Creating Community
Supplement: Social Profiles of Local Communities

While local communities across Victoria face some similar challenges in the face of global change, they are very different from the point of view of geography, economy and social history. They are also diverse in the ways in which they respond to the mixture of threats and opportunities posed by global change. Local face-to-face communities are but one layer within the multi-layered structures of contemporary community life and, at the same time, they refract the influences of more extended social formations (James 2006). As discussed in Chapter 1, it is important to understand both the local specificities of social life taking place in different locales and the ways in which local communities are being constantly recomposed by broader social formations and influences. This chapter is designed to better contextualize the four local starting points from which we have examined the local–global character of contemporary community life: Hamilton, Daylesford, Broadmeadows and St Kilda. The chapter will profile the four local communities separately but to make these profiles comparable we have constructed them in a similar way; starting first with some observations that try to capture key features of the community, followed by a review of the area’s history. We end each profile with an assessment of key challenges facing that community based on our observations as social researchers and on available data on the demography of each community.

In setting out to examine a wide range of cultural activities taking place in a spectrum of Victorian communities, we put considerable time went into selecting the specific local communities in which the research would be conducted. It was important to include a range of places, from inner urban to rural and regional, and it was also important to choose a variety of communities that would reflect diverse social contexts within which local cultural activities are taking place. In pursuing the social mapping methodology (see Chapter 1) we selected communities in which we felt we could build meaningful collaborations. While the research team selected local communities in which the research would be conducted we refrained from then imposing our own conception of what constituted the local community. So, for example, the study in the Hamilton region included a look at some of the smaller towns that orient to Hamilton as a commercial and administrative centre (including Dunkeld, Balmoral and Macarthur). This, then, became the study of a broader regional community, rather than a more specific local community, and we were guided by the Globalism Institute’s Critical Reference Group in the region to gain an understanding of what constitutes that region’s identity. Considering Hamilton as a region broadened the range of social contexts we were able to examine. Similarly, the community centred on Daylesford clearly includes people living in nearby Hepburn Springs (virtually a twin town) and in some small surrounding settlements, and we saw no need to define the area any more precisely than that. In Broadmeadows we focused...
primarily on the community that has emerged out of the public housing estates located in the suburb of Broadmeadows and neighbouring Dallas but we also took into account the fact that there is an ‘old Broadmeadows’ in the form of an historic village located in the suburb now known as Westmeadows. In this case, history helps to redefine the prevailing conception of what is ‘Broadmeadows’.

It is easy to get lost in the complexity of any one local community and books could be written just on the basis of the research conducted for the following profiles. Having completed preliminary research on each of the four locales, we conducted what in the literature is called a transect walk through each of the places to gain a kind of cross-sectional analysis of local life and its historic formation. This approach worked well in the case of St Kilda where the transect could easily be walked, and in the cases of Broadmeadows and Daylesford where we needed a vehicle to complete a longer cross-sectional journey. However, while a transect walk through the heart of Hamilton township gave us some insights into the history and the character of that regional centre, it could not provide an adequate transect of the region as a whole. From people living in the Hamilton area we developed the sense of region ranging from Glenthompson in the east to Coleraine in the west (one transect) and from Balmoral in the north to Macarthur in the south (a second transect). As a commercial centre Hamilton has been losing ground in recent decades to Horsham in the north and both Portland and Warrnambool in the south. However, Hamilton is working hard to maintain its distinctive identity and people living in the region want that effort to succeed. In trying to understand the cross-section of lived experience in this region we were well advised by members of the Globalism Institute’s Critical Reference Group, who live in different parts of the region.

Early on in the process of research and writing the profiles it became apparent that focusing on any one of the sites—and indeed on a deep investigation of any place—could become an endless task. There always seemed to be another book to read, person to talk to, website to access, story to follow up. Resources across the sites ranged from formal, written histories, through collections of local stories, to stories that we remembered hearing somewhere, sometime; stories that evoked a mood of a place. Of course, no source can capture all the complexity of a place, highlighting its multitude of stories, the way shifts of sun and cloud reveal different features in a landscape. However, by laying several stories, timelines and histories of a place alongside one another we have tried to weave a kind of fabric of each place.

It is important to note the limitations in this approach as they have clear ramifications for the following written profiles. Although we visited each of the areas on a number of occasions, the size of the task meant that we relied primarily on existing written materials to compile the history outlines—books, internet and library searches, and various articles. In all areas, we drew directly on previous Globalism Institute research reports and material related to other Institute projects in the same communities. Three of the four sites had major formal history texts, which were used as key resources while trying to maintain an awareness of each text’s limitations. Other sources varied extensively from place to place. Relying on the key formal history text as the axis of a place’s history poses the risk of allowing the stories chosen by particular historians to become dominant while other (possibly neglected) stories become diminished, unheard or even lost. We all make choices and the construction of a social profile is a subjective practice only made valid by this very admission. While the books allowed for the establishing of a basic chronology or timeline for each site, we also relied on conversations with people, but the breadth of this is uneven. For example, we have not attempted to give voice to Aboriginal accounts of pre-colonial history in all of the four areas concerned. While some such accounts are available—especially for the Hamilton region—it would be impossible to do justice to them in the following brief accounts. The historical narratives discussed below are taken predominantly from non-indigenous accounts of the local histories.

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1 The notion of a ‘transect walk’ was derived from a research methodology used for a study on the sustainability of a range of local communities in India—see Humaran, Hyma and Wood 2004.
St Kilda

One of Melbourne’s iconic bayside suburbs, St Kilda is a syncopated silhouette of buildings, piers and palm trees, located six kilometres south-east of the city centre. Its broad commercial boulevards are as crammed with shops as the Acland Street cafes are with multi-tiered cakes. The historic Esplanade, lined with thick palms, opens expansively out to a view of Port Phillip Bay. Bike-riders cover its length, jostling for footpath space with the stop-and-start gait of tourists. Australia’s oldest Luna Park is at one end of the beach and twirls its rides behind a grinning moon-face entrance.

St Kilda is one of seven neighbourhoods in the City of Port Phillip, the second-fastest-growing municipality in the inner metropolitan region. A large number of Port Phillip residents have not lived in the area for an extended period of time, live alone, and are likely to not have family in the area. At the time of data collection (in 2001), St Kilda had a population of 18,318. This was moderately higher than the 1996 figure of 17,437, but the growth rate in St Kilda has been slower than the overall growth rate in the City of Port Phillip. The number of overseas visitors in St Kilda on census night in 2001 was double that of 1996. Growth was modest across all age groups in St Kilda. Only 25- to 34-year-olds (12.5 per cent) and 45- to 54-year-olds (13.3 per cent) grew significantly. 32.9 per cent of the St Kilda population is 25 to 34 years old, a high percentage in relation to Port Phillip as a whole. Only 10.1 per cent of the St Kilda population is under 20—there are relatively few children and teenagers.

St Kilda has become an intrinsic part of the image that Melbourne projects to itself and out to the world. The hit TV show The Secret Life of Us was set in St Kilda, and sent out an image first nationally then on international cable television of St Kilda as the inner-city playground for the young. This image is reflected in the growing number of young professionals attracted to the area of Port Phillip. The main sector in the municipality, and in St Kilda, are young adults aged 25 to 44, with relatively high incomes. Many spend more than 50 hours a week at a workplace elsewhere in Melbourne. They are attracted to live in the inner-city suburb with its bay-side location and lively cultural life.

Beyond the wide main drags, however, the streets grow narrower. The back streets and lanes of St Kilda still host the prostitution and illicit drug activity that are woven into St Kilda’s history. Organizations like the Sacred Heart Mission—set up in 1982 to support the physical, social, and spiritual needs of homeless or at-risk people—are crucial to the survival of those living and working on the St Kilda streets. Seamy nightclubs that were infamous in the 1970s, such as the Mousetrap in the old St Kilda Baths complex, have disappeared. Now SBS television films its RocKwiz program in the Esplanade Hotel, drawing on St Kilda’s rock-and-roll history. Some of the old buildings, saved from a destructive modernization blitz of the 1960s and 1970s, have been restored to their original grandeur. However, some old icons are preserved only as markers in the midst of the new—for example, the Novotel Hotel on The Esplanade has a St Moritz Bar with a picture of an ice skater as its motif. How many people would recognize that this is a reference to the famous St Moritz ice skating rink that once stood on that site?

Perhaps because so much of it is flanked by water, St Kilda has a feeling of being a world unto itself, independent from the larger city. Greater Melbourne has only relatively recently come to embrace waterfront living. The controversial development of high-density apartments at the Docklands is an example of this change in attitude towards the water with the shift from port and industry to ‘modern’ lifestyle enclaves. St Kilda, however, from its settlement by Europeans

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2 Statistical information for St Kilda is taken primarily from demographic fact-sheets prepared by the City of Port Phillip Council. It is based on census data provided by the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The fact-sheets are available on the City of Port Phillip website, at www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/2001census. The most recent data available at time of writing is the 2001 data. Unlike some other sites, the entire research transect area is contained within the demographic neighbourhood.
in the mid-1800s, has always had an eye on the water, and much remains today to remind visitors of its Edwardian seaside resort history.

In the early twentieth century, as the city increasingly engulfed the bay, and as Melbournians ventured further afield for outings, the resort ambience gave way to a much greater mix of crowded residences, functional amenities and remnant recreational facilities. Once-grand mansions were converted into accommodation houses for visitors and, later, into low-cost housing options, the precursor to the area’s rooming houses of today. Gradually, St Kilda itself filled up with flats while areas to the south and east, such as Elwood and Balaclava, took on a more suburban feel, with brick houses in beachside suburbs. The ‘Get a Street Life’ project, organized by Port Phillip City Council, used street-party gatherings, photographs and stories to capture and share all sorts of everyday-life stories from all sorts of St Kilda streets.

Port Phillip Bay laps at St Kilda’s sandy southern flank. Despite the number of bayside beaches, St Kilda attracts most attention from local and international visitors as the Melbourne beach. In the late 1960s, when the visiting Prince Charles described a swim at St Kilda as being akin to a ‘dip in a sewer’, few would have predicted its future popularity. Today, diners eat seafood platters or drink lattes as they watch the passing parade of strollers, joggers and cyclists and, beyond that, the kids and families playing in the sand or swimming in the bay. Backpackers sprawl on the grass soaking up the sun. Many of the strollers continue on to the end of the long pier where the historic, much-loved kiosk has been restored after being gutted by fire in 2003. Even in cold Melbourne winters, swimmers can swim in the restored St Kilda Baths—provided they can afford the hefty post-renovation entry fee.

Almost rivalling the beach as an attraction for visitors is the restaurant strip of Acland Street. This jam-packed strip is notoriously busy, especially on weekends, and is also a key focus point of many discussions about the changing face of St Kilda—particularly the shift from what former Port Phillip mayor Dick Gross has called ‘remnant European’ to a ‘more international beachside’ culture. The changing face of Acland Street is a clear marker of the changes to the area, where the ‘old world’ European heritage consolidated in the middle decades of last century is fading from view.

In the period surrounding World War II, many Jewish people—many of them survivors of the German death camps—found their way to St Kilda and became an integral part of the identity of the community. St Kilda was already established as a spiritual home for Melbourne’s Jewish community, and a synagogue was established in the area as early as 1872. Those who arrived as refugees after World War II gravitated to the area, even if many of them actually lived in suburbs such as Carlton. Although the Jewish heartland in Melbourne has now shifted further east, the establishment of the Jewish Museum in St Kilda in 1982 confirmed the area’s significance to the broader Jewish community. As the European migrant communities settled, cafes, shops and restaurants began to spring up around Melbourne, with some of the most famous being in St Kilda. Delis, butchers, fruit shops and cafes were established. Acland St became most famous for its European-style cake shops. The oldest of these is The Monarch, established in 1934 and still operating today. Also still operating is Café Scheherazade, which was recently immortalized by Melbourne writer Arnold Zable in his book Café Scheherazade. Zable captures the community of Holocaust survivors who met regularly at the Scheherazade, and who can still be found there, now in their 70s and 80s.

These days, the butchers, fruit shops and delis have disappeared, and the older establishments face endless rent increases as new commercial businesses move in to capitalize on St Kilda’s thriving tourism. Boutiques, homewares shops, chain stores and generic, glass-fronted cafes now dominate the streetscape. Nostalgic attachment to the old European cosmopolitanism—which is easy to find in the writings of many people who have spent time in St Kilda over the

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years—cannot keep up with the rent hikes. Urban development and gentrification remain a major issue for the community in the whole of St Kilda, not just Acland Street, and Port Phillip Council has initiated a series of dialogues on gentrification, beginning in 2003. Another hotly contested issue the Council have initiated dialogue about is prostitution. St Kilda has long been associated with the sex industry, with the earliest reports of prostitutes in the area occurring at the end of the nineteenth century. In 2002, then Mayor of Port Phillip, Darren Ray, told ABC TV’s *7.30 Report* that there were 400 street sex-workers in and around St Kilda—more than in the whole of Sydney. In an attempt to find an alternative to the ‘zero tolerance’ approach to prostitution, council proposed certain zones of tolerance, where safe houses could be set up and arrests would not be made for workers or clients. However, after an Attorney General’s report and much community consultation—often very heated—council decided this proposal was, according to the council’s website, ‘moving ahead of the community’. The Zones of Tolerance plan was not implemented. Prostitution and drug-use remain an issue for St Kilda, and violence, rape and even murder remain an issue for street sex-workers.

St Kilda is facing many new challenges. In recent years, Port Phillip City Council has been innovative in encouraging social diversity and a richness of cultural activity. It has tried to give access to cultural activity for as diverse and inclusive a sector of the community as possible. However, the council is also encouraging the promotion and development of the area in ways that encourage gentrification, and some of these developments are having negative impacts on the area’s social diversity. A significant question for the area is whether this wave of development will erase some of the diverse stories that are still highly visible in the area; stories that have forged an identification with place that many residents, past and present, speak about.

A Transect

In St Kilda we began our transect walk at the ‘Corroboree Tree’ near St Kilda Junction and continued down Fitzroy Street, along The Esplanade, on into Acland Street, and into Blessington Street to end at the abundant St Kilda Botanical Gardens. Decades of higher-than-average-density housing has meant a multiplicity of communities live, or have lived, in St Kilda’s tight streets, and many stories overlay each other in the buildings and streetscapes you pass on this journey. Our route takes us past many of the things that have made St Kilda famous; it does not take us into the seedier back alleys that have made it infamous. The very active St Kilda Historical Society has produced a booklet outlining several walks that can be taken in both St Kilda and the broader Port Phillip district, each with a different theme, and Port Phillip City Council supported the creation of ‘Sex and Drugs Historical Tours’ that used street theatre to tell stories of the sex industry in St Kilda. The juxtaposing and interweaving of different physical and thematic pathways through this space indicates just how many stories exist in a relatively condensed suburb. Our transect route offers just a cross-section of that complexity.

The ‘Corroboree Tree’ is an ancient River Red Gum, said to be hundreds of years old. It was an important ceremonial gathering place for the indigenous Bunurong people. St Kilda Junction is a traffic-heavy nexus of tramlines and several arterial roads, and the tree appears to balance precariously alongside one of the busy roads. It can be approached through a pleasant grove of planted natives, but the road exposes a flank that is overshadowed by tall office-buildings and imposing billboard advertising. European settlers observed ceremonies in progress at the Corroboree Tree site. Little of the St Kilda landscape remains as it was before European arrival, but groups within the community have worked to return certain areas to their natural pre-settlement vegetation, including the small billabong at the base of the Corroboree Tree. This can remind us of the area’s long, pre-settlement, history but it also reminds us that the Bunurong were dispossessed of their land and those who survived violent attacks and disease were placed in distant settlements (for example, Corranderk near Healesville) with other remnant

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4 [http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2002/s634642.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2002/s634642.htm), broadcast: 29 July 2002.
communities. By the late-nineteenth century, the Corroboree Tree had become the location of a ‘fringe dweller’ campsite for dispossessed Bunurong people.

Fitzroy Street is a wide boulevard that slopes from the busy junction down to the bay. It represents much of what is commonly seen as contemporary St Kilda life. It passes the historic St Kilda Oval on the fringes of Albert Park, and then becomes a hubbub of trams, restaurants, bars and apartments. Sheer glass restaurant frontages reflect the sky and the water. Cheaper Italian pizza and spaghetti bars and budget vegetarian cafes serve backpackers jugs of beer at sidewalk tables. The elegantly crumbling George Hotel—epitome of nineteenth-century style and then 1970s dirty rock and roll—has been restored to stylish cinema, bar and restaurant complex. Along with the Tolarno Hotel and Leo’s Spaghetti bar, The George is a much-photographed image of St Kilda’s past and present. The less photogenic 7-11 and convenience stores have pushed their way in, and claim increasing chunks of streetscape, bringing their familiar homogeneity to once-grand Edwardian hotel facades.

Just before the end of Fitzroy Street is a triangle of garden that is both infamous and famous. It was infamous as the site of a toilet block known as the ‘Spanish Mission’, a notorious beat and seedy pick-up joint in the 1960s. ‘Cleve Gardens’ is famous, however, as a modern politicized site for Aboriginal Australia. Until the 1990s it was a meeting place for Aboriginal people, the local ‘parkies’ and people visiting the area. A toilet block in the gardens painted with the Aboriginal flag was a local landmark. When Albert Park became the site of the Grand Prix, the ensuing ‘facelift’ saw the demolition of the toilet block and the forced moving on of the people who gathered there. In stories, the gardens remain a significant site of resistance, and there is a nice irony in the fact that other Aboriginal people have come to gather in some of St Kilda’s public spaces over the years to defy the ongoing conquest of Bunurong country.

Turning from the end of Fitzroy Street into The Esplanade, our transect route turns onto the vast boulevard designed by Carlo Catani in the 1800s to mimic the seaside esplanades of Edwardian England. In summer, the spruced-up façade of the Esplanade Hotel soaks up the yellow light; this legendary live music venue is a popular spot to drink pots of beer and watch the sun sink into the bay. Many of the iconic buildings along the Esplanade were once threatened with demolition but have recently been restored—the baths, expensive and exclusive; St Kilda Pier with its famous kiosk; the Palais Theatre and Luna Park.

On wintry days the choppy waves are grey under Melbourne’s low cloud; a few cyclists might brave the rain on the bayside bike path but the dull sand is empty. In summer, however, the beach is crowded with bodies, and the bike path feels like ‘everyone’ is outside, from grandmothers in burquas wheeling toddlers on training bikes to the roller-bladers who weave past the pigeons and pedestrians. Unlike the blocks on the western side of Fitzroy Street, the Esplanade remained somewhat protected from the high-rise unit development of the 1960s and 1970s, and many original flats from the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century remain. However, high-rise development in St Kilda continues apace, and the Esplanade Hotel is now dwarfed by a high-rise apartment against which many residents fought a long campaign. Although the ‘Espy’ was saved from planned demolition, it is largely overshadowed by such recent developments. Beside Luna Park is O’Donnell Gardens, another site for the mainly Aboriginal parkies. Many of those who used to gather in Cleve Gardens now sit in O’Donnell Gardens, and local artist Julie Shiels celebrated their presence by creating a pair of cast bronze milk crates in memory of Aunty Alma, a local elder who used to be an O’Donnell Gardens regular. The milk crates serve as an ironic counterpoint to the memorials built by the white settlers in the same park.

Acland Street’s best-known strip stretches from Luna Park to Barkly Street, but the street actually begins over the hill at Fitzroy Street and runs parallel to The Esplanade. This residential section is lined with art deco flats and some of St Kilda’s earliest and best-known mansions, such as Linden, now a gallery. The section between Luna Park and Barkly Street contains the
‘old world’ European cake shops and cafes mentioned earlier. Colourful street mosaics—the result of past community art initiatives—and creative rooftop sculptures on some shops contribute to a bohemian ambience and a vibrant streetscape, but the increasing number of more generic chain stores is changing this. Some bastions of different eras remain—from the St Kilda Bowling Club to the Galleon Cafe.

