

AUSTRALIA'S REGIONAL CENTRES:

Are They Part of the Nation's Network of Cities or Only When it Matters Politically?

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INTRODUCTION

Thirty seven percent of Australians do not live in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth or Adelaide. Reinforced by popular media references and current political arrangements at the federal level, this constituency has increasingly being referred to under the collective term of 'regional' Australia. Regional Australia is a broad term that can cover persons living in as a diverse range of settings as, on farms, in remote mining communities, as well as those who live in towns, cities and large regional centres. Contrary to widely held perceptions, reinforced by the often-used media term 'the bush', regional Australians mostly live in large cities and towns (DFAT, 2008). These non-metropolitan Australians are urban dwellers just like their metropolitan counterparts, with nearly 20 percent of them living in cities with populations between 40,000 and 500,000. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2004, p. 1) defines 'urban' as a settlement of over 1,000 people. Another 5 percent of Australians live in cities and towns with more than 1,000 and less than 40,000 people. Only 13 percent of Australians live in rural or non-urban settings. The reality of this demographic situation, together with the financial and political dominance of the five metropolitan areas, sets much of the national policy agenda and dominates dialogue and research about urban policy at the national level and in each of the five mainland states.

Recent initiatives by the federal government have provided a much stronger focus on regional Australia with policy and programs to specifically address the assessed needs of regional Australians. This new found recognition of regional Australia can be linked to agreements between the Labor party and three independent Members of Parliament who represent regional electorates (Brett, 2011). At the same time, the federal government has once again entered the policy area of Australia's cities and has pursued a program to develop a national urban policy (DIT, 2011). In doing so it has provided a definitional cut off in terms of 'urban' as places with 100,000 persons or more. Using this criterion, only eighteen Australian cities (see: Figure 1, below) are part of an urban policy agenda and by default all urban areas below this population level are not part of that agenda.

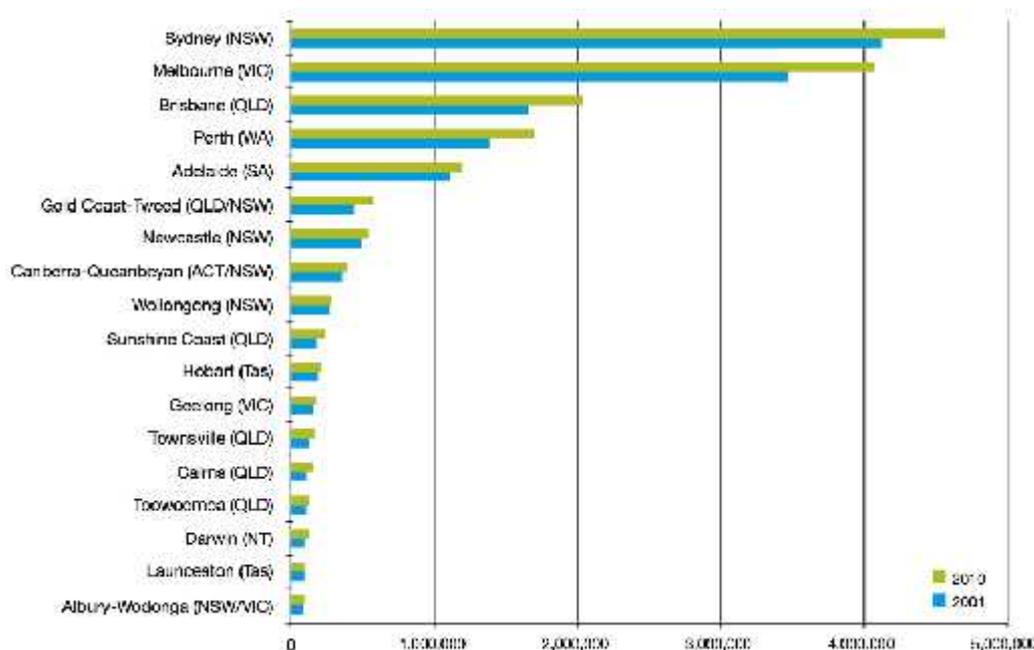


Figure 1: Australia's 18 Major Cities – Population level and change from 2001 to 2010
(source: DIT, 2011, p. 6)

By implication, a national urban policy has no application to about 12 percent of the population who live in cities and towns with populations between 1,000 and 100,000 people (ABS, 2011). Many cities have a population just below that critical 100,000 level, they include cities such as: Ballarat (VIC), Bendigo (VIC), Mandurah (WA), Wagga Wagga (NSW) and Mackay (QLD). They are among a number of smaller cities in Australia that are growing rapidly and some will, in only a few years, achieve 100,000 persons. Do these cities suddenly acquire an urban policy agenda once they pass this population milestone? This definitional divide begs the question; what *is* the 'urban' policy agenda for cities and towns with less than 100,000 people? Is it the same as larger places just scaled down, or is it somehow different?

