



# Introduction

## Chapter 1

The annual *State of Australian Cities* report fulfils a commitment by the Australian Government to publish an annual report on the progress of Australian cities towards the national aspirations described in *Our Cities, Our Future – a national urban policy for a productive, sustainable and liveable future* (Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2011). The Australian Government's *State of Australian Cities 2010* report was the first comprehensive snapshot of Australian cities, bringing together existing data and research to inform development of a national urban policy. The *State of Australian Cities 2012* report is the third in the series.

### What's new in 2012?

The previous *State of Australian Cities* reports drew heavily from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *2006 Census of Population and Housing* (the Census).

In 2012, the ABS released the data from the 2011 Census in two tranches. The first tranche was released in July and contained the Basic Community Profile which focuses on population profiles and housing. This data forms the basis of much of the *State of Australian Cities 2012* report. The second tranche was released in October and contained data on skills, migration and industry structure. This tranche was released too late for it to be comprehensively incorporated into this report and while a small component of the travel to work data is incorporated in Chapter 5, Liveability, more detailed discussions of human capital, changing industry structure and the movement of Australians will have to await analysis in future reports.

Feedback from the 2011 report indicated that readers would like to see more feature articles and in this year's report these are used more extensively to highlight particular policy-relevant issues. This year's report also commences the monitoring of progress of the implementation of the National Urban Policy. Chapter 6 on Governance, provides this reporting.

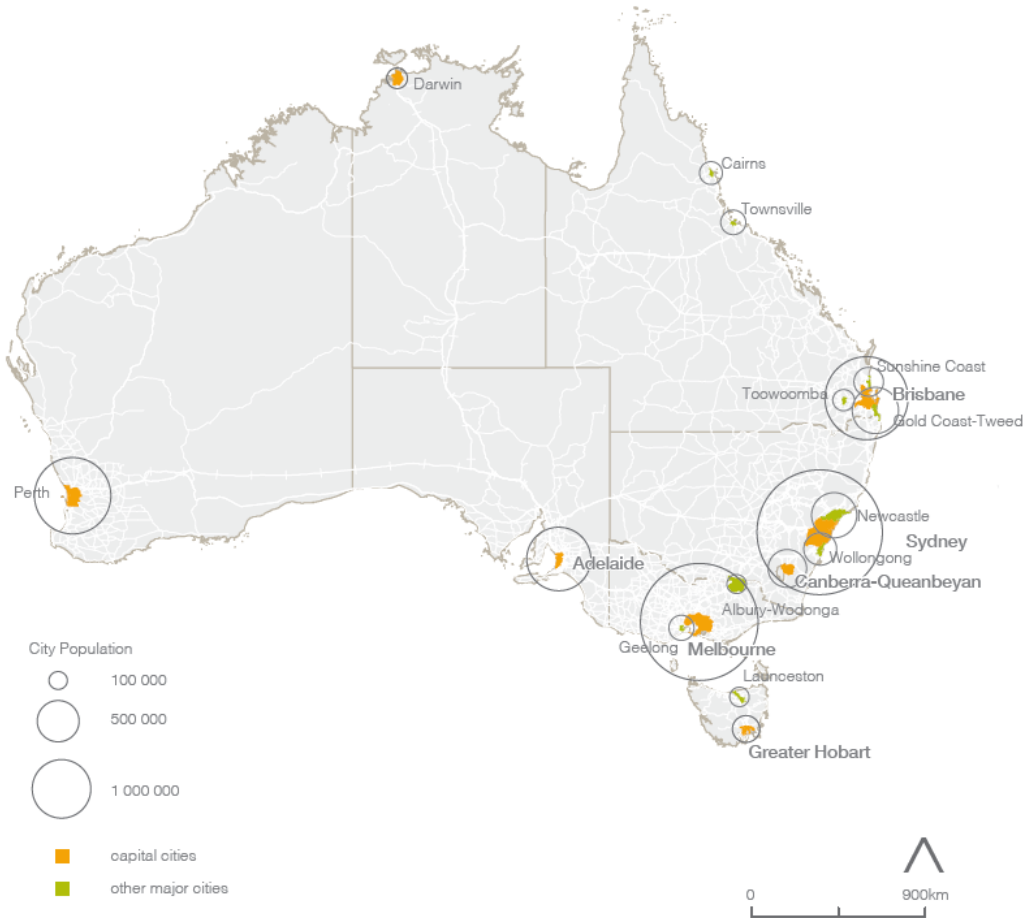
Because changes in cities can take years to crystallise, some of the reporting in this edition looks back more than a century, giving greater context to the current data.

### Structure of the 2012 report

This report follows the model of the previous reports and reflects the structure of the National Urban Policy. Chapter 2 details changes in urban population and settlement. Indicators relating to the policy's three primary dimensions – productivity, sustainability and liveability – are discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The report concludes with a discussion of governance in Chapter 6.

