



## Sea Change: Re-Inventing Rural and Regional Australia

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Abstract: The ABC's popular *SeaChange* series has re-popularised the idyll of getting away from big city pressures to high amenity rural and small town settings on the Australian coastline and in select inland localities usually within striking distance of the big cities. This paper addresses: the changing relationships between city and hinterland that enable, or drive, such choices; the reasons why people choose to move; the different types of places in which they settle; and the implications for these places, the settlers and existing residents. Movements from city to country have been going on for a long time, 30 years in their contemporary manifestations in Australia and in other western industrialised nations. Whilst the factors involved are constant, there are significant recent shifts to the balance of forces that make the most recent period, and the scenario for the future, distinctive and worthy of continued attention by researchers and policy makers. Drawing on a long-term research engagement with the subject, the paper is based on a recent public lecture given by the author at the State Library of New South Wales.

Key terms: Sea change, population turnaround, counterurbanisation, perimetropolitan development, exurban development, regional development, amenity migration, welfare migration.

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### Introduction

The ABC's *SeaChange* series, with its cast of quirky characters in down south Pearl Bay (aka Barwon Heads in Victoria), re-tells the myth of escaping from city pressures in a particularly beguiling way. Whatever the production values and quality of acting that made the series a hit, it is clear that the sense of mutually supporting small-town community values, anti-materialism and coastal setting were also things that drew the viewers in.

There wouldn't seem to be a whole lot new in that; after all, people have been escaping or, more likely, dreaming of escaping, from high-pressure metropolitan lifestyles for decades, even centuries. So why did the series so capture the public imagination? Is something new going on, a fundamental shift in values and lifestyle aspirations amongst large numbers of city dwellers? Or are we merely witnessing the latest re-run of the escapist tape that for most people will always be no more than an Arcadian dream?

When I was thinking about how to frame the presentation on which this paper is based, it seemed to me that one angle I could take would be to present what I call

the Sea Change movement in contrast to the 'doom and gloom' stories about rural and regional Australia (for example, Pritchard & McManus 2000). Such interpretations reflect the so-called unbalanced relationship between the big Australian cities and their non-metropolitan hinterlands. Themes include the notion that the cities are sucking the life out of the bush and that the benefits of economic growth are increasingly concentrated in the metropolis.

Following from that line of thinking, since the city-country relationship is the basis for the Sea Change process, I need to make the point that the Australian settlement system, on a State-by-State basis, has a pronounced level of what geographers call 'metropolitan primacy' (Rose, 1966). This means that the largest cities in the system, in the Australian case the State capitals, are very much bigger than the next largest centres in the respective States. In New South Wales, Sydney, at four million people, represents around 60 percent of the State's population. High levels of primacy also characterize Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. Exceptions are Queensland, where there is a series of large towns along the coast, partly because Brisbane is eccentrically located in the State's south-east corner, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, where in each case there are two large towns, but not much else. The point about metropolitan primacy is that there are not too many options outside the State capitals for people and businesses needing big city environments. It follows that the capitals are always going to capture the majority of investment, consumer and business spending, whereas the non-metropolitan regions will at best lag and at worst lose out in growth and therefore, perhaps, net welfare terms.

The specific questions around which research on which I draw for this paper has been framed are fourfold:

First, what types of places are colonised by Sea Changers?

Second, what sorts of people leave the cities for presumably bucolic bliss, traditionally with a tang of the briny, but also and always including favoured non-coastal localities?

Third, what sorts of implications do Sea Changers have for the places in which they settle? Are their cultural, social and economic influences wholly benign, or are there matters that may require some collective attention? As a corollary, what implications do the places in which they settle have on the lives of Sea Changers?

Fourth, how widespread geographically is the Sea Change phenomenon and is it likely to be a significant part of the solution to the development and demographic problems of rural and regional Australia?

Before I turn to these questions I need to give a thumbnail sketch of the changing relationships between cities and their hinterlands.

## **The City and the Bush**

There are various ways of structuring a history of the relationship between the Australian metropolis and its regional hinterland into convenient periods. Whilst the story starts with white settlement, to avoid making that the subject of the presentation I've selected three phases post-World War II; the 1950s and 60s; the 70s and 80s; and the 1990s up to the present day.

