The 'Sea Change' phenomenon in South Australia

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Introduction

Australia is a highly urbanised country with more than 86% of its population living in the coastal zone. In the last forty years there has been a trend of increasing population growth in non-metropolitan coastal areas. This increase in non-metropolitan coastal population was raised as an issue in the national coastal zone inquiry conducted by the Resource Assessment Commission (RAC) which noted the rapid population growth in the coastal divisions adjacent to major capital cities between 1971-1991 (RAC, 1993). The non-metropolitan coasts have consequently experienced an 'increase in pressure from rising numbers of residents, tourists and recreationists [which] is placing great stress on the activities of all governments, but especially local government' (Harvey and Caton, 2003, p. 230). Local government has been the driving force behind recent initiatives to undertake research into this phenomenon and to assess the impacts.

This phenomenon has been addressed in the academic literature primarily within the fields of demography, planning, policy and coastal management. Evidence of increasing coastal population has been described by demographers as a 'sea change' (Burnley and Murphy, 2004) or a 'third wave' of population migration in Australia to the beach (Salt, 2001). One of the consequences of the sea change movement has been the pressure placed on local councils to provide adequate infrastructure and services for the population influx as well as the need to address strategic planning issues (Harvey, 2006). In response to these pressures a coalition of Australian coastal councils established a National Sea Change Taskforce (NSCT) in 2004, which has commissioned a number of research papers into coastal communities and best practice coastal planning (Gurran et al., 2005a; Gurran et al., 2006; Gurran et al., 2008). The sea change phenomenon has also come to the attention of the Planning Institute of Australia which organized a collection of papers on coastal planning (Gurran et al., 2005b; Harty, 2005; Huppatz, 2005; Shepard, 2005) to discuss the issue amongst planning professionals.

The sea change phenomenon has also raised other issues such as the potential impact of climate change on sea change communities; the related policy responses to potential climate change impacts, vulnerability and adaptation and the social and policy implications of climate change related policies (Harvey and Clarke, 2007). Harvey and Clarke discuss the interaction of climate change related coastal impacts with social and environmental changes and note that the 'Sea change phenomena (sic) is causing different social impacts, such as: a) creating new coastal communities in pristine coastal areas; b) changing the social mix of existing coastal retirement or 'lifestyle' communities by raising property values and affecting housing affordability; c) creating gentrification of some areas often focused on waterfront real estate creating a divide with adjacent more affordable housing stock' (Harvey and Clarke, 2007, p. 57). In addition they note; that the sea change development pressure may constrain local councils in

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terms of strategic coastal planning; that non-metropolitan coastal communities may have a reduced capacity to respond to climate change impacts because of endemic social disadvantage; that changing coastal risks will cause increasing liability to fall on local councils in the future; and that these risks will affect coastal insurance premiums and where there is scientific uncertainty with future risks the courts will also become involved (Harvey and Clarke, 2007).

Each state in Australia is affected by the sea change phenomenon to varying degrees and according to Salt (2008) is comprised of 446 towns located outside the capital cities on the coast. Salt comments on the variation in these towns from what he refers to as the 'quintessential' sea change communities such as Byron Bay in New South Wales, through to towns at the other end of the spectrum including Dampier in Western Australia and Nhulumby on the Arnhem Land coast (Salt, 2008). In South Australia the recent State of the Environment (SOE) Report (EPA, 2008) presented preliminary evidence of the sea change phenomenon using two non-metropolitan coastal towns of different population size and age structure, Victor Harbor and Wallaroo (Figure 1) however, there does not appear to be anything in the academic literature specifically investigating this phenomenon in South Australia.

In order to obtain a better assessment of the extent of the sea change phenomenon in South Australia, this paper examines recent coastal development and coastal population change on the non-metropolitan coast and analyses this in the context of current literature on the sea change phenomenon in Australia. The paper uses land-division and built-dwelling data together with recent major coastal development approvals to assess the extent and timing of coastal development and the linkages with marina-associated waterfront development. These data are examined together with population data to provide insights into the rate of population increase and the different age structures that characterize these sea change communities. The paper concludes by placing this South Australian study within the national sea change context.