# Defining our major cities

Figure 1-1 Major cities of Australia



The State of Australian Cities reports define major cities as those with a population of more than 100,000 residents. This follows the ABS definition (2011) and the convention in urban studies literature (Forster and Hamnett 2007). Applying this definition, there are 18 major cities in Australia (Figure 1-1). In 2011, 77.3 per cent of the population lived in these cities, up from 75.9 per cent in 2001.

## Other Australian cities

**Table 1-1** Cities with total population between 30,000 and 100,000 and growth rates 2001–2011 (Statistical District)

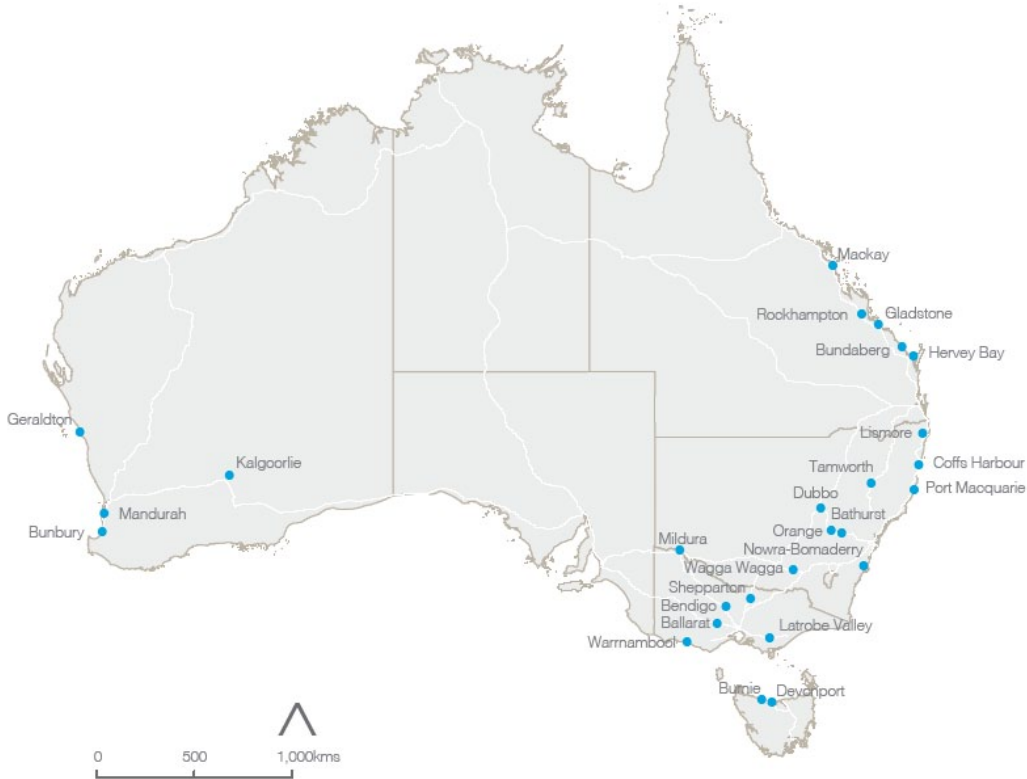
City	2001	2011	Average annual growth (%)
Ballarat (VIC)	83,599	95,007	1.3
Bendigo (VIC)	79,673	89,666	1.2
Mandurah (WA)*	59,752	88,305	4.0
Burnie-Devonport (TAS)	77,480	84,217	0.8
Mackay (QLD)	64,767	83,350	2.6
Latrobe Valley (VIC)	74,996	78,614	0.5
Rockhampton (QLD)	67,369	75,648	1.2
Bunbury (WA)	50,008	67,090	3.0
Bundaberg (QLD)	56,806	65,728	1.5
Hervey Bay (QLD)	39,599	58,261	3.9
Wagga Wagga (NSW)	52,120	56,540	0.8
Coffs Harbour (NSW)	46,099	52,014	1.2
Gladstone (QLD)	39,100	50,507	2.6
Shepparton (VIC)	44,876	48,958	0.9
Mildura (VIC)	45,294	48,382	0.7
Tamworth (NSW)	42,510	46,751	1.0
Port Macquarie (NSW)	38,130	43,791	1.4
Orange (NSW)	36,999	39,480	0.7
Dubbo (NSW)	35,191	36,920	0.5
Geraldton (WA)	31,425	36,138	1.4
Nowra-Bomaderry (NSW)	30,168	34,444	1.3
Bathurst (NSW)	30,615	34,373	1.2
Warrnambool (VIC)	29,629	32,592	1.0
Kalgoorlie/Boulder (WA)	29,383	31,880	0.8
Lismore (NSW)	30,871	31,607	0.2

Note: \*Mandurah now classified as part of Perth (2011 Census)

Source: ABS 2012

A total of 6.3 per cent of Australians live in cities with populations between 30,000 and 100,000 (Table 1-1). Only five out of the 25 cities are growing faster than the national average of around 1.5 per cent.

