

1996 CENSUS FINDINGS ON INTERSTATE MIGRATION TO QUEENSLAND FOCUSING ON SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND

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South-East Queensland continues to be the fastest-growing region in Australia, largely because of net migration. This paper examines the contribution of net interstate migration between the 1991 and 1996 censuses to this growth. More people moved into the region in 1991-1996 than in 1986-1991 but the strong out-migration of Victorians appears to have peaked in the early 1990s. However, the authors doubt that overall levels of net migration to the area will fall significantly in the immediate future.

The paper also analyses some of the characteristics of interstate migrants to South-East Queensland. People aged 35-39 form the largest age group, and clerical and service-workers the largest occupational group. These trends are even more pronounced for people who move to Brisbane. People who move to South-East Queensland are, however, less likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed or not in the labour force than those who move to Brisbane.

The 1996 Census of Population and Housing results have confirmed that South-East Queensland remains Australia's fastest growing area. But are the components of population growth changing over time and are the emerging trends different from past trends?

This paper examines the contribution of interstate migration to the growth of South-East Queensland in terms of the numerical size of the flows and in terms of its composition regarding age structure, labour-force status and occupational groupings. In addition, the paper briefly canvasses the value of analysing past internal migration patterns in terms of their predictive power for future directions.

South-East Queensland, defined as the Brisbane and Moreton Statistical Divisions, extends from Noosa Shire in the north to the New South Wales border in the south and to Toowoomba in the west, but not including that city. It has been described by Stimson et al.¹ as the nation's first sun-belt metropolis, spread in mainly low-density form across a vast area, creating a poly-centric urban form.

Since 1986 the region's population has increased by 632,000 from 1,593,000 in 1986 to 2,225,000 in 1996. This represents an annual growth rate of 3.4 per cent over the ten year period compared with 2.4 per cent for Queensland and 1.3 per cent for Australia as a whole.

At 30 June 1996 the Brisbane Statistical Division accounted for 71.1 per cent of the region's population and 55.7 per cent of the growth over the intercensal period 1991-96. The Moreton Statistical Division made up the balance of 28.9 per cent of the region's population and 44.3 per cent of the region's growth over the same period.

Population growth in the Moreton Statistical Division is dominated by the Gold and Sunshine Coast sub-regions.² Over the last intercensal period these two areas accounted for 95.9 per cent of the increase in the Statistical Division's population.

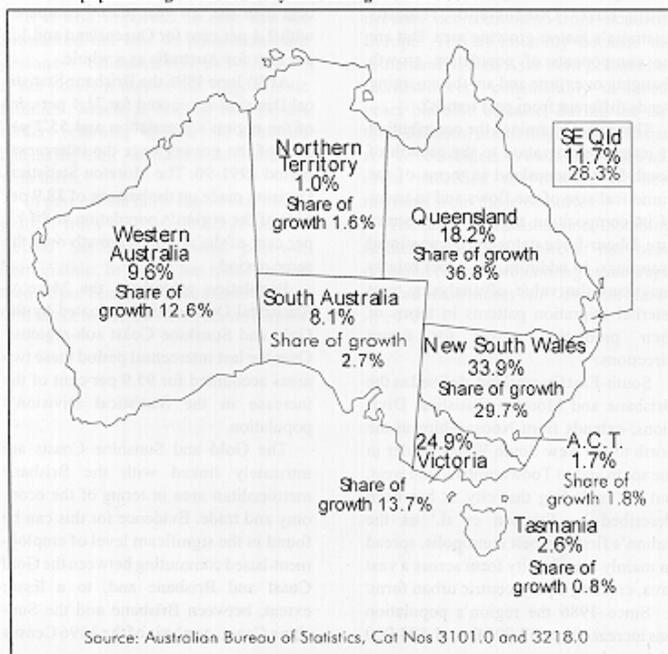
The Gold and Sunshine Coasts are intricately linked with the Brisbane metropolitan area in

terms of the economy and trade. Evidence for this can be found in the significant level of employment-based commuting between the Gold Coast and Brisbane and, to a lesser extent, between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. Analysis of the 1996 Census journey-to-work data reveals that 10,200 persons lived on the Gold Coast but worked in Brisbane City with a reverse flow of 2,600. At 3,800 persons, travel between the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane City for employment reasons was considerably less, while movement in the reverse direction was 1,300 persons.