The urban policy and planning agenda of smaller cities that sit below the level of major cities in developed nations receives little attention (Bell and Jayne 2006, 2009). However the size and scale of these 'small' cities varies depending on their particular national setting and settlement hierarchy. Bell and Jayne have examined the UK and North American examples, and by their definition small cities in these demographic settings are typically around the 250,000 population level. They do though find the same issues prevailing, that is the urban policy and research agenda is dominated by the largest cities and the agenda of smaller cities is little studied, poorly articulated and likely to be a combination of limited research and an assumption that it is the same as larger cities just at a smaller scale (Bell and Jayne 2006, 2009).

This paper discusses the periodic emergence of regional Australia as a focus of policy and action, the development of a network of regional centres in Australia, the difficulties and shortcomings in confining a national urban policy to only the very large cities and how regional policy and an urban policy agenda relates to Australia's 'non-urban' cities and larger towns.

REGIONAL AUSTRALIA AND REGIONAL CENTRES

Outside the sprawling edges of Australia's five major metropolitan areas lies 99 percent of the country's landmass. It is variously defined and described as rural Australia, country Australia, regional Australia, rural and regional Australia (RARA), rural and remote Australia, non-metropolitan Australia or just 'the bush'. Despite the descriptions, which appear to imply a dispersed agriculturally based non-urban population, almost all (87 percent) of the population resides in urban places (ABS, 2004, p. 1). Rather quaintly, ABC Radio across regional Australia still runs a one-hour segment at midday called 'The Country Hour'. As Judith Brett (2011) comments in her latest Quarterly Essay, the word 'country' has all but disappeared from Australia's political vocabulary as a word for the settled countryside. It has been replaced by 'regional' for major non-metropolitan centres and 'rural' for areas of sparse population, although regional often does for both.

While there is an interchangeable set of terms to describe and define non-metropolitan Australia, the term 'regional Australia' has risen to prominence and common use. It is now particularly equated with the agenda of the current federal government. As well, in recognition of its reliance on and the formal agreement struck with the independents, the government has created a Minister for Regional Australia and Regional Development, and embarked on a policy and program to provide increased funding for regional Australia.

Similar to the confusion around the term for the population living in regional Australia, the larger cities and towns that together make up the bulk of regional Australia's population have also been variously termed. Budge and Butt (2009) contended that using the term 'medium sized cities' is most apt when referring to the larger regional centres of Australia with populations in excess of around 40,000. Recently in *Urban Design Forum*, Duncan (2011) commented on the difficulty in defining urban regional Australia noting the 'absence of a clear, agreed term'. He suggested that the term 'regional cities' would appear to be the best definition available. However this definition does not include 'small [urban regional] localities' (as defined by Stimson et al., 2001). In a paper focusing on the 'economic restructuring [of] Australia's regional cities and towns', Stimson et al., (2001, p. 24) refer to smaller regional

centres – which they term ‘small localities [with] populations between 4,000 and 10,000’ – as ‘rural urban communities [that exist] outside of the mega-metro regions’.

While the search for a more precise definition continues, the growing general use of the term ‘regional centre’ has gained widespread use. It avoids the hierarchy implicit in the terms city and town. It appears that regional centre better encapsulates the key characteristics of urban localities across regional Australia (see, for example: New South Wales Government, 2011; Queensland Government, 2010; Victorian Government, 2010). The term regional centre has within it the concept of an economic and social role, the ‘centre’ of a definable region. A regional centre operates as a core around which a range of activities reliant on a central place function.

It is likely that there will be a continuing search and debate for a definition that encompasses *all* of the urbanised regional, rural and remote localities that exist outside of the major metropolitan areas of Australia. But as Duncan (2011) warns, those seeking a definitive descriptor should remain aware of the inherent risk in equating the urban policy agenda of urban regional Australia ‘with [that of] the wider ‘regional and rural’ agenda which, while important, is largely distinct from addressing the urban aspects of cities [and towns] beyond the dominant metroplexes’.

DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL POLICY IN AUSTRALIA

Policy for regional Australia and for regional centres (which is different to regional policy, and which will be discussed later) has a checkered history in Australia. There are a number of concepts in the development of a distinct policy for regional Australia. Firstly, that a level of government intervention is needed in order to promote and support development essentially because there are unrealized economic opportunities in regional settings. Secondly, there are disadvantages experienced by people in regional areas because of disparities in income levels, unemployment rates, health levels, educational attainments, access to services and so on. These disparities are such that some form of intervention is justified to redress these disadvantages. Thirdly, that some form of decentralisation would be ‘good’ for Australia so as to counteract the ‘unhealthy’ concentrations of population in the large metropolitan areas and that by encouraging people to relocate, it would relieve the consequences of population pressures in Australia’s burgeoning metro areas (Logan, 1987; Rainnie & Grant, 2005; Argent, 2010; Daley & Lancy, 2011).

These policy issues, themes and responses periodically do the rounds in federal government circles and are consistently raised in state policy agendas. The level of interest, the degree of resources and the vigour with which these are pursued depends on a range of factors, which vary from genuine interest and concern to political expediency (Brett 2011). Regardless of whether a state or federal government is dependent on a political arrangement in respect to regional areas to hold power, it has generally become a part of each federal or state governments’ position to develop a distinct set of directions and actions around regional agendas and needs. There is an inherent ‘logic’ in governments being seen to take account of the specific needs of regional constituents. The rural or regional constituency in Australia has a long history of seeking a special set of arrangements on the basis that they have a different agenda.

Is the Labor government’s recent focus on regional Australia a widespread concern for these places and issues or primarily – or even entirely – driven by their alliance and dependency on individuals representing regional interests? This circumstance periodically surfaces, although not so starkly at the federal level. The Bracks Labor government in Victoria from 1999 to 2002 was dependent on three rural and regional independents. The incumbency of the current Barnett government in Western Australia is dependent on a deal between the Liberals, National and an independent MP and the provision of a large fund earmarked specifically to address regional issues. The basis of that fund is that regional Western Australians were not receiving their fair share of the revenue that the state was raising from mining in regional and remote WA.

The concept of regions has not always had the connotations that the term now evokes. As a term, geographers used 'regions' as a way of describing areas with common physical characteristics. Griffith Taylor, the first Australian geographer of note, described in his 1940 book *Australia* – with the marvelous subtitle 'A study of warm environments and their effect on British settlement' – regions as seven grand sweeping geographical 'natural regions'. In time, the concept of regions became much more equated with economic development, addressing 'lagging regions' and particularly in a European setting, economically depressed areas. In the emergence of the 'new' regionalism, the differences between regions become more important, this form of thinking was epitomised in Michael Porter's theory of the comparative advantage of regions.

After World War II, the Australian Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction called for local government authorities to inform the Commonwealth about necessary projects which needed to be undertaken during the post-war era in respective local areas (Lloyd & Troy, 1981; 1984). This concept of working directly with local governments or groups (regions) of local governments is a consistent theme among labor governments at the federal level. Whitlam established the Australian Assistance Plan; under Keating, the government established Area Consultative Committees, and the current government, Regional Development Australia Committees. Federal Labor appears to repeatedly return to this theme to break the necessity of working with the states and as a means of directing funds to regions. Following WWII, the federal government encouraged the states to survey regional areas. Some states organised regional development committees with state and local representatives. The documents produced were largely descriptive and lacked the advocacy that so characterises contemporary regional reports and strategies.

The Whitlam era of regional policy and planning in respect to cities and regions stands in stark contrast to anything that has gone before or since. Under his leadership, the federal government worked directly with the regional bodies they set up and funded. The prime example was Albury-Wodonga, where the federal government directly took charge of the planning and development of a regional centre and drove its growth and development. The consequence was a massive boost to its population but ultimately the project ran out of steam and political will. While Albury-Wodonga is held up as an example of what can be achieved with federal regional policy, its failure to deliver on the grand projections and promises is also cited as an example of the failure of a federal regional policy approach (Lloyd & Troy, 1981; 1984; Logan, 1987).

Minister Crean's current regional agenda is held up as a yet again discovery by the federal government of the concepts of regionalism and the value of direct regional intervention. For all the rhetoric and perception that this agenda is all about regional Australia, the reality is that it is once again being used as a means to bypass the states and deliver direct to local constituencies. Regional Development Australia (RDA) Committees are not Committees of regional Australia. In fact the 55 RDA Committees are across the *whole of* Australia. For example metropolitan Sydney is one RDA, Melbourne has four RDAs and Tasmania is a single RDA.