Along Acland Street the faces in the street are anything but homogenous. However, it is still noticeable that people stop to talk to each other; young mothers with kids chat to the ever-present old man collecting coins; while cafe owners sit down to coffee with their regulars. On a Sunday morning, fashionable actors sun themselves at crowded sidewalk tables, but now the crowds of pedestrians and the fast passage down the footpath inhibit interaction.

Noise levels drop as we leave Acland Street and approach the Botanical Gardens. These gardens contain a section that has been regenerated with plants that would have been there at the time of colonization and settlement, and another section has a formal rose garden. Each year the Global Garden Party brings many revellers to the gardens—this event grew out of the St Kilda Environment Festival initiated by the active St Kilda Environment Centre. The Environment Centre is housed near the entrance to the gardens in what was once a series of run-down rooms but is now a sustainably designed ‘Eco-House’. A model of environmental efficiency, with its own water treatment facility, the centre is run by a passionate greenie who emerged from the ranks of the garden-maintenance crew.

Away from the main drags, St Kilda is an eclectic mix of ramshackle brick flats, modern monoliths, tourist hotels and rooming houses—some government-subsidized, some private—for people requiring housing and homelessness support, for instance those with special needs or at risk of homelessness. St Kilda streets are host to multiple communities and contradictions. Smartly dressed young professionals, on their way to a beachside lunch meeting, stride past lingering sex workers. In the local Veg Out Community Gardens, enthusiasts tend their vegetable plots as practicing artists work in the adjacent Bowling Club Artists Studios. All at once, the mood of this unique community is buoyant and sad, hopeful and frustrated, excited and nervous, soothing and disturbing. As local resident and well-known artist Mirka Mora said, with her characteristic lyrical hope: St Kilda will grow, and bloom, and die. And grow and bloom again, just like flowers (Mora in Anastasios, 1997).

History

Springtime in Australia Felix! Wattle trees were coming into bloom; gum trees were tipped with reddish brown shoots of new leaves, new life for summer days, and the clumps of ti-tree showed a bright mantle of vivid green, upon the arched tops of its groves. In the sunshine, beneath a clear blue sky, was a red bluff headland, with waves sweeping against its stone base. (1835)

The bayside area in Melbourne was originally covered by the sea (Presland, 1994). When the water receded to close to its present level, sediment deposits built up, salt marshes and ti-tree scrub developed, and the land became part of the country of the Bunurong Tribe of the Kulin Nation. Yuroe Yuroke—the area later named St Kilda—was originally inhabited by the Yalukit Willam Clan of that tribe. The place took its name from the grinding stones at the base of the red sandstone cliffs along the water’s edge, used to sharpen axes.

Bunurong territory extended to the Mornington Peninsula and the catchment area of Western Port Bay, as well as the coastal strip of Port Phillip. Their abundant marine environs enabled them to stay in their lands throughout the year. The Yalukit Willam made Walert-gurn—

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5 John Pascoe Fawkner, quoted by J.B Cooper about the first sighting of Yuroe Yuroke from The Enterprise, 1835.
possum-skin rugs—for warmth, ate tortoises, frogs, eels, fish, shellfish and edible plants, and wove the indigenous grasses. Many places around *Yuroe Yuroke* were sites of significance, including the Corroboree Tree, midden piles along the foreshore, and the abundant lagoon that has been replaced by Albert Park Lake—once an important camping place. In 1802, members of the first surveying party sent to the Port Phillip area by the New South Wales Governor described this abundant Yalukit Willam country as: ‘Soil very bad and thinly wooded … low swampy country’ (Cooper, 1931, p. 2). In 1835, however, John Pascoe Fawkner sent a party on his schooner the *Enterprise* to find a site for the new settlement of ‘Melbourne’. Their description of the *Yuroe Yuroke* region was more positive (albeit written in retrospect), describing how the ‘lovely knolls around the lagoons on the flats or swamps’ and ‘innumerable flocks of teal, ducks, geese and swans … filled them with joy’ (Cooper, 1931, p. 3). However, Fawkner’s party, concerned about fresh water, moved on to the Yarra River.

It is difficult to estimate the population of Bunurong people pre-European settlement, partly because of violent encounters they had already had with sealers and whalers along the coast from the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the twenty-seven years following the foundation of Melbourne in 1835, numbers of Bunurong declined through disease, conflict, infanticide, cruelty and displacement. By the time the first census of Aboriginal people was taken in 1839, there were eighty-three Bunurong. By 1863, according to the St Kilda Historical Society, there were only eleven. In 1839, the first pastoral lease was issued in *Yuroe Yuroke*, then known as ‘Green Knoll’. Officially named Fareham Village, the new settlement instead took the name that Governor La Trobe gave it whilst picnicking in 1841, as he waved his hand toward the schooner anchored off the nearby beach. The *Lady of St Kilda* had arrived at Red Bluff on 6 July 1841, and most likely took its name from the story of Lady Grange, imprisoned on the Hebridean island of Hirta (Kilda) by Bonnie Prince Charlie. Here is a story of something once grand then cast off, persecuted, somehow disconnected. La Trobe could not have known then how prescient was his naming of the community that would ultimately develop in this swampy, exotic place.

The first official auction of lots in St Kilda Village was in 1842, and by 1846 the area was attracting prosperous settlers, despite what some saw as the ‘rough assortment of shanties, eternally shipless bay beyond, monotonous bush around, and woebegone black heathens in mia mias near the beach’ (Longmire, 1989, p. vii). The Prince Regent had made seaside living fashionable in England, but even before official lots were auctioned in 1842, settlers had moved into temporary tents in the scrub by the beach. Known as Beach Squatters, they sought an escape from the unsanitary conditions of the town settlement where ‘colonial fever’ raged in the summer. A seaside residence, built on clean soil, away from the smells of town drains was desirable, but they were without tenure (Cooper, 1931). By 1846, St Kilda was called ‘the Scarborough of the South’ by auctioneers: its roller-coaster history was heading for a high point.

Following Victoria’s separation from the colony of New South Wales, the discovery of gold in 1851 brought about a boom in population and economy in Melbourne—fast becoming the largest and most prosperous city in Australia. St Kilda flourished, and by the 1860s was the best address in Melbourne. Those who ruled Victoria competed for the best sites on the hill overlooking the water to build their mansions, such as Linden (owned by wealthy Jewish merchant Moritz Michaelis) and Oberwyl, the 36-room ‘folly’ of Portuguese merchant John Gomes de Silva (Peterson, 2005). Oberwyl also had solid wooden shutters for protection against marauding bushrangers—the hunt for gold brought ‘convicts, ticket-of-leave men, bond-breakers and others of the convict classes’. These ‘human wolves’ prowled the southern portions of Melbourne and frequented the St Kilda and Brighton Roads (Cooper, 1931, p. 45).

The bourgeoning village took on a dappled social make-up. Class distinction came to be mapped out on the landscape: the wealthy on the hill, their servants in small quarters on large estates, poorer classes down on the Balaclava flats and Chinese fishermen camped in tents on the beach. The general timbre of St Kilda, however, was felt to be well bred. When the police
found prostitutes in Acland Street in 1886, they were ordered to leave for being ‘out of character’ with genteel St Kilda (Longmire, 1989, p. ix). In 1856 the St Kilda railway station—resplendent with chandelier—was built, only the second in Victoria. Until 1888, facility of travel between St Kilda and Melbourne was the exclusive preserve of those who could afford the train. However, increased demand and density of building meant that cable cars were introduced, making St Kilda accessible to day-trippers and the lower classes, attracted to the seaside resort and the developing amusement attractions. St Kilda’s roller-coaster history was finishing its climb. Wealthy families, put off by the growing crowds, moved to Toorak and South Yarra.

The Depression of the 1890s wrought great change in St Kilda. Many wealthy families were forced out, and mansions took on new roles as boarding and guesthouses. Some wealth did remain, and the early decades of the new century led to an increase in the development of ‘modish’ new flats. St Kilda councillors took advantage of the increased guest facilities, and endorsed the development of St Kilda as a resort area. In 1906, a Foreshore Committee was established, charged with managing and beautifying the entire St Kilda foreshore. The first theatrical production to set up its pavilion by the sea was The English Pierrots. Its success proved that the shore lands were a potential source of revenue (Cooper, 1931). The opening of Luna Park in 1912 established the carnivalesque identity of St Kilda, and it became the playground of Melbourne. Public transport increased and crowds flocked to the cinemas, dancehalls and sea baths.

However, with the growing century came a growing dissonance. The union jacks, military bands and cannon salutes of the vice-regal visits to St Kilda Pier had an underscore of jazz. In the 1920s, not-so-innocent pleasures were markedly more prevalent. Notorious underworld figure Squizzy Taylor had a house in Elwood and frequented St Kilda’s dance halls with his accomplice and wife, Ida Pender. In the 1930s, cocaine was the fashion among the gangs on Fitzroy and Acland Streets and prostitution increased, along with sly-grog trading and organized crime (Anastasios, 1997). The Great Depression was a turning point in the changing character of St Kilda. The entertainment industry struggled to attract crowds due to people’s reduced spending. Poverty and unemployment increased, and boarding houses became overcrowded accommodation for the poor. Benevolent societies lobbied government and council for assistance with limited results—in part due, according to Anne Longmire, to council’s unwillingness to institute any ‘Soviet methods’ to advantage those who were not ‘thrifty’ enough to prepare for a rainy day (Longmire, 1989, p. 39). The first half of the 1930s set up tensions in St Kilda—largely between the rich and poor—that time would prove unable to dissolve.

In 1937, St Kilda issued almost the highest value of building permits of any municipality, but built fewer houses than any municipality. Low outlay and high potential return boosted the building of flats. Real estate agents functioned as town planners, and specialized in turning old property into something ‘bigger and better’. Developers took full advantage of outdated by-laws to build more dwellings on less space, ignoring any potential concerns about population increase or living conditions. Flats—and the people who lived in them—were certainly not seen as appropriate for a family neighbourhood, and those living in the flats dealt with limited space, light, ventilation and privacy. Tensions set up in the Depression were further tested as the ethnic face of St Kilda began to change.

In the period leading up to World War II, migrants—many of them Jewish—left Europe and came to Australia. St Kilda had an established Jewish community set up by people like Moritz Michaelis in the nineteenth century, and was a principle destination for new arrivals. A synagogue had been consecrated there in 1872, and the Victorian Union of Progressive Judaism founded the Temple Beth Israel in 1930. Jews fleeing Anti-Semitism in Europe, however, found a mixed reception in Australia from both the Anglo community and the anglicized Jewish community, who feared the ‘ghetto habits’ of the new arrivals would make life difficult for all
Jews (Longmire, 1989). Waves of migration—particularly European—followed, and the changes to St Kilda’s character that ensued created some of its most distinctive features.

The volatility of the cultural conflicts in St Kilda surrounding refugees, communism and emerging social divisions were set against a backdrop where little money went into public works or maintaining grand buildings of historic value. Residential buildings were also in disrepair. St Kilda left the 1940s a more diverse society, but one with an increasing range of tensions. As European migration continued after the war, refugees and migrants continued to pass through or stay in St Kilda. Its Jewish community grew into one of Melbourne’s most significant. Gradually, European cosmopolitanism broke down Anglo-centric bias. European-style establishments along Fitzroy and Acland Streets gained reputation and patronage. Significant among them were Leo’s Spaghetti Bar and Tolarno’s on Fitzroy Street, and Cafe Scheherazade on Acland Street. Many Anglo-Australians at the time called the new cuisine ‘greasy wog food’, but without this ‘wog’ food—or continental approach to eating and drinking—Melbourne would not have developed the cosmopolitan style for which has subsequently become famous.

Menzies, the Great Australian Dream and the Cold War dominated Australia following World War II. Viewed through the white picket fence of the suburban quarter-acre block, inner-city St Kilda appeared old and run-down. More people had cars and were attracted to suburbs further afield. St Kilda—with its immigrants, prostitutes, organized crime, Bodgies, Widgies and poor—went into decline. The development of flats continued through the 1960s, with no consideration for history or preservation. Most St Kilda flats were rented rather than owner-occupied, and the relatively cheap rent attracted many tenants experiencing difficulties. The abundance of flats influenced the development of St Kilda: young people, new arrivals, elderly and the financially disadvantaged moved in and families did not (Johnson, 1983). However, St Kilda Council failed to recognize or cater for the specific needs of this unusual community and community facilities were neglected.

In *The Paper Chase*, his 1966 memoir, novelist Hal Porter had the following to say about his city of residence:

> St Kilda, once a fashionable and grandiose seaside suburb … has become tawdry … Its mansions along the Esplanade … have become boarding houses, or have been subdivided into flats, flatettes and hives of bed-sitter cells smelling of gas rings. In 1949 … the suburb has become a post-war working class playground providing all the shoddy and instant pleasures the working class go in for (Longmire, 1989, p. 176).

Other residents, however, saw things differently. Mirka and Georges Mora were pioneers of al fresco dining in Melbourne. In 1965, the Moras moved from Exhibition Street to the Hotel Tolarno in Fitzroy Street, setting it up as cafe and art gallery. It was the first French cafe in town and brought with it the patronage of the many artists associated with the Contemporary Art Society that had met regularly above Café Mirka in the city. Mirka saw St Kilda as a seaside paradise and found great inspiration from its childlike joys—the merry-go-round, the seaside—and the proximity of its darker aspects. The Moras provided a key pivot for Melbourne’s art world and encouraged the presence of artists in St Kilda. During World War II, St Kilda had once again become Melbourne’s entertainment centre, a pressure valve in tense times. The presence of American troops, the tensions and restrictions of war, the staid nature of the rest of Melbourne and the changed nature of St Kilda made for a wilder and faster ride. The St Kilda works of Albert Tucker and Sidney Nolan captured the dark-and-light atmosphere characterized by the conflict and hedonism, and the shadow of the Great Depression. Nolan and Tucker figure among many significant artists drawn to St Kilda, among them Joy Hester, Rupert Bunny and Arthur Boyd.
The neglect of the governing authorities to address St Kilda’s social issues influenced another shift in the already complex society. The self-conscious and parochial efforts to establish a settlement whose character they could dictate had fallen away, and the community was diverse, rough, dirty and, for many, exciting. It was active and strong, vibrant and creative. Resident action groups formed to address the neglect of tenants’ needs and the physical decline and neglect of public spaces and works. Residents blocked the construction of a second marina and halted further foreshore redevelopment. Council could resist the forces of change no longer. In 1967 they agreed to build a public library. A municipal social worker was employed, a child-care centre opened and the first female councillor was elected in 1975. More stringent height controls were implemented for new developments. Council decided not only to admit to the image problem caused by St Kilda’s underside, but also to use it to attract visitors by promoting the area as swinging and risqué ‘happening place’ (Longmire, 1989, p. 230). Inevitably, it could be said, this planted the seeds of a significant phase in St Kilda’s ongoing reinvention; one it is still negotiating today.

The recession of the mid-1970s left a bleak legacy for St Kilda’s vulnerable. As a new trend towards inner-city living began, social disharmony increased, as it appeared likely that St Kilda’s poor would be displaced. Indeed, St Kilda’s processes of gentrification began with the displacement of working-class or lower-income individuals and their replacement by the middle-class or wealthy property-owners. In the early 1980s, St Kilda was non-mainstream in many ways—dangerous, criminal, morally destitute—and the socially diverse mix was punk, creative, flamboyant and studded with misfits whose buttons were missing, lipstick was askew, who did not quite smell right or could not find refuge anywhere else (Brand, 2003). Like other inner-city Melbourne areas such as Collingwood and Fitzroy, and like Sydney’s Kings Cross, this ‘avant-garde bohemian’ mix attracted outsiders. However, the social problems were more visible than ever—the stabbing of prostitutes, the dead bodies of young drug addicts, overdoses on the beach, younger and younger prostitutes on the street. The structure of council changed in the mid-1980s, and more focus was given to addressing these issues, although a schism could be identified between those who wanted them addressed as a human emergency and those who blamed visible prostitution for keeping property values low. The 1980s saw the first St Kilda Festival, which aimed to celebrate St Kilda as a ‘city with a myriad of faces’ (Longmire, 1989, p. 278). Outdoor cafes increased, and many older establishments were replaced by more modern ones.

A note on sources and gaps

More than the other sites in this project, St Kilda has an abundance of sources to draw from: some dry histories, some livelier, locally produced texts. St Kilda has also featured widely in many plays, artworks, television programs and so on. This plethora of angles on the place refracts the multitude of stories, and makes it easier to view the place from a range of perspectives.

John Butler Cooper began his formal history of the city of St Kilda in 1930, producing two large volumes that begin with the arrival of Europeans in the 1830s and end 100 years later. Anne Longmire, writing in the 1980s, then chose to pick up the thread from where Cooper left off, and she produced what she calls a third volume in an ‘ongoing history’ of St Kilda (St Kilda: The Show Goes On). Her book takes us through until the mid-1980s, and she leaves it open for another writer to pick up from her and write the next volume. Cooper’s work, in particular, is limited largely to an account of the colonial establishment and development of the city, with a heavy focus on local government. Longmire’s account is much more plural in its stories. St Kilda in the decades she is writing about has become a thriving and diverse place. Certain stories, however, are not present—Aboriginal people, for instance, all but disappear from the texts close to the time of European settlement. However, both texts provide important structure to the history, and place St Kilda well in relation to broader outside political and economic contexts.
The St Kilda Historical Society (SKHS) has, since its establishment in 1970, built a volume of resources about the City of Port Phillip, many of which are online as well as published. SKHS has published pamphlets and books about the Aboriginal history of the area, including a ‘walk’ around sites of Aboriginal significance. It has also published on the architecture, pubs, churches, cinemas, and many other ‘walks’, for instance a walk focusing on the experience of migrants in Port Melbourne. Port Phillip City Council also has a series of online resources about the entire Local Government Area. This was helpful in gathering information about contemporary shifts, such as gentrification, that are fundamental to the changes taking place but as yet not written about in any formal sense.

There is, at present, much support for and interest in telling local history from many perspectives in the locale. The council has been supporting the informal collection of a diversity of stories, and has driven projects like the Margins, Memories and Markers (discussed as a case study project in Chapters 5–9). These stories guided our research. The presence of St Kilda in the work of many artists, from painters such as Albert Tucker and Sidney Nolan, to writers such as Ray Lawler, Arnold Zable and Raimondo Cortese, and in television dramas (such as The Secret Life of Us), contributes to its ‘iconic’ status. The Sacred Heart Mission has supported publication of St Kilda in Your Face, a book that creatively and evocatively uses the ‘iconic’ images of the place and people of St Kilda. This book highlighted the character and characters of the area, especially the contemporary dissonance when drug use, prostitution and homelessness meet the thriving cafe culture, and the ‘old’ St Kilda has its foundations rocked by the demolition and development of the ‘new’.

Demographic Information and Some Future Challenges

It will be very interesting to see what the 2006 Census reveals in terms of the changing demographics of the St Kilda community. However, there can be no doubt that gentrification and the associated rise in real-estate prices and rents is posing a big challenge to the area’s social diversity. Port Phillip City Council is working hard to sustain a decent stock of affordable housing in the area, yet the very popularity of a place with such a colourful and diverse history is making that a difficult task. This social diversity that created such a rich folklore may now be at risk, and it remains to be seen what a changing community will do with its local endowment.

Across Port Phillip, the population is diverse, and a significant percentage is disadvantaged in some way. Port Phillip has linguistically and culturally diverse populations, families and single parents. There are people who are unemployed, and of those who are employed, there are many on low incomes who struggle to keep up with rising housing costs of the inner city. Port Phillip has an Indigenous population, and there was an increase in Aboriginal people living in St Kilda from 1996 to 2001, with 29.7 per cent of Port Phillip’s Aboriginal population living in St Kilda (77 of 259 people). This represents 0.42 per cent of St Kilda’s population (0.29 per cent of Port Phillip). St Kilda has a higher proportion of English-only speakers (72.8 per cent) than Port Phillip (70.7 per cent). The five largest language groups other than English are Russian, Chinese languages, Greek, Polish and Italian. In the period 1996–2001, all major language groups other than English and Italian decreased in numbers in St Kilda. The most significant decreases were in the Russian and Chinese language speakers. While the numbers have decreased (248 in 1996; 145 in 2001), St Kilda still has a larger number of Polish speakers than Port Phillip.