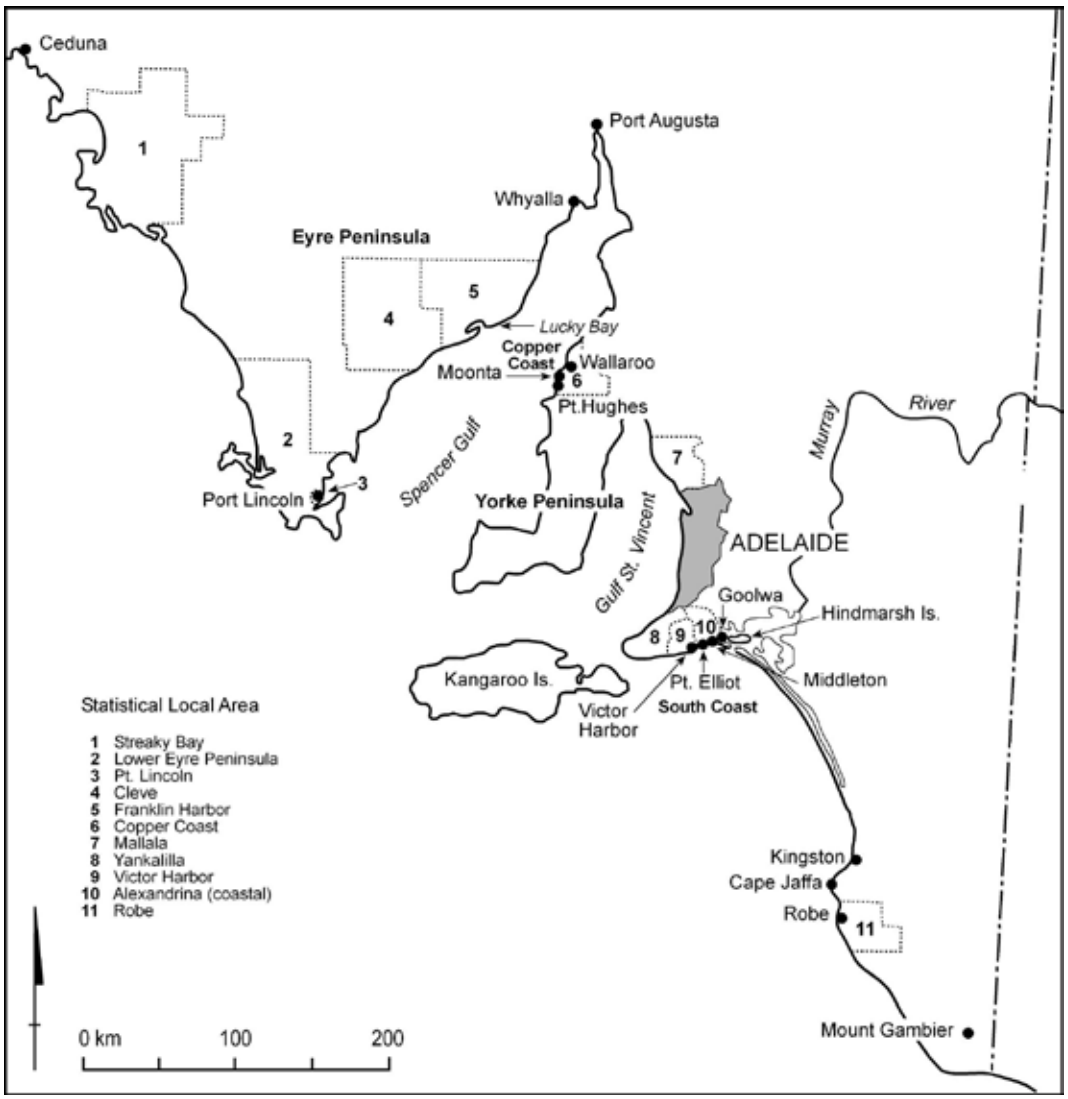
Coastal land division and housing development in South Australia

As noted in the State of the Environment (SOE) Report for South Australia (EPA, 2008), South Australia has a relatively low proportion of urbanized coast (7%) compared to states such as New South Wales which has 27% of its coast urbanized. Notwithstanding this low overall development, there has been increased demand for coastal housing in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of South Australia. Between 1996 and 2006 there was a rapid increase in the number of dwellings built within 500 metres of the coast peaking at 855 in 2000. Since then it has remained between 650 and 800 new dwellings per year (EPA, 2008).

This increased development pressure has occurred even though 64% of land within 500 metres of the South Australian coast is zoned as Coastal or having an environmental constraint that restricted development. As noted in the SOE report the proposed land divisions in 2007 for this same coastal strip were predominantly either rural or residential collectively comprising 84.8% of total applications and including a high number of residential subdivisions (EPA, 2008).

A good illustration of the increase in housing development comes from the Victor Harbor-Port Elliot section of the south coast, which is about 80 km from metropolitan Adelaide (Fig 2) and within easy commuting distance. Here the population of Victor Harbor has

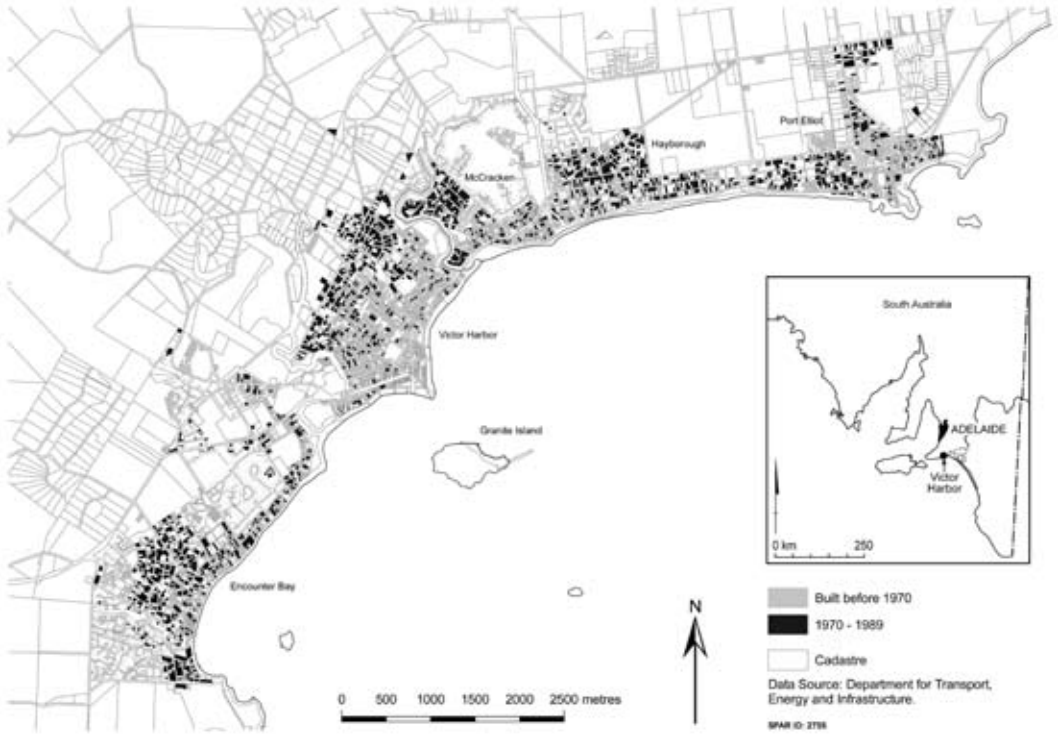
Figure 1 Location of South Australian non-metropolitan urban coastal communities referred to in the text



tripled in size since 1970 (see section below on population growth). Figure 2 illustrates extensive housing development between Victor Harbor and Port Elliot over the 19 year period, 1970-1989.