In his address to the Regional Development Australia National Forum earlier this year, Minister Crean (2011a) stated that having representatives from 'all [of] the 55 Regional Development Australia Committees is vital to being able to find ways to address the economic, social and environmental needs of each region'. It should be noted that Crean's speech, like so many on this topic, used the terms regions and regional Australia interchangeably. In this regard, the government is playing to both ends of the regional spectrum. Sitting in this audience were representatives of inner Sydney and outback Northern Territory. Reading the speech, one could form the view that it was all about regional Australia when in fact it was about Australia's regions. Crean (ibid) went on to say 'these are exciting times for regional Australia, full of potential and promise ... RDAs are there to perform a strategic role - one that is rooted in strong engagement with Local Government, Regional Organisations of Councils and other stakeholders. RDAs are there as facilitators, mentors and brokers on regional development'. Further, he talked about the 'untapped potential in regional Australia that we are starting to harness' (ibid). He referred to 'the Evocities campaign [which] promotes the NSW regional cities of Albury, Dubbo, Orange,

Bathurst, Armidale, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga to people in Sydney [and that] these are all growth cities that have come together to promote the employment and lifestyle opportunities offered by these regional centres' (ibid). Minister Crean's full speech is riddled with the dual agenda of regional Australia and Australian regions, and in no doubt provided comfort to all in the audience, no matter where they lived.

The federal government was forced with the release of the Grattan Institute's report *Investing in regions: Making a difference* (Daley & Lancy, 2011) to seek to counter the claims that successive regional development policy has failed to deliver sufficient gains to regions to justify the expense and effort. In responding, Minister Crean enunciated what the federal government was seeking to achieve by conducting a regional Australia development policy. But he was able to add little to the claims in the Grattan Institute's work that there is an (urban) policy agenda particularly around fast growing regional centres that is missed by much of the regional policy agenda pursued by successive governments. Mr Crean's media release expressed its disappointment in the report that says its extensive investment in regional Australia isn't producing the promised economic development. Minister Crean (2011b) said of the report:

[it] failed to recognise the challenges and circumstances facing those in the regions [and by doing so] strengthened the government's resolve to keep investing in the regions. At a time when many regional Australians are doing it tough, I am astonished at any suggestion that government investment makes little difference to economic prosperity in the regions ... We will never back away from ensuring that regional Australians have access to the services, infrastructure and programs they need, no matter where they live. Our investment is not a one-size-fits-all approach to regional development. Instead, we are working directly with local communities to target investments on projects that make a lasting impact, be it to drive growth, or meet the needs of high growth regions ... Regional Australia is an area of crucial focus but this report adds little to the debate.

EMERGENCE OF A NETWORK OF REGIONAL CENTRES

The major characteristic of Australia's emerging settlement pattern has been the growing dominance of, and the continuing focus on, the growth of Sydney and Melbourne and relatively recently, the rise of Brisbane and Perth, together with the extended metropolitan areas of each. At another level, the hollowing out of the population of much of inland rural Australia has been accompanied by the sustained growth of a limited number of major inland and coastal regional centres (Budge & Butt, 2009). Large regional centres such as Newcastle, Wollongong, Geelong, Townsville and Cairns, which all benefit from a coastal location have all grown strongly and they have been accompanied by a network of inland regional centres such as Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Dubbo, Mildura, Mount Gambier, Tamworth and Toowoomba, each of which have sustained population growth. While the immediate hinterland population of these centres in the towns and rural areas immediately dependent on them has grown, these places lie in larger regions that have generally experienced population stagnation or decline, even though the productive value of agriculture in these areas has risen considerably. Budge and Butt at the 2009 SOAC conference, in documenting the rise of these major regional population centres (those between 40,000 and 500,000), showed that nearly one in five Australians now live in these centres and that collectively they are increasing their share of Australia's population.

While regional centres in themselves form an important part of the discussion concerning an urban regional policy agenda, the links between these centres, and the overall network of which they are part, must likewise be acknowledged. There is growing evidence that these regional centres are developing as a network of places that are linking to each other and to the metropolitan areas through improved road and rail connections and services, and with the further development of air services. These are significant changes in the way in which these regional centres are physically linked into Australia's economic and social activity. The potential for a high-speed rail service linking Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane also means that regional centres such as Albury-Wodonga, Canberra, Newcastle, Lismore and the Gold Coast would also form part of that network.