A high proportion of people living in St Kilda were born in English-speaking countries. While this means St Kilda has a higher proportion of English-only speakers than Port Phillip (12 per cent to 10.4 per cent) it has an equivalent number of people born overseas to Port Phillip (both 28.4 per cent). Overall numbers of people living in Port Phillip who were born overseas decreased in 2001. As well as those born in English-speaking countries, residents who were born overseas comprise two clear groups with different demographics. The first is residents from Asian countries, who are younger and are made up of a large proportion of students. In
contrast, many of the European-born populations in Port Phillip, particularly from Greece and Poland, have high proportions of older people. None of the major countries of birth in St Kilda experienced any significant growth from 1996 to 2001. The number of people born in Poland experienced the most marked decline, from 367 (2.1 per cent of population) to 263 (1.4 per cent).

Port Phillip has a lower proportion than Melbourne generally of all the major religions, with the exception of Judaism. Port Phillip also has a high proportion of people with no religion, with 23.8 per cent compared to the overall Melbourne figure of 17.1 per cent. The municipality has a relatively mobile population. On census night in 2001, a large proportion of St Kilda residents (65 per cent) had lived at their current address for less than five years. 33 per cent had changed address in the year leading up to the census. Both of these figures were higher than those for Port Phillip as a whole.

Households in Port Phillip have changed significantly since the previous census in 1996. Lone-person households accounted for almost half (49.2 per cent) of St Kilda’s households. The number of lone-person households is significant, at 41.9 per cent of all households. For younger people with disposable incomes this is often a lifestyle choice. This is in contrast to the other group of lone-person households—the older person living in a family home after their partner has deceased—who tend to have lower incomes but wish to maintain community connections. They also tend to be more physically vulnerable and require community support services. The number of lone-person households in St Kilda decreased from 4,589 to 4,435 from 1996 to 2001. There is a low proportion of families with children in St Kilda compared with Port Phillip as a whole and non-family households make up 62.3 per cent of households in St Kilda. Couples without children are the fastest-growing household type, increasing by 27.6 per cent from 1996 to 2001. 12.7 per cent of household in St Kilda are group households.

A very high proportion of St Kilda’s housing stock is flats, units or apartments (67.8 per cent). The number of such dwellings increased by 722 from 1996 to 2001. Other dwellings types are low in comparison: only 7.8 per cent are separate houses, and 10.4 per cent semi-detached (although these also increased in number over the five years). Housing stock in Port Phillip overall differs from other Melbourne municipalities in the larger number of flats and townhouses. Over two-thirds of the housing stock in St Kilda is flats, units or apartments. However, it does also include larger houses from the Victoria and Edwardian eras. Like neighbouring inner-city areas, Port Phillip’s median property prices have been rising steadily since at least 1985. Between 1991 and 1996, the median house price in Port Phillip increased by 34.3 per cent. Between 1996 and 2001, it increased by 98.6 per cent. As such, the general level of monthly home loan repayments has increased over this time, making the number of households in Port Phillip that paid less than $100 a week in rent very scarce. As such, low-income residents depend on public housing to remain in the area. An estimated 55.7 per cent of households rent their dwelling premises (47.9 per cent in Port Phillip). In the five years 1996 to 2001, the number of households paying very low rent (less than $100 a week) decreased significantly (by 63.2 per cent). There was a concurrent very large increase (558.3 per cent) in households paying over $400 a week. The largest increase, however, was in the bracket paying $200 to $299 per week, which rose from 5.9 per cent of St Kilda’s population in 1996 to 10 per cent in 2001.

For a number of reasons, it is very difficult to measure the rate of public housing (for a full explanation, see www.portphillip.vic.gov.au). Yet one type of public housing is worth noting: rooming houses have been important providers of low-cost accommodation in Port Phillip for many years. There are two main types of rooming houses: community and private. Community rooming houses are managed by non-government organisations, whereas private rooming houses are owned and managed by private entities for profit. There were 1338 people living in rooming houses in 2000, in 74 facilities throughout the city. By September 2003 this had decreased to 1220 in 62 facilities. Between 2000 and 2003 there was an increase in the number
of community rooming houses from 35 to 37 (519 places to 643) but a larger decrease in private rooming houses, from 39 to 25 (819 places to 577). Many of the private rooming houses have been or are being redeveloped into private flats or motels. According to the Port Phillip website, in July 2006, Port Phillip had 67 rooming houses (23 private and 44 community) of which the majority (36) were located in St Kilda.

It is difficult to measure homelessness, and Port Phillip is no different in this regard. On census night in 2001 there were 29 people in Port Phillip staying in hostels for the homeless, refuges or night shelters. A total of 59 people were counted in either improvised homes, tents, or were sleeping outdoors. These numbers tend to underestimate homelessness. A distinctive characteristic of Port Phillip’s population is the very high number of people with formal post-school qualifications; 62.9 per cent of the City’s over-15 population has obtained a formal qualification, compared to 47.9 per cent in Melbourne as a whole. The total number of St Kilda residents with post-school qualifications increased from 57.9 per cent to 65.6 per cent (1,749 people) from 1996 to 2001, and the number of people without post-school qualifications dropped by 991 people over that period. While there is a low proportion of school-age children in the municipality, there is a relatively large tertiary student population.

According to the 2001 Census, Port Phillip’s unemployment rate was 6.2 per cent (similar to the overall rate for Melbourne). The number of St Kilda residents in employment rose by 1,541 between 1996 and 2001, and of these 1,264 were full-time employed. However, St Kilda had a slightly higher unemployment rate (7.7 per cent) than Port Phillip. When compared with Port Phillip as a whole, St Kilda has a lower proportion (25.6 per cent to 29.1 per cent) of households earning more than $1,500 a week, and a higher proportion of household earning less than $300 a week (14.4 per cent as compared to 13.2 per cent). However, within St Kilda itself there have been significant shifts in the years 1996 to 2001. Households earning less than $300 a week have decreased from 24.6 per cent to 14.4 per cent of St Kilda’s population, and households earning more than $1,500 a week have increased from 12.3 per cent to 25.6 per cent of the population. The growth rate for this bracket was 108.4 per cent—higher than for Port Phillip (104.6 per cent). In general, households earning less than $700 a week decreased overall, and those earning over $700 a week increased (except for the bracket $1,000 to $1,499, which decreased in St Kilda but increased in Port Phillip).

The largest employer of St Kilda (and Port Phillip in general) residents is the property and business services industry (23.3 per cent in St Kilda; 23.4 per cent in Port Phillip). There was a significant increase in this sector from 1996 to 2001. Compared with Port Phillip, more St Kilda residents are employed in hospitality (8.7 per cent) and cultural and recreational services (6.9 per cent). Port Phillip is centrally located within a public transport network of trams, buses, trains and light rail lines. As such, the proportion of people who catch public transport to work is high compared to Melbourne generally, and is increasing. St Kilda has a high level of public transport use compared with Port Phillip. 32.9 per cent of St Kilda commuters went to work by train, bus or tram, while for Port Phillip that figure is 27.2 per cent. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of people travelling to work by tram increased by 51.2 per cent. While the level of car ownership in the municipality is low compared to Melbourne, it has risen significantly since the last census. Just under half (49.9 per cent) of St Kilda’s commuters drive to work. The number of dwellings with no motor vehicle has decreased in both St Kilda and Port Phillip, and dwellings with one or more vehicles have increased. However, in St Kilda 61.9 per cent of dwelling have a vehicle compared with 68.4 per cent in Port Phillip. The number of cars in St Kilda increased by 12.7 per cent from 1996 to 2001, while the population only increased by 5.1 per cent.

There are some clear demographic changes in St Kilda and Port Phillip as a whole. In the five years leading up to 2001, Port Phillip saw significant increases in the number of young children, adults aged 30 to 34, and 55 to 64, and people who speak only English at home. There were also increases in couples without children and people who live alone. There was a notable increase in
numbers of employed people, people with higher incomes and people with university educations. In contrast, there were significant decreases in people aged over 65 years old, people who spoke languages other than English, especially Russian, Greek and Polish speakers. There were fewer unemployed people, people with lower incomes, and fewer families with children. As with other inner-city locations, Port Phillip is losing some of its economic and ethnic diversity in favour of a more highly educated, younger population with larger disposable incomes.

**Broadmeadows**

Located towards Melbourne’s northwest edge, Broadmeadows is part of the broader City of Hume, a large and varied local government area. Many people from outside the area may associate Broadmeadows with acres of treeless housing estates or thundering traffic corridors. They may, however, be surprised by the peaceful hilltops of ancient trees, the valleys tiled with red-roofed new housing estates, the tiny specialty grocery stores and the dynamic contemporary CBD.

Broadmeadows is an outer urban suburb of Melbourne with a long history, much of which is largely unknown or unrecognized. Over the latter half of the twentieth century, Broadmeadows developed a rather undeserved reputation as one of the worst places to live in Victoria (Peel, 2004). Recent history of public housing and the disadvantaged community that resulted has become the dominant perception of the community. The compounded legacy of bad planning decisions in the area has had a profound effect on the lives of residents, and many of its consequences continue, for example, as evidenced by the high unemployment and low school retention rates.

However, much change has taken place in the community, particularly over the past decade. Broadmeadows plays a key role in the City of Hume’s 2030 Vision as a CBD for the broader Hume region, and an industry and transit hub. Considerable efforts are now being made to encourage the recognition and development of the thriving and diverse multicultural community that has grown over the past 30 years. The natural environment features prominently in efforts to support and celebrate the people and place. Cultural celebrations and artistic activities draw upon the rich resources within the newer communities, including some practicing professional artists who struggle for recognition in their new homeland.

**A Transect**

The research used for this study cuts a cross-section from Gellibrand Hill, to the west of Broadmeadows, through the growing CBD to the old housing estate area. Traversing this route reveals what is, to many, the surprising beauty and diversity of the area, as well as what historian Andrew Lemon calls its ‘forgotten’ history. It also takes in the legacies of poor planning, and the subsequent efforts to transform the area.

The expansive vista and windswept peace of Gellibrand Hill is far from the typical idea of Broadmeadows. Giant river red gums stand sentinel beside smooth granite boulders as warbling birds flick and play the winds. Its views extend to Mt Macedon and the Great Dividing Range, Port Phillip Bay and the Woodland Historic Park. It also overlooks the smokestacks of nearby factories, and there is a bird’s-eye view of Tullamarine airport. Low, huge planes drag their bellies in to land and the navigation tower atop the hill sends out a low hum. There are few visitors, perhaps because it is not well signposted. Gellibrand has a private, rural feel; the ruins of an early homestead peacefully crumble. Down the hill, the transect passes through the small shopping centre of the village of Westmeadows—the original site of the historic village of Broadmeadows. Here, a very old bluestone bridge crosses the newly rejuvenated Moonee Ponds Creek, and the village is dotted with tiny bluestone cottages. Outside the ‘Old Broadie Bar’,
however, is a billboard advertising a new housing estate—one of an increasing number of ‘McMansion’ estates that are visible in the surrounding hills and valleys.

Peaceful hill and historic village are, however, quickly forgotten in negotiating the rings of traffic that surround the Broadmeadows CBD. Thick-set and dominant in the centre of the CBD is the Broadmeadows Shopping Mall and its car park. Inside, the mall is bustling—families with prams and toddlers, a bustling food court—against a backdrop of generic beige features and chain stores. There is some concern that the dominance of this large complex would cause smaller local shopping centres to struggle, but some local centres such as Olsen Place and the Dallas Shopping Centre have made a revival in keeping with the changing local communities around them. Other public buildings abound in the central town area; the Dianella Health Service, Broadmeadows Health Service, the courthouse, Batman Kangan TAFE College. Across the car park from the mall is the Hume Global Learning Centre, with its bold diagonal roofline and multilingual welcoming text on the walls. Inside, there is a buzz of activity: computer labs, a library (Broadmeadows’ first), a cafe, groups of people chatting, meeting, drinking coffee. An exhibition lines the walls and many languages mingle in the air.

Transport is omnipresent in the Broadmeadows CBD. Large roads ring the shopping mall and the rumble of heavy traffic is never far away. Planes still fly low overhead, and birds dive and chatter in small flocks. A massive transport corridor, built in the 1970s, slices through the city from south to north. This kind of infrastructure serves as an example of bad planning decisions made in the past that Broadmeadows now has to deal with. It has a very real effect on the lives of residents from the nearby housing estate areas cut off from the CBD by the road and railway line. Many people do not feel comfortable using the unwelcoming pedestrian underpass that links them to the CBD and the alternative shopping centre of Glenroy is blocked from them by the corridor of the Western Ring Road.

The ‘broad acre’ housing estates themselves are also raise issues of poor planning. When they were built, little thought was given to the quality of housing or the conditions faced by tenants over time. The estates lacked even the most basic facilities: footpaths, public telephones, schools and so on. Streetscaping was practically non-existent, and tenants had to walk three kilometres to Glenroy to pay their rent and shop at larger stores. However, the community that developed from these hard conditions prided itself on the ‘Broady Spirit’, and stories abound of people pulling together to help each other through adverse conditions and circumstances (see, for example, Peel, 2004). Today, conditions have improved and, during the 1990s, many long-overdue recreational and educational facilities originally promised in the estates’ conception were provided to the area. The small, simple houses are still modest on their identical blocks. Some have gardens, fresh paint or a gnome on the doorstep. Some are less cosy, with limp curtains in plain windows behind a bare lawn. ‘For Sale’ signs are up outside some of the houses, as some properties are released for private sale. The omission of shade trees by the original planners is another consequence of poor initial planning and implementation. Kids cruise on pushbikes, riding through the web of streets around shopping centres like Olsen Place. While significant renewal and training programs are in place now, issues such as unemployment and low school retention rates are still significant in Broadmeadows (as discussed below).

When the housing estates were first built, the majority of tenants were of Anglo-Australian descent. However, it is obvious in Broadmeadows now that there is huge cultural diversity. Hume municipality has the largest Turkish population in Melbourne, and since Vietnamese refugee arrivals began to settle there in the 1970s, groups of many nationalities have arrived and settled. Many people from places such as Lebanon and Turkey gather in the smaller shopping centres, such as Olsen Place or the Dallas Shopping Centre. Specialty grocery and take-away stores, selling Lebanese pizza, Sri Lankan groceries or home-made Turkish delight are replacing more traditional grocery stores. The multicultural foods available in Olsen Place featured in The Age newspaper’s gourmet magazine, Epicure, in 2005. These smaller shopping centres occupy a significant place in local efforts at neighbourhood renewal and resolving tensions in this diverse
and changing community. While the specialist shops at both Olsen Place and Dallas may make them attractive for people outside the immediate area, some of the older, Anglo-Australian residents have struggled with the changing identity of their local shopping centres. The plaza at Olsen Place has been renovated to add more seating and trees and a major renovation of the Dallas shopping centre is underway, with aesthetics that reflect the multicultural nature of the community. Turkish people from all over Melbourne came to the Dallas shopping centre to watch the televised games from the 2002 soccer World Cup and it could become the Turkish equivalent of what Carlton is for Italians. In response to the events of September 11, 2001, significant efforts have been made throughout the City of Hume to address issues of racial and cultural harmony, for example through meaningful interfaith dialogues.

At the end of our transect, on the edge of the old public housing estate, is the Jack Roper Reserve. Jack Roper is a long-time resident who still lives in the area and the reserve has been named after him because he had served as a councillor on the old Broadmeadows Council, yet it is unlikely that many people who use this popular open space know who Jack is or why the place bears his name. In the centre of the reserve is a lake where many geese, white swans and ducks have made a home. The lake has a pergola and a fishing place, where there is usually someone catching a peaceful moment. Even this peace is against a backdrop of constant traffic as the Western Ring Road curves around the reserve. The road is among the major roads that cut many people off from easy access to schools and other amenities. However, there is much effort being made in the area—for example, the ‘Greening Broadmeadows’ project—to regenerate and re-value the existing areas of natural beauty, and alongside the reserve, a strip of meandering greenery is being encouraged and maintained along a creek.

Much focus is being given to the rich and dynamic culture that exists in Broadmeadows today. However, it is a place with a mixed history, and has not entirely been able to shake the stigma of being an ‘undesirable’ place to live. It also still carries many consequences, physically and socially, of the terrible planning decisions of past decades. Broadmeadows—as its name suggests—was named for the features of its expansive natural beauty, and many groups, both within council and the local community, are putting much effort into recognizing and developing that beauty again.

History

We had another gratifying sight, this was plains, and open forest, which served to give them a more beautiful appearance … and as far as we could see with the Spy Glass from SE to West and as the land falling with a gradual descent towards the South, never did I behold a more charming and gratifying sight.6 (1824)

There was a substantially imbalanced socio-economic profile developed within the city (due mostly to the regulations relating to the Housing Commission Residents). [Translation: Mostly it was poorly paid, unskilled workers and their families who moved into Broadmeadows.]

This was compounded to such an extent that Broadmeadows has become popularised as a less-than-sought-after area, devoid of many community facilities and generally having an unattractive environment. [Translation: No-one really wanted to live there.]7 (1976)

By the 1820s, the Port Phillip regions of the colony of New South Wales had been mapped by maritime explorers along the bays, but inland beyond the fringes was still unknown to Europeans. Hamilton Hume and William Wilton Hovell set out from Lake George, the southernmost point of the settlement in New South Wales, in late spring of 1824. When they

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6 William Wilton Hovell, on reaching the Broadmeadows region, 1824 (Lemon, 1984, p. 12).
climbed a hill in the area now known as Broadmeadows they gained their first glimpse of Port Phillip. Perhaps it was the euphoria of nearly reaching their destination, but Hovell’s description of the pleasant grassland environment is at odds with modern-day perceptions of the area. A decade after Hume and Hovell, John Batman also crossed the district. He travelled closer to Broadmeadows than Hume and Hovell, and laid claim, via treaties with the Aborigines, to vast tracts of land. The land was to be subdivided among the syndicate funding him but, significantly, the land that he was to set aside for himself incorporated much of the Broadmeadows district. Although the Governor of New South Wales declared Batman’s treaties void it is noteworthy that the two acknowledged founding fathers of Melbourne—Batman and John Pascoe Fawkner—were both attracted to the Broadmeadows district.

The plains provided ideal places for the flocks of sheep coming into the new settlement from Van Diemen’s Land and from the settled parts of New South Wales. Richard Hoddle, Government Surveyor, began tracing Melbourne’s streams to their headwaters in 1836, but when it came to the Broadmeadows area he found that the squatters had already done the mapping. Many built up large flocks, and by the late 1830s a land boom was in full swing in the district. Hoddle was charged with reserving areas of land for future townships that would grow along the road heading towards Sydney, and in the Will Will Rook Parish he found a ‘delightful spot for a township’ where the road dipped into the Moonee Ponds Creek and surrounding hills provided shelter from the winds. This was to become the site of Broadmeadows town (Lemon, 1982). Sections of land in Will Will Rook Parish went up for sale in 1838, making them among the first lands sold in the Port Phillip region outside the township of Melbourne. The land was not expensive, and large portions were bought by speculators John Terry Hughes and John Hosking, who planned to lease in the short term and then sell the land in the future. Among those who leased land from Hughes and Hosking was the Cameron family of Scottish origin. J.P. Fawkner bought land in the adjoining Jika Jika Parish in 1839, and set about creating a ‘beautiful and park-like estate’ and a ‘beautiful village’ to be named Pascoe.