To place the recent population growth of South-East Queensland in perspective in the Australian context, it is appropriate to analyse the region's share of growth, firstly in comparison with other states and territories and secondly in the light of population change in the nation's other major metropolitan regions.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of the national population held by each state and territory and by the South-East Queensland region as at 30 June 1996. It also shows the share of national growth for each of these areas over the 1991-96 intercensal period.

Figure 1: Proportion of national resident population at 30 June 1996 and share of national population growth for five years ending 30 June 1996



In the period 1991-96 Queensland recorded the highest level of growth of all the States and Territories. With 18.2 per cent of the Australian population in 1996 it accounted for 36.8 per cent of the nation's population increase over the intercensal period. This level, however, was considerably down from the 1986-91 period when the State's growth represented 44 per cent of the national growth.

Similarly, South-East Queensland had 11.7 per cent of the nation's population in 1996 but recorded 28.3 per cent of the country's growth over the 1991-96 period. This level of growth was two percentage points lower than the increase shown for the 1986-91 period.

Table 1 provides an analysis of population change over the 1986-96 period for all of Australia's major metropolitan areas with populations greater than one million. South-East Queensland's share of national growth is the highest for all the metropolitan regions in both intercensal periods since 1986. During the 1991-96 period, growth in the Moreton Statistical Division alone was greater than that for the Melbourne, Perth or Adelaide Statistical

Divisions respectively. South-East Queensland, therefore, has remained Australia's fastest growing region since 1986 and recent population projections released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics³ and forthcoming projections by the Queensland Department of Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning⁴ indicate that this position is expected to be maintained for at least the next 20 years, albeit at a lower level of growth.

Table 1: Population change, major metropolitan regions of Australia, 1986-91 and 1991-96				
Region	1986-91		1991-96	
	Change	Per cent of national change	Change	Per cent of national change
Brisbane SD ^a	140,647	11.1	162,601	15.8
Moreton SD	114,064	9.0	128,447	12.5
SE Qld total	254,711	20.1	291,048	28.3
Sydney SD	201,255	15.9	206,515	20.1
Melbourne SD	188,754	14.9	127,360	12.4
Adelaide SD	53,661	4.2	22,023	2.1
Perth SD	138,662	11.0	106,370	10.4
Australia	1,265,636	100.0	1,027,450	100.0

^a SD stands for Statistical Division.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cat. No. 3101.0 and 3218.0

INTERSTATE MIGRATION

Three quarters of the growth in South-East Queensland for both intercensal periods can be attributed to assumed net migration. Unfortunately Census data do not enable this measure to be disaggregated into the three components of net migration — interstate, intrastate and overseas migration — because permanent and long-term overseas departures between 1991 and 1996 are not captured by the 1996 Census as these people would have left Australia by the time of the Census.

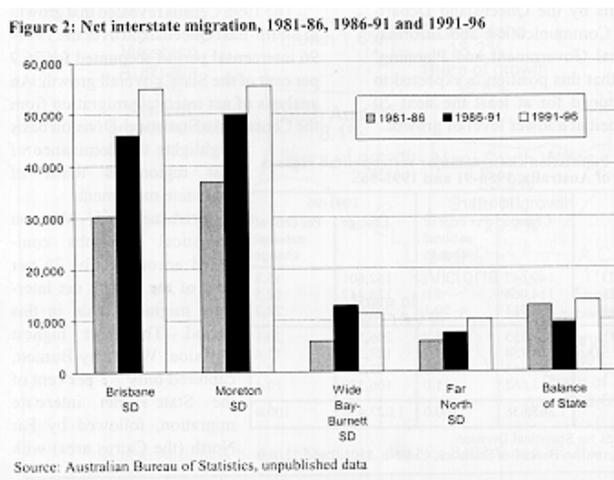
In addition, there was a 4.3 per cent level of non-response to the Census question 'where were you five years ago?'. To further complicate the analysis, some respondents indicated they moved in the intercensal period but did not indicate their address five years previously.

Despite these limitations, the Census does provide valuable insight into the attributes of the people who did move and those who did complete the Census form correctly.