Another example of an emerging regional network can clearly be seen in the map of existing and proposed Australian mining sites, and the critical infrastructure (gas pipeline, roads and rail, etc.) that links each (see: Appendix A). Politically, the policy agenda of (literally) linking Australia's regional centres with metropolitan areas has attracted major interest of late. This is probably no more apparent than with the development and roll out of a National Broadband Network (NBN). Touted by the federal government as a 'key nation-building project' prior to the last election, the NBN proved to be one of or even the major bargaining tool that ultimately led to the formation of a coalition government pact between the Labor Party and the two crossbenchers Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor (Australian Government, 2011a). Once in full operation, the NBN promises to deliver much for rural, regional and remote Australia, including the ability to 'connect our big cities, regional centres and rural communities' (Australian Government, 2011b, p. 1). NBN Co, the entity tasked with the job of constructing the digital network, has produced a map showing 'indicative representation of the fibre and wireless components' of the NBN (see: Appendix B). This map shows the extent to which metro-urban, regional urban, rural urban and even some remote urban centres have a capacity to become part of a broader network of regional centres.

However, where the political influence of the regionally based MPs concerning the rollout of the NBN is already apparent, is with the choice of sites for the 'fibre-to-the premises first release' (NBN Co, 2011a). Of the five initial sites chosen on the mainland, four are situated in regional Australia. It will be perhaps of no surprise to some that one of these sites is Armidale (NSW), part of independent Member of Parliament Tony Windsor's own electorate. While the claim might be that '[t]he sites were selected by NBN Co's network planners and engineers because they represent the diverse situations they will encounter during the network rollout' (ibid), a reading of the press releases (Windsor, 2011) issued from the office of Tony Windsor MP indicates that the choice of Armidale (at least) was an attempt to appease the political demands as made by himself.

NATIONAL URBAN POLICY AGENDA

The federal government has detailed its current national urban policy agenda through the recently released flagship policy document: *Our Cities, Our Future - A National Urban Policy for a productive, sustainable and liveable future* (DIT, 2011). The government has set out why it sees it as being important to have such a policy, before describing how it plans to implement the same. In essence, the government's national urban policy agenda 'seek[s] to guide public and private investment to achieve optimal socio-economic and environmental outcomes in our cities' (ibid, p. 12).

The definition of cities is restricted to the 18 largest cities; those with more than 100,000 persons (see: Figure 1, previously). In effect this leaves out the 13 percent of Australians who live in urban areas; cities and towns of less than 100,000 persons. Examples of the policy shortfall come in the form of numerous position statements put forward by relevant Ministers in respect to a number of matters, these include:

1) Regional Australia Minister Simon Crean (2011b), on the Government's inability to cope with developmental stresses on rural, yet nonetheless urban communities as a result of the mining boom: 'A fly-in fly-out or drive-in drive-out workforce is an inevitable part of coping with the skills demands and the huge growth in the resource sector ... Ideally you want to build communities that are sustainable, but some workers will always choose to live elsewhere and commute'.

2) Infrastructure and Transport Minister Anthony Albanese (2011), on the fact that the government's national urban policy agenda does not extend to cities with populations less than 100,000 people: '...in 2009 all State and Territory Governments agreed through COAG that they would have in place capital city strategic plans by 1 January 2012 ... we would like to see cities with populations greater than 100,000 put in place similar plans'.

3) Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities Minister Tony Burke (2011), on the Government's hands off approach to implementing a national urban policy

agenda in regional Australia: ‘...we reject the 1970s, old style, government controlled, decentralisation model and there's a really good reason why we can reject that. You don't need government to control decentralisation now to be able to grow the regions.’

THE REGIONAL CENTRE URBAN POLICY AGENDA

This paper contends that there is a distinct lack of attention in government to an urban policy agenda for cities below 100,000 and indeed to cities outside the five metropolitan areas. This extends to a lack of research on smaller urban areas and cities in Australia. As part of the preparation of this paper, the authors undertook a search of various Australian-published planning-related journals via the *Informit* database by using a range of key search terms (see: Table 1, below). This search failed to reveal any literature concerned with the topics described by the key search terms.