*The 1950s and 1960s: post WWII industrialisation and the long economic boom*

Big city growth compared with smaller cities and towns and rural areas accelerated after World War II as the Australian manufacturing sector grew rapidly. This expansion was based on strong increases in business and household demand during the long economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s and high levels of tariff protection from imports (Logan et al., 1981). Immigration, which ran at high levels in that period, largely favoured the cities, where jobs in the factories and the lower echelons of the service economy were booming (Burnley, 1974). At the same time job loss in the rural economy was accelerating due to increased use of machinery in place of labour. There was also increasing realisation on the part of many younger people and their parents that their financial prospects were better in the cities. Resulting rural-urban drift produced a political response that resulted in the decentralisation policies of the 1960s. These reached their high water mark in the regional growth centres programs at Bathurst-Orange and Albury-Wodonga in the early 1970s (Stilwell, 1974).<sup>2</sup>

Small town decline, usually involving urban centres with populations less than 5000, which is very much part of the 'doom and gloom' discourse around rural and regional Australia today, was in fact initiated in the 50s and 60s by a combination of factors (Henshall Hansen, 1988). Road improvements, increased car ownership and services growth in larger regional centres combined to encourage farmers and residents of small towns and villages to bypass those places to shop and access services in the regional cities.

At the same time, metropolitan affluence produced by the long economic boom of the 50s and 60s produced benefits for rural and regional Australia. As well as increased demand for food and fibre products, there were notable increases in domestic tourism in a period when overseas travel for recreational purposes was still very much the province of the rich (Murphy, 1992). Building on established coastal and near-metropolitan districts, booming car ownership, disposable income and leisure time combined to geographically widen the range of domestic tourism and increase its numbers overall. This was a period of 'no frills', democratic weekenders and also the nucleus of the coastal sprawl phenomenon (Murphy, 1977). We still have the sprawl but the weekenders today are more likely to be designer homes or apartments because building regulations are much tighter and many people have a lot more money to spend.

One aspect of change in non-metropolitan areas themselves that further enhanced the attraction of metropolitan interest during this period was Britain's entry to the European Economic Community. This led to a contraction in the dairy industry in remote areas on the north and south coasts of NSW and in Victoria's Gippsland. As farmers bailed out, a lot of cheap, isolated farmland provided toeholds for hippies from the early 1970s, most publicly visible in the Nimbin area in northern NSW (Munro-Clark, 1986, Hannan in this issue). Whilst small scale in the overall spectrum of non-metropolitan change, these bridgeheads of counter-culture settlement remain iconic for alternative lifestyle settlers today.

*The 1970s and 1980s: Economic restructuring and first phase population turnaround*

But just as Federal and State governments in Victoria and NSW were ratcheting up their commitment to regional development with the early 70s growth centres, far

reaching economic and demographic forces began to make themselves felt in Australia. The expansion of the manufacturing sector came to a halt in the early 70s and a process of major job shedding was initiated. This marked the transformation to a post-industrial, globalised Australian economy that had significant regional implications (Murphy and Watson, 1995). For decentralisation policy it meant that the manufacturing jobs that had underpinned policy in the 60s dried up; so if regional development was to be fostered, it would need to find some other growth motor. As well as this, the change of Federal Government in 1975, combined with a more sophisticated understanding of what could and could not be achieved by regional policy, meant that government interest in top-down, big spending regional development programs evaporated (Vipond, 1989).

As it turned out, the need for interventionist, top-down policy seemed to have been made redundant by the discovery of what portended to be of a major demographic shift in the mid-1970s. This was the so-called population turnaround (Champion, 1989) and it refers to the fact that non-metropolitan areas were now attracting increased shares of national population growth and the shares of State population contained in the capitals were contracting. This historic transformation of the demographic balance between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas was heralded as signalling a market-driven resurgence of non-metropolitan areas as places to live and work in. Over the past 30 years a million people left the five mainland capitals for smaller places, with 450,000 leaving Sydney alone (Burnley and Murphy 2002). However, because of the more pressing concern for the overall state of the transforming Australian economy and its welfare implications, interest in rural and regional Australia has received less government attention.

In the 70s, de-industrialisation, driven by global economic processes and reinforced by decreased tariff protection from 1975, was the 'buzzword' in academic, public policy and media circles. The early 1980s marked another shift in discourses around urban and regional development, with the term globalisation entering academic and popular parlance. From the early 80s notions of 'global cities' took hold and it was realised that a new round of capitalist accumulation was in place, and that its natural home was once more the larger cities. Paralleling this, it was noted that the population turnaround had contracted (Hugo 1994). This did not mean that fewer people were leaving the cities, rather the cities were more than making up for losses through internal migration by gains from immigration and natural increase (Burnley and Murphy, 2002).