Figure 1-2 Cities in Australia with populations between 30,000 and 100,000



One of the most striking features of Australian cities with populations of fewer than 100,000 is their social and economic diversity. They range from the industrial cities of Burnie-Devonport, Ballarat and Bendigo to sea-change cities and others that service extensive agricultural hinterlands and mining activities. Their smaller size does not lessen their role as critical regional connectors or economic switchyards in the wider economy.

## Geographical boundaries

The State of Australian Cities reports use ABS boundaries that most closely relate to the built urban areas to enable national comparisons.

The 2011 Census marked the first major change to the ABS geography for nearly 50 years. Previously, ABS units were based on Collection Districts which were the areas that a Census collector could cover when distributing and collecting Census forms (about 200 households). These were then built up into Statistical Local Areas and Local Government Areas. One of the main problems with this system was that every time Local Government Areas changed, the ABS geography changed. Since this happened most years, constructing a data time series was difficult and progressively more inaccurate.

To address this problem, a new geographic unit called a ‘mesh block’ was adopted for the 2011 Census. In an urban context, mesh blocks are areas that contain between 30 and 60 dwellings. Mesh blocks have two main advantages:

1. They function like small Lego bricks and can be built up into a variety of geographies according to requirements. In other words, users of Census data are no longer restricted to local government boundaries.
2. The area of mesh blocks will remain stable through time which means that those wishing to construct a time series will not have to deal with continual changes in geographic areas and long and accurate time series will eventually be possible.

As part of the changeover, much of the Census geography used in the previous State of Australian Cities reports is no longer ‘technically supported’ by the ABS. The Statistical Divisions used for capital cities in earlier reports have been replaced by a unit called the ‘Greater Capital City Statistical Area’. The differences between the old and new geographies are shown in a series of maps in Appendix A of this report and are briefly outlined here:

- *Sydney*. Little has changed apart from some extension in the Blue Mountains.
- *Melbourne*. The boundary of Melbourne has been greatly extended northwards and now takes in Macedon, Lancefield and the Murrindindi shire.
- *Brisbane*. This city has the largest boundary changes of all and nearly doubles in area. The new areas are mainly to the west and include the rapidly suburbanising Beaudesert, the former dairying areas of Boonah and the Eastern Downs around Esk, stretching nearly as far north as Nanango.
- *Adelaide*. This city has two pieces added to it. The northern boundary is extended to take in the former agricultural areas of Roseworthy and Two Wells while, to the east, Adelaide now takes in Hahndorf and Mt Barker and extends out as far as Mt Torrens.
- *Perth*. Much of the former Peel area has been added to Perth, which now includes Mandurah and Pinjarra.
- *Hobart*. There are only small boundary changes to this city – it moves a little further to the east to take in the fishing village of Dunalloy.
- *Canberra*. The boundary now takes in the whole of the ACT but the effect on its population is minimal.
- *Darwin*. Unchanged.

The ABS has published a limited number of time series based on the new capital city geographies and these are used in this report where possible.

In previous reports, an ABS unit called a ‘Statistical District’ was used to define the non-capital major cities. This is also a non-supported geography for the 2011 Census, but fortunately it was possible to manually reconstruct these using Statistical Local Areas. This means that it was also possible to construct a time series back to 1996 for the non-capitals.

Inevitably, with such a major change, there has been a period of adjustment and this report does contain some data on the old boundaries, particularly in the longer time series.

## Residence

In the 2006 Census, the ABS introduced a major change that affects the time series used in this report. All previous Censuses were based on place of enumeration i.e. a person was counted where they were on Census night. In order to improve the accuracy of the Census, 2006 and 2011 data was also based on place of usual residence. In most cases, the difference between the two methods is slight – often a fraction of a per cent – but it presents a dilemma to those constructing a time series. The choice is between continuing to use the less accurate place of enumeration data or changing to place of usual residence and having a very slight discrepancy between the pre and post-2001 Census data. The approach taken in this report is to use place of enumeration data pre-2001 and place of usual residence post-2001 as a default because the value of long time series insights outweighs a slight loss in short-term accuracy. The exception is where the time series involves very small changes over the years such as housing occupancy rates. In these cases, only place of usual residence data is used (2006 and 2011 Censuses).

## Cities within cities

Within the area of the largest capital cities there are a number centres that have populations in excess of 100,000 people. Some, like Parramatta in Sydney, also have densely developed central business districts and provide a wide range of commercial and employment opportunities, services and cultural and recreational facilities. These centres are not separately identified as major cities because much of their economic infrastructure, such as transport, energy and water, is shared with the wider metropolitan region.

## Chapter 1 References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011, *Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)*, cat. no. 1216.0, Canberra.

ABS 2012, *Regional Population Growth, Australia 2011*, cat. no. 3218.0, Canberra.

Department of Infrastructure and Transport 2011, *Our Cities, Our Future – a national urban policy for a more productive, sustainable and liveable future*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Forster, C and Hamnett, S 2008, The State of Australian Cities, *Built Environment* 34(3): 247–254.