Inevitably the early boom in land prices came to an end when, in 1842, lands for sale in Tullamarine Parish failed to reach reserve. Among the victims of this crash was J.P. Fawkner, who lost everything except his Pascoe Vale farm. In the economic slump that followed, sheep lost value, except when boiled down into tallow for export, and with the resulting lessening of flock sizes, farms shrunk and smaller farms were sold off. The region stabilized into a collection of farms—largely livestock and dairy—and in 1850 enough general farms, shops and tradespeople had come to the region to justify formal establishment of the township of Broadmeadows on the site intended by Hoddle. Scottish Presbyterians became the dominant group within this new township. The discovery of gold in the Ballarat and Bendigo districts brought great change to the Broadmeadows area as some residents left to try their luck on the fields. Traffic heading for the goldfields passed through the district on roads that were not made for such traffic. There was, however, one positive thing about the poor state of the roads: the slow journeys meant people had to stop in the Broadmeadows village and use its services.

By 1859, a quarter of the Will Will Rook Parish was under crop. Farmers in the Broadmeadows region cleared small holdings to plant oats, wheat and barley, and vegetables and vines seemed to thrive. The poor roads made travel to sell goods difficult, but when they could travel to Melbourne their produce brought a good price. However, poor agricultural practices in early years led to later problems and by the 1860s the exhausted soils led to decreasing yields and several dry seasons led to the abandonment of many farms. Things picked up again in the late 1860s but early dreams had been somewhat curtailed by experience. The railway line, heading north to Wodonga, came through the district in 1873 and this reduced travel time to Melbourne to just half an hour. Broadmeadows township was two miles from the station—too far for many but close enough to be a source of supplies, repairs and refreshment. By now the district had two major transport corridors, the old Sydney Road and the railway line, and this brought advantages and disadvantages that still affect the region today.
Initially the area seemed unaffected by the Victorian land boom of 1888 but, in fact, this was the time when suburban development was first planned and some powerful syndicates moved in aiming to turn large farms like ‘Glenroy’ into instant suburbs by subdivision. However, when the boom once again crashed in 1890, these syndicates ended up with many unsold blocks and went into liquidation, leaving half-developed areas thinly covered in houses. The Depression of the 1890s was less devastating for people living in Broadmeadows than for those living in Melbourne. Unemployment, for example, was lower because many of the farms were family concerns. Although the population of Broadmeadows town declined the farming community remained stable.

Access to sufficient water has been a constant issue for the region, and with the roads still in a state of disrepair the local council amalgamated with Merriang Shire to the south in order to get access to more funding for public works. This meant that Council meetings were no longer held in the old town and it became much quieter as a result. Up until the latter part of the nineteenth century, Broadmeadows had been a quiet town in a rural district. However, new plans for the development of Melbourne as a whole would soon change the character of the district permanently. Up until the 1880s, suburban spread had developed unevenly as the railway development favoured south-eastern and eastern suburbs and these areas attracted a ‘new class’ of suburban settlers. Industry and ‘noxious trades’ were established in the west, and there was growing industrial activity in the north as well. With brickworks thriving in both Brunswick and Northcote, and tanneries and soap factories operating in Preston, middle-class Melburnians came to regard the north as working-class territory and so were less inclined to regard even the most charming parts of the Broadmeadows, Moonee Ponds or Essendon region as a desirable place to live. This can be detected in population trends. In 1921–23, Brighton’s population increased from 21,235 to 29,707; Camberwell’s from 23,835 to 50,052, while Broadmeadows increased from 5,430 to just 6,032 (Lemon, 1982, p. 145). This lack of growth became self-fulfilling, as the lack of population led to slow provision of facilities such as electricity and reticulated water, even when surrounding regions had them. This again compounded a growing stigmatization of the area. Another factor contributing to the stigmatization of the area was the government’s tendency to regard the northern suburbs as the ideal location for institutions unwanted elsewhere, and the region’s acceptance of these institutions in its bid for growth. With one eye on guaranteeing a railway connection through the town (as the Melbourne General cemetery did for Fawkner), Broadmeadows gave approval to institutions such as the Greenvale Sanatorium for Tuberculosis Sufferers, the Salvation Army Girls’ Home in Glenroy and the conversion by the Catholic Church of a twenty-six-acre homestead into St Joseph’s Foundling Hospital for abandoned and orphaned babies.

The advantage of these institutions was that they brought people into the area, and this was certainly the case when a site to the east of Broadmeadows, close to the railway station, was selected as an army training camp during World War I. The camp was constructed and had reticulated water within five days, which probably increased the frustration of other residents who were still waiting for such a service. The army camp became a hive of activity and attracted curious spectators in their tens of thousands. For the first time Broadmeadows became a household name across Melbourne. As the camp entered its first winter, however, the clay-and-loam basalt soil of the region began to take its toll. The mud that had so plagued the travellers along the region’s roads for decades now was to take its toll on conditions at the camp and a lack of adequate sanitation soon attracted bad publicity. Illness and death among the soldiers combined with increasing reports of bad behaviour—especially towards women but also including gambling and drinking—suggested poor management. The troops were relocated to Seymour while the Broadmeadows camp was improved and the Defence Department finally took some responsibility for improving the roads leading to the camp. The army camp has had a number of usages over the years—a camp for homeless unemployed in the Great Depression, an intern camp for ‘aliens’ during World War II and then a migrant camp in the post-World War II period. Through all of this it has attracted its share of controversy.
Work finally began, in 1924, on giving Broadmeadows and areas of similar distance from the city such as Box Hill a reliable supply of water and in 1935 Broadmeadows was also connected to the electricity grid. Yet as late as the 1950s, there were still no drains or footpaths. Then, on 12 April 1951, the Victorian Housing Commission made an announcement that would reshape the whole future of the district. It announced the acquisition of over 5,500 acres of land on which it proposed to build a ‘model suburb’ the size of a provincial city. As well as thousands of houses the Commission promised to provide sewerage, water, churches, schools, ovals and shops in order to meet the needs of tens of thousands of new residents. This plan grew out of a 1937 report by the Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board, which had urged the removal of low-paid workers from some appalling inner-city slums. While the Commission was slow to act on the recommendation it eventually looked for an area where it could acquire a large area of land for a price well below market value, much to the chagrin of the former land owners.

While there was some opposition within state government about a ‘costly, ugly suburban sprawl’ (Lemon, 1982, p. 177), Broadmeadows’ civic leaders embraced the plan enthusiastically and this helped to quell the opposition. What the Council failed to predict, however, was that a general boom in housing construction had created a shortage of skilled labour and the new houses at Broadmeadows were constructed with little knowledge of building regulations and with little supervision. Furthermore, logic suggests that the basic infrastructure—gas, electricity, water, sewerage, and footpaths—should be put in place before the houses, but here the process was in reverse and many of the promised services were not delivered at all. Early residents talk of having to walk on muddy, unsealed, roads to reach the train station where they had to leave their gumboots and put on normal shoes. Interestingly, the rows of boots at the train station were left undisturbed throughout the day until their owners returned home from work in the evenings. The conditions were difficult but the early residents talk of a certain camaraderie that emerged to help cope with such conditions. They suggest that this is the origin of a much touted ‘Broady spirit’ that has more recently been praised by former residents such as media personality Eddie Maguire.

In 1956, as Broadmeadows was declared a City by Governor Sir Dallas Brooks, disputes arose between the council and the Housing Commission about standards of construction. However, the rate of change continued to outstrip the council’s capacity to deal with it. Prior to World War I, Broadmeadows had a population of 6,278 and 1,518 houses yet when it was declared a city it had 24,000 people and 6,000 houses. The year 1956 was momentous for Broadmeadows because this was also the year in which Victorian Premier Henry Bolte announced that the Ford Motor Company had purchased 400 acres of residential zone land in order to build its enormous factory. Not only was the land quickly rezoned but the state government announced the construction of a new railway line to terminate near the factory at Upfield, and work began on widening the Hume Highway to become a four-land road up as far as the new Ford factory. Yet while all this was going on a 1956 Royal Commission into the Housing Acts and Housing Commission described problems—such as ill-health, tensions and dissatisfactions, broken homes, drunkenness and delinquency, vice and crime—that could arise from poor housing. The Royal Commission extended its criticism of slum areas to areas in which new houses were built with little thought to the ‘requirements of life other than mere shelter’ (Lemon, 1982, p. 181) and it made specific criticisms of the Broadmeadows estate. The report also pointed out that a strategy of giving priority to large families meant that there were suddenly very large numbers of children in the area and a lack of balance in the demographic mix. In response to criticisms that it had not provided adequate services for the new residents of Broadmeadows the Housing Commission said it was the responsibility of private enterprise to develop shops and for Broadmeadows Council to provide community facilities, such as halls, sports grounds and parks. However, the council lacked the resources to make such provisions and facilities.

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8 Some stories of early settlement have been gathered for the Globalism Institute by Martin Mulligan during earlier research in Broadmeadows.
remained as nothing more than marks on maps for many years. For a long time the nearest shops were in Glenroy, a very long walk on roads without footpaths, especially for women pushing prams. The sudden influx of children also meant that school facilities were totally inadequate and classes were sometimes held in sheds or outside or the students took turns to use the existing classrooms. Thirty-six schools were built in Broadmeadows between 1954 and 1979. For economy and speed, however, solid brick schools were superseded by light timber schools that all looked the same. They were cheap and fast to build but had problems of maintenance (Broadmeadows Historical Society, 1987). By 1961, nearly 50 per cent of the Broadmeadows population was under 21 years, and yet there were no facilities, such as a public swimming pool. As late as 1976, most of the community facilities promised in the early 1950s were still on the drawing boards.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a succession of surveys was conducted in Broadmeadows shire. Each reached very similar conclusions: residents faced significant problems and had inadequate services and facilities. In the early 1970s the Whitlam federal government provided an injection of funding for a community health centre and an indoor sporting complex and this put pressure on the state government to provide some matching funding. However, the demise of the Whitlam government in late 1975 led to a new period of neglect. By now, the young people who had squeezed into inadequate schools in the 1950s and 1960s were now trying to squeeze into an inadequate supply of jobs. The industrial growth that Ford’s arrival symbolized had already slowed. The 1976 census revealed that 45,680 of Broadmeadows’ population of 108,743 were under 19 and many of them were seeking work.

The injection of funding from the Whitlam government did provide an incentive to create a decent shopping centre and this led to the construction of a Town Hall and, in 1974, the Meadow Fair Shopping Mall. In 1980 the Housing Commission announced a ‘New Directions’ document, and cited an ‘awareness within the ministry of deficiencies in past policies and procedures’. After 1981, they would construct no new houses, but would either pay private enterprise to buy for them, or buy houses on the open market to add to public housing stock. In 1982, the Minister of Housing, Jeff Kennett, invoked a legal right to absolve the Housing Commission from any rates on undeveloped land it owned—this alone deprived the Broadmeadows Council of $242,000 in annual income. Still the area had no hospital, no local library, high unemployment and high levels of frustration but there was no shortage of outside experts brought in to study the problems. In 1980, Councillor Lynda Blundell commented, ‘There are many people like myself who are tired of being treated as monkeys in a zoo’. By this time it had become a fashion in the Melbourne media to portray Broadmeadows as a kind of wild zone patrolled by gangs of young thugs (see Peel, 2004). Of course, there were gangs but, as Peel has explained, they were primarily about a search for identity in an area that had promised much but delivered very little. They were probably symptomatic of the ‘Broady spirit’. There is certainly an element of resilience in the way that a hastily constructed community has coped with adversity.

Note on sources and gaps

Andrew Lemon’s Broadmeadows: A Forgotten History was commissioned by the Broadmeadows Historical Society in response to a feeling that the area’s long and interesting history was largely unknown or overshadowed by the stigmatization resulting from poor planning processes. This account of the area’s history has drawn extensively on Lemon’s book however its focus on ‘pioneer’ history—reflecting the interest of the Historical Society—meant that later developments were inadequately analysed. Many smaller, more ‘local’ publications have been produced by the Historical Society, but these commonly use Lemon as the key reference as well. Not much has been done to fill the gaps in Lemon’s account and the most obvious gap is the lack of discussion about the Aboriginal people of the area before and after the arrival of the settlers. Much work remains to be done on documenting the history of the Aboriginal people of the Broadmeadows area and it is pleasing to see that the Batman Kangan TAFE at Broadmeadows has established a new Koori Studies Centre.
Another weakness of Lemon’s book is that it ends at a time when many profound changes were taking place within the community. There is very little discussion, for example, of the profound impact of the waves of migrants arriving from the late 1970s onwards. There is very little documentation of their migration or settlement experiences and so the published histories are increasingly at odds with the character of the contemporary local community. We have drawn on some research conducted for a previous study conducted by the Globalism Institute (see Mulligan et al 2004) and this helps to fill a few of the gaps in more the more recent history of the area. The book by Mark Peel is also helpful in this regard. However, the gaps are much more significant than the gaps in the documented history of St Kilda and this is one more disadvantage faced by the Broadmeadows community.

Demographic Information and Some Future Challenges

The Hume Municipality is a large and diverse Local Government Area located on the urban–rural fringe, 20 kilometres northwest of the centre of Melbourne.9 Land-use within the city includes established residential areas, industry, vast rural areas and areas committed for future urban growth. It contains twenty-two suburbs and shares several industrial areas, rural areas and suburbs with other Councils (including most of the suburb of Tullamarine). In 2001, the population of Hume was estimated at 132,976. It is projected to grow at a rate of 2.3 per cent between 2001 and 2030, but not evenly across the municipality. The municipality as a whole is highly culturally diverse, with almost a third (28.8 per cent) of the population being born overseas, and 36.4 per cent of residents speaking a language other than English at home. The most common overseas countries of birth of Hume residents were Turkey, United Kingdom and Italy. Growing communities in Hume City include residents born in Iraq, Sri Lanka, Lebanon and the Philippines. According the 2001 Census, Hume had a youthful age structure, with a substantial proportion of the population aged under 18 years, and the proportion of residents aged 65 years or more was significantly lower than for the Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD). This is due in part to immigration, as 80 per cent of the new residents recently arrived from other countries were aged 35 years or younger.

The suburb of Broadmeadows is located in the south-eastern part of the Hume municipality. It is a major town centre within Hume, and comprises a mix of residential areas, retail precincts, transport, medical, educational and government services and facilities. The population of Broadmeadows, as estimated in 2001, was 10,695. While Broadmeadows shares many characteristics the broader municipal community, there are some significant differences. Primary among these were higher levels of disadvantage (for instance higher unemployment and lower income), and different household, ethnic and religious compositions (for instance, fewer couples with children, larger indigenous population, more people of Islamic faith). In Broadmeadows, just under one-third (30.2 per cent) of the population were under 18 years old. However, the proportion of people aged 65 or over was 11.8 per cent, somewhat higher than Hume City (6.9 per cent) but still under the proportion for Melbourne as a whole (12.1 per cent). While indigenous people made up 0.52 per cent of Hume City’s population (compared to 0.36 per cent for Melbourne), this proportion was higher in Broadmeadows, at 1.18 per cent. One third of the population of Broadmeadows (33 per cent) were born overseas in a non-English-speaking country. In 2001, the primary overseas countries of birth of Broadmeadows residents were Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon. A high 46.1 per cent of Broadmeadows residents spoke a language other than English at home and the most common languages were Turkish.

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9 Statistical information for Hume City and Broadmeadows is taken primarily from demographic factsheets prepared by the Hume City Council. The factsheets are based primarily on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2001 census figures, and are supplemented by additional information from Hume City Council, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, and Centrelink. The research transect for Broadmeadows is contained within Hume City, but does not fall entirely (though it mostly does) within the formal boundaries of Broadmeadows suburb.
Religiosity is proportionally high in the Hume municipality as a whole. Christianity remains the most common, with almost two-thirds (64.9 per cent) of the population of Christian faith. But the figures in 2001 showed a significant increase in non-Christian religions. Non-Christian religions accounted for 21.8 per cent of people of faith in Broadmeadows, and 14.6 per cent across Hume. Between 1996 and 2001 the proportion of the population of Islamic faith increased notably, unsurprisingly given the countries from which the new arrivals came. In 2001, 19.1 per cent of Broadmeadows residents (12 per cent of Hume) identified Islam as their religion.

For Hume as a whole 58.9 per cent of families were two parents with children while this figure drops to 46.1 per cent in Broadmeadows. One-parent families are much more common in Broadmeadows (28.2 per cent) than Hume (16.5 per cent). Compared to Melbourne as a whole, Hume has a low proportion of lone-person households (13.4 per cent as compared to 23.2 per cent), but for Broadmeadows this figure was 19.9 per cent. Households in Hume City tend to be larger than for Melbourne as a whole with 18.7 per cent of all households having five or more people. Indeed, the mean number of persons per household in Hume municipality is 3.2, compared with 2.7 for Melbourne as a whole.

Because it has a relatively young population, Hume municipality has a larger proportion of its residents attending primary or secondary school than Melbourne as a whole. Beyond school, the overall picture of Hume residents shows a larger proportion of people whose highest level of school completed in Year 10 or less (38.1 per cent) than for all of Melbourne (30.8 per cent). For Broadmeadows this figure was even higher at 45.2 per cent. Similarly, Hume had a smaller proportion of persons completing Year 12 (32.3 per cent) than Melbourne as a whole (43.2 per cent), and in Broadmeadows this was a smaller proportion again (23.7 per cent). A further difference in Broadmeadows was that it had double the percentage of Hume municipality of people aged 15 or older who did not go to school (Broadmeadows 5.2 per cent; Hume 2.4 per cent). Just over one quarter (26.4 per cent) of the people living in Hume aged 15 years or over had a qualification (compared to 36.4 per cent for Melbourne as a whole), and in Broadmeadows this figure dropped to a low 16 per cent. Hume municipality has a smaller proportion of residents attending university than the Melbourne as a whole, despite similar proportions of 18- to 34-year-olds. Only 2.9 per cent of people living in Broadmeadows hold a tertiary qualification.

Unemployment was high in Broadmeadows with less than half the people over the age of 15 years (44.4 per cent) in the labour force. This was much lower than the figure for Hume (60.9 per cent) and for Melbourne (61.7 per cent). Unemployment in Broadmeadows was estimated at 18.7 per cent compared to 6.6 per cent for Melbourne as a whole. Of those in employment, 23.4 per cent were in part-time positions. Employed residents in Hume work primarily in manufacturing and retail. The municipality has a strong industrial and commercial base, made up of a mix that includes motor vehicle manufacture, heavy engineering, electronics and communications, paper and food manufacture, and retail. There was a low level of professional employment in the municipality, with only 5.5 per cent of employed persons noting their occupation as managers and administrators, and 10.9 per cent as professionals. Just under one third (31.1 per cent) of Hume’s population over the age of 15 had no income or an income of less than $200 per week (compared to 26.6 per cent for Melbourne); in Broadmeadows that figure was 38.8 per cent. The median weekly individual income for Broadmeadows was only $243 compared to $405 for Melbourne as a whole. As well as low personal incomes, household incomes were also low in Broadmeadows, with just under one third (31.2 per cent) of households having a weekly household income of less than $400 (compared to 21.8 per cent for Melbourne). Only 6.5 per cent of Broadmeadows households had an income of $1500 or more per week. The median weekly household income in Broadmeadows was $536; in Hume City it was $872.
The majority of private dwellings in Broadmeadows and Hume municipality are separate houses. As is common in outlying city suburbs, the number of flats, units or apartments was proportionally low in Hume at 4.2 per cent of private dwellings; however, the percentage was higher in Broadmeadows at 10.4 per cent of private dwellings. Home ownership was relatively high in Hume municipality with over three-quarters (77.3 per cent) of occupied private dwellings being either fully owned or being purchased, compared to 70 per cent for the Melbourne. However, in Broadmeadows in 2001, less than two thirds (60.9 per cent) of private dwellings were fully owned or being purchased. In Broadmeadows, 24.2 per cent of monthly housing loan repayments were less than $400 per month and median property prices were below the Hume median price, at $127 500 for residential dwellings and $60 000 for vacant land. There was a relatively low proportion of rental properties in Hume municipality: 15.7 per cent as compared to 22.8 per cent for Melbourne. However, this figure was very different in Broadmeadows, with just under a third (30.8 per cent) of occupied private dwellings being rented. Of these, over half (56.2 per cent) were rented through the State Housing Authority and 41.5 per cent of rented properties were rented at less than $100 per week (compared to 19 per cent for Hume rented properties overall). The median weekly rent in Broadmeadows was $114 (compared to $159 for Hume).

