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**Title:**

**Regional Australia's Demography: Definitions, Dynamism, Diversity and Dichotomy**

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**Abstract:**

There are many myths which have been perpetuated about non-metropolitan Australia and its residents but among the least tenable is the stereotyping of these areas as being less dynamic and less differentiated than the nation's metropolitan areas. The present paper seeks to dispel this myth by examining some of the contemporary and impending dynamics of the non-metropolitan sector through the window of considering the shifts in its population. The most important resource in regional Australia are its people but our knowledge of them is somewhat limited. It may come as a surprise that 37.3 percent of Australians live outside of cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants at the turn of the century and they are changing in substantial and important ways under the influence of economic, social, political, and environmental shifts. The present paper summarises trends in the size, composition, and spatial distribution of Australians living outside the major cities. It argues that Australia's non-metropolitan based population is becoming more diverse and that this increased diversity offers considerable potential in efforts to work toward social, economic and environmental sustainability in rural Australia. It is also argued that along with increased diversity in non-metropolitan Australia there has been a polarization within the sector, which presents major challenges to policy makers.