The 1996 Census revealed that growth in South-East Queensland over the 1991-96 intercensal period accounted for 76.9 per cent of the State's overall growth. An analysis of net interstate migration from the Census on a Statistical-Division basis highlights the dominance of this region in terms of interstate movement.

Brisbane and Moreton Statistical Divisions combined accounted for 76 per cent of the State's net interstate migration gain in this period. The next highest Division, Wide Bay-Burnett, captured only 7.8 per cent of the State's net interstate migration, followed by Far North (the Cairns area) with 6.9 per cent. The remainder of the State recorded only 9.4 per cent of the total net interstate migration flow.

Figure 2 shows net interstate migration for the key recipient Statistical Divisions in Queensland over the last three intercensal periods. There is a remarkable level of consistency in terms of South-East Queensland's share of net interstate migration to the state over the past 15 years with the level varying by only three per cent between each of the intercensal periods.



The sub-regions within South-East Queensland that benefited most from net interstate migration between 1991 and 1996 are presented in Table 2. The four sub-regions listed in Table 2, Brisbane City, the Brisbane Statistical Division (SD) less Brisbane City (Balance of BSD), Gold Coast region and Sunshine Coast region, captured more than 95 per cent of the total net migration to South-East Queensland. The fifth sub-region, balance of Moreton Statistical Division, represents the remaining area and is comprised of predominantly non-urban local government areas.

On a sub-regional basis the Gold Coast region recorded the highest net gain of 33,447 from interstate migration followed by Balance of Brisbane Statistical Division at 31,127, Brisbane City 23,767 and Sunshine Coast 19,007.

Table 2 also provides a breakdown of the origin of interstate migrants. The table highlights that Brisbane City recorded a higher net gain from the balance of New South Wales compared with Sydney, while in the other three sub-regions of South-East Queensland the situation was reversed.

Place of residence 1996 (destination)	Place of residence in 1991 (origin)					
	Sydney	Balance of NSW	Melbourne	Balance of Victoria	Rest of Australia	Total
Brisbane City	3,602	5,773	5,702	2,475	6,215	23,767

Balance of Brisbane SD	8,247	6,578	7,029	3,767	5,506	31,127
Gold Coast ^a	9,899	6,827	7,855	3,582	5,284	33,447
Sunshine Coast	5,145	3,452	4,245	2,718	3,447	19,007
Balance of SE Qld	1,023	803	502	314	371	3,013
Total SE Qld	27,916	23,433	25,333	12,856	20,823	110,361
Per cent	25.3	21.2	23.0	11.6	18.9	100.0

^a Excludes Part A in Brisbane SD.

Source: 1996 Census, unpublished tables

The strong net outflow from Victoria, particularly Melbourne, is readily apparent in the table. In the 1991-96 period the net movement to the four major sub-regions of South-East Queensland from Victoria was 38,230. People from Melbourne accounted for 25,358 and those from the rest of Victoria 12,872. In 1991 to 1996 the net exchange with Victoria was 60 per cent higher compared with level of 23,100 recorded for the 1986-91 period.⁵

For the first time since data on internal migration data have been collected by the Census, the 1996 Census showed that Melbourne (5,700) made a greater contribution to Brisbane City growth than Sydney (3,600). By way of comparison, the net internal migration movement from the Balance of New South Wales (5,800) was also higher than from Sydney.

The high levels of net interstate migration loss from Victoria appear to be a feature of the early 1990s and have already shown a remarkable turnabout. An examination of annual interstate migration data compiled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that interstate migration loss from Victoria peaked in 1993-94 at 29,195 but has fallen dramatically in the last four years. Preliminary data for 1997-98 indicate that Victoria will record a net interstate migration loss of less than 1,000, the lowest loss since the 1960s.

Similarly interstate migration exchanges with Queensland reveal net flows peaked in 1993-94 at 18,062 but had declined significantly to 4,012 by 1997-98.