Hume municipality is linked to larger public transport systems via a train line and bus routes, but the services are uneven across the municipality with many people being reliant on cars to travel to work. More households (40 per cent) had two cars compared to 35.3 per cent for Melbourne as a whole and only 5.8 per cent of households in Hume had no motor vehicle. In comparison with many parts of the municipality residents in Broadmeadows have good access to public transport; 40.5 per cent of households had only one vehicle and 25.2 per cent had two. A higher proportion of households in Broadmeadows had no car at all compared to Hume (15.3 per cent compared to 5.8 per cent).

When the Broadmeadows Global Learning Centre opened in the Broadmeadows CBD, part of its aim was to increase computer access and encourage computer usage among the district. In the 2001 census, almost three-quarters (72.1 per cent) of Broadmeadows residents did not use a computer at home and 75.2 per cent did not use the internet at all. It will be interesting to see what difference the Global Learning Centre will be able to make to this relatively low use of computers. Other significant challenges for the Broadmeadows area are in dealing with the stubborn legacy of badly planned infrastructure and in preventing tensions arising as a result of the high level of ethnic diversity. The Global Learning Centre is also actively engaged in vocational training for those seeking work but the area is vulnerable to global market changes, as evidenced by a recent decision by Ford to ‘shed’ around 600 workers from its Broadmeadows plant. The challenge is to make the most of the changing demographics (and the richness they present) while also managing and mitigating the poor infrastructure and social policy decisions of the past.

**Daylesford**

With its volcanic hills and soils, crisp climate and forests, the Daylesford area has long attracted a diversity of residents, visitors and those lured by the natural resources. Situated just over an hour’s drive northwest of Melbourne, Daylesford and its ‘sister town’ Hepburn Springs form the nexus of a region of central Victoria now called ‘Australia’s Spa Country’, a reference to its mineral springs. On the way there, a single-lane highway weaves through old-growth forest; small farmhouses gradually cluster into streets of quaint cottages that bend and rise into the picturesque town.

Daylesford and Hepburn Springs have had peaks and troughs of popularity and prosperity since settlement. Soon after the Europeans arrived in the region the discovery of gold caused a
population explosion and set in motion the plundering of the land typical to all gold-rush towns and regions. However, Europeans working in the Jim Crow Diggings—as the region was called at the time—discovered the mineral springs long known by the local Aboriginal people, and recognized their value from similar springs in Europe. The protection they initiated was prescient. The springs have indeed outlasted their base-metal counterparts as a regional asset to this day. In looking at Daylesford for this project, we not only focused on the town itself, but also the nearby township of Hepburn Springs and the area down the ridge from Hepburn Springs now sometimes called ‘Old Hepburn’. These areas are largely promoted now as one area, and physically joined by housing along the connecting road. However, they were all settled separately and have varying features, and a history of rivalry.

It can be hard to imagine, visiting Daylesford now, that only a couple of decades ago it was in the depths of decline. Vincent Street was then a ghost strip of empty shops used as storage space by tradespeople. Today it is crammed with gift shops, cafes, banks, bookshops and delicatessens. Like St Kilda, Daylesford is busiest on the weekend, when its numbers swell to include the ranks of day-trippers or city visitors, but it has certainly come back as a thriving commercial strip. Tourism has become the most important industry. Many of the shops service the needs of visitors, and many well-known attractions were set up specifically to attract tourism to the then-moribund region. Many houses have been converted into guesthouses—there are approximately 3,000 beds for visitors in the two towns—and many cottages and established homes have a sign outside advertising accommodation (Ashton and Newton 1999). Perhaps as a consequence of the many ‘alternative lifestyles’ who moved to the area in the 1970s, it has built a reputation as a ‘healing centre’, and has overtaken Byron Bay—the northern NSW town well known as the spiritual home for those seeking alternative lifestyles and alternative healing—in the number of holistic services available.

During the gold rush many groups came to try their luck at Jim Crow Diggings and its surrounding mines. Significant numbers of Chinese, Welsh, Cornish and English miners came to the region, as did a group now synonymous with Hepburn Springs—Swiss-Italian miners from the Lombardy and Ticino regions of Northern Italy and Southern Switzerland. The township that became Hepburn Springs developed a European ambiance, under the influence of the Swiss-Italian settlers. In Daylesford, however, church spires, deciduous trees and the misty cold in winter combine to create the town’s renowned English mood. Wombat Hill, with the Convent Gallery on its flank and the Botanical Gardens atop its crown, overlooks the region. On the hill as well as through the town, European trees change colour with the seasons. Old cars are parked in the broad, generous streets. Lake Daylesford, with its boathouse, trees and nearby amphitheatre, is a key attraction today. Unlike nearby Jubilee Lake, Lake Daylesford is artificial. In 1929, market gardens—set up by the Chinese community who came looking for gold—were flooded and the lake created. No signs remain today of the Chinese market gardens; that story remains neglected. In the economic downturn of the 1970s, Lake Daylesford was swampy and unkempt, but now it is attractive—the Boathouse Cafe has paddleboats, ducks, Devonshire Teas and delightful views.

The region’s beauty and convenience to Melbourne have also attracted ‘treechangers’ seeking a lifestyle change, and a large number of people have purchased weekender houses. While there has been an ongoing campaign from some community organizations in favour of tourism and the tourist dollar, there is also ongoing need for discussion about the more difficult or negative aspects of the rapid changes taking place. For instance, houses that are bought as weekenders are often empty during the week, leaving local streets devoid of cohesive community life. Meanwhile, rental properties—particularly affordable rental properties—are very difficult to find. Living costs are rising, and there is a lack of access to employment opportunities outside the tourism industry. Public transport to the region remains a big problem. On the other hand, despite its relatively small population, Daylesford has amenities and services which towns of similar size struggle to gain and maintain (Ashton and Newton 1999). For example, there are three primary schools and a secondary college, a hospital, local police, medical practices and
several banks. The local property boom has created a healthy building sector, and there is a preponderance of owner-operated businesses in all sectors.

Certain longer-term residents feel disenfranchised by the demise of the previously dominant local industries of farming, mining and timber. The current marketing focus on tourism tends to exclude these traditional industries that the town was built on. The traditional industries have steadily closed and of the many layers of people living in this area the residents with long-term associations with the town are arguably at the bottom of the pile. While farmers continue to operate around the town, evidence of other older industries is harder to find. The last timber mill near Daylesford is closing down and the Daytex textiles mill ceased operations in 2003. Yet the area rightly prides itself on being able to initiate constructive local forums and debates on issues of concern, such as the future of the timber industry in the Wombat State Forest. This capacity to hold frank and constructive local dialogues is important as the balance between older and newer residents shifts. The area also prides itself on being a tolerant community, and probably has the largest lesbian and gay population in regional and rural Australia. Unlike communities in Broadmeadows or St Kilda, Daylesford has seen relatively little in the way of migrant arrivals from Asia and the Middle East. However, the legacy of the area’s popularity among European visitors is still evident. According to the owner of the Lake House Hotel, Alla Wolf-Tasker, each Boxing Day people from Hungary and the former Yugoslavia congregate for a picnic and cook shaslicks.

Like St Kilda, Daylesford has an outstanding range of cultural activities—festivals, groups, performances, galleries and so on—and this is all the more remarkable for the size of the population (less than 4,000). Many artists moved to the area and set up studios when land was cheap in the 1970s and 1980s. There is, at present, a large community of resident artists and strong community support for the arts. This trend has also been mirrored in other towns in the broader region, such as Castlemaine, where a large community of artists now also lives and many festivals and events are held throughout the year. While tourist campaigns target Hepburn Springs for the mineral spas and Daylesford for ‘indulgence’ retreats, there are issues about how sustainable these activities are, both environmentally and in terms of how much they take from the local community. There are some tensions surrounding tourism, with some residents unconvinced that tourist dollars actually contribute significantly to the local economy, and others insisting that (sustainable) tourism is vital to the area’s survival and health. Nonetheless, many examples can be found where residents from different parts of the community have worked together on community projects. For example, when the local football club was in deep trouble, a couple of relative newcomers stepped in and turned these troubles around.

Certain aspects of Daylesford’s complex history have recently been rehabilitated. For example, there is a strong acknowledgement now of the Swiss-Italian history of the area—a story that the community did not always feel safe to tell. But there is a danger that other place stories that are currently much harder to find may not survive. For example, there are many gold rush stories that could be told as part of the town’s history, including the stories of people from places such as Cornwall and China. The local Aboriginal history, while it has been written about, does not feature in the way town is promoted. Daylesford and Hepburn Springs have diverse communities and many groups are passionate about the way the two towns will develop into the future. Perhaps more could be done to acknowledge the full diversity of people living in the community and to tell more of the stories from the past—even if those stories are not easily turned into promotional brochures for the tourism industry.

*A Transect*

In Daylesford, the research transect begins at the bottom of the ridge on which Hepburn Springs is situated, at ‘Old’ Hepburn. We then follow that ridge up to Hepburn Springs, then into Daylesford itself, where we continue up Vincent Street and then climb Wombat Hill to finish in the Botanical Gardens atop the hill. Following the natural contours of the land seemed
appropriate in a locale whose history has been so shaped by natural features and resources. However, many of the stories associated with places along our transect route are not evident unless you look closely, or know something of the place already. Some of them are marked into the landscape physically; some suggested by place names, such as Cornish Hill; and others are almost invisible, but nonetheless hover over the terrain as if waiting for the telling. Our transect offers just a glimpse of the wealth of stories embedded in this landscape.

At the bottom of the ridge the ambience is very much rural Australia. Indeed, at this distance from Vincent Street there are still plenty of farms. In the past, the area was probably best known for wool, potatoes and dairy. For a time, the large multinational food processing company McCains set up shop in Daylesford to receive and process the potatoes. It subsequently moved that operation to Ballarat and the local potato growers are finding it increasingly difficult to compete with cheaper imports from New Zealand and Europe. Yet at the Old Hepburn Hotel you might get the impression that little has changed in the district. Unlike the European or English buildings that prevail in Hepburn Springs and Daylesford, the Hepburn Hotel is a traditional Australia bush pub, with verandah and corrugated-iron roof. And rather than spas, massages or lattes, the pub advertises ‘pie of the day’ and you can sit peacefully on a lounge in front of a log fire in winter.

Between Old Hepburn and Hepburn Springs we pass a place known as Doctor’s Gully and from inside a car there is little sign that this was one of the most heavily mined places in the district—pock-marked and devoid of trees. Regrowth trees hide most of that damage—although you can find plenty of remnants from the mining days by foot if you know where to look. Few travellers would even know that some of the more colourful local names—like Doctor’s Gully or Breakneck Gorge—were planted on the land at the time of gold. We leave the gully and head up the ridge that is flanked by forest on both sides. The road swings and curves into Hepburn Springs as it climbs the hill, and it becomes evident from the birdcalls and the clean, cool air why Hepburn Springs has been a popular holiday and ‘health’ destination since the nineteenth century.

The ambience has become distinctly European with restored Italianate stone buildings and gardens and the quaint, old-fashioned bathing pavilion. It feels almost like a movie set; indeed one of the town’s most iconic buildings, the Macaroni Factory, was the location for the film Love’s Brother in 2004. Hepburn Springs, more than Daylesford, was the centre of the Swiss-Italian community that arrived during and after the gold rush, and many of their buildings were made to last (and they have). The pastel-hued European architecture set in the very Australian bush that flanks the ridge gives the town a unique atmosphere.

The sound of running water spills out of the new baths complex at the renovated Springs Retreat Hotel. Next door, heritage-listed and crack-riddled, Villa Parma Bed and Breakfast has recently been acquired by the Springs Retreat. The Villa’s previous owners restored the garden to close to the original Italian palazzo-style villa design created by Fabrizio Crippa in 1864, even establishing several rows of grapevines from cuttings of Crippa’s original vines. Further along the main road, the Macaroni Factory has also had a recent facelift. The Bellinzona Grange, built by Swiss-Italian settlers, was gutted by fire in 2003 but it has been rebuilt in a similar style. Bellinzona caters for a well-heeled clientele but the general store must be more flexible; alongside the daily papers and paper bags filled with locally grown spuds, the shopper can choose from a range of gourmet products, much of it local in origin. Another iconic building in Hepburn Springs is the Palais, first built as a ballroom and now operating as a bar and music venue for prominent visiting musicians (and local poetry nights). Down the side of the ridge in Mineral Springs Reserve hand pumps deliver mineral water free of charge, and here the old Edwardian Pavilion has recently been renovated.

Between Hepburn Springs and Daylesford the Eucalypt forest closes in but a strip of housing has almost connected the two towns. Rounding the curves into Daylesford the trees give way to
offer a view of picturesque Wombat Hill, dotted with European trees, church spires and, often, a misty shroud. The roads south and east of Daylesford pass through long stretches of the now-protected Wombat Forest—most of it regrowth that has followed heavy logging in the past. However, once we arrive in Daylesford itself we might well be in the English Cotswalds, where the original Daylesford is located. Contrasting cars negotiate the large roundabout that brings us into Vincent Street. Dusty utes with kelpies in the back pull up outside hardware stores, while shiny Saabs do laps of the block looking for a park. Twenty-five years ago Vincent Street was almost deserted; today, however, cars jostle for parking space, pedestrians dodge traffic and the shopping strip is crowded. In a single block of shops, we find banks, bookshops and luxury chocolates alongside hardware, health foods and gourmet delicatessens. Cafés mingle with kitchenware shops and the Pantechnicon Art Gallery. The old streetscape has been retained and when the largest general store was turned into a standard Coles Supermarket it was located discreetly out of view behind the Vincent Street facade.

Wombat Hill stands as a backdrop to Vincent Street and as we head up the hill we first pass a small reserve reminding us that a smaller hill on its flanks was known as Cornish Hill in honour of a cluster of Cornish tin-miners who came seeking gold. However, in the time we were conducting research in Daylesford, the sign on Cornish Hill had been vandalized and not replaced. Old photos of this area reveal intense mining and a teeming mass of people but, again, you have to look hard for the evidence. If you take the time you discover that many of the hillocks on the flanks of Wombat Hill—now covered in trees—are actually old tailings dumps. The Botanical Gardens, at the top of Wombat Hill, are quite famous—indeed there are several trees in the gardens that have been listed by the National Heritage Trust. It is like entering a tree museum and, particularly in the mornings, the gardens belong to the giant conifers, redwoods and elms. The air carries the gentle sweetness of pine needles, and brazen crows and cockatoos perch on branches and call their news. Lilting and melodic magpie calls warble more gently from the tops of the trees. The smell of freshly cut grass is piquant in the cold air. It is ironic that the hill and the lush gardens are named after the once-common wombats because the old-growth eucalypt forest that was home to the wombats was cleared to make way for the gardens. According to local legend the felled natives were not even used for their timber—simply piled up and burnt. The view from one side of Wombat Hill is dominated by the rooftop of the Convent Gallery, steeples, the courthouse, trees and undulating streets of cottages. However, looking in the other direction the scenery is a flat patchwork of farm paddocks with blue-green shadows of the Wombat Forest in the distance. These differing views illuminate the contrast between the Englishness of Daylesford and the more familiar Australian landscape from which it emerges.

While Daylesford serves as a peaceful country retreat for many residents and visitors, it faces significant issues as the descendents of the early settlers and those who have arrived in waves of immigration since the 1970s negotiate ways of sharing a common space. Employment in traditional rural industries has all but disappeared and the hospitality industry offers only insecure, casual employment. ‘Gentrification’ is changing the character of the community in ways that might threaten its appealing diversity. There is no easy mix, and more needs to be done to make this complex community more inclusive. While the Swiss-Italian heritage is reasserting itself, especially in Hepburn Springs, other stories are still out of sight. Most locals know, for example, that nearby Mt Franklin was a site of great importance to the indigenous Dja Dja Warrung people and that a failed attempt was subsequently made to turn Aboriginal people into farmers at Franklinford. Descendents of the Dja Dja Warrung have lodged a native title claim to the Mt Franklin area, reminding the community of the neglected story, but few people know how to handle this aspect of their history.

History

An ideal holiday resort in summer is one that affords complete relief from the glare, din, bustle and heat of crowded cities; one where fresh air, quietness and
perfect rest may be secured; where the eye and ear may be delighted with the beautiful sights and musical sounds of Nature in her calmest, most beautiful moods, and, withal, the longed-for spot should not be so far removed from the cities as to be unprovided with the conveniences, comforts and luxuries to be found in large centres of population. Daylesford is this beau ideal.

Picturesque Daylesford: Victoria’s Most Popular Summer Resort, 1891

‘Hepburn renamed me—from a song, did you know? And so very briefly I became Mount Jim Crow
Hepburn would visit when he felt like a ride
And soon there were squatters on every side.
With dogs and disease and the whitefella gun
The ‘DjaDja’ were moved form their place in the sun
Oh Edward Stone Parker came serving the Lord
And established a church that he called Franklinford.’

From Lalgambook Song, © Ken Mansell 2000

The clan name of the Dja Dja Warrung people who lived mainly around the Daylesford district was Munal Gundidj. At nearby Mount Franklin (Lalgambook), in the area known as Larnebarramul, the clan was the Gunangara Gundidj. The wider country of the Dja Dja Warrung people included the Loddon and lower Avoca River basins, and extended from Mount Macedon in the south to Kyneton and Mt Alexander in the north (Attwood 1999). The country of the Munal Gundidj was volcanic, with rich ‘chocolate’ soil, basalt lava flows and several surrounding scoria cone volcanoes (including Mount Franklin). Like most people of south-eastern Australia, the Dja Dja Wurrung wore skin cloaks in the cold, and there was strong trade in kangaroo-skin and possum-skin cloaks (Mt Alexander Diggings Development Association 1993). Possums were in plentiful supply as a food source, as well as kangaroos, emus and goannas. Rivers supplied mussels, fish and shrimp, lilies and ribbon weed. In the fields along the plains, yam daisies and pig face added fibre to the Aboriginal diet. Inter-tribe trade, such as in axes and abalone shells, took place with groups from other areas. No doubt it was along these trading routes that first news of the pale newcomers arrived. Animals, objects and diseases of the Europeans preceded them into Dja Dja Warrung country. A smallpox epidemic that hit the Port Phillip District had such a devastating impact on people far removed from the colony that it came to be incorporated into Aboriginal myth narratives, in which a large snake called Mindi (Mindye) was sent from Bunjil, and spread magic dust over the Aboriginal people to punish them for being bad. As a result of this epidemic it seems that the Dja Dja Warrung may have numbered only 900 to 1,900 people at point of contact (Attwood 1999). It seems that the Dja Dja Warrung initially accepted the earliest white settlers in their land as Amydeet: ‘the separate state of the spirit when the body is dead’. In seeing the white people as returned ancestral kinsfolk it seems that they assumed they would treat the locals with respect and there are reports of early settlers being offered gifts by elders. However, it soon became obvious that they had misread the intent of the invaders.