These reciprocal processes underpinned the emergence of a new round of political conversations centred on the metropolitan/non-metropolitan divide. Once again the big cities were dominating the Australian economy, whilst rural and regional Australia was losing out, or at best receiving a lesser share of benefits flowing from national economic growth. The economic and social problems of 'the bush' and the rise of populist political resistance to economic and social change in Australia, signalled by the Pauline Hanson's *One Nation* arrival on the political scene, are of course intimately related.

### *Since the 1990s: Population Turnaround: Phase 2*

Despite these trends I think we may be witnessing a Mark 2 turnaround today. There is considerable evidence, much of it ad hoc and as yet under-researched, of a new round of spillover effects from metropolitan to non-metropolitan regions. The benefits of growth created in the big cities in the 80s and 90s have for some time been translated into new growth impulses in the bush. These benefits are of two

kinds: those that involve metropolitan demand for non-metropolitan resources; and those that involve people relocating from metropolitan to non-metropolitan settings. People are still leaving the cities in significant numbers despite the demographic balance having shifted back to the cities. Indeed, whilst the numbers fluctuate, more people moved out of Sydney to non-metropolitan NSW in the last intercensal period, 1991 to 1996, than moved out in any other five-year period from 1971 to 1986 (Burnley and Murphy 2002).

## **Sea Change Settings**

People who leave the cities for non-metropolitan Australia settle in many places, but predominantly in Sea Change localities. As a point of clarification, the term 'sea change' is used in a metaphorical sense to connote people making a fundamental change in their lifestyles. Whilst many who leave the cities move literally to the coast, many also relocate to non-coastal areas (especially localities within striking distance of the bigger cities) but have the same motivations as the coasters. Following from this, a basic distinction we have made in our research is between what we call 'perimetropolitan' and 'population turnaround' settings. There are variations within these categories and the categories themselves overlap with respect to the types of people moving into them from the cities (Burnley and Murphy, 2002).

### *Perimetropolitan settings*

Perimetropolitan localities are rural areas and small towns that are beyond the edge of the official suburbs of the city but still within commuting distance of metropolitan jobs. In the case of Sydney, we are talking about areas within about a 100-kilometer straight-line distance from central Sydney. This includes the Central Coast, between Sydney and Newcastle, and the Upper Blue Mountains (both with mixes of Sea Change and suburban characteristics), the Southern Tablelands and Near South Coast places, such as Kangaroo Valley and Kiama. People who relocate to the metropolitan periphery in some cases commute to metropolitan jobs and in other cases work locally. Either way, their motivations for moving are very similar to those who move beyond metropolitan labour markets to population turnaround settings (Burnley and Murphy, 2002).

### *Population turnaround settings*

In the Australian context population turnaround settings are primarily coastal localities beyond commuting range of the big cities. In NSW, this means the coasts north of Newcastle and south of Nowra although one cannot draw sharp boundaries. Within the coastal zone there are different types of residential settings. One distinction is between large towns such as Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour and smaller ones such as Evans Head and Harrington. The larger places offer better commercial and social services but have the urban 'feel' that many leave the city to escape from. Urban centres can also be distinguished according to the lifestyles that they offer. Byron Bay, for example, has been transformed from its seaside industrial character, based on an abattoir that was operating up until the early 70s along with a Greek café that closed at 6pm and a couple of rough pubs, into a kind of ersatz yuppie, 'waxhead' (surfie) and hippie paradise. It's atypical and contrasts sharply with places like Evans Head, south of Ballina, which has a character that resonates

on baby boomers like me from family holidays in the 50s and 60s (and which, incidentally, has scored a mention in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as a good place to buy land). Bateman's Bay, with its middle-class Canberra influence, has different characteristics to the more democratic and industrial Nowra and its hinterland around Jervis Bay and St George's Basin.

From a statistical viewpoint, a notable trend has been that population growth rates are now higher in the perimetropolitan areas than in the turnaround localities (Burnley and Murphy, 1995). Whether this is because people increasingly want to have their cake - Arcadian bliss - and eat it too - have access to city jobs and delights - is an open question.