Figure 3 shows similarly intense housing development over the subsequent 17 year period, 1990-2007 but with a slightly different pattern. Over the latter period there was not only residential infill, and subdivision of larger blocks but there were new forms of development such as the waterfront real estate of the Encounter Lakes subdivision comprising 495 residential allotments. This had the first stage of its land subdivision released in late

Figure 2 Housing development from Victor Harbor to Port Elliot over the 19 year period 1970-1989



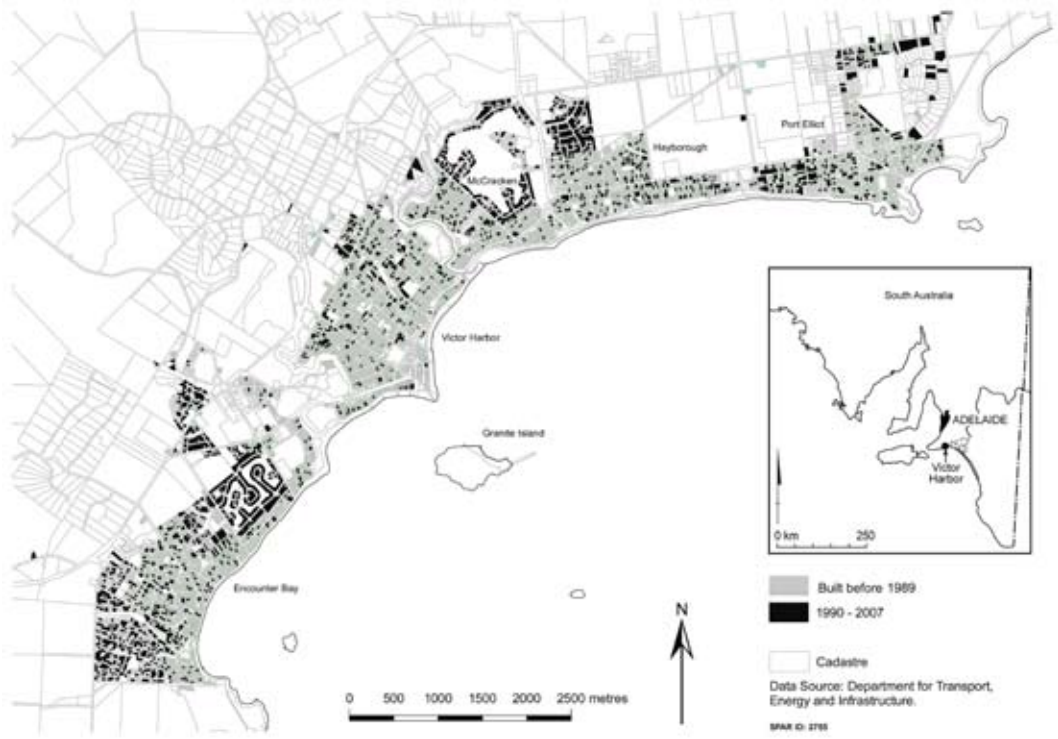
Source: after EPA, 2008, p117

1988 with a final release in 2001. Another large housing development surrounds the McCraken Estate golf course and leisure resort. The appearance of waterfront and leisure resort development over this recent period represents a fundamental change in the type of development for this area which is consistent with the sea change lifestyle movement and is not accounted for merely by population growth.

In addition to the development shown in Figure 3 there has been continued coastal subdivision adjacent to Encounter Lakes with the release in May 2008 of the 110 allotment 'Franklin Island' subdivision first stage. In the Hayborough area a new subdivision 200m from the beach called 'Beyond Today' was launched in 2007 creating 220 allotments. It is anticipated that this development will be completed in 2011.

This south coast sea change development is not restricted to the Victor Harbor/Port Elliot stretch of coast. To the northeast of Port Elliot, housing development has now extended along the Middleton coast (see Figure 4) towards Goolwa resulting in a residential coastal strip which is now virtually continuous from Victor Harbor to Goolwa. Middleton is identified by Salt (2008) as a 'perfect sea change town and one of the best examples in South Australia. Salt selects one 'perfect sea change community' from each

Figure 3 Housing development from Victor Harbor to Port Elliot over the 17 year period 1990-2007



Source: after EPA, 2008, p117

of the five states and notes that Middleton in South Australia, 'with 820 residents', is often overlooked because it sits between the two larger communities of Port Elliot and Goolwa. Salt suggests that some of Australia's best sea change towns have slipped under the radar because the census only recognises an urban centre once it exceeds a population of 200 and suggests that about six sea change communities materialize around the Australian coast every year (Salt, 2008).