White settlers first came to the Loddon district, 120 kilometres northwest of Melbourne, in the late 1830s, and one of the earliest was a squatter and ‘overlander’ from Sydney, Captain James Hepburn. Hepburn picked out his run in the area now bearing his name, and he called it Jim Crow Creek, possibly after a song that was popular at that time (Maddicks, 1981). Others soon followed Hepburn and, by the end of the 1830s, sheep and cattle runs had taken over a considerable amount of the best portions of Dja Dja Warrung land. Naturally, the first places to be occupied were those that were also most valuable to the Aboriginal people—the creeks, watercourses and rivers. Once they realized that the invaders had come to dispossess them the Dja Dja Warrung offered resistance by stealing their food and killing their stock, and this led to further violent clashes. Violent conflict, however, was probably not as pronounced as it was in the Hamilton region (discussed in the next section). This may have been because the white
settlement proceeded more slowly in this district and possibly because the Dja Dja Warrung had heard what had happened to others who had fought the invaders.

In the 1830s, concern in Britain for the welfare of the indigenous peoples of the colonies prompted the establishment of Aboriginal protectorates. In 1840, Edward Stone Parker was appointed Regional Protector of Aborigines for the Port Phillip District, excluding Melbourne and Geelong. As the most of his area fell in Dja Dja Warrung land, he developed reasonable relations with them. With typical (misguided) idealism, Parker sought to set aside a place for the Dja Dja Warrung, where they could exist in a place that was ‘for them’, and learn how to till the soil (Mt Alexander Diggings Development Association 1993). In consultation with the Aboriginal people, he chose a site on the northern side of Mt Franklin, on Jim Crow Creek. It became known as the Loddon Aboriginal Protectorate Station at Franklinford and it soon had a church, a school, a store and dwellings. However, by the end of 1842, only 142 Dja Dja Warrung had survived and by the end of the 1840s, Franklinford was closed as a protectorate. Much of the land was reclaimed by the government although Dja Dja Warrung Christian converts were allowed to retain twenty-one acres to run as a farm. The small community continued to decline and by 1863 only thirty-eight of them remained. At this point the Franklinford School was closed and, in what Bain Atwood has called a forerunner of the more general policy of removing Aboriginal children from their parents, the children were sent far away to Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve, near Healesville (Attwood 1999).

In the meantime, Dja Dja Warrung country was flooded with immigrants because in August 1851, John Egan discovered gold in the area that was then known as Wombat Flat. The rush to the Jim Crow Fields was slower to start than in other fields, even though some of the fields around Ballarat were played out by 1852. Perhaps it was the hilly country or the cold weather but the rush of diggers didn’t take place until 1855 and then, at its peak, some 5,000 miners were camping in tents (Maddicks 1981). This mining community was more transient than some, as gold was closer to the surface and mainly alluvial. As the surface gold was stripped, tunnelling and quartz mining took over from alluvial, and the mining population became more permanent. Henry Maddicks gives the number of miners in the region in 1859 as 2,763 European miners and 900 Chinese (ibid). Place names that have persisted since this time—for example, Italian Hill, Dannebroge Party, Cornish Hill—suggest that the miners congregated in their own communities of origin. The Swiss-Italian from Switzerland’s Ticino region and Italy’s Lombardy used their traditional tunnelling skills to bore into hard basalt rock in areas such as Italian Hill, alongside Jubilee Lake. The Cornish metal and gold miners formed several companies to work the quartz reefs above Wombat Flat, now Lake Daylesford, while the Chinese, who preferred looking for alluvial gold, sluiced the creeks (there are still remnant Chinese water ‘races’ near some of the creeks).

Many of the Swiss-Italians diversified into other activities, planting orchards and vines to make wine. They grey olives, peaches, plums, pears, mulberry, chestnuts and walnuts, and made their traditional ‘bullboar’ sausages, the recipes for which were passed down through the generations and recently passed on to interested students at Daylesford Secondary College. Apparently the enterprising Swiss-Italians saw the lucrative potential in supplying meat, baked bread and other produce to the goldminers. An early commercial venture was the flour mill on the banks of Jim Crow Creek, with Battisti Minotto as miller in 1875. The Lucini Brothers built their commercial macaroni shop in 1855 and subsequently the factory that still survives. The old macaroni factory is now considered to be the oldest Italian building in Australia (Gervasoni 2005). The mass arrival of the goldminers created even worse problems for the Dja Dja Warrung—their traditional camping sites along the creeks were taken over; the forests were cleared and many of their sacred sites violated. Some of the Aborigines turned to begging or prostitution to survive; many became alcoholic (Attwood 1999).

The mineral springs of the district are formed by water that flows over ancient volcanic rock into underground aquifers (Gervasoni 2005). When Captain Hepburn first arrived, the
Aboriginal people showed him the springs that were later to bear his name. However, if not for the arrival of the Swiss-Italians and other European migrants the springs may not have survived the goldrush. Mines filled with water and springs disappeared. However, the Swiss-Italian miners had come from spa country and they knew the value of this asset. In 1864 they organized to petition the government to create a mineral springs reserve and the Daylesford Advocate reported at the time: 'If the waters of the Hepburn Mineral Spring possess anything like the healing virtues for which the different speakers give them credit … it was no vain boast which said Daylesford might yet become the most celebrated town in the colony’ (Gervasoni 2005). So, in 1865, a portion of land including the mineral springs was preserved at Hepburn—the first mineral springs reserve in Victoria—and a full-time caretaker was employed. By the 1920s, the springs were a leading tourist highlight, promoted in brochures as: ‘highly recommended by Leading Medical Men for anaemia, Impurity of Blood, Dyspepsia, Torpidity of the Liver, Constipation, Lumbago, Diseases of the Kidneys, Diabetes, Obesity, Rheumatism, Scrofula, Rickets in Children, St Vitus’s Dance, Skin Diseases, Nervous and General Debility, Loss of Appetite, etc.’ (Daylesford, Eganstown, and Hepburn Progress Associations 1920).

Gold put Daylesford on the map and left the previously tranquil pastoral region transformed. The town was officially proclaimed in 1859, and made a borough in 1863. After the goldrush the population declined steadily in the following decades but some former miners stayed to set up farms and businesses. Timber mills had been set up to supply mine props and building timber during the rush and some of them continued to operate after the mines closed. The state government tried to ease the transition from goldmining to farming by making land available and supporting those wanting to produce butter, cheese, hay and potatoes (Osborne 1979). However, as the population in the district declined, local markets for such products shrank and there was a lack of adequate transport links to either Melbourne or Ballarat. Struggling farmers joined the campaign of local businessmen to bring the railway to the district. The request for a railway connection was first raised in the Victorian parliament in 1865 and initial surveying began in 1874. Work on the line connecting Daylesford to the main line between Melbourne and Bendigo began in 1879 and that line opened in 1880. The arrival of the train brought a new influx of tourists and brochures from this era promoted fishing, the mineral springs and Jubilee Lake. The public gardens on Wombat Hill also featured and it was suggested that from that vantage point the visitor could look out over the ‘village of Franklinford with its brick church’ in the north and over the mines to the south. The railway line meant that Daylesford was in fairly easy reach of Melbourne, but coal shortages in the late 1880s restricted the frequency of train services and the depression of the 1890s meant a further reduction of services.

Despite these difficulties Daylesford continued to be a popular tourist spot. It had a reputation as a good place for honeymoons and it began to attract a significant number Russian Jewish holiday-makers (Brett 1999). According to local historian Clare Gervasoni, Wombat Hill was sometimes called ‘Russian Hill’ due to the number of Russian holiday houses there, and local resident and restaurateur Alla Wolf-Tasker has fond childhood memories of her Russian family cottage, where friends would gather and share food, music and ideas. However, increasing use of motorcars meant that people living in Melbourne had more choices about places they could visit, and to counter the subsequent decline in visitor numbers a brochure called Delightful Daylesford and District, published around 1920, pointed to guesthouses with garages, and the many roundtrips that could be taken within the district by people with cars. A slow decline in tourism became more marked after World War II as Melburnians looked further afield for holiday destinations. By the 1970s, Daylesford had reached an economic low, with wool processing and fabric making much more important than any form of tourism. Ironically, the low prices for real estate at this time once again made the area attractive to a new group of Melburnians: it became a kind of mecca for people seeking alternative lifestyles and artists wanting to live and work in more congenial settings.

This influx of newcomers brought new interests and possibilities that have persisted in the community since, but it also sowed the seeds for some of the persisting internal tensions. As
part of this movement to the area, Alla Wolf-Tasker and her husband took over a dilapidated property on the edge of weed-infested Lake Daylesford and set about creating a small luxury hotel—the Lake House—that would draw back some of the well-heeled visitors (often with a love of things European) who had flocked to the area in earlier times. The Wolf-Taskers joined others in the community to clean up the lake and its surrounds and slowly their efforts brought dividends. The eventual success of the Lake House encouraged two other enterprising women to set up other tourist attractions in the 1980s: Carol White set up Lavandula Farm (at nearby Shepherd’s Flat) and ceramicist Tina Banitska bought the Convent Gallery on Wombat Hill. Following these innovations, a new wave of tourism gathered steam in the 1990s. Once again Melburnians discovered the mineral springs and other charms of the district that had been a major attraction in the late-nineteenth century and then again in the 1920s and 1930s. A more recent shift in holiday habits—towards more short-break holidays—led to Tourism Victoria launching its successful ‘Visit Victoria’ campaign and soon new guesthouses and B&Bs were setting up in Daylesford and Hepburn Springs.

Natural assets have dictated the post-European settlement of the Daylesford area. The foresight of those early settlers who protected the mineral springs has been vindicated and the Swiss-Italian story has given the area a unique asset. Tourism Victoria decided it could market all this with the creation of a ‘Pure Indulgence Tour’. This may work for day-tripping visitors but irks many locals who emphasise that they live in a hard-working and vibrant community. Others have concern for the disregard this label suggests for pressures on the natural assets of the area. There remain opportunities in the area to highlight not only some of its lesser-known stories, but also to examine the ways tourism and gentrification are affecting many—often quieter—sectors of the community.

**Note on Sources and Gaps**

Unlike the other three research sites, Daylesford has no ‘formal’ written history. However, there are several ‘key’ texts that focus primarily on one aspect of Daylesford’s history/development, such as the indigenous people of the region, the gold rush and the Swiss-Italian settlers. Examples include Bain Attwood’s extensive writings on the Dja Dja Warrung people and the Aboriginal people of Western Victoria more broadly, Murrel Osborne’s book, Timber, Spuds and Spa about the railway and the traditional industries of the Daylesford region, 100 Years of Daylesford Gold Mining History, by Henry T. Maddicks, and Clare Gervasoni’s Bullboar, Macaroni and Mineral Water: Spa Country’s Swiss-Italian Story. Passionate and knowledgeable individuals were able to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of the history of the area through their own committed research. Peter O’Mara, in particular, was invaluable in constructing a ‘timeline’ of the region. In this process he, in turn, enlisted the help of local historian Clare Gervasoni on several occasions. This generosity helped us to gain a fuller idea of the people and events in the region. The extensive knowledge of people such as Clare and Peter reflects the interest that exists in the town in celebrating the community and its history in an inclusive and complete way.

While we were able to gain an idea of which aspects of the region’s history were better known or more widely researched, we were not always able to fill the gaps. For example, some settler groups, such as the Cornish miners, are not extensively written about, nor did we find much about the Chinese who were significant in the region during the gold rush. Further, while it is clear that the region’s traditional industries have declined or collapsed we were not able to consult people with detailed knowledge of those industries. There is also very little documentation of the arrival in the 1970s of people seeking an alternative lifestyle. Internet research yielded further information about the history of tourism, the arrival of railway and the Franklinford Farm. However, discussion of tourism focuses heavily on the Swiss-Italian heritage and Daylesford’s European ambience.

There is little information on the decades between the 1940s and the 1990s when Daylesford was out of fashion. Information about the decline of rural industries, and the early revival of
tourism comes mainly from past research conducted in Daylesford by the Globalism Institute (Mulligan et al 2004). The History Centre has useful publications relating to the gold rush and early industries but little on more recent history.

Demographic Information and Some Future Challenges

It is much more difficult to get a clear picture of the demography of the community centred on Daylesford than for any of the other three local communities included in this study. Some data has been extracted from 2001 Census results for Daylesford that do not include Hepburn Springs and some surrounding settlements and there is little detailed breakdown of this data. The following account, consequently, contains only broad categories of information and there are many gaps.

In 2001, the population of Daylesford was estimated at 3,396, of which 46.1 per cent were males and 53.9 per cent females. Indigenous people made up 0.6 per cent of the population, which is higher than for Melbourne (0.36 per cent) or the state as a whole (0.5 per cent). At the time of the census 43 per cent of Daylesford residents were aged between 25 and 54. However, the area has a relatively high proportion of people over 65 —19 per cent compared to 12.1 per cent for Melbourne and 12.7 per cent for Victoria. There was a relatively small proportion of people under the age of 15 (17 per cent).

While the region has a strong identity as a centre for European settlers, especially Swiss-Italian, Daylesford did not have an ethnically diverse community. In 2001, 81.2 per cent of the population said they were born in Australia, compared with 71.1 per cent in Victoria overall. For those born overseas, the primary countries of birth were England, Germany, New Zealand and Scotland. An estimated 90.1 per cent of the Daylesford population spoke only English at home, significantly more than the Victorian state average of 75.3 per cent. The most common languages other than English spoken in Daylesford were German, Italian and Croatian. A high percentage of people in Daylesford said they were of no religion in 2001 (24.1 per cent). For those with religious affiliations, Christian religions dominated and Catholicism was the most common religion. At the time of the 2001 Census 65 people identified as Buddhist and nine as Jewish.

The majority of households in Daylesford are comprised of couples without children (43.4 per cent). A third of local families are couples with children, and one-parent families account for 22.3 per cent. Lone-person households (32.3 per cent) were more prevalent than in Melbourne (23.2 per cent) and there was a lower proportion of married people (42.5 per cent compared to 50.8 per cent). There were higher proportions of people who were separated, divorced or widowed. Only two per cent of Daylesford residents were attending university compared to the state figure of four per cent, and this probably reflects the low proportion of people in the 18–20 age category.

In 2001, the unemployment rate in Daylesford (7.2 per cent) was higher than the rate for the Melbourne (6.6 per cent) and of those in the labour force, 53.3 per cent were employed full-time and 36.5 per cent part-time. The main industries of employment in Daylesford were Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants, Health Services, Personal and Households Goods, Retailing, Education and Business Services. A relatively high proportion (9.4 per cent) of those employed worked in Accommodation or Cafes and Restaurants and this reflects the impact of tourism. However, the most common occupations indicated were Professionals and Associate

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10 Statistical information for Daylesford is taken primarily from the 2001 Census Quickstats prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The factsheets are on 2001 census figures. The data relates specifically to Daylesford, not to Hepburn Springs or the broader research area around Daylesford.
Professionals, followed by Clerical, Sales and Service Workers. The median individual income for people in Hepburn Shire was in the range of $200–299 in 2001; however, no separate figures on income were available for Daylesford.

The majority of private dwellings in Daylesford were listed as separate houses. However, a distinctive feature was the large number of unoccupied private dwellings. On census night in 2001, only 70.9 per cent of Daylesford’s private dwellings were occupied. In 2001, 67.1 per cent of occupied private dwellings in Daylesford were either fully owned or being purchased, compared to 70 per cent for Melbourne. Rented dwellings accounted for 23.6 per cent of dwelling types, compared to 22.8 per cent for Melbourne. Of those renting, 10.4 per cent were renting from a state housing authority.

Daylesford has no local public transport system and is not well connected by public transport to either Ballarat or Melbourne. In the 2001 census, most people stated that they travelled to work by car as drivers or passengers. Three per cent of residents worked at home. Many people choose to live in the Daylesford area because of its natural beauty and good amenities. It has a relatively rich cultural life. However, you may well live in a street with few neighbours during the week and have to put up with an influx of visitors on the weekend. There is not a lot of secure employment and it can be a tough place to live if you don’t own a house and a car. People attracted by the area’s obvious charms might find that life in such a place can also be quite lonely.

**Hamilton**

Outside the Commonwealth Bank on the corner of Gray Street and Brown Street in the centre of Hamilton stands a column that pays homage to the Merino sheep that brought significant wealth and a measure of fame to this town and its region. ‘Finest Merino wool produced anywhere in the world’ is the claim that once led the local Shire to erect signs welcoming visitors to the ‘Wool capital of the world’. Hamilton still holds a large, annual wool industry ‘Sheepvention’ that is still the biggest event on the social calendar. Yet, the monument outside the bank seems strangely unconvincing at the hub of a region that no longer ‘rides on the sheep’s back’. A sharp decline in international prices for wool during the 1980s and the long-term failure of wool to recapture its place in the textile market led to a local recession and a subsequent turn to other resource industries, including beef, plantation timber and mineral sand mining. Dusty utes are still prominent among the vehicles that gather in the centre of what is still the commercial hub of a working farm district. But well-dressed sheep graziers are not so prominent among the school children, shopkeepers, and locals grabbing a cappuccino or sandwich in one of the cafes. Across the intersection from the Commonwealth Bank is a run-of-the-mill Coles supermarket but on another corner is the Darriwill Farm Co-op store that specializes in gourmet food and fine wines. Perhaps the juxtaposition of these two businesses indicates the difficulties facing a region that has attempted to diversify its agricultural production since the demise of wool while local businesses have increasingly given way to local branches of large, often multinational, corporations.

This once-prosperous region has certainly not sunk into poverty; there are no beggars along Gray Street and no sense of gloom in the air. There are also no signs of hardship at the well-endowed Hamilton Art Gallery a little further along Brown Street from the Commonwealth Bank, and some well-heeled farmers still turn up for orchestral performances and theatre in the adjacent Performing Arts Centre. Indeed most residents seem to repeat the mantra of the civic leaders that the region is experiencing a new resource-led boom. However, there is a lack of confidence in their voices and many admit that there are serious concerns about the environmental impacts and long-term economic sustainability of the new boom industries—blue-gum plantations and mineral-sand mining.
Things have not turned out the way that the explorer Thomas Mitchell imagined when he stood on this ridge and gazed across the wandering creek and the green plain that it watered. This was a district that made Mitchell feel nostalgic for mother England and he wrote in his journal that it offered the best prospect seen for the creation of a ‘little England’ that should ‘remain British for thousands of years to come’ (Powell, 1970). He probably envisaged a lush countryside dotted with little hamlets and patterned by tightly-packed farms. Travelling south to the coast, Mitchell was shocked to find that the Henty brothers had already come across from Tasmania to set up a farm at what is now known as Portland.

The Hentys were probably more pragmatic in their dreams than Mitchell and they set up the pattern of farming based on large-scale sheep runs that eventually brought prosperity to the district. However, neither the Hentys nor Mitchell could have imagined how vulnerable the district would be to fluctuations of the world market or to the impacts of periodic droughts that now threaten to become longer and more intense as a result of global warming.

During the long boom pioneered by the Hentys, the Hamilton district attracted many ambitious and enterprising settlers—including the son of Charles Dickens, Alfred Tennyson Dickens, whose wife Jessie was killed in an accident with a horse and cart on the corner of Gray and Brown Streets in 1878. But the tall church spires that rise above the profile of the ridge along which Gray Street now runs and the handful of elegant mansions in the nearby streets are probably the vestiges of what Mitchell saw in his mind’s eye. It now seems quite preposterous that the dream that drove more than a century of planning was to recreate the English pastoral in this eminently Australian landscape.

Hamilton is located almost 300 kilometres west of Melbourne and is one of several large towns in Victoria’s Western District—a largely agricultural and pastoral district that also includes a significant stretch of coastline in the state’s south-west corner. The landscape surrounding Hamilton is characterized by classic volcanic cones and basalt plains. To the north, the jagged outline of Gariwerd—the indigenous name for the Grampians Mountain Range—pushes out of the plain. The Wannon and Glenelg Rivers flow to the south and west before becoming swampy as they approach the sea. In his book *Hamilton: A Western District History*, Don Garden writes: ‘in their natural state, the Western District plains look something like a park. The wet tussock grasslands were covered with tufted grasses and sparsely scattered trees, the most common of which were the River Red Gum, Yellow Box, Swamp Gum and She-oak’ (p 4). Garden evokes a picture of abundant volcanic plains, with enough rainfall and water to support a great diversity of life.