### *Rural and urban settings*

One of the things that stimulated our most recent work on this subject was American literature showing very high levels of population growth in rural or exurban parts of perimetropolitan regions and in turnaround areas. Whilst there is certainly ultra-low density residential living in both perimetropolitan and population turnaround regions in Australia, we found that most growth is essentially urban (Burnley and Murphy, 1995). One of the reasons for this is the much tighter planning controls that limit the extent of rural sprawl.

## **The Spectrum of Sea Changers**

So much for settings, what about the Sea Changers who colonise them? They are actually a very mixed bunch in their social and economic profiles, attitudes and reasons for moving. One way of categorising them is into those who make a largely free choice to leave the city - the free agents, if you like - and those who, to some extent at least, are pushed out of the city due to the high costs of living there. I shall call the latter forced relocators.

### *Free agents*

Retirees have for decades been the driving force of population growth in non-metropolitan Sea Change localities. Places like Port Macquarie on the NSW North Coast owe up to a third of their population growth to retirees (Murphy, 1981). These people are driven by the benefits of trading down from high priced city houses and the attractions of a low-key lifestyle in a high amenity environment (Murphy and Zehner, 1988). Some of these people are returning to places where they were born and raised, but most are not. They represent only a small part of the city's ageing population but have a large demographic effect in Sea Change localities, where the base population is small.

Alternative life stylers, as I mentioned earlier, were an important though quite localised component of the population turnaround in the 1970s, in NSW notably in places like Nimbin on the North Coast (Munro-Clark, 1986). Theirs was and is a largely rural lifestyle, to some degree self-sufficient and often dependent on income-support payments. These days, however, whilst the 'ferals', as some hospitable locals refer to them, are still there (and newcomers are arriving daily) the notion of an alternative lifestyle has broadened considerably from the visually obvious hippies to many less obvious followers and sympathisers. Just as gentrification was the precursor of the boom in inner-city apartment living that we are experiencing in the

big cities today, because of its demonstration effect on those who previously regarded suburban living in a detached house as the only sensible living arrangement so, it may be argued, the hippie scene convinced many people of the virtues of a non-metropolitan lifestyle.

An interesting sub-category of what we might regard as small 'a' alternative Sea Changers are those who conduct businesses through the internet. We have come across numerous examples of this in our research, and it seems to be an increasing trend, though still small scale. One example is a couple that conduct a town-planning consultancy from the NSW South Coast. Nearly all of the business is in Sydney, but it is of a type that requires an average of only two days a fortnight for client contact. Interestingly, a major stimulus to relocating to what had been a holiday home was that the couple did not own a house in Sydney, and their rental lease expired in an expensive property market. By all accounts the arrangement has worked very well.

With regard to the age profile of movers to Sea Change places, by far the majority (around 70%) are actually of working age, and this has been increasing (Burnley and Murphy, 2002). The primary reason for this is that retirees and tourists need goods and services, and this permits others to move away from the city and make a reasonable living. These Sea Changers also, of course, get the advantages of cheaper housing and high levels of amenity.

### *Forced relocators*

As well as those who more or less opt with enthusiasm for a Sea Change lifestyle, there are those who are arguably forced to live away from the cities because their incomes are too low to enable them to live in appropriate and affordable housing. There is some ambiguity here because some at least in the categories I have just referred to might regard themselves as having been forced out of the city. But there is one category of low-income earners where the notion of forcing may have some real backing (Hugo and Bell, 1998). These are the people who rely on some form of income support payment, especially the unemployed, single parent households and those with disabilities (see Sweeney in this issue on the mentally ill). There is no doubt that Sea Change localities both near the metropolis and more distant from it have high levels of unemployment and disproportionate numbers of single parent households. Over a recent 12 month period, Australia wide, around 11000 unemployed people moved from the cities to non-metropolitan areas and around 5000 single parent households did so (unpublished data from Department of Family and Community Services Longitudinal Data Set, Murphy et al., 2001). Of further interest though is that more unemployed people moved from the coast to the cities than vice versa, whereas fewer single parent households did so. This is an interesting paradox. The out-migration from the cities is presumably a function of housing costs, family support networks and portability of unemployment benefits. The migration to the cities no doubt reflects the greater work opportunities available there. Incidentally, Laura from *Sea Change* was, of course, a single parent, but quite atypical in her affluence<sup>3</sup>.

