



project in progress summary

knowledge for managing Australian landscapes

Change & continuity in peri-urban Australia

*Research project number RMI13 of the Social and Institutional Research Program of Land & Water Australia.
Commencement date: December 2004; Anticipated completion: December 2006.*

Background

Australia is one of the world's most urbanised countries. Consistent with a global trend, the size of Australian cities has increased dramatically over the last 100 years. Increasing numbers of people are choosing to live in urban environments, with nearly 75% of Australians living in the metropolitan areas of capital or smaller cities and this is projected to increase to 90% by the year 2011.

This concentration of population is unusual internationally. It is concentrating impacts over significant areas around capital cities. These impacts are extending for significant distances from the main metropolitan areas. Governments have developed institutional arrangements, policies and legislative and statutory processes in response to the impacts of cities on hinterlands. These have sometimes controlled impacts, such as by directing development into defined areas. However, regulation has also led to other consequences. For example, the introduction of a legislated Urban Growth Boundary around the Melbourne Metropolitan area, and a broad green belt, has led to increased pressure on rural land

in municipalities outside the green belt. Significant social and economic change is also leading to movements of populations into regional areas within 200 kilometres of some capital cities, including Melbourne and Brisbane. In addition these in turn create a wider range of influence in terms of holiday locations and lifestyle farms. These population shifts are related to lifestyle and demographic change, and also to new patterns of work and communication.

Current and projected future policy and program responses reflect a short term horizon approach and an incapacity or unwillingness to explore the longer term implications of the changing role and function of peri-urban areas and communities. The likely longer term future runs counter to the prevailing view which essentially values and supports growth and development.

The legislative system devised to manage and control land use changes and new developments may only have limited relevance to the needs of peri-urban areas. The presence of new metropolitan origin residents will likely lead to calls for increasingly stringent natural resource management policies and for limits to further settlement of these areas.



Project objectives

This study will examine changes in agricultural and lifestyle land uses, rural water use, and land management. It will examine the implications of these changes for future land use and management. Relationships between key factors will be identified and analysed, for example, between Catchment Management processes, National Action Plan and Natural Heritage Trust funded projects, biodiversity conservation, and social and economic trends. Finally, it will develop scenarios for future land use and management based on business and usual, interventionist and deregulated options.

This study of peri-urban regions in two states has two key aims:

1. To investigate the nature and extent of contemporary peri urban regions in Australia and seek to identify likely future patterns of socio-economic, agricultural, cultural, natural resource development, environmental and land use change in peri-urban landscapes.
2. To analyse the historical, contemporary and emergent trends, including institutional actions, that have produced, and which are recasting, Australia's peri-urban regions.
3. To model future development and management scenarios to produce a clear assessment of change and continuity in peri-urban regions.

Study areas

This study will examine changes in agricultural and lifestyle land uses, rural water use, and land management in catchments, and demographic, environmental and economic trends in the peri urban areas of Melbourne and Brisbane.

Target audiences for project findings

This project has relevance for multiple audiences. The key audiences are Government policy makers (Commonwealth, State, Local), academics and researchers, public and private land owners/managers/regulators in peri urban areas, and community organisations.

Progress to date

- National and international literature review
- Engagement with key stakeholders

Contact

Principal researchers

Melbourne

Assoc Prof Michael Buxton, School of Social Science and Planning, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne

Telephone: (03) 9925 3039
Fax: (03) 9925 1885
Email: michael.buxton@rmit.edu.au

Brisbane

Dr Darryl Low Choy, Centre for Urban Research, School of Environmental Planning, Griffith University, Brisbane.

Telephone: (07) 3875 7496
Fax: (07) 3875 4026
Email: d.lowchoy@griffith.edu.au

Contact the SIRP team

Social and Institutional Research Program
Land & Water Australia
GPO Box 2182
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: 02 6263 6069
Website: www.sirp.gov.au