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, our approach to Hamilton for this study was not limited to the town of Hamilton itself. We began to think of the town of Glenthompson being the region’s eastern gateway, after which one passes through Dunkeld, at the foot of the Grampians, and on to Hamilton. It is then necessary to radiate out to a surprising diversity of small towns, ranging from Macarthur in the south to Balmoral in the north. The region is not defined by any particular boundaries and opinions vary on where and how such boundaries might be defined. Each of these towns naturally has its own history and stories. Some have been turned into published histories or collections of stories. The dominance of the pastoralist settler history most associated with the town of Hamilton risks the more diverse regional history being overlooked. There is a diverse network of smaller towns surrounding Hamilton, and many are currently involved in consolidating themselves and choosing which, if any, of the larger towns in the region to align with.

There are opportunities—as has happened in the past—to use something like a festival or celebration to position Hamilton as part of the Southern Grampians region, and to use the relationships between it and smaller centres to attract visitors. This could potentially open up a more diverse and sustainable economic base for an area that has traditionally, and unsustainably, relied on one or two industries. In the past it was wool; presently, it is mineral
sands and blue-gum plantations. Hamilton has a history of patronage of elite arts but not a rich culture of community-based arts. More diverse stories need to emerge. Many of the surrounding smaller towns, such as Macarthur, Tarrington and Dunkeld, have drawn on their local stories to create an inclusive sense of identity. There is an opportunity for Hamilton to be part of this, rather than seeing itself as an unquestioned dominant regional centre.

A Transect

For a visitor coming from the direction of Melbourne the first distant glimpse of the Hamilton region is of the serrated silhouette of the Grampians range standing on the horizon like a kind of fossilized dinosaur. From its southern tip the long and narrow spine of sharp peaks arises out of a flat landscape and stretches far to the north. Looking the other way it takes on the appearance of a pointer to the fertile region that stretches away to the south and west. The small town of Glenthompson, with its clay pit and brickworks, marks the region’s entry point and soon the paddocks are scattered with ancient twisted red gums—up to 500 years old—that have escaped the attention of loggers simply because they do not stand tall and straight. Most of these trees were here long before the first European explorers and settlers arrived.

From Glenthompson the highway heads for the southern tip of the Grampians range and here—with the imposing Mt Sturgeon and Mt Abrupt as backdrop—is the small town of Dunkeld. Names like Dunkeld, Grampians and Hamilton were taken from Scotland and littered on this antipodean landscape, but they are now but a distant echo of that early settlement influence. Dunkeld appears more prosperous than other towns in the region and the old Royal Mail hotel has been converted into a modern bistro and luxury accommodation. However, much of this prosperity is due to one man—the son of the local butcher who went on to establish a high profile and small fortune as one of Australia’s leading QCs. As well as owning nearly half the properties in the main street and other properties in the district, Alan Myers is creating one of the best native gardens in Australia, behind the long stretches of a beautifully crafted stone wall. Further along the road to Hamilton, rows of Cyprus trees and a carefully manicured hedge—with the name ‘Bolinda’ engraved in it—remind us of the sustained attempts made by the European settlers to turn this area into a neo-Europe. Away from the main road, paddocks once used for grazing sheep are being turned into extensive plantations of native Tasmanian blue gums now marshalled into straight lines and grid formations for future harvesting.

Hamilton township stands on a ridge overlooking the so-named ‘Grange Burn’ creek and its skyline is dominated by church spires. A little further west the road rejoins the Wannon River, which loops around the Grampians near Dunkeld and heads west before turning south. The picturesque Wannon Falls, and other scenes along the river, have been captured by visiting landscape painters, starting with the globetrotting Nicholas Chevalier, and this sequence of images creates a kind of social history of the area. Further along we arrive at the pleasant town of Coleraine, nestled in a sheltered valley, and a little further west we reach the western gateway of the region at Casterton, on the banks of the Glenelg River. Coleraine, in particular, is probably indicative of the resilience of some of the region’s small towns. The downturn in rural industries—beginning in the 1980s—hit the town badly and there were rumours of its imminent demise. It now boasts a thriving community bank and the revitalized chocolate factory has become an attraction for visitors. The Coleraine Race Track still hosts a popular annual horse-racing carnival and locals remember with pride when local horse Dandy Andy beat the best in the land to win the 1988 Australian Cup race in Sydney.

Not far from Hamilton is the small township of Tarrington that celebrates an annual Lanthenenfest reflecting the influence of early German settlers. Before World War I, Tarrington had been proud to call itself Hochkirk—a name chosen by its Lutheran founders—and not far away is the site of a utopian commune set up in the nineteenth century by another cluster of German migrants. However, the change of name was forced by external authorities fearing a post-war backlash against everything German. Just as people around Daylesford and Hepburn
Springs have rehabilitated their Italian heritage as the bitter legacy of World War II has subsided, the community of Tarrington and the Hamilton region more broadly has re-embraced its historic links with Germany.

While the local communities in the Hamilton region are surprisingly diverse they continue to orient to Hamilton as a commercial and cultural hub. Running along the top of the ridge on which the town has been built, Gray Street serves as a kind of transect of this regional heartland. As in St Kilda, the Hamilton Historical Society has produced a series of booklets outlining walks that can be taken through the town that give a sense of its history and character today. The Gray Street walk starts where the street rises up the hill from the creek and ends where the street reaches the large, artificial Lake Hamilton on the other side of town. This walk showcases some fine examples of the large and sturdy houses built by successful early settlers and it also demonstrates the significant role that the churches have played in the town’s development. However, while some of the early mansions are well preserved, the civic and retail architecture along Gray Street demonstrates that much of the early character of that hub has been lost—through a combination of bad fires and a modernization blitz that created a bland, undistinguished streetscape.

At the south-western end of Gray Street, the sound of water bubbles from the Grange Burn creek—which curves around the southern half of the town’s central commercial area to Lake Hamilton, and after which the town was once named. At this point the creek is lined by trees. Magpies jostle for space on their branches. A gravel path winds along the edge of the creek and flat paddocks extend across the far side. It is a peaceful place: the warbling of the birds, the distant sounding of a school siren or a truck downshifting gears indicate the presence of town and roads nearby, but they are muted here. The air is clean and cool; the smell of the earth is given sweetness by the sun that warms the reedy grass around the eucalypts. Moving up and away from the creek Gray Street is lined with tall trees whose leaves fill the street in autumn with a multitude of shapes and colours. There is view from this part of town over a valley, misty in the mornings, to mountains beyond. The houses are generally old and established, some with extensive gardens, and the Hamilton Historical Society calls this ‘the Paris end of Gray Street’ (Hamilton Historical Society, 2004). But the distinctive landmarks on this hill are the twin churches, which stand side by side yet are contrasting in character. The Presbyterian Church was built in 1857 and originally conducted services in both Gaelic and English, reflecting the Scottish heritage of the town. The church was rebuilt in 1909 and stands in a cleared lawn; its spire made of local bluestone is austere yet beautiful. It has dressings of freestone from Mount Abrupt in the Grampians range, and the adjoining St Andrews Scout Hall is made of bricks from local brick-makers.

The Anglican Christ Church is surrounded by trees, giving it a less austere feel than its neighbour. Its old stone walls catch the first of the morning sun, and wide-hipped conifers and hedges fill the garden. Looking down Gray Street from the churches, a dappled tunnel of autumn trees gives a sense of looking into town. This church, also made of local bluestone, opened in 1868 and contains an organ built by the Cassons Patent Organ Company of London in 1891. It is the only major example of a Casson organ in Australia, and is a key venue for the Southern Grampians Promenade of Sacred Music, a significant annual arts event that takes place in Hamilton and surrounding townships.

At the intersection of Gray and Kennedy Streets there is a roundabout where the town hub begins. There are several old but well-maintained civic buildings such as the Dundas Chamber and the Gray Street Primary School. The roses growing along the school’s fence have the deep, velvet sweetness of years of growing. The scale and solidity of the civic buildings—the Hamilton Club, the apricot and sky-blue Hamilton History Centre—give the impression of a well-established town with money and history. However, they now stand alongside new, plain, corporate buildings. At the Post Office the business day begins early. People come and go, and exchange greetings. They seem busy, like they are nipping in to do this or that errand. Unlike St
Kilda or elements of Daylesford, this does not feel like a cafe culture—it is a busy, working centre and few people stop for more than an exchange of greetings. Dusty utes pull up, alongside four-wheel drives and smaller cars. Tractors are not an uncommon sight on the local streets, and every now there are still glimpses of old wealth. According to booklets published by the Historical Society, the shops along Gray Street once had verandahs and cast-iron lace but all that has gone and handicraft shops now mingle with a Subway outlet and the familiar sign of a TAB. There are remnants of art deco tiling and one original gas light, first lit in 1878, has been retained, but this is a town that has embraced twentieth-century modernism.

Travelling out of the commercial area towards Lake Hamilton Gray Street becomes once again residential. The manicured gardens and grand homes of this central street do not reflect a much greater diversity of dwellings across the town: the 2001 Census revealed that there are 200 homes, out of a total rental stock of 804, that are owned by a government housing authority. The north-eastern end of Gray Street may not be the ‘Paris end’: the houses are neither as old nor as grand, but they are substantial and well-maintained. People living at this end of town are within easy walking distance of the large and popular lake—created by constructing a dam on the Grange Burn in 1977—but the lake is surrounded by dry grass rather than lush green and the ambience is more of dry Australia than lush Europe. We have gone from the more cloistered part of the town to one that seems more exposed to the realities of its rural Australian setting.

Hamilton was established on the wealth of a booming pastoral industry, and still has the physical character of a wealthy town: wide streets, grand houses, lovely views, well-maintained gardens. Perhaps its grandeur is most evident in the Botanical Gardens that were among the first such gardens to be established in Australia. The site for the gardens was set aside in 1853 and first planted in 1870. In 1881, the Curator of the Melbourne Botanical Gardens, William Guilfoyle, was appointed to oversee the design and development of the Hamilton gardens and his influence is still evident in the impressive collection of trees, the small lake, and a couple of menageries housing some exotic birds. The Botanical Gardens are a source of pride to Hamiltonians and so are the private secondary colleges—including Hamilton Alexander College and Monivae College—that attract boarding students from far afield. The Hamilton Art Gallery also houses a very impressive collection of Australian and international artworks, many of them donated by wealthy local benefactors. Yet while these are the landmarks of past prosperity, there is little in the way of public works of art and little to suggest that contemporary forms of art are being encouraged. As the town and the region face an uncertain future, the legacy of social conservatism continues.

History

In his book Meeting of Sighs: An Anthology of Folk Verse of Victoria’s Western District (1981), Peter Hay draws attention to a coincidence that is revealing of the journey of the Western District, socially and politically, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hay acknowledges that the federal electoral of Wannon is viewed as a ‘blue-ribbon Liberal seat’. This was particularly so at the time of the book’s publication, when it was held by Australia’s then-Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser—‘a squatter of Scottish ancestry, tall of build and puritan in moral outlook’ (Hay, 1981, p. 51). However, Hay points out that this same seat in the national parliament was once held by another tall man of Scottish ancestry, who was like Fraser in his ‘puritan moral outlook’, but totally unlike Fraser in politics. J.K. McDougall, who held the seat of Wannon from 1906 to 1912, was a radical socialist and Wannon was a stronghold for the left wing of the Labor Party. In McDougall’s time many farm labourers, including shearsers, lived in the district and many of them had joined the emerging trade union movement. There was also a significant number of small-scale farmers alongside the wealthy graziers. However, as the twentieth century progressed, the decline in employment in agricultural labour gradually changed the political inclinations of the area.

While Malcolm Fraser brought the spotlight to the Western District in more recent times—and
supported an exaggerated view of the area as the heartland of conservatism and privilege—Hay insists that McDougall was one of the region’s ‘most outstanding individuals’. His verse is uncompromising, severe and forthright. Hay calls McDougall’s poem ‘The White Man’s Burden’—written in 1902 in the context of the Boer War—as ‘arguably the most powerful piece of Australian socialist literature’ (p. 51). The poem’s fierce, ringing anti-war sentiment was turned against McDougall in 1919. A version of the poem appeared during the 1919 federal elections and was deliberately distorted by the Nationalist Party to suggest disrespect for Australians fighting in the ‘Great War’. Soon afterwards McDougall was ‘tarred and feathered’ by five returned soldiers: bound, gagged, and dumped outside the public baths in a country town. McDougall’s personal demise foreshadowed the demise of the Labor Party in the district and the area fell out of the national spotlight until Malcolm Fraser’s emergence in the mid-1970s. Fraser has moved out of the district and the spotlight has left with him. Falling prices for wool and other traditional products, and new uncertainties associated with global warming have tarnished the image of privilege and success. But it is interesting and revealing that the twentieth century was book-ended in this district by two such public characters—with their similarities and stark differences.

Dramatic peaks, rolling hills and depressions, swamps, abundant grasslands and fertile soils characterize the landscape of the south-western region of Victoria that was formed relatively recently in geological terms by volcanic activity. Extensive basalt plains cover an area of some 20,000 square kilometres, and they were an abundant source of life long before the European settlers arrived. When the New South Wales Surveyor-General Major Thomas Mitchell arrived on his exploratory journey in the 1830s the area was covered with open savannah woodland. It had a large indigenous population whose staple diet included abundant game and root crops such as the daisy yam (*muurang*). (Powell, 1970) In his *Hamilton: A Western District History*, Don Garden (1984) writes that the region was populated by possums, platypus, kangaroos and wallabies, as well as ducks, honeyeaters, galahs and cockatoos. There were large areas of wetland that were of particular importance to the indigenous Gunditjmara people who built an extensive aquaculture system, consisting of stone weirs, channels and eel traps in the area of the Budj Bim lava flow.

Hamilton lies near the boundaries of three different groupings of Aboriginal people: the Gunditjmara in the south, the Tjapwarong in the north, and Bunganditj in the west. An abundance of life meant that these people did not need to travel far to get what they needed and Garden suggests that there appeared to be a stable population of around 4,000 people. Eels were not only harvested, they were also smoked and traded, and ‘villages’ of stone huts were constructed near the eel traps in the Lake Condah area on the Budj Bim lava flow.

The colony of Australia centred on Sydney had been in existence for nearly 50 years before the colonial authorities decided to expand settlement into the area now known as Victoria. Despite Hume and Hovell’s favourable reports of the Port Phillip district in 1824–25, further journeys south did not take place for another decade (Powell, 1970). By the time that Major Thomas Mitchell set off on his grand journey of exploration in 1836, whalers had established a couple of small settlements on the southern coast but little was known of what lay beyond the coast. Mitchell’s journey was originally intended to chart the stretch of the Darling River that had not yet been charted, but when he reached the Murray he decided to push further south, around the Grampians, past the current site of Hamilton and reaching the coast at Portland Bay. He was very surprised that the Henty brothers from Van Diemen’s Land had already set up base at what has become Portland, but this probably only increased his enthusiasm for future settlement of the attractive region. Mitchell’s jubilation at what he found to the south of the Murray River not only precipitated the first great land rush in Victoria’s history, it also set up perceptions of the region that were to have a profound and lasting effect on the way the settlers saw the land and the prospects for rural development.

It is important to note that Mitchell left New South Wales in the grip of a severe drought, and
arrived in the area after a wet winter and a mild spring (Powell, 1970). This contrast led him to declare the region surrounding Hamilton to be ‘champagne country’ and he suggested that a large section of the south should be seen as ‘Australia Felix’—the lucky country. As he passed through the area of Hamilton, Mitchell wrote in his diary that ‘a finer country could scarcely be imagined. Enormous trees of the mimosa or wattle, of which the bark is so valuable, grew almost every where … the sublime peaks of the Grampians began to appear above the trees to the northward’ (Garden, 1984, p. 9). It is this dream of the relocated homeland that fuelled the dreams of the incoming settlers. This seemed to be the best chance yet of recreating the English countryside without the social divisions of English society. The pragmatic Henty brothers pioneered the tradition of large pastoral runs and they were the ones who introduced the Merino sheep to the district. However, the dream of an English countryside created a popular vision of a landscape of small fields, intensively cultivated and ‘softening the horizon’ (Powell, 1970, p. 258) and this led to plans to curb the expansionary aims of the early settlers by setting aside large tracts of land for a host of smallholdings.

This smallholder philosophy of land use can be traced to the British political exiles making Victoria home following the Gold Rush of the 1850s and 1860s (Powell, 1970). Chartists and other reformers in Britain were demanding ‘land for the people’, and this was also picked up in Australia. Ireland at this time was the site of much dispute about land reform following the devastating ‘potato famine’, and as Western Europe experienced rapid industrialization, North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand all offered fresh opportunity for rural development. In Britain, the Chartist movement made the distribution of smallholdings a priority in their platform for political reform (Powell, 1970) and they worked to purchase large land holdings and divide them into smaller properties of between one and five acres. Australian politicians looked to this approach of setting up Chartist ‘Land Colonies’ as a possible solution to urban unemployment—the self-sufficient small plot could provide ‘just reward for honest toil’ (Powell, 1970). The land reform movement grew in strength, but squatters guarded their position as holders of large holdings—land was quickly seen as the key to social and political power.

This push for small holdings seemed driven by the urban middle classes, and cannot be separated by a desire to oust the powerful squatters from their monopoly of land and growing social and political dominance. However, this approach to the land was based largely on ideology rather than a real understanding of the environmental conditions that made farming—even in this ‘lucky’ corner of the country—fraught with risk. Most of those who took up the smallholdings were doomed to poverty and eventual failure and their properties were gradually absorbed into the large holdings of the prosperous graziers. Poor transport, distance from markets, and poor conditions (such as widespread flooding in 1858 followed by drought in 1858–59) combined with poor farming methods led to their demise. According to Monica Keneley (2000), the failure of Land Acts based on the idea of closer settlement did not readily dim the enthusiasm of the broader population or their elected representatives for this ideal. Indeed it was the ongoing belief in the persistent image of the ‘Yeomen’ farmer who could find independence on the land that formed the basis of the Soldier Settlement Scheme following World War I—which also ended in disaster for the vast majority of those who took up the offer of farms too small to be viable. Exacerbating the problem for the Soldier Settlement farmers was that most of the land on the best volcanic soils in the Western District had already been absorbed into successful large farms and so most of the blocks assigned to them were in the more arid regions, with sandy soil and a much lower capacity to carry sheep. Of course, not all of the Soldier Settlement farms failed; some had enough success to eventually expand their holdings, and in some areas there were even sub-divisions of larger properties (Keneley, 2000). But on balance the smallholder movement—driven by ideology born in distant lands—lost out to the pragmatism of the early settlers and their descendants.

The first Europeans to establish a run in the Hamilton region (then known as Grange Burn) are thought to be the Wedge family, who drove their flock of sheep west from Werribee, reaching
the Hamilton area in 1838. In 1837, the Winter brothers laid claim to 20,000 acres on the Wannon River and Acheson French took up a run at the Grange in 1841. By the end of 1842, about ten stations had been established in the area and some of these pioneering families are still influential in the district. However, the early settlement was also marked by a bloody conflict with the indigenous people—indeed some historians say this was one of the most violent settlement processes anywhere in Australia (Garden, 1984)—and the stories and memories of the violence have only been partially documented. In her book A Distant Field of Murder (1990), Jan Critchett writes that she had become dissatisfied with existing histories of the district, and set out to challenge some of the local mythology about the indigenous society and their responses to the settlers. Critchett has tried to piece together the picture of the society that predated European settlement and to better assess the strength and cost of the resistance to early incursions of the Europeans. However, this is no easy task—the evidence is at best patchy—and there continues to be local unease about the ‘skeletons in the cupboard’. But Critchett concludes that what took place was a form of war in the sense of ‘men of one race being forced to take up arms against those of the other’ (Critchett, 1990, p. 186). The Aboriginal resistance to European settlement could not be sustained in the long term, but the conflicts did exert significant cost on individual settlers at the time, forcing many into insolvency or abandoning their runs. Frustrated by a perceived lack of government support or protection against Aboriginal attacks, many took action themselves and sporadic violence continued. According to Critchett records suggest that 35 settlers were killed by Aborigines and there is one recording of the deaths of 27 Aboriginal women and ten children. However, there can be little doubt that the Aboriginal casualties were much, much higher. Many indigenous people also died from the spread of diseases for which they had no immunity, and by 1863 the Aboriginal population of the district had shrunk to just 645 people.