More generally the notion that people are being forced to leave the city is supported when one looks at the relationship over time between net internal migration loss from Sydney and housing prices. When prices are high more people leave. Many are surprised to hear that Sydney in particular has experienced net internal migration losses since the early 1970s. Another point suggested by this pattern is that immigration is a factor in setting house prices and therefore a factor in pushing people away from the city.

### *Periodic Population*

When talking about Sea Changers, it is essential to acknowledge that the areas they populate also have large floating populations of weekend and holiday visitors (Murphy, 1992). A sidelight to this is the emergence of a population of Sea Changers who really live in two places, the city and the bush. They are more than just weekend visitors. Domestic tourist and day trip recreation travel are key drivers of the economies of Sea Change localities, providing many jobs and business opportunities. International tourism is also a factor of increasing importance, but more so in the areas closer to the cities and selected high profile destinations such as the Gold Coast.

### *Two other categories of Sea Changers*

A couple of other categories of movers, or sub-categories of the ones I've already mentioned, are interesting. First, there are the gentrifiers. Whilst this term was coined to refer to those who began to repopulate the inner city from the late 1960s, buying and renovating old, cheap terrace housing, very similar processes have been operating in some Sea Change localities. They have had similar displacement effects in those localities as the gentrifiers of the inner city had on pre-existing working class populations. A recent example of this that I heard of was a female-headed single parent household that was actually compelled to move out of rental accommodation in Bundanoon, on the NSW Southern Tablelands, and hardly a metropolis, to a cheaper place in the nearby village of Wingelo. Places like Kangaroo Valley (south of Sydney), Byron Bay (NSW Far North Coast) and Noosa (Queensland) are to all intents and purposes also heavily gentrified.

The other category of movers that I'd like to mention includes those who move inter-State. We all know about Victorians moving to NSW and Queensland after retiring, and the numbers are quite significant, but what about people moving from NSW to Tasmania? Perhaps retirement and alternative lifestyle migration to that State present long-term opportunities for its economic revitalisation. More generally this could be true of other parts of rural and regional Australia that are not usually thought of as Sea Change localities.

## **Impacts of Sea Changers**

Jobs and business opportunities follow population growth but the nature of demand in Sea Change localities leads primarily to growth at the low end of the service economy. Apart from tourism, some modest export-oriented manufacturing, and culture industry growth in areas such as the far north coast of NSW (Gibson, 2002), the economies are narrowly based and not dynamic. The weight of competitive advantage in attracting high growth sectors is very much with big cities and the Australian condition of metropolitan primacy will continue to reinforce this. It's unlikely that Sea Change localities will provide much serious competition to the big cities in economic and therefore demographic terms. In this respect it is important to understand that Sea Change localities, particularly of the population turnaround variety, have high levels of unemployment that, whilst partly based on in-movement of the unemployed, fundamentally reflects the weakness of their economies.

Some of the worst social problems in NSW are emerging in the coastal areas substantially as a result of in-migration of income-support recipients (Vinson, 1999). Various social problems result from retirees moving into Sea Change localities. The basis for this is the fact that couples are separating themselves from family and friends in the city just when they are heading into a stage of the life cycle when they are most likely to need support from friends and relatives. The problems may not emerge until health issues present themselves. Often it is the relatively healthy partner having to ferry the sick person to the local doctor or specialists in remote cities. Further problems arise in the transition to specialised retirement accommodation because it can take some time to sell houses and because such facilities may not be available locally. Local councils typically are left to provide support services with inadequate resources to do so<sup>4</sup>.

The gentrification process that I have already referred to a couple of times is a particularly interesting phenomenon when detached from its inner city connotations and applied to both perimetropolitan and population turnaround localities. It is the basis for 'nimbyism' that might be regarded as uncondusive to economic growth and therefore prejudicial to the prospects of workforce age populations. On the other hand the presence of gentrifiers, as has been the case in the inner city, can also be seen as highly beneficial in the development of a quality built environment. Whilst *SeaChange's* Bob Jelly didn't seem to have much support in his efforts to turn Pearl Bay into the Gold Coast, that spectre lies behind the recent announcement by NSW Premier, Bob Carr, of a more interventionist State role in relation to coastal development in NSW. At least in some Sea Change areas there is now a political constituency that is highly supportive of better planning, a need apparent to many in the face of the phenomena of 'Baulkham Hills in the bush', 'brick venereal disease' and environmental decay in high amenity Sea Change localities. These are the product of pro-growth mentalities combined with poor professional skills and unsympathetic local councillors. We are at a critical point in turning things around in this regard.

