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Publication Details

This report was originally published as Keys, CL, Recent evidence of changing settlement patterns in New South Wales, Wollongong Studies in Geography No.8, Department of Geography, University of Wollongong, 1980, 4p.

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Abstract
New South Wales, like the other mainland states of Australia, has traditionally been associated with a condition of metropolitan primacy (Rose. 1966). Moreover. the degree to which Sydney and the other capital cities have dominated the populations of their respective states has increased almost without interruption since the latter part of the nineteenth century, leading to the situation of the early 1970s in which three out of every five people in mainland Australia resided in a state capital. Outside these primate cities some urban centres have experienced short periods of explosive growth. but for most the rule has been either stagnation or slow growth. Rural Australia, meanwhile, has seen its proportion of the national population fall considerably. In 1921 more than a third of the nation's people lived outside the urban centres; fifty years later this proportion had declined to less than one seventh.

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This report is available at Research Online: http://ro.uow.edu.au/wollgeo/8

WOLLONGONG STUDIES IN GEOGRAPHY No.8
Department of Geography, University of Wollongong.

RECENT EVIDENCE OF CHANGING SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

C. L. Keys

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New South Wales, like the other mainland states of Australia, has traditionally been associated with a condition of metropolitan primacy (Rose, 1966). Moreover, the degree to which Sydney and the other capital cities have dominated the populations of their respective states has increased almost without interruption since the latter part of the nineteenth century, leading to the situation of the early 1970s in which three out of every five people in mainland Australia resided in a state capital. Outside these primate cities some urban centres have experienced short periods of explosive growth, but for most the rule has been either stagnation or slow growth. Rural Australia, meanwhile, has seen its proportion of the national population fall considerably. In 1921 more than a third of the nation's people lived outside the urban centres; fifty years later this proportion had declined to less than one seventh.

These trends in Australia's demographic history are readily explicable by reference to the migration flows which characterized the nation's economic development up to 1970. With farm numbers declining as agriculture followed the global trend toward the substitution of land and capital for labour, people were extruded from the agricultural sector and sought employment in manufacturing and services. The country towns were unable to absorb the exodus, however: few participated in the manufacturing boom, which was dominated by Sydney and Melbourne and to a lesser extent the smaller state capitals, while the expansion of the service sector outside the capitals was truncated by the decline in the agricultural population. With employment opportunities increasingly being dominated by the capitals, people from rural areas and country towns alike were forced to look to the cities for work. After World War II, however, the contribution of rural-to-metropolitan and urban-to-metropolitan flows to the growth of the state capitals was reduced appreciably as Australia looked to Europe for labour to staff the big-city factories (Merrett, 1978).

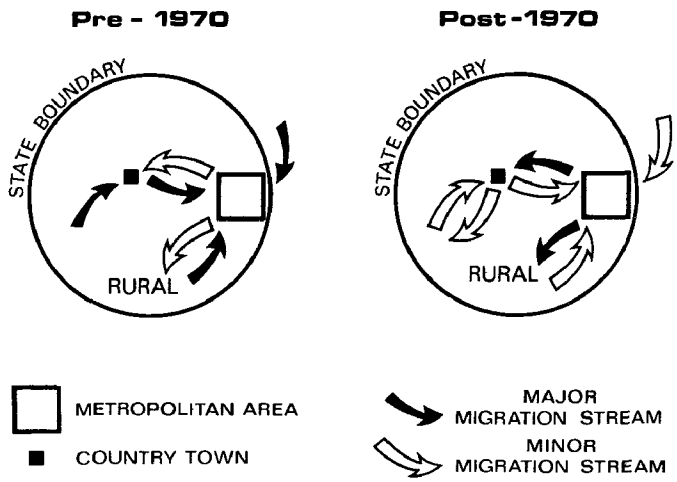

Figure 1: Migration patterns in New South Wales

One of the consequences of international migration was that native-born Australians were enabled to move in increasing numbers into the newly-booming and high-wage service sector, the development of which was concentrated in the capitals.

