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## Ageing in the bush – a perspective from Victoria

**Jeremy Reynolds, Chris Wight & Anne Barlow** ([jeremy.reynolds@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:jeremy.reynolds@dse.vic.gov.au))  
Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment

### Abstract

This paper is about the ageing population of rural and regional Victoria and its implications for state and local government and other service providers.

Ageing populations are a common phenomenon in all advanced countries. They stem from the combination of greater life expectancy and lowering fertility rates and their historical and ongoing legacy. Victoria is no different in this respect. In 1971 Victoria's population exhibited a classical pyramid. But it has changed since. The highest numbers of people are now aged in their early thirties and the bulge of population born in the 25 years after WWII are now aged in their 30s, 40s and 50s.

Regional Victoria already has an older population than Melbourne. Over time regional Victoria's entrenched migration patterns accentuate this ageing process. Regional Victoria's population is projected to grow by 27% over the 2001 to 2031 period. Its population aged over 60 is projected to grow by 133% and its population over 80 by 553% over the same period.

Within regional Victoria there are fundamental differences in age structure between the peri-urban areas around Melbourne, regional centres, coastal areas and the remoter dry land farming areas. Service providers need to understand this geography of ageing. The loss of children in many rural areas presents issues for providers of education services and a larger aged population creates greater demands for health services. In the dry land farming areas the loss of young and middle aged populations leads to further shortages of skilled people required to provide services.

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