Table 1: List of Australian-published planning-related journals, and the key terms used to search the full text of the same for references to a ‘regional centre urban policy’

Journals	Key Search Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australasian Journal of Regional Studies • Australasian Journal of Environmental Management • Australian Planner • Journal of Australian Studies • Rural Society • Sustaining Regions • Urban Futures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mid sized city • non-metropolitan • regional centre • regional city

Bell & Jayne (2006) identified that small cities do have distinct urban policy agendas but that by comparison with the scale of the agenda in large cities it is not of great enough significance to attract the attention of urban policy research. What sorts of matters do constitute the urban policy agenda of these smaller cities – regional centres? Bell & Jayne (2006; 2009) found that there is an absence of research on small cities and as a consequence there is often an assumption that the agenda will be the same as in larger cities, just scaled down. Budge & Butt (2009) found that in Australia ‘the planning agenda of small cities has distinct elements, but similar to the findings of Bell and Jayne, it is often confounded by parochialism and scale’. Ofori-Amoah (2007), in discussing the US experience with small cities, found that the agenda is frequently much more about ‘identity, expectation, potential and parochialism than the agenda found in larger cities’. Similar findings emerged in Canada in the research of Seasons, (2003), Simard & Simard (2005), Nelson (2005) and Garrett-Petts (2005).

Referring to Bendigo (VIC) as an example of a regional centre with a population just below 100,000, a search of federal and state government databases reveals very little in the way of government support for the development of an urban policy agenda, as it would apply to such a city. In terms of the Federal Government, the only apparent mention Bendigo receives is with its inclusion in the Water Smart Australia program (DSEWPC, 2010) in reference to the development of the Bendigo Water Recycling and Goldfields Superpipe projects. In terms of an ‘urban policy agenda’ and the Victorian government, such an agenda for Bendigo is referred to in the Department of Planning and Community Development’s Bendigo Corridor Sustainable Growth Strategy, and again in the Regional Residential Report – Bendigo document (DPCD, 2010). As a rapidly expanding regional urban centre with an estimated residential population increase for the period 2011-2031 of 38 percent (Forecast.id, 2011), Bendigo will have to wait only a few years until its population hits 100,000 and at that point will, all of a sudden, attract the attention of the federal government because it will be one of those regional centres that is part of the national urban policy agenda.

While this paper is clearly advocating extending urban policy agendas and research to regional centres it also suggests that the changing urbanisation of regional, rural and remote centres of Australia is also important. Newly emerging cities and towns in mining communities are part of that. Take for example Roxby Downs, a highly urbanised, yet totally resource-based community situated approximately 600km north of Adelaide. As an indicator of its urbane nature, 82 percent of Roxby Down’s resident population of 4,292 persons is reported to have access to the Internet at their place of residence (ABS, 2010b). By comparison, Burnside, a leafy green inner-eastern suburb of Adelaide, has only 70 percent of its residents connected to the Internet.

Roxby (as it is known by the locals) is a young town, both in chronological age and population structure. Purposely founded around 25-years ago to service the BHP-Billiton-owned Olympic Dam copper, uranium, silver and gold mine, Roxby residents average just 29-years of age with 38 per cent of the population aged 15-years and younger (Roxby Downs, 2011). Roxby may soon have to prepare for an even larger and faster influx of residents. In 2009, BHP-Billiton filed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with federal and state government agencies. The EIS outlined a proposal to expand the Olympic Dam mine site by developing ‘an open pit mine’, which in effect ‘would lift ore production six-fold’ (Government of South Australia, 2011). BHP has submitted a Development Plan Amendment (DPA) with local and state government authorities to rezone land to allow for an expansion of the township boundary, and the ‘establishment of a new temporary workers’ village for up to 10,000 people’, and the ‘establishment of a new airport’.

Roxby Downs is not alone in its struggle to develop an effective and coherent urban policy agenda. Many of Australia’s regional and remote mining regions face a similar battle. One example is the Pilbara region of Western Australia. The Pilbara region is about to embark on an ambitious plan, the making of which has occurred mostly as a result of state and local government action and very little by the way of support from federal government urban policy initiatives (PDC, 2010; DRDL, 2011). The plan itself seeks to implement a wide range of urban policy objectives, one of which is to adequately respond to a projected population increase of close to 100% across the region in the coming 20-plus years (see: Figure 2), below.

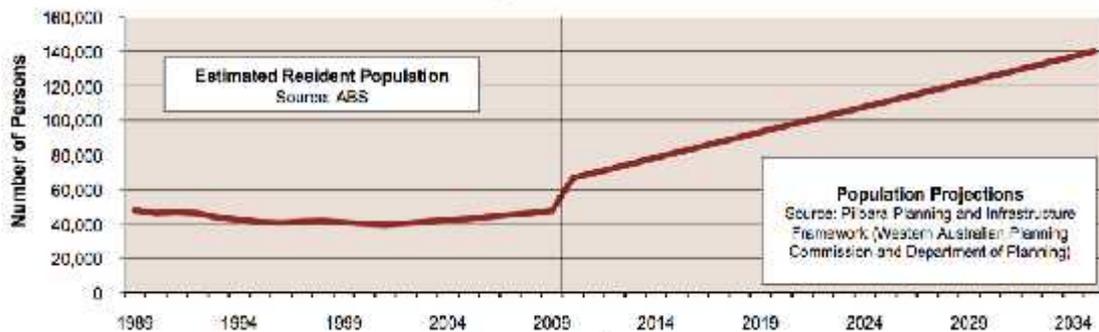


Figure 2: Pilbara region – Population projection for the period 2009-2035 (Source: PDC, 2011, p. 2)