A second example of sea change coastal development comes from a section of northwest Yorke Peninsula within the District Council of Copper Coast where the coastal town of Wallaroo has had an almost 50% increase in population since 1970 (see section below on population growth). Wallaroo, is twice as far from metropolitan Adelaide as the south coast example of Victor Harbor, Port Elliot, Middleton and Goolwa but is still within easy driving distance (160 km) for a holiday or lifestyle shift location. While the area has traditionally had an industrial/ farming based economy, there has been a more recent increase in residential development. Over the last 20 years, 41% (645 dwellings) of the total 1,561 dwellings built within 2 km from the coast in the DC Copper Coast have appeared in the last 5 years (source Planning SA data, 2008). In comparison only half this number of dwellings was built at a distance beyond 2 km from the coast in the same area

Figure 4 housing development along the Middleton coast (in distance) to the east of Port Elliot (foreground). Much of this housing is less than 20 years old

Photo: Nick Harvey, 2008

over the same period.

Two recent development proposals on the Copper Coast will continue the sea change population shift in the area. The first is the North Shores residential development at Wallaroo comprising 280 allotments within 500 metres from the beach. The second is 'The Dunes' residential and resort development associated with a Greg Norman designed golf course which had its first stage of 300 allotments released in late 2007.

3 Waterfront development as part of the sea change phenomenon

As noted by Harvey and Swift (1990) non-metropolitan waterfront development in South Australia is usually associated with coastal marina developments and most of these require expensive breakwater construction and ongoing dredging to protect and maintain an open channel to the sea. In addition they usually require revetment wall rock protection around the marina basin and waterways. It is often not possible to fund these works from marina berth revenue alone, so there has been a tendency to link extensive waterfront residential development to these marina developments to such an extent that the term 'marina' is often a misnomer where it comprises a small part of the overall development.

Coastal marina developments in South Australia were the subject of controversy in the mid 1980s associated with a lack of strategic planning, a lack of guidelines for development and uncertainty about the demand for marina berths (Harvey, 1992; Harvey and Swift, 1990). Following a strategic environmental assessment approach the South Australian government released a South Australian coastal marina strategy ;n 1988, which set the framework for coastal marina developments over the last 20 years (Harvey, 2000; 2002). Since the marina strategy was developed in 1988 there have been 8 non-metropolitan coastal marina developments approved in South Australia of which three are associated with significant residential development. One of these, The Copper Cove marina,

Figure 5 Illustration of the extent of waterfront housing development (centre-left) associated with the Copper Cove Marina development

Photo: Nick Harvey, 2008

located at Wallaroo (see Fig 5) has created a large area of new housing development which is likely to attract a different socio-economic mix of residents compared to the rest of the Wallaroo township. Of the 500 housing allotments in the Copper Cove marina development, 275 are waterfront allotments, many with their own moorings. In addition there are 154 berths in the inner harbour and 24 commercial berths inside the breakwater.

A much larger south coast waterfront development of 1052 allotments is located on Hindmarsh Island where an associated marina complex is linked to the low energy wave climate of the Murray River rather than the sea and does not have the need for expensive coastal breakwaters. The Hindmarsh Island marina and residential development is adjacent to seawater in the Murray River estuary and Coorong Lagoon but this water is artificially separated from the river water by the Goolwa barrage which maintains the level of the river water behind it and hence the water level within the marina. As noted by Clarke and Harvey (2006) a strong demand for waterfront housing meant that by late 2004, 650 allotments had been sold, 172 homes had been constructed, 41 were under construction and another 27 due to commence. This will complete stage eight out of eleven stages of the approved development.

In addition to the south coast and Copper Coast examples above, there has been housing development associated with marinas on other parts of the South Australian coast such as at Port Lincoln where the Stage II marina proposal comprised 200 new allotments plus 165 resort units and was essentially an expansion of the existing Stage I marina and housing development. More recently, on the southeast coast at Cape Jaffa a marina has only just been completed in 2008 with a planned 570 new housing allotments, including

a significant proportion of waterfront allotments.

It is clear that the 8 new non-metropolitan marina developments approved over the last 20 years have contributed significantly to new coastal subdivisions, particularly associated with the Copper Cove (500 allotments), Cape Jaffa (570 allotments) and Hindmarsh Island (1052 allotments) marinas. The latter two developments comprise the majority of all the residential growth over the last two decades at the respective locations. These examples, clearly demonstrate the ongoing importance of marinas and their associated waterfront development as part of the South Australian sea change phenomenon.

Apart from the non-metropolitan marina-related residential development there has been little stand-alone waterfront development in these areas. One of these exceptions, as noted above, is the waterfront development associated with the latest phase of non-metropolitan coastal development at Victor Harbor. Here the Encounter Lakes subdivision is purely residential and does not have boating access to the sea as it is only connected via a salt-water flushing pipe. The lake development comprises 495 residential allotments of which 284 are waterfront. Adjacent to this development is a similar style of development, the new Franklin Island subdivision with 110 waterfront allotments.

4 Coastal population increase and demographic profile change

The most notable areas of coastal population growth are concentrated in areas north and south of metropolitan Adelaide and also specific localities associated with retirement and recreational activities on Eyre Peninsula and in the Copper Coast District Council in Northern Yorke Peninsula. Table 1 shows the coastal Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) which have experienced the most significant population change between the 1996 and 2006 censuses. The south coast SLAs of Alexandrina (coastal) and Victor Harbor have had substantial and consistent growth over the 10 year period with over 6,000 persons added to these two populations. The rate of growth stayed in excess of 3 per cent per annum in Alexandrina, which includes the coastal towns of Goolwa, Middleton and Port Elliot. Yankalilla is another southern area that has had above average population growth, especially in the more recent 2001-2006 intercensal period.