In summary, in terms of interstate migration flows to South-East Queensland, the main characteristics of the 1991-96 period are:

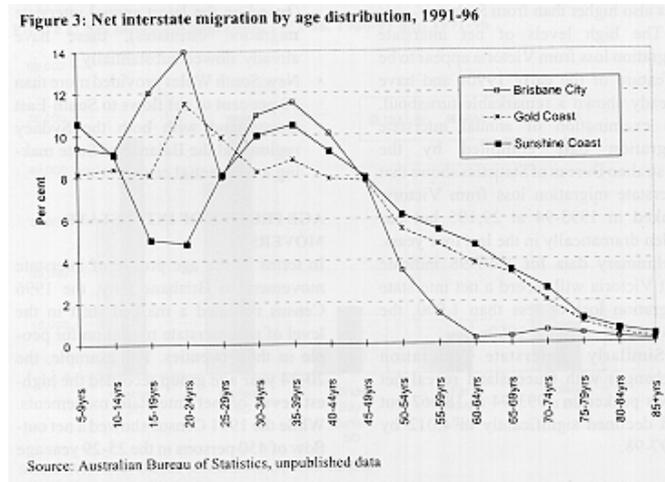
- Strong net migration flows were recorded from all States and Territories;
- Record levels of net interstate migration gain from Victoria occurred, particularly for Brisbane City, but (based on the latest annual interstate migration estimates), these have already slowed substantially
- New South Wales provided more than 50 per cent of net flows to South-East Queensland with both the Sydney region and the Balance of State making a substantial contribution.

AGE PROFILE OF INTERSTATE MOVERS

In terms of the age profile of interstate movement to Brisbane City, the 1996 Census revealed a marked shift in the level of net interstate migration for people in their twenties. For example, the 20-24 year age group recorded the highest level of net interstate movements. While the 1991 Census showed a net out-flow of 450 persons in the 25-29 year age group, the 1996 Census revealed that this age group recorded a net inflow of 1,900.

Brisbane City recorded positive net interstate migration for all age groups. However, it is clear from the cross-classified migration tables analysed for this paper, that in the older age groups (60 years and over) there was strong out-migration from Brisbane to adjacent coastal destinations in South-East Queensland and Northern New South Wales.

Figure 3 reveals that the age profiles of net interstate migration for Gold Coast City and the Sunshine Coast region have similar patterns for persons aged over 30 years with a peak in the 35-39 age group for both areas.



In net terms, however, the Sunshine Coast, does not gain greatly in the movement of people between 15 and 24 years of age. While the inflow was quite strong from interstate movement in this age group, the outflow of intrastate movers is also high, possibly reflecting the lack of tertiary education facilities and job opportunities in the regions. The recent establishment of a university at Sippy Downs in Maroochy Shire may well, over time, slow the outflow of students moving to the Brisbane region to undertake tertiary education.

The data for Gold Coast City and the Sunshine Coast region also fail to support the commonly held view that interstate migration is dominated by relatively older persons.

For both coastal regions there was a continual decline in the size of the net movement by five-year age group from the peak in the 35-39 year age group. There was no evidence of a slight rise in the 60-64 age group that was identifiable in the 1991 Census data for the 1986-91 period.⁶ In terms of specific age groups, persons aged 60 years or more represented 10.9 per cent and 13.2 per cent of the net interstate migration to Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast respectively. By comparison, the proportion of the estimated resident population in the same age groups in 1996 was 18 per cent and 19.4 per cent for the two areas. What is evident from the 1996 Census data is relatively high levels of movement for people in their thirties and forties (who are most likely still in the labour-force) and their dependent children.

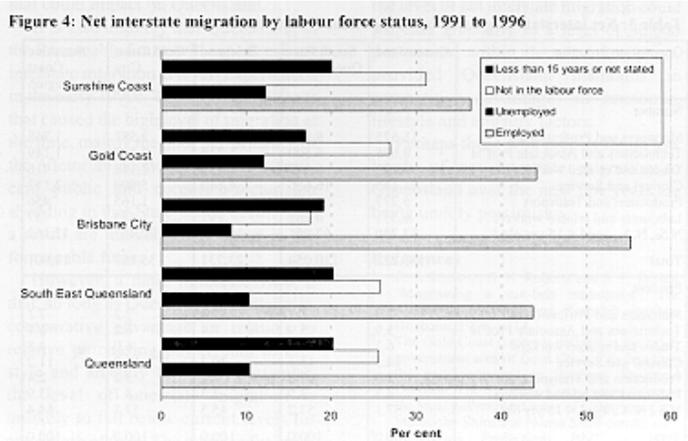
LABOUR-FORCE STATUS AND OCCUPATION OF INTERSTATE MOVERS

Labour-force status and occupation of movers at the time of the Census does not necessarily reflect their labour-force status and occupation before or at the time of the interstate move. Notwithstanding this shortcoming inherent in the data, these characteristics of interstate migrants provide a revealing insight into the net effect of interstate migration on Queensland's labour-force.

