Reference No. 132

Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990-2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:

Research Publication:

Name of Researcher(s):
J. Taylor

Time period:
1996 - 2001

Geographic location:
National, with statistical information disaggregated at Major city, Inner regional, Outer regional, Remote and Very remote categories of geolocation.

Methodology:

Aims:
The paper aims to identify emerging demographic 'hotspots' across Australia which require attention from policy makers involved with service delivery to Indigenous Australians.

Selected findings and insights:
There was a significant shift in the distribution of Indigenous Australians between 1971 and 2001. Almost one-third of Indigenous Australians were resident in major cities in 2001 compared to 15% in 1971 and about another 40% in inner or outer regional areas (compared to 29% in 1971). Correspondingly the proportion of Indigenous people living in remote or very remote areas decreased from 56% in 1971 to 26% in 2001.

Indigenous Australians were much more likely to live away from cities and in remote areas compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

- In very remote Australia, 45% of the residents were Indigenous and in areas outside the main service and mining towns they represented the great majority of residents.

- There were 80,000 Indigenous Australians across 1,055 communities who were living in remote areas with no ready access to banking and shopping services and hence were generally isolated from mainstream economic and social infrastructure. Some 60% of these people were living in communities of less than 500, and about one-quarter were living in communities of less than 200.

1. Note: even taking into account a greater propensity for urban Indigenous people to self-identify in the Census this represents a major shift, due to both rural-urban migration and the overall expansion of urban areas to incorporate outer-lying 'rural' areas.

2. The paper points out that the numbers of Indigenous people living in small communities is not really unusual as overall there were almost 2 million Australians living in settlements of less than 200, of whom only 3% were Indigenous.
The age profile of Indigenous Australia was much younger than non-Indigenous Australia, with high population growth likely to continue, resulting in:

- an increasing gap between the aging profile of non-Indigenous Australians and the youthful profile of Indigenous Australians.

While Indigenous Australians appeared to change their usual place of residence at a higher rate than non-Indigenous Australians this largely reflected the youthful nature of Indigenous Australians — young people were more mobile. However the number of Indigenous Australians moving their usual place of residence increased significantly over the last decade — between 1986 and 1991, some 45% moved compared to 51% in the 1996-2001 Census period.

- Remote Indigenous Australians of all ages tended to be less migratory than Indigenous people in less remote locations
- There was strong positive net migration (migration in minus migration out) in coastal regions of southern and eastern Australia and in the south-west, including the capital cities of Brisbane (Qld), Adelaide (SA) and Perth (WA);
- Negative net migration was found in the more remote areas of most States and the Northern Territory (as well Sydney).

An analysis of population turnover showed that it was the 15-24 age group which tended to move into cities seeking education and employment and the out-migration was of older age groups reflecting difficulties in accessing affordable (public) housing.

Despite substantial increases in Indigenous populations in major cities, Indigenous Australians continued to be located in lower socio-economic status neighbourhoods, indicating a lack of social mobility and a pattern of spatial disadvantage.

- The proportion of the Indigenous population was highest (around 25%) in the decile of collectors’ districts (CDs) that had the lowest socio-economic status (SES) in major cities, and this proportion declined steadily with increasing SES of CDs.

High temporary mobility was a feature of the Indigenous population — some 7% of the Indigenous population was recorded away from their usual place of residence on the night of the 1991 Census, with over 11% of Darwin’s Indigenous population being short-term residents.

- In remote regions, temporary mobility was generally directed towards service centres, especially Alice Springs (NT), which services some 260 small Indigenous communities, Katherine (NT), Darwin (NT), Nhulunbu (NT), Broome (WA), Kununurra (WA), Cairns (Qld), Mt Isa (Qld), Thursday Island (Torres Strait) and Weipa (Qld). This pattern of temporary mobility was evident in the accompanying map (opposite).

Population flows in and out of town camps indicated considerable movement between town camps, hostels, and suburban dwellings, as well as between the urban area and surrounding rural communities, which made it extremely difficult to meet the fluctuating demand of town camp dwellers. For example,

- despite a Census count in Alice Springs (NT) town camps of less than 1,000 persons, the estimated service population was as high as 3,500.

Similarly, flows out of remote townships to outstations on a temporary (seasonal) basis occurred.
When **moving place of residence**, Indigenous Australians tended to move from very remote and remote areas to outer regional centres, from outer regional centres to inner regional centres, and from inner regional centres to major cities. This contrasted to the mobility pattern of non-Indigenous Australians who tended to move more directly to major cities.

**In regional centres** such as Broken Hill (NSW), Dubbo (NSW), Orange (NSW), Tamworth (NSW), Port Augusta (SA) and Kalgoolie (WA), Indigenous population growth rates were greater than for non-Indigenous Australians. In Broken Hill (NSW), Port Augusta (SA) and Kalgoorlie (WA) there was an actual decrease in the size of the non-Indigenous population.

- From 1996 to 2001, in these regional centres overall growth was 2%, with an Indigenous growth rate of 28% while the non-Indigenous growth rate was almost zero.