The Copper Coast District Council, which includes the coastal towns of Wallaroo, Moonta Bay and Port Hughes, is among those areas experiencing rates of population growth in excess of 1 per cent annually with some 1300 persons added to its population over the 10 year period. The other significant gains in population occurred in Port Lincoln and the Lower Eyre Peninsula SLA adjacent to it. The SLAs of Cleve and Franklin Harbor on the northeast coast of Eyre peninsula have experienced substantial growth in the most recent intercensal 2001-2006 period due largely to developments such as the ferry terminal at Lucky Bay that links to Wallaroo on Yorke Peninsula. This has reduced travelling time to and from Adelaide and enhanced the attraction of the Eyre Peninsula for retirees moving in from Whyalla and adjacent farming areas, as well as workers associated with the expanding aquaculture businesses in the area. Robe in the South East is the other notable area that has increased its population by over one third between 1996 and 2006 attracting retirees and offering recreational amenities.

Whilst examining the population gains in the more favourable coastal locations it is important to emphasise that the age structure of these areas is changing dramatically as shown in Figure 6. There has been substantial growth

Table 1 South Australia: Coastal Population Growth by SLA, 1996-2006

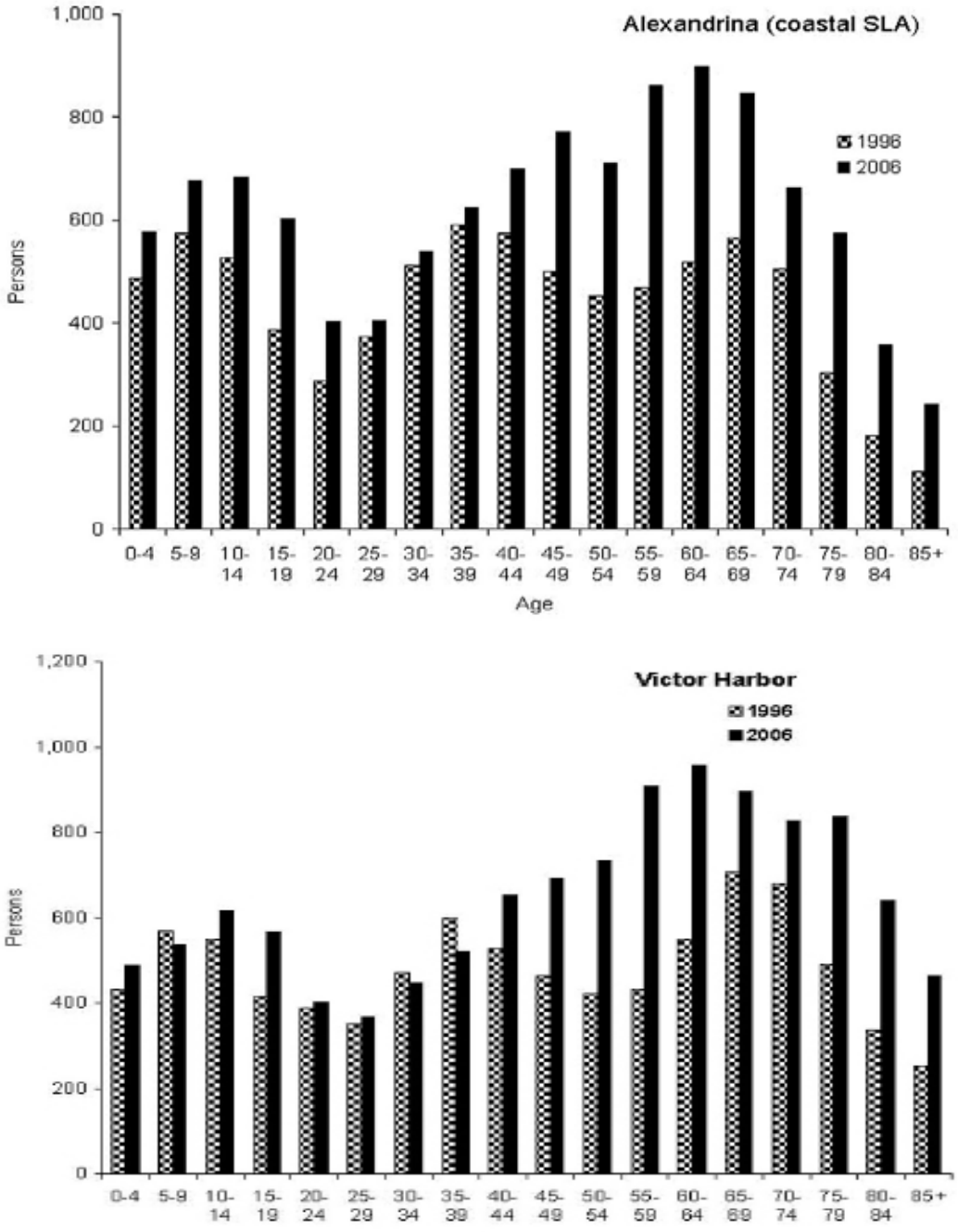
Ranked* Statistical Local Area (SLA)	Population 1996	Population 2006	Population Change 1996-2006	Percentage Change 1996-2006*	Growth rate 1996-2001	Growth rate 2001-06
Alexandrina (coastal)	7938	11174	3236	40.8	3.2	3.8
Victor Harbor	8656	11605	2949	34.1	4.1	1.9
Robe	1277	1716	439	34.1	1.7	4.3
Cleve	1884	2414	530	28.1	-0.6	5.7
Franklin Harbor	1218	1490	272	22.3	0.8	3.3
Yankalilla	3538	3994	456	12.9	0.6	1.9
Mallala	6761	7739	978	14.5	0.9	1.8
Copper Coast	9883	11212	1329	13.4	1.3	1.2
Lower Eyre Peninsula	3859	4310	451	11.7	1.1	1.1
Pt Lincoln	12182	13431	1249	10.3	1.7	0.3
Streaky Bay	1925	2085	160	8.3	0.6	1.0