The restructuring of the Australian economy was accompanied, therefore, by a centralisation of the country's labour force and population. Migration - both within the country and from abroad - was the agency by which this centralisation occurred. The first diagram of Figure 1 portrays, in schematic form, the process as it applied in New South Wales. The second diagram presents a picture which differs substantially from those which obtained prior to and for a generation after World War II. In the 1970s the flows from abroad were sharply reduced, and at the same time the flows out of Sydney to other parts of the state grew to become larger in volume than those in the opposite direction. A 'turnaround' occurred in the directional orientation of the principal intra-state migration streams and consequently the distribution of population growth and decline in the seventies was quite different from that which applied in the sixties and earlier.

For New South Wales, the onset of the seventies appears in retrospect to have been a watershed between the two eras as far as migration flows, population growth and population distribution are concerned. During the sixties and earlier, the state's population grew steadily and the migration flows ensured that most of this growth accrued to Sydney. Newcastle and Wollongong, export cities and industrial annexes of the capital, also attracted growing shares of the population whereas the smaller 'regional centres' barely held their own and the remaining urban centres and rural areas both declined in relative demographic importance (Table 1). The sixties, it appears, represented at least temporarily the end of the long era of increasing population concentration and increasingly high levels of primate-city dominance. After 1971 the state's rate of population growth declined sharply, largely because of a decline in birth rates, a reduction of inflows from abroad and a drift of population to Queensland. Sydney's primacy was reduced slightly and the growth rates of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong fell to below that of the state as a whole. Meanwhile the regional

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE N.S.W. POPULATION, 1961-79

	1961	1966	1971	1976	1979 (est.)
Sydney	55.7	57.8	59.3	58.0	57.4
Newcastle/Wollongong	9.1	9.4	9.5	9.4	9.3
Regional centres*	4.5	4.6	4.7	5.0	5.2
Other urban centres**	16.1	14.8	15.2	16.5	17.1
Rural	14.6	13.4	11.3	11.1	11.0

* Ten centres with populations of more than 17,000 in 1979 and with clearly-defined region-serving roles (Albury, Wagga Wagga, Goulburn, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo, Tamworth, Armidale, Lismore and Grafton).

** Mostly centres of fewer than 10,000 people but including some larger places which are not primarily regional service centres, for example: Broken Hill (a mining town), Maitland (part of the Newcastle Statistical District), Queanbeyan (an extension of Canberra), Brisbane Waters and The Entrance (resort-retirement centres).

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Censuses of Population and Housing 1961, 1966, 1971, 1976; Estimated Population of Municipalities and Shires, New South Wales, at 30 June, 1979.