## **The Future**

To conclude, let me answer the question implied in my title. To put it bluntly, growth in Sea Change localities is no panacea for the ills of rural and regional Australia and has a very limited capacity to act as a counter-magnet to the big cities. The scale of growth is too low and its geographical distribution too narrow to impact on the inland areas where population decline, especially in small towns, and the agricultural economy are most in need of stimulus. There are, nevertheless, many positives in the contemporary relationship between metropolitan-focused economic growth and the flourishing, in their own way, of Sea Change places. There is the prospect of inland areas not currently recognized as Sea Change localities becoming so. Certainly, as cities like Sydney grow, their perimetropolitan regions will expand to take in areas such as the Central Tablelands of NSW. It's notable in this regard that the perimetropolitan areas have been experiencing higher growth rates than the turnaround areas for a number of years, although just why that is happening is for matter of speculation.

An intriguing feature of coastal growth in NSW, which probably goes against popular perception, is that a substantial proportion results not from in-migration from Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane, but from the inland. Just as an example, on the Mid-North Coast between 1991 and 1996, 23 per cent of in-movers were from inland NSW. Figures of 18 and 13 percent respectively were recorded from the South Coast

and the Far North Coast. This suggests that the coast is acting as an 'intervening opportunity' to Sydney; people can move away from the inland to places where jobs are available (even with the high unemployment) and where housing costs are manageable. This safety valve role could be quite important in the future.

There are also some as yet vestigial potentialities in telecommuting and in the growth of local cultural production, some of which is tourism related, some of which is self-generated and export oriented (see Goggin and Gibson in this issue). There will also be a significant continuing stimulus to non-metropolitan economies in general from the new forms of agricultural products demanded by sophisticated and well-heeled city palates. Some of this new production will be underpinned by investors who have profited from the metropolitan economy. Like the hippies of the 70s who moved into dairy country, the new city-rich of today gain an added benefit from cheap broad acre land in many rural areas.

An important element in any scenario around the future of Sea Change localities is the likelihood of continuing, even accelerating displacement of lower income earners from the metropolis in search of affordable housing. This seems to be an inevitable outcome of the social polarisation inherent in economic restructuring. The extent to which we should be concerned about the process, beyond ensuring adequate social welfare support in such places, is a moot point. But it is very much bound up in the Hansonite politics of the displaced and disaffected. If we are going to realise Minister Joe Hockey's scenario for higher levels of immigration and a Sydney with eight million people by 2050, and also maintain social cohesion, we are going to have to get a lot better at managing the metropolis so that displacement effects are not exacerbated.

And what about the growth pressures that have recently compelled the NSW government to take control of planning powers on the coast? As one who has been watching coastal development for a quarter of a century, I can only ask, why hasn't something been done before now? Well of course there have been many policy initiatives over that period and local government has become increasingly sophisticated, both at the professional and political levels. Nevertheless, urban sprawl, inappropriate building styles, materials and colour schemes and damage to coastal ecosystems is proceeding apace. The growth pressures will remain, but it should be possible, with sufficient political commitment, to have growth and effective management of the built and natural environments. Certainly attempting to close the door on growth is as quixotic in the Sea Change areas as it is in the metropolis, so we had better get better at managing it.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a slightly modified version of a public lecture presented at the State Library of New South Wales on 15 August 2001. It is based on research over a number of years by myself and Ian Burnley at UNSW which is to be published in

composite form next year in *The Great Change: Movement from Metropolitan to Arcadian Australian* (UNSW Press, 2002a). This published version has benefited from the constructive feedback of two anonymous referees.

<sup>2</sup> Loss of population from rural areas also took place in the 1920s when commodity prices were low and people were forced off the land during the Great Depression. Despite this, however, "there was actually a slackening and short term reversal of the longer term trend toward urbanization in Australia during the Depression when the nation's rural population reached a pre-War peak" (Hugo and Bell, 1998. P 107)

<sup>3</sup> A social survey of 7000 income-support recipients relocating from metropolitan to non-metropolitan NSW and SA is currently being conducted under a project funded by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (Murphy et al., 2001)

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to one of the referees whose observations are incorporated in this paragraph.

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