*SLAs ranked by percentage population change 1996-2006
Source: ABS, 2006 census CDATA time series

in older population due to the in-migration of retirees and what can be considered as a pre-retirement population of persons in their late 40s and 50s, as well as young families that are engaged in service occupations that have been expanding over the last decade. The changing age profiles of Alexandrina (coastal) and Victor Harbor between 1996 and 2006 demonstrate the very significant increase in the 40 plus population with the doubling of population aged above 75 years. The ageing forward of 1996 cohorts of the population in their 60s and 70s effectively generates much of the growth in the aged at more advanced ages by 2006, and clearly puts considerable pressure on health services and aged care that in turn provides job opportunities for younger families. There is a similar, but less marked, pattern of growth in the 40 plus population in the Copper Coast with a significant increase in the retired population 65-74 years and to a lesser extent those at advanced ages. One common aspect in all of the age profiles is the notable deficit in young adults 20-34 years with only marginal changes occurring over the 10 year period.

Figure 7 shows age-sex specific net migration profiles based on estimates calculated for the most recent intercensal period 2001-2006 for each of the areas. All profiles show significant net migration gains in males and females in their late 50s and 60s with net migration loss indicated for the latter age groups. There are also significant in-migration gains in population in their late 30s and 40s and their accompanying young children, attracted to the job opportunities generated by the substantial

Figure 6 Change in Age Structure of Populations in Alexandrina, Victor Harbor and Copper Coast, 1996-2006