- The main dynamic leading to this high Indigenous growth was positive net migration, with a major in-migration of younger adults aged 15 - 34 years. In contrast, non-Indigenous movers-out exceeded non-Indigenous movers-in, especially among younger adults in their twenties.

Out-migration was a feature of the **Torres Strait Region**, with some 85% of Torres Strait Islanders resident on mainland Australia, mainly in the larger urban centres of northern Queensland or in the metropolitan areas of the eastern States.

This paper also reports on net migration patterns in the **Murray-Darling Basin** between 1996 and 2001. Within the **Murray-Darling Basin** the Indigenous population steadily increased while the non-Indigenous population declined in many areas – due to differences in net migration where for 1996-2001, there was a net loss of 31,000 non-Indigenous persons with only a slight loss of Indigenous persons.
• Furthermore the rate of loss out of the Basin of younger people aged 10–29 was five times greater for the non-Indigenous population than the Indigenous population;

• With such differential migration rates and natural growth rates, particular localities such as Wilcannia (NSW) were becoming predominately comprised of Indigenous people.

Across remote Australia, the Indigenous population was projected to grow significantly. Projections to 2016 indicated rapid growth in Cape York Peninsula (Qld), west Arnhem Land (NT) and the Gulf country (Qld) with moderate growth in the East Kimberley (WA) and across the arid zone. In contrast, projected population growth for the non-Indigenous population ranged from negative to slightly positive, resulting in an increasing Indigenous share of the remote regional population.

• The continuing growth of Indigenous towns to the point where they were approaching the status of an Indigenous 'urban centre' is identified in the paper. Some 14 such traditionally Indigenous towns were approaching or exceeding 1000 persons in 2001, and these were mainly clustered in the tropical north.

• Infrastructure issues would become of paramount importance for these newly forming Indigenous urban centres. For example, a case study of Wadeye (NT) showed, compared to Longreach (Qld),
  • a lack of a high school, boarding school, TAFE college, social clubs, sporting clubs, fire service, magistrates court, newspaper, free to air television reception, mobile phone reception, resident doctor, hospital, retail pharmacy, multiple retail outlets, adequate public housing, private housing market, sealed urban roads, sealed access roads, and wet weather road access.

The paper provides a summary of labour demand and supply in remote areas, highlighting that:

• The mainstream labour market was concentrated in jobs in a relatively few industries and occupations. Not counting government services, the major industries were agriculture and mining with about one-third of non-Indigenous private employment and one-quarter of Indigenous employment in jobs in industries such as mining extraction, gold mining and beef cattle.

• While high Indigenous population growth with increasing numbers of young adults should ensure a ready supply of labour, low socio-economic levels, limited human capital (in terms of basic skills and work readiness) and health problems may well combine to reduce the actual supply of suitable labour should demand be generated. Furthermore where some demand might be generated, it was likely to be insufficient to meet the growing size of the potential workforce unless whole new avenues of employment were opened up. The paper analyses these issues in the context of labour demand and supply in the Pilbara (WA) and the East Kimberley (WA).

Educational implications:

There are distinct differences in the demographic trends of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. As a result quite different policy settings are required to address to immediate and future directions for the education, training and higher education of Indigenous Australians.

With such marked projected changes occurring in the distribution and movement of Indigenous young people, agencies responsible for the delivery of education and training services will need to respond to greater demands being placed upon existing school curricula, training courses, support services and facilities. The continuing relocation of Indigenous young people to particular regional centres and to a limited number of low socio-economic neighbourhoods in capital cities will create demographic ‘hot spots’ and place added strain on existing education and training provision. That is, whilst the numbers may appear small their impact may be quite significant due to their concentration within the existing populations.
In those largely Indigenous townships where there is expected to be increased population growth due to migration and high fertility rates, additional educational and training facilities will be required to meet increased numbers of students and increased numbers of working age adults who require further training. Associated with additional education provision will be the supply of adequately trained teachers and the provision of additional teacher housing. [facilities] [teacher supply].

The migration of Indigenous young people into urban areas, concentrated in existing low SES neighbourhoods, presents a slightly different set of issues for education and training authorities. Where enrolments are declining and less pressure on existing facilities, then the issue is more likely to be associated with professional development of existing teaching staff in the education of Indigenous students, and possibly the employment of Indigenous Education Workers. [teacher in-service]

The temporary and permanent migration of school-age Indigenous young people with their parents is another challenge for education authorities who may need to develop information systems for transfer of school record information and where differences in curricula between schools may be an issue. Whilst the impact on staffing of permanent migration can be planned for, temporary migration (especially when it is seasonally based or when several large families are involved) is more difficult for schools to cope with. Temporary migration also presents additional problems for receiving schools, especially students from the ‘bush’ who are less likely to be equipped in literacy and numeracy skills and may not be as ‘school ready’ as other students. [curriculum]

The differentiation of town camps is useful. Not only are there the obvious implications for general service provision to ‘town campers’. School-age children and students living in town camps present particular resourcing issues for local schools such as the difficulties associated with contacting or engaging parents/carers in the education of their children. [school community relations]

Relevance:

Introductory Topic: The Changing Demography of Indigenous Australia

Related papers:


