since the original study was undertaken.

The researchers made a number of key findings and noted the resilience and robustness of these small towns and their communities. A detailed summary of the finding of this investigation is contained in the second half of this report.