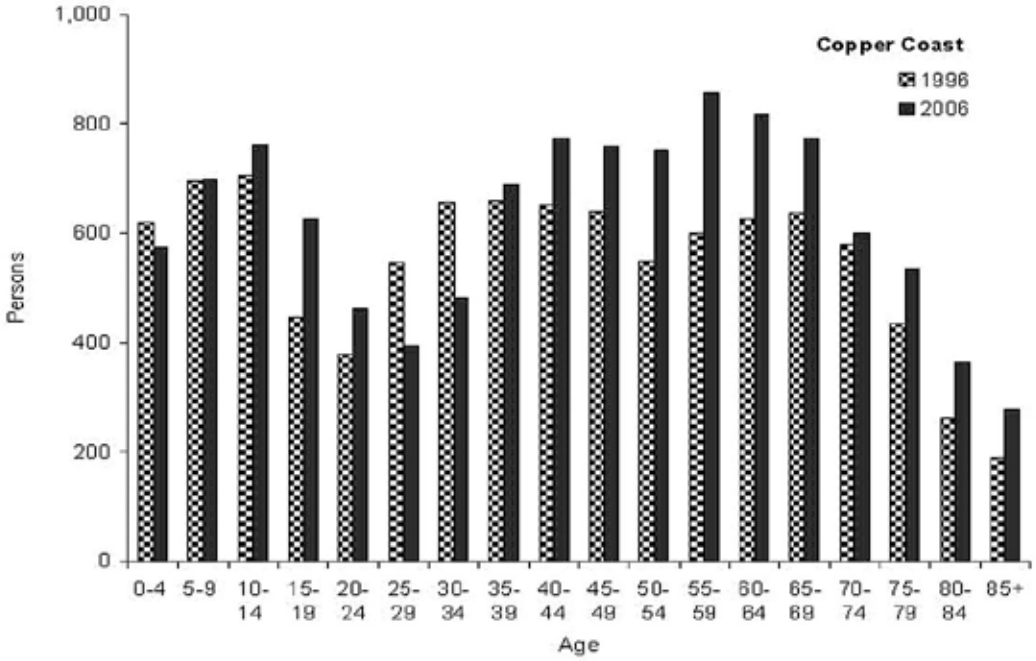
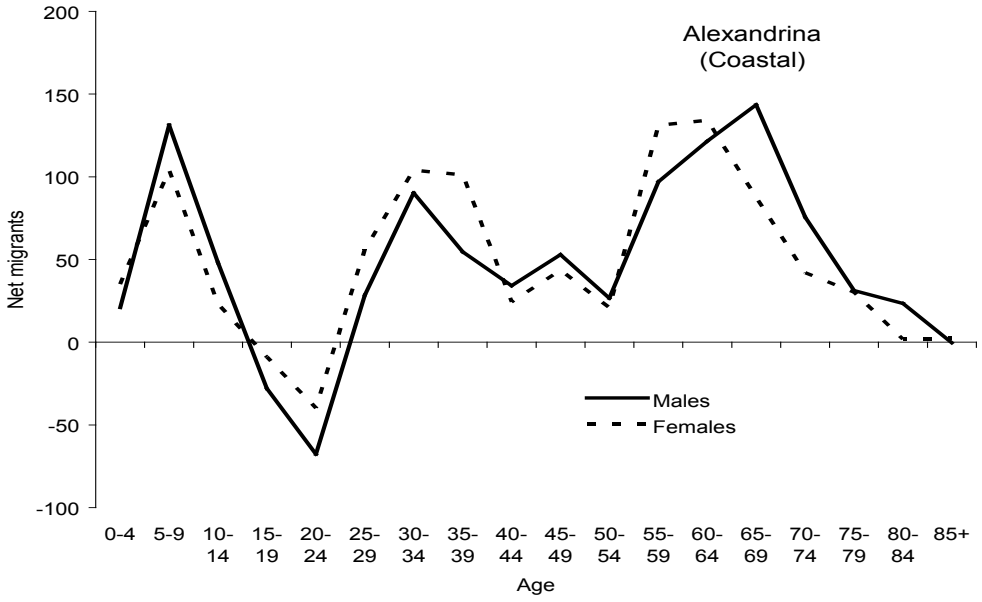
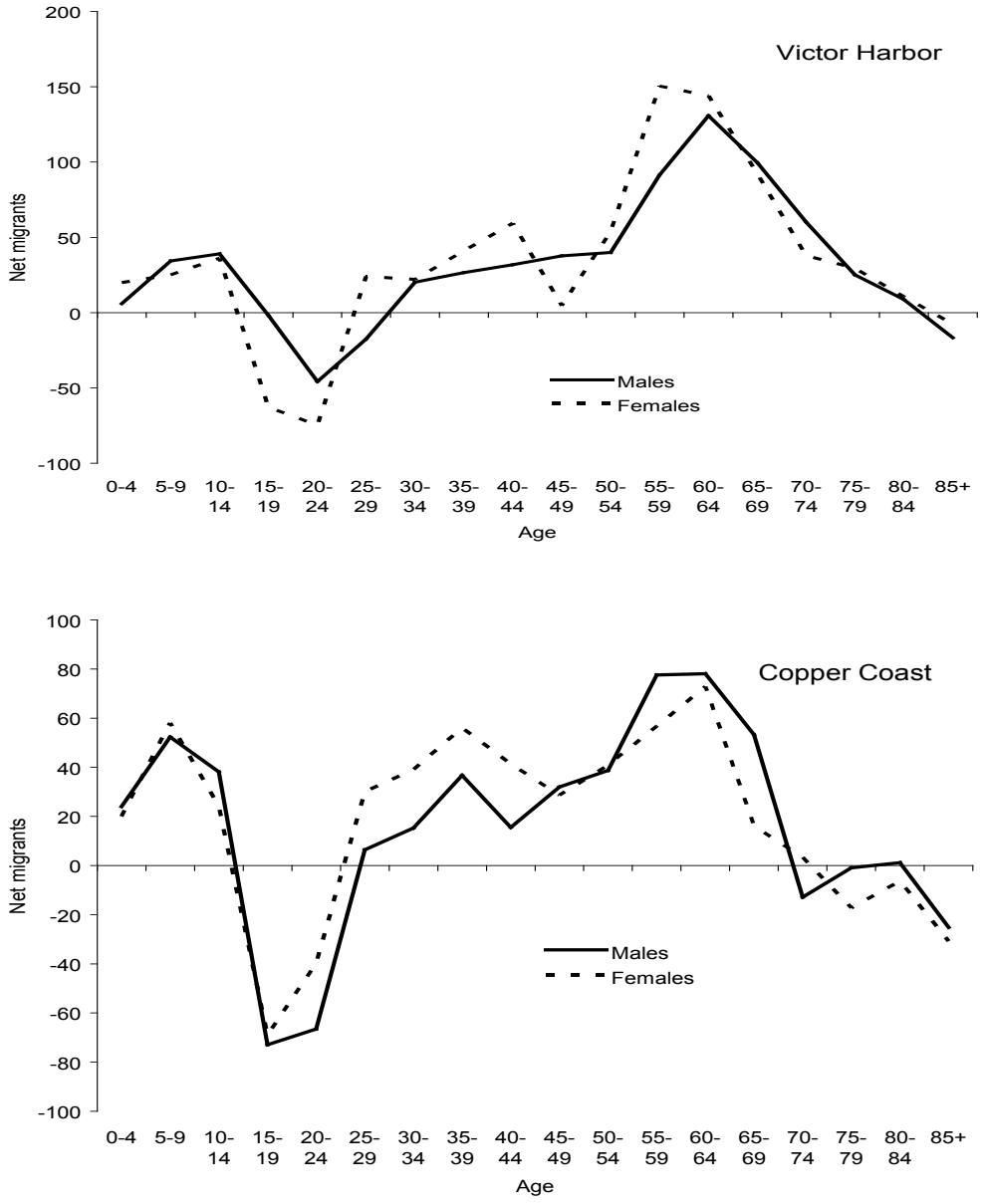


Figure 7 Net Migration Estimates in Alexandrina, Victor Harbor and Copper Coast, 2001-2006





Source: previously unpublished estimates by Rudd based on the 2001 and 2006 census data

population growth in these areas over the last decade or so. However the very notable migration loss of young adults is consistent with the long-standing exodus of youth from non-metropolitan areas to metropolitan areas (Rudd, 2006).

Non-metropolitan coastal areas displaying quite exceptional growth contrast dramatically to the majority of other non-metropolitan areas, specifically the predominantly agriculturally based ones, that are characterized by a long-term trend of population decline (Rudd, 2004) expected to continue into the future. The very marked spatial concentration of coastal population gain in particular locations, those that appear to be more favoured areas with resort-recreational activities and amenities, continue to attract further developments whether they be marina and housing projects, business ventures or government investment in services, thus generating a momentum for future growth.

It should also be mentioned that much of the considerable growth in the coastal areas alluded to above is an under-estimate of population as the figures are based on the resident population at the time of the census. The significant development of housing in these coastal growth areas attracts second or holiday home owners buying into the areas which significantly boost seasonal and holiday populations but are excluded from census counts. This poses major difficulties for service providers where funding is based on census count populations and yet demand for services can be well above provision and pressure on infrastructure cannot be met.