Australia’s approach to urban policy agenda is in danger of failing to capture much of the change that is occurring as a result of regional growth, the mining boom and the ‘two speed economy’, because it is locked into an old paradigm about cities and their population size.

CONCLUSION

Australia was once a nation of ‘the country’ and ‘the bush’, both demographically and culturally. The twentieth century saw a handful of metropolitan areas progressively assume an importance that is in stark contrast to the structure of most nations. While that dominance will continue the rest of Australia is transforming; inland pastoral and rural areas are hollowing out in terms of their population and a small number of strategically located

coastal and inland regional centres are growing at much faster rates than they have for years, and the mining boom is turning a number of towns into places with urban problems (housing affordability, lack of services, marginalised populations and low levels of community engagement). The federal government has yet again turned to a regional approach to addressing issues, but it continues to cloud this approach by running twin agendas of promoting and supporting regional Australia while dividing the whole nation into regions in an attempt to engage directly with local governments and bypass the states. It has then compounded the confusion of this approach by establishing a national urban policy agenda which sets an arbitrary population level for what is urban, which disenfranchises some of Australia's fastest growing (in percentage terms) urban places. This paper advocates a more inclusive approach and suggests that an urban policy agenda should be examining urban policy issues when they are found in regional centres rather than defining the urban places and then examining the issues.