Figure 4 shows the net effect of interstate migration to the labour-force of Queensland,

South-East Queensland, and three key regions within South-East Queensland (Brisbane City, Gold Coast City and the Sunshine Coast region). For South-East Queensland as a whole, net migration resulted in an additional:

- 48,170 employed people (43.7 per cent of net interstate movers) living in the region in 1996;
- 11,340 unemployed people (10.3 per cent of movers);
- 28,420 people not in the labour-force (25.8 per cent of movers); and
- 22,319 people (20.2 per cent of movers) who were aged less than 15 years, or who did not respond to the Census question about labour-force status.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census 1996, unpublished tables

Within the region, the employed component of net interstate migration to Brisbane City comprised 55.2 per cent (Figure 4), considerably greater than comparable figures for Gold Coast City (44.1 per cent), or the Sunshine Coast region (36.4 per cent). In contrast, the unemployed component of net interstate migration to the Gold and Sunshine Coast regions (respectively 12.1 per cent and 12.3 per cent) exceeded that for Brisbane City (8.2 per cent). This is in keeping with comparable data from the 1991 Census,⁷ and supports the contention that Brisbane City provides more employment opportunities than either of the two coastal urban regions.

Similarly, persons who at the time of the 1996 Census indicated that they were 'not in the labour force' comprised a large proportion of movers to the Sunshine Coast region (31.2 per cent of interstate movers) and to Gold Coast City (26.9 per cent of movers), rather than to Brisbane City (17.5 per cent of movers). Once again, these data support results from earlier intercensal periods. They reflect both the relatively older age structure of interstate movers to South-East Queensland's coastal regions and fewer employment opportunities compared with Brisbane City.

Table 3 shows net interstate migration by occupation for selected geographical areas and shows that net interstate movement was positive for every occupational grouping. In rank order, the most significant occupational grouping for all the regions shown was the clerical and service-worker category. Brisbane City recorded the largest proportional gain (20.3 per cent) for this category, followed by Gold Coast City (16.2 per cent) and the Sunshine Coast region (11.2 per cent). The relative dominance of the clerical and service worker category is most likely due to high rates of growth in the tourism, construction and service industries in South-East Queensland between 1991 and 1996.

Table 3 also shows that proportional gains for Brisbane City exceeded comparable gains recorded for either the Gold or Sunshine Coast regions in all categories except labourer and

related occupations. The greatest difference in relation to occupational categories was for managers and professionals. Here the gain recorded for Brisbane City was 1.7 times the gain recorded for either Gold Coast City or the Sunshine Coast urban region.

Table 3: Net interstate migration by occupation, 1991 to 1996					
Occupation grouping	Queensland	South East Queensland	Brisbane City	Gold Coast City	Sunshine Coast region
Number					
Managers and Professionals	11,575	8,861	2,946	2,587	1,368
Technicians and Associate Prof'ls	8,695	6,500	1,746	2,217	1,149
Trades and related workers	9,173	6,617	1,657	2,148	916
Clerical and Service	21,155	16,656	4,810	5,800	2,112
Production and Transport	5,773	4,188	975	1,165	456
Labourers and related workers	6,331	4,281	791	1,483	737
N.S., N.A., aged < 15 yrs old ^a	83,250	62,951	10,806	20,467	12,163
Total	146,222	110,054	23,731	35,867	18,901
Per cent					
Managers and Professionals	7.9	8.1	12.4	7.2	7.2
Technicians and Associate Prof'ls	5.9	5.9	7.4	6.2	6.1
Trades and related workers	6.3	6.0	7.0	6.0	4.8
Clerical and Service	14.5	15.1	20.3	16.2	11.2
Production and Transport	3.9	3.8	4.1	3.2	2.4
Labourers and related workers	4.3	3.9	3.3	4.1	3.9
N.S., N.A., aged < 15 yrs old	57.1	57.2	45.5	57.1	64.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
^a N.S. = Not stated occupation, N.A. = Not applicable, i.e. not employed.					
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 Census, unpublished tables					

FUTURE TRENDS IN INTERSTATE MIGRATION

Observed variations in the level of both internal and overseas migration to Queensland and South-East Queensland in recent years clearly illustrate the difficulty in using past trends as a guide to likely future outcomes.

Despite extensive investigation into internal migration data from past Censuses,⁸ and other credible sources,⁹ analysis regarding the magnitude, composition and causes¹⁰ of past flows does not necessarily represent a reliable tool to facilitate the prediction of likely volumes of future flows.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics¹¹ the level of net interstate migration to Queensland has declined from a peak of 49,200 in 1992-93 to an eleven-year low of 20,800 in 1997-98.

One analyst¹² believes that this level will decline much further over the next few years, primarily because of factors associated with the Asian economic crisis that could impact on Queensland.

It is also unlikely that Queensland in the foreseeable future will experience net interstate migration at levels experienced in the early 1990s. The key determinants that caused the high level of migration at the time, mainly the poor performance of the Victorian economy and the significant public and corporate-sector job shedding in that State which occurred as a result are unlikely to re-occur in the foreseeable future.

However, a more moderate view is that, so long as Queensland maintains its comparative advantage in relation to relative purchasing power, and in lifestyle and amenity factors in particular, the level of interstate migration is unlikely to fall below current levels for any length of time. The motives for interstate migration are complex and interrelated and are therefore difficult to model.

The 'sunbelt migration' to Queensland from the southern States appears to be largely confined to coastal Queensland south of Bundaberg. The coastal areas of the Wide Bay-Burnett region such as Hervey Bay and the Bundaberg/ Burnett area are regarded as a natural extension of South-East Queensland. These areas are about four hours by road from Brisbane. Residents in these areas are therefore able to access higher order services and recreation facilities available in the capital city within the day or with an overnight stay in Brisbane.

Further north, the Cairns region is the only other region of the State to receive significant interstate migration and this is largely associated with the tourism industry.

As the Australian population ages, the desire for retirement in the sunbelt could become increasingly important. Based on current evidence it is just as likely that the level of net interstate migration could increase gradually to a level of 30,000 per annum within the next few years, provided Queensland maintains its competitive advantages in economic, lifestyle and amenity factors.

Perhaps those who predict future low levels of net interstate migration to Queensland over the next few years are being unduly pessimistic.

References

¹ R. J. Stimson, B. H. Roberts and S. P. Taylor, 'Monitoring a sun-belt metropolis', The Australian Housing and Research Institute Brisbane, 1996, p. 14

² The Gold Coast region is defined as the local-government area of Gold Coast City less than the part contained in Brisbane Statistical Division. The Sunshine Coast region refers to the local government areas of Caloundra City, Maroochy Shire and Noosa Shire combined.

³ *Population Projections 1997 to 2015*, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1998, cat. no. 3220.0

⁴ *Population Projections for Queensland*, Queensland Department of Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning, 1998

⁵ R. A Barker, 'Interstate migration to South-East Queensland: an analysis', *People and Place*, vol. 1 no. 4, 1993, pp. 30 - 37

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ M. J. Bell, *Internal Migration in Australia 1981-1986*, Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS), Canberra, 1992; M. J. Bell, *Internal Migration in Australia 1991-1996*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992

⁹ *1995 Queensland Migration Survey*, Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Brisbane, 1996

¹⁰ Queensland Treasury, 'An Economic Model of Interstate Migration', *Queensland Economic Review*, Winter, 1998, pp. 28-31

¹¹ *Australian Demographics Statistics*, ABS, cat. no. 3101.0 (various issues)

¹² P. Brain (Executive Director National Institute of Economic and Industry Research), Address to a forum on 'Medium Term Outlook and the Strategies for South-East Queensland', Brisbane, 3 September 1998

Back to [Contents Vol. 6 No. 4](#)

Back to [People and Place Home Page](#)