Another problem faced by these communities is the lack of knowledge about the future intentions of many of the second homeowners who may ultimately become permanent residents.

5 Discussion: sea change in South Australia

From the data presented in this paper it is clear that a significant amount of South Australia's population growth, land division and housing development is taking place in non-metropolitan coastal centres and that both growth and development pressure are predicted to continue. It is also clear that some of these areas, such as the Alexandrina (coastal) SLA, are experiencing very high rates of population growth. Such growth trends of increased non-metropolitan coastal resident and tourist populations are in keeping with the other Australian states, albeit on a smaller scale. These trends have profound implications for coastal local councils in South Australia. The demand for development, specifically the preference for waterfront development, is taking place at a time of great uncertainty associated with climate change and sea-level rise.

The SA Government in its submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Climate Change noted that current coastal development patterns in South Australia may be increasing coastal vulnerability to climate change. In addition there are associated social considerations in regard to infrastructure provision and services. Consequently there is a need for decision-makers to carefully consider development plans and applications in areas of vulnerability and to be aware of the demographic nuances in particular regions. Failing to plan strategically for coastal development has the potential for significant environmental and social challenges with undue burdens placed on local governments, communities and private landholders. Much research effort and policy development is underway across Australia, with the formulation of appropriate responses and strategies to manage to both sea change growth and coastal vulnerability from sea-level

rise. For example there a number of initiatives have occurred at the national level such as:

- National Sea Change Taskforce (local government national initiative)
- Australian Department of Climate Change (Australian Government) initiatives
  - National Coastal Vulnerability Assessment
  - The Australian Climate Change Science Program
- The Adaptation Research Facility (Griffith University) – nationally funded

At the state level in South Australia there have also been recent initiatives:

- SA Strategic Plan (2007)
- SA Greenhouse Strategy (2007)
- State Natural Resource Management Plan (2006)
- Coast Protection Board (CPB) initiatives
  - CPB Policy (2002)
  - Living Coast Strategy (2004)

What remains to be seen is whether first, the anticipated outcomes of such efforts will be timely enough to keep pace with development pressure and second, if information will be available at scales that will meet the needs of local governments which hold the responsibility for much of the planning and development decision making at the coast.

It is of concern that despite all the good intentions of previous national and state coastal policies, plans, efforts and initiatives of preceding decades, inappropriate development has continually been allowed (SA Government, 2008). Both state and national State of the Environment Reports document a continuing decline of coastal resources, partly due to a consequence of urban development and expansion. One principal reason offered to explain the lack of success of previous endeavors is the jurisdictional complexity of coastal management in Australia and limited evidence of integrated management at the coast. Another is the mismatch that exists between research and policy development and the failure of policy to protect coastal resources from inappropriate development. It appears that the main problem in South Australia is the limited adequacy and power of local government development plans.

National studies undertaken for the National Sea Change Task Force consistently identify that the local sphere of government is under considerable pressure to adequately manage the sea change phenomena by planning strategically and sustainably to cope with the demand. Additionally local councils are grappling with planning and development issues related to projected sea-level rise and appropriate set back guidelines for local development plans (Norman, 2008).

Two recent coastal planning decisions illustrate these problems. First, at Gippsland Lakes, Victoria a coastal development proposal was rejected in 2008, in part because of the threat of sea-level rise and increased erosion, and in part because of the inappropriateness of the proposed development within a rural planning zone (ABC, 2008). Second, at Marion Bay on Yorke Peninsula, South Australia a development proposal was rejected in September 2007 largely on the grounds of vulnerability to coastal erosion and the threat of increased vulnerability from projected sea-level rise (Environment, Resources and Development Court of South Australia, 2007). Both of these are considered landmark cases where Councils defeated inappropriate coastal development proposals.

South Australia has a suite of legislative and management frameworks in place. However, the effectiveness of these regulatory instruments is questionable. For example the

Coast Protection Board (CPB) has a range of policies designed to address development in the coastal zone and avoid risk from natural hazards, particularly flooding and erosion. A recent South Australian parliamentary inquiry into Coastal development concluded that the key agency 'has limited powers' because a study of the CPB's activities for a given year showed that around 20% of the CPB's advice in relation to development assessment was not followed by planning authorities (SA Government, 2008, p. 6). This clearly demonstrates institutional barriers to effective planning.

6 Conclusion

This paper provides detailed evidence of the sea change phenomenon in South Australia and illustrates the effect of this on selected coastal communities through changing age structure, rapid population growth and housing development. All of these factors affect coastal planning and management, including the need to address impacts from projected sea-level rise associated with climate change. In some council areas it is the speed of change that is putting pressure on existing infrastructure and exposing poor planning or a lack of strategic planning. Since State and local governments are vested with powers for land use planning and managing coastal lands they will also have the responsibility for implementing change.

There is clearly a need for strategic planning at the level of local government based upon principles of sustainable development. The South Australian government (2008) has already acknowledged that appropriate management is needed which in part can be done through best practice regulatory measures and institutional frameworks. Here there is an opportunity to take up the recommendations of the NSCT (2006) 'Best Practice Guidelines' which offer a raft of protective and strategic planning responses.

The role of the state government in South Australian coastal management and decision-making should be strengthened with statutory policies from the lead agency on coastal management, the Coast Protection Board. In addition, there is a need for coastal vulnerability assessment in conjunction with careful demographic analysis of the changes taking place along the South Australian coast. Finally, the development pressure from the sea change phenomenon highlights the need for further research to determine the institutional barriers to effective planning, the adequacy of coastal development plans, and their robustness to withstand developer demand and challenge.

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