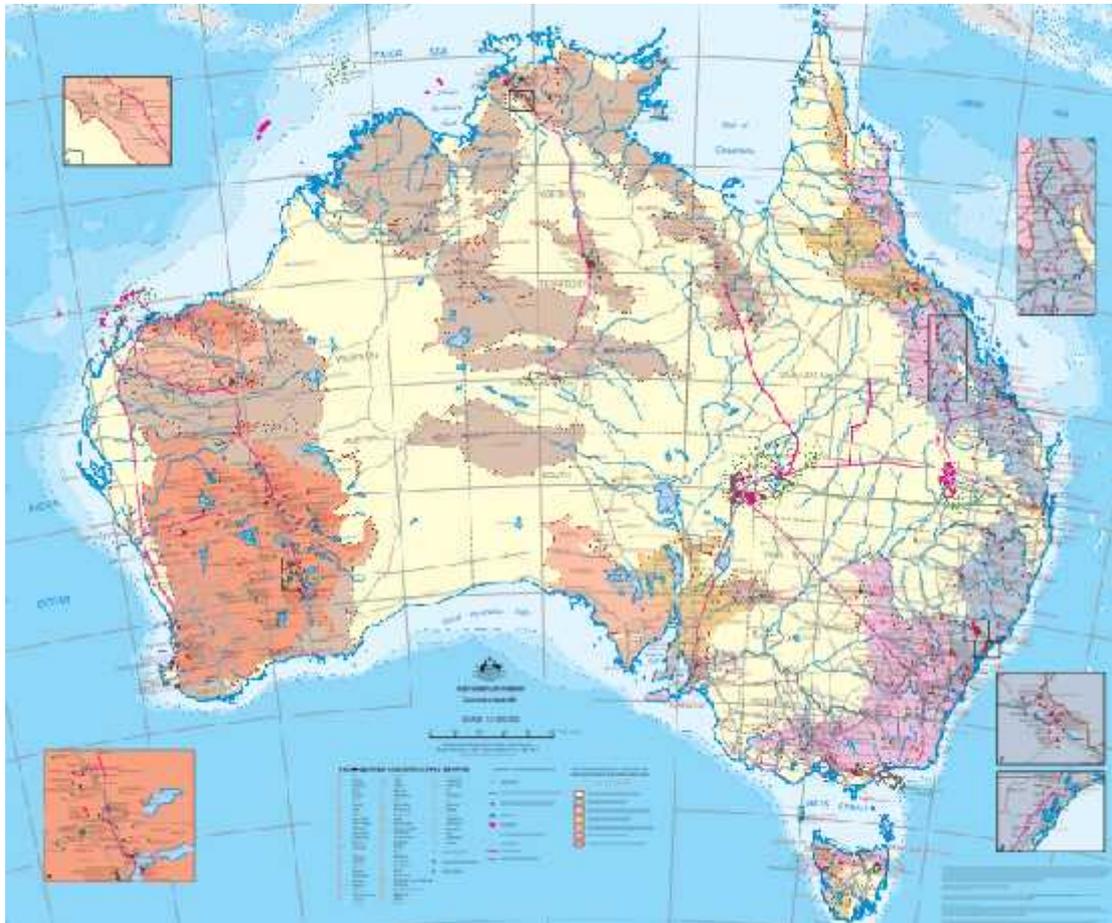
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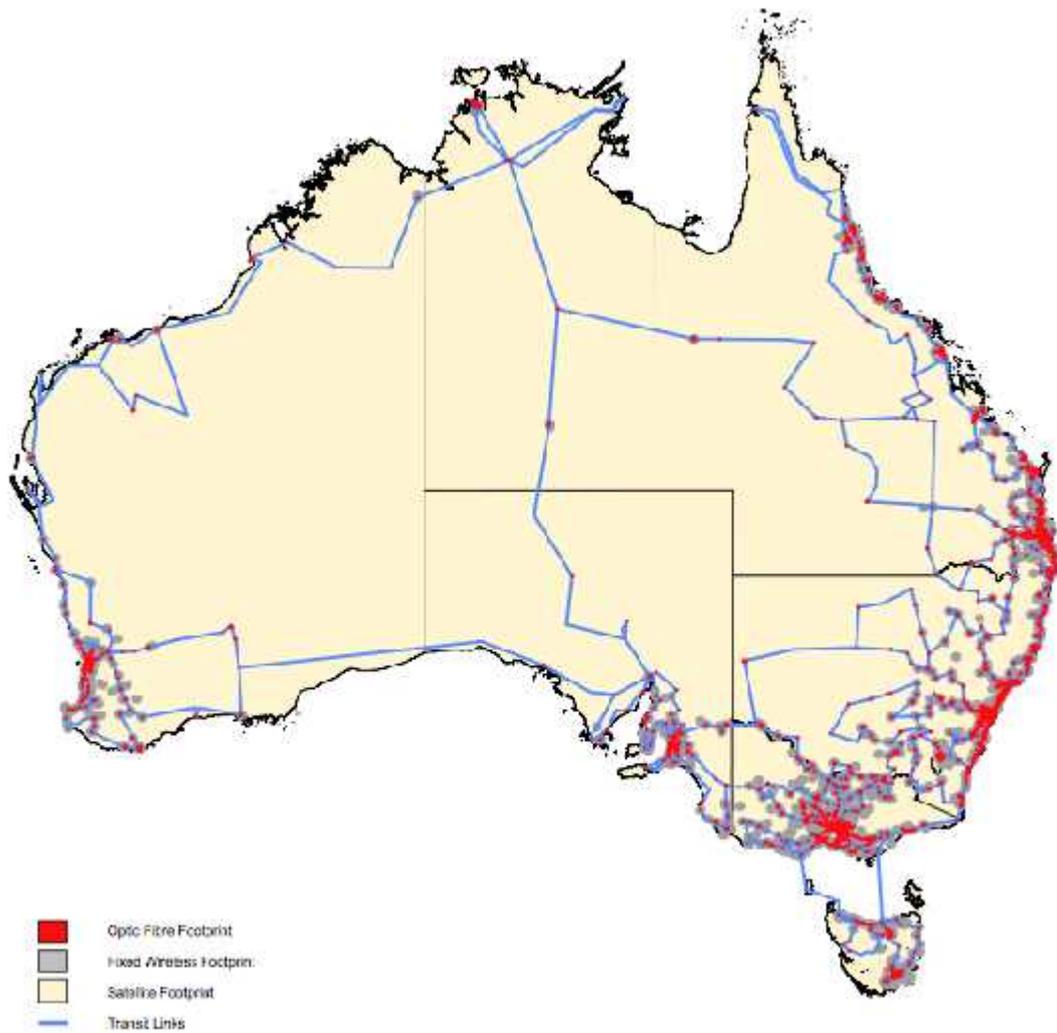
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APPENDIX A



Existing and proposed Australian mining sites, and the critical infrastructure that links each (Source: Geoscience Australia: http://www.ga.gov.au/image_cache/GA6886.pdf)

APPENDIX B



Indicative representation of the fibre and wireless components of the NBN (Source: NBN Co: <http://www.nbnco.com.au/assets/maps/coverage-australia.pdf>)