Between 1830 and 1890, the Western District of Victoria became an established pastoral economy, with some of the largest holdings of freehold land in the colony (Keneley, 2000). Growing British demand for Australian wool meant that the pastoral industry predated the establishment of any towns and at the end of the 1840s there was still no town in the district; just some scattered stores and blacksmiths shops on the Wannon River and on the Grange Burn. A census of settlers taken in 1851 showed a population of 1,579 comprising 1,141 males and 438 females. The occupations listed included shepherds or sheep management, stockmen or cattle management, labourers, mechanics, domestic servants and two doctors. Of these, 609 were born in England, 298 in Scotland and 275 in Ireland. Although the English outnumbered the Scots, a larger proportion of the successful squatters were Scottish (Garden, 1984). By 1890, 3.2 million acres of some of the best land in the district was in the hands of large landowners—men who owned more than 5,000 acres (Keneley 1999).

In 1849, Robert Hoddle, head of the Melbourne Survey office, instructed the surveyor in charge of the Portland Bay area, Henry Wade, to set out a new town site and agricultural blocks at the Grange Burn, for the town that came to be known as Hamilton. It grew steadily in the second half of the 1850s as the main service centre for the Grange region. Businesses clustered in the central town blocks, mainly Gray and Lonsdale Streets. By 1859, there was a Bank of Victoria, and many stores and services such as saddlers, painters and a timber yard. Also in 1859 and, according to Garden, symbolic of the town’s growing stature, the town established its own Newspaper: the Hamilton Courier and Normanby, Dundas, Follett and Villiers and Heytsbury Advertiser, or the Courier for short (Garden, 1984, p. 58).

Many of the businessmen attracted to the town in this early time were to make a significant contribution to the development of the town and district through the businesses they established, the buildings they constructed or the leadership roles they adopted. Names like Learmonth, Cameron, Thomson and Laidlaw recur throughout the development of the town. Between these town-based businessmen and the wealthy, powerful pastoralists, Hamilton had many outspoken and often wealthy public figures who sought to influence the direction of the town’s development.
By the 1860s, Hamilton was in many ways a typical rural Victorian town, with streets largely unmade and businesses that served the surrounding farms. However, as Don Garden (1984) points out, it was the only important town in the colony that was not a mining centre or a port. The development and growth of the 1860s and 1870s established the essential nature of the town. Hamilton had aspirations as a major provincial city, but there was competition with other towns such as Portland and Port Fairy. Even at this early stage, the town’s vulnerability was clear: its narrow economic base. Competing for a railway connection and seeing the value of setting itself up as a centre for education are some of the ways Hamilton has tried to shore up its economic base and secure position in the region.

As the town grew, town affairs were increasingly managed by what Garden calls the ‘leading townsmen’. These were men who had the capital to take risks on enterprises and attract fresh waves of like minds to the town. Inevitably, the town’s council came to be dominated by these successful professional and business men who, despite bold business leadership, made a very conservative council, working hard to serve the interest of the wealthy few who elected them, sometimes blocking democratic reforms in the legislative Council (Garden, 1984, p. 76). While the council’s interests were conservative, many Hamiltonians were politically liberal and a majority of townspeople voted Labor in federal and state elections early in the twentieth century (Garden, 1984, p. 173). This liberal tendency—in combination with the seat of Wannon being held by the socialist radical J.K. McDougall, and the battles fought in the district by shearsers for better pay and conditions—creates a much more nuanced picture of the overall political landscape of the region than the commonly held idea that it is, and has always been, wealthy and conservative.

By the 1860s, Hamilton had reticulated water, gas lighting and a railway. A decade later it was called a ‘town of churches’ (Garden, 1984, p. 82) with seven churches in the town. To this day, the spires on Gray Street (‘Church Hill’) are landmarks to which the town remains attached. From the 1880s, Hamilton was fortunate and privileged enough to be one of the few towns of its size to have local colleges, meaning children of the wealthy could further their schooling beyond primary school without going away to boarding school. Initially there were two: the Hamilton and Western District College for boys and the Alexandra College for girls. Local support for the establishment of schools continued throughout the region’s expansion following closer settlement in the late decades of the nineteenth century.

Through the early decades of the twentieth century, the town followed a steady develop pattern of a comfortable rural town. Many Australians saw significant improvements in their standard of living in the early twentieth century, with shorter working hours, technological advances and increased spending power transforming lifestyles (Garden 1984). Rapid communication and especially the advent of the motorcar had a great impact on Hamilton (which was then on the main route to South Australia). When Reg Ansett came to Hamilton in the 1930s and set up his transport network (initially motor then, more successfully, air) it was a boost to the local economy and profile (Garden, 1984, p. 213).

Hamilton today is still a peaceful, functioning rural centre. It has maintained many of the elegant and grand buildings established in the town’s early years. Having built its character as a regional centre with strong education and health facilities, Hamilton still seems uneasy about how to make a significant shift away from the regional dependence on agriculture. The number of farms in the region has fallen since the 1960s, and trends towards mechanization have replaced labour needs, contributing to a declining population. Modern roads and cars mean that people from far away for shopping or services; they also mean that people could travel to one of many significant towns in the region.

See the Hamilton History Centre’s Church Hill Walk booklet.
In the context of Victoria, Hamilton is a long way from Melbourne and this has been both a blessing and a disadvantage at different times in its history. The town was once the undisputed centre of the whole western district, with most important roads passing through it. However, when the main highway connecting Melbourne and Adelaide was built further to the north, Hamilton lost much of its regional prominence and in recent decades it has fallen behind other regional centres such as Horsham in the north and Portland and Warrnambool in the south. Its population, around 10,000, has not grown in the last 20 years and not many tourists venture beyond the Grampians or away from the coast. Though Hamilton still calls itself the ‘wool capital of the world’ this appears to be an increasingly hollow claim.

Note on Sources and Gaps
This account of the history and character of the Hamilton region relies on a limited number of secondary sources. There are many gaps in the documented history and although conversations with members of the Globalism Institute’s Critical Reference Group in the region helped to fill some of the gaps many remain. The one detailed history of Hamilton—Hamilton: A Western District History by Don Garden—focuses heavily on the town and not the region. There are smaller books, less ‘formal’ histories, about the smaller towns in the region, such as Macarthur, Dunkeld and Tarrington, and the communities that have developed since European settlement. There is an excellent collection of such books in the local history section of Hamilton’s public library. They help to balance Garden’s rather dry and narrow account but none of them are regional in scope and it is difficult to gain such a perspective.

Demographic Information and some Future Challenges

Hamilton and its surrounds act as a regional service centre for a predominantly agricultural hinterland, and are comparable to many wheat–sheep belt areas in regional Australia. There is demographic diversity among the different townships and rural surrounds that make up the Southern Grampians Local Government area. Overall, it is an older demographic and a highly stable population. There are relatively few post-school aged people and younger adults. The area has more low- to middle-income earners and fewer high individual income earners than the Victorian average. A large number of Southern Grampians residents are either couples with children or elderly and living alone. At the time of data collection (2001), the shire had a population of 16,606, of whom over 50 per cent lived in Hamilton; 15 per cent lived in smaller townships, and one in three lived in rural parts of the shire. The population of the region is in overall decline from the numbers in the 1996 census. The trend of population decline dates back at least twenty years, with a decline of 11 per cent in the shire since 1981. The rate of decline has slowed since the 1990s. Neighbouring shires are also experiencing population decline; however, the population in Warrnambool—one of Hamilton’s key competitors as a regional centre—increased by 13 per cent from 1991 to 2001. The regional Victorian population in general grew between 1996 and 2001 by 3.5 per cent, and the total population of Victoria grew by 7 per cent. Coleraine is the second largest town in the Southern Grampians but its population has also been in decline and it was predicted that it would fall below 1000 by the time of the 2006 Census. The ‘tree-change’ movement so prevalent in some regional areas in Victoria has not reached this region although Warrnambool has experienced some growth.

12 Statistical information for the Hamilton region is taken primarily from two sources: Hamilton and its Hinterland: The Changing Demographic and Labour Market Context of a Victorian Regional Centre (Simone Alexander, Trevor Budge, Robin Goodman and Dave Mercer, School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT, July 2005), and the Southern Grampians Shire Council’s community profile based in the 2001 Census data. The RMIT study draws on a number of sources, such as ABS data, Victorian Government, and private-sector sources to provide information that is, in some instances, more up-to-date than the 2001 census data. For the purposes of this report, we have used the data provided for the Southern Grampians Statistical Local Area, which includes the town of Hamilton and some of the surrounding research transect townships (such as Tarrington and Dunkeld), but not the entire region covered by the transect.
Six in every ten people in the municipality lived at the same address in 2001 as they did in 1996. However, there has been some movement within the shire; the percentage of shire’s population living in Hamilton increased slightly since 1991, at the expense of the rural areas of this shire. Population aging is a trend across most areas of Australia. However, it is more heavily underlined in the Southern Grampians than in many other places, even than neighbouring districts. In 2001, 18 in every 100 people were over retirement age, compared to a state average of 13 in 100. Between 1991 and 2001, the population aged over 65 has grown at double the rate of Victoria as a whole. The area’s median age in 2001 was 40; for neighbouring shires and regional Victoria it was 37 and for the state as a whole it was 35.

The age structure in the Southern Grampians has two distinctive features: an apparent under-representation of post-school aged young people (18–24) and younger adults (25–34), and a high proportion of maturer adults (50–59), older people (60–74) and the elderly (75 and above). These demographics vary from township to township: Coleraine, Dunkeld and Penshurst have an older population (in Penshurst and Coleraine it is double the shire average); Hamilton and the rural areas of the shire have a considerably younger population.

Like many regional municipalities in Victoria, the population in the Southern Grampians—and the Western District more broadly—is characterized by strong Anglo-Celtic origins. There is markedly less ethnic diversity in the shire than in metropolitan Melbourne or the larger regional centres, and a very high proportion of people were born in Australia, especially in comparison with the Victorian average. Of those born overseas, many more in the Southern Grampians than in Victoria more broadly were born in traditional Anglophone countries. In the 2001 census, people were asked for the first time to identify the ancestries over three generation with which they most identified. In the Southern Grampians, Australian and Anglo-Celtic backgrounds were heavily represented, as well as a small but significant proportion of people who identified as having German ancestry. The leading percentages were as follows: 42 per cent identified as having Australian ancestry; 36 per cent English; 9 per cent Irish, 5 per cent German and 3 per cent Scottish. There is little use of languages other than English. In 2001 95 per cent of people spoke only English at home; only 21 people born overseas said they spoke English ‘not well or not at all’. Of these, eight were new arrivals to Australia (since 2000).

There is an indigenous population in the shire, which was counted in the 2001 census at 99 people—0.6 per cent of the total population. This was slightly above the state average, but below neighbouring Glenelg shire, where 1.2 per cent of the shire identified as indigenous. This could in part be attributed to the presence of organizations like the Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation in Heywood (in Glenelg shire). The indigenous population in Southern Grampians is also below the Western District and regional Victorian averages. Mirroring the ethnic make-up of the Southern Grampians, religious affiliation in the shire was largely confined to the Christian churches. Relative to Victoria, the Uniting, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches drew larger levels of affiliation. Uniting Church allegiance was 2.5 times that for Victoria, and while only 1 per cent of the state declared themselves Lutheran, in the Southern Grampians it was 8 per cent. In the rural parts of the shire, that figure rose to 12 per cent. Those living in Hamilton were more likely to declare themselves Catholic, Anglican or as having no religion.

Several household types are predominant in the Southern Grampians. There is a higher percentage of married couples living with children and proportionally more lone-person households than in Victoria as a whole. Some household trends can be attributed to the ageing population (for instance, the high representation of couples living without children could be older couples whose children have gone). Household types vary across the shire. In the 2001 census, 57 per cent of people aged 15 or more stated they were married. In regional Victoria that figure was 53.7 per cent, and 51.5 per cent in Victoria overall. The relative absence of younger adults in the Southern Grampians—many of whom would be in the pre-marital phase of their lives—may have had an inflating effect on the figures. Six in ten people in the shire lived in a
family consisting of a couple with children. However, there was an increase in the percentage of one-parent families since 1996; one in ten families were one-parent families.

Older people form a much larger proportion of lone-person households in the Southern Grampians than in Victoria—particularly older women. Female widows stand out in Southern Grampian’s census figures. In 2001, 9 per cent of people aged over 15 were widowed, and eight in ten widows were female. Three-quarters of these were 70 and above. In the Southern Grampians, Just under half (49 per cent) of the lone-person households consisted of a person aged 65 or more, whereas for Victoria that was 39 per cent and for Melbourne 36 per cent. Women over 65 represented 62 per cent of all lone-person households in the Southern Grampians.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing was the major field of employment across the shire. While agriculture has always been important, other industry sectors’ contribution to the market has changed over time. Between 1991 and 2001, the growth and decline in other sectors reflected, largely, broader sectoral shifts in Victoria. The largest occupational group in the area is ‘managers and administrators’ (often running farm businesses), followed by ‘professionals’, ‘intermediate clerical, sales and service’ an ‘tradespersons and related workers’. There is diversity in the shire’s townships around occupation, for instance Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the dominant occupation in the rural areas and Balmoral, but in Hamilton it is outstripped by Retail Trade, Health and Community Services (Hamilton has a major hospital), and Manufacturing and Education. This probably reflects Hamilton’s role as a service provider for the rural surrounds. Even though it is still the dominant industry in the shire—especially rural areas—the agricultural workforce declined substantially during the last two decades of the twentieth century. The ageing nature of the workforce may contribute to changes in the agricultural labour force: in 2001, 13 per cent of the male agricultural workforce was 65 or over, and close to 60 per cent of the male agricultural work force was 40 or over.

Three in every five Southern Grampians residents aged over 15 were in the labour force. The unemployment rate in the shire was lower than the Victorian average; however, the unemployment rate for 15- to 19-year-olds was 2.5 times the shire’s general unemployment rate. In 2001, while overall unemployment rates had fallen for women and men, people aged between 15 and 24 made up only one sixth of the labour force but represented one third of the unemployed in the community. One in 20 people were unemployed, and rural areas had a lower unemployment rate than the townships. The vast majority of males worked full-time; part-time employment was mainly fulfilled by women. A third of the men in the labour force were employed in the agricultural sector—in rural parts of the shire, six in ten employed men worked in agriculture. One in five women in the labour force worked in the health and community services sector. Females were more likely than men to be outside the labour force, at least for periods of time. This could be attributed to women assuming primary carer roles (for instance, for children or elderly relatives). It also could be due to the structure of some female occupations and employment opportunities. Part-time employment has grown in the Southern Grampians in the last decade, as it has in Victoria more broadly. In the Southern Grampians, 79 per cent of males in workforce worked full-time, while half of the females in labour force worked part-time. The household income in Southern Grampians was lower than the Victorian average but this may reflect the fact that the average household size was smaller and there was a relatively high proportion of people living alone.

A feature of the Southern Grampians area is the large number of secondary schools, especially non-government boarding schools. This is reflected in the census data: more than half of all secondary school students in the municipality at census time were attending non-government schools. This is much higher than other areas, including Victoria as a whole and comparable areas. The large numbers of boarding school students in the area may also have influenced the relatively high number of school-aged children in the shire. A quarter of the population was participating in formal education in 2001—mostly at primary or secondary schools. The
Southern Grampians had a below-average participation in TAFE and university compared to the average for Victoria and for the Western District. There was an especially low university attendance in the shire’s smaller townships. Following this, there are fewer people in shire with university and college qualifications than the Victorian average. However, there are more people holding certificate qualifications. Partly due to a public policy focus on the issue, the overall number of qualifications in the shire had risen from 1996 to 2001. In the census data, six in every ten people in the shire aged over 15 had finished year 10 or equivalent. Three in ten had a post-school qualification, and eight in 100 held a university qualification. The school completion rate to year 12 for Victoria was 39 per cent; for regional Victoria it was 28 per cent; for the Southern Grampians it was 25 per cent.

As with Victoria as a whole, owner-occupancy is the housing tenure of choice in the Southern Grampians. In 2001, three-quarters of all occupied dwellings in the shire were either owned outright or were being purchased. This represents a high level of home ownership/home purchasing, comfortably above the overall Victorian figure of 71 per cent. The level of full home ownership (55 per cent) in the shire was even further above the Victorian average (43 per cent) and higher than surrounding areas. The level of outright home ownership in the shire increased markedly between 1991 and 2001. In 1991, 47 per cent of people owned a home outright and 28 per cent lived in one being purchased. By 2001, that was 51 per cent and 27 per cent. This could be attributed to the ageing population (generally in Australia, home ownership is highest among the aged), and also to the fact that housing affordability is greater in the municipality’s market than other places. However, there was less variety in dwelling type than for Victoria overall. Separate houses are the leading dwelling type in both instances, but overall in Victoria there are substantive amounts of other dwelling types—significant among these are flats/units, apartments and townhouses/semi-detached dwellings. This is not the case in the Southern Grampians. Further, the proportion of unoccupied private dwellings is higher in the shire than the state average. While there is a relatively low proportion of people renting their dwellings, public housing makes up a higher percentage of the rental market in the Southern Grampians (19 per cent) than in broader Victoria (14 per cent), yet only Hamilton, Coleraine and Dunkeld have any public housing stock. Rents, as well as mortgage repayments, are considerably lower in the Southern Grampians than Victoria overall.

Not surprisingly, motor vehicle ownership in the Southern Grampians was higher than the Victorian average. There is little in the way of public transport infrastructure, and the major industry (agriculture) has transport requirements. The level of multiple vehicle ownership in the shire was greater than state average (53 per cent to 50 per cent) and the percentage of households with three or more cars was higher than neighbouring districts, regional Victoria and the state average. Within the shire, however, Coleraine and Penshurst, with large numbers of elderly people, have a higher percentage of households with no vehicle.

The level of computer usage at home in the shire, at four in ten people, was only just below the state average. Highest usage was among those between the ages of 10 and 19. However, internet use lagged behind the Victorian and regional Victorian averages (three in ten as opposed to four in ten people). In the shire, 31 per cent had access to the internet, with 22 per cent having access at home. Young people at school or college were the highest computer users, with three quarters of those aged ten to 19 using a home computer. The lowest use was among those older than 55. There was also a relatively low use of computers among people aged 20 to 24, due probably to the low university participation rate in the area.

Clearly the demographics reflect some concerns for the future of the region. A declining and ageing population and less secure forms of employment require some strategic responses. Diversification could provide it with a more robust and diverse local economy—one that is also environmentally sustainable in the face of global warming. It could be an advantage, in the context of multicultural Australia, to attract more ethnic diversity to the shire’s population. This may also assist in presenting a more vibrant regional image and avoid falling behind other
centres. Horsham, for instance, has a stronger and more co-ordinated community arts sector, which may add to its potential to attract tourists. It is important for the shire to ensure that the smaller towns remain viable and vibrant and an investment in the arts can help achieve this. One new national spotlight has fallen on this region with the declaration of the Lake Condah area as a national heritage site. The extraordinary story of the aquaculture system that was sustained for thousand of years by the Gunditjmara people could become a major asset for a region that has still suffers from the legacy of early violent conflicts between the settlers and the indigenous people. Even though Lake Condah actually falls within the neighbouring Glenelg Shire the future of this priceless heritage asset should occupy the imaginations of the Southern Grampians Shire and all its residents.
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