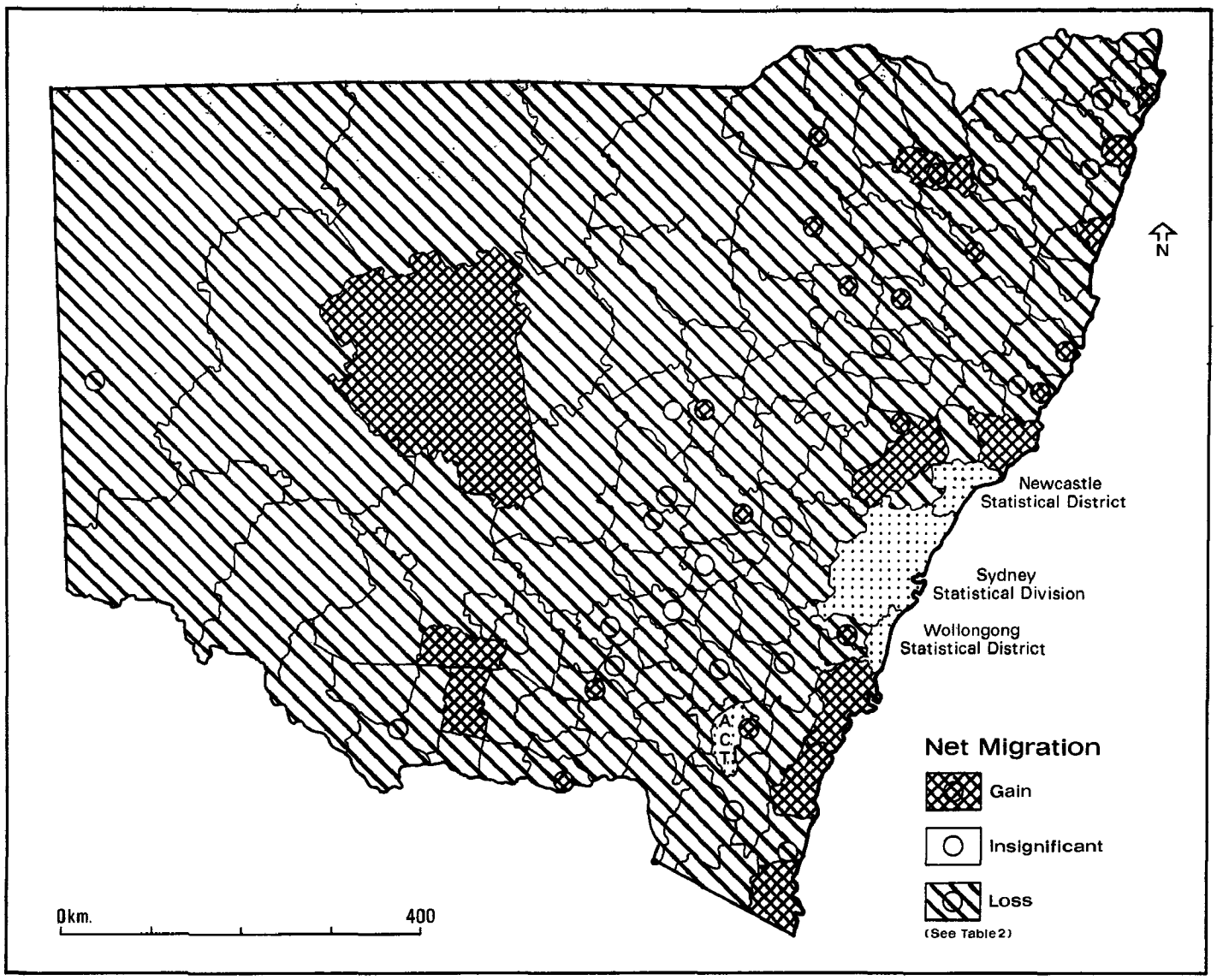

Figure 2: Net migration, 1961-71

capitals and the other urban centres increased their shares of total statewide growth and the rural sector, having declined both relatively and absolutely in demographic terms between 1961 and 1971, showed renewed growth such that its share of the state's population in 1979 was little changed from that of eight years previously. During the decade to 1971 the metropolitan areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong absorbed more than 90 per cent of the population increase in New South Wales. In the following eight years the same areas accounted for less than two thirds of the state's growth.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate in greater detail the difference between the pre-1971 and post-1971 periods as far as non-metropolitan New South Wales is concerned.[1] During the earlier period only a small number of local government areas - most of them shires dotted irregularly along the coast or urban municipalities on the tablelands and western slopes - experienced net in-migration.[2] In all more than four fifths of all LGAs outside the metropolitan core (defined here as comprising the Sydney Statistical Division and the Newcastle and Wollongong Statistical Districts) lost more people than they gained on the migration exchange. Many of these experienced actual population falls since natural increase (the excess of births over deaths) was not sufficient to make up the losses created by out-migration. During the 1970s a significant shift occurred, however: more than a third of the non-metropolitan shires and municipalities experienced greater inflows of people than outflows. Only one of the seventeen coastal shires failed to achieve a positive net migration balance, while several shires on the tablelands, in the central west and elsewhere experienced net in-migration in place of the characteristic net out-migration of earlier years. A majority of the municipalities, too, achieved migrational gains (Table 2). The primary outcome of the changed situation as regards migration flows was that between 1971 and 1979 population growth was much more widespread outside the metropolitan areas than had been the case in the decade in 1971. Growth in recent years has been dispersed away from the major cities and shared more equally among the constituent parts of the state than was earlier the case: in all, some two

Notes:

1. In this paper all data refer to local government area boundaries as they existed in mid-1979. Some estimation has been necessary in adjusting the population and migration figures to a constant set of boundaries for the period under examination. In addition, it should be noted that deficiencies in census counts and estimates of net migration are common and unavoidable. The figures and tables presented here should be regarded not as precisely accurate but as indicative of general situations.

2. Shires in New South Wales are made up of rural or mixed urban-rural populations, whereas the municipalities are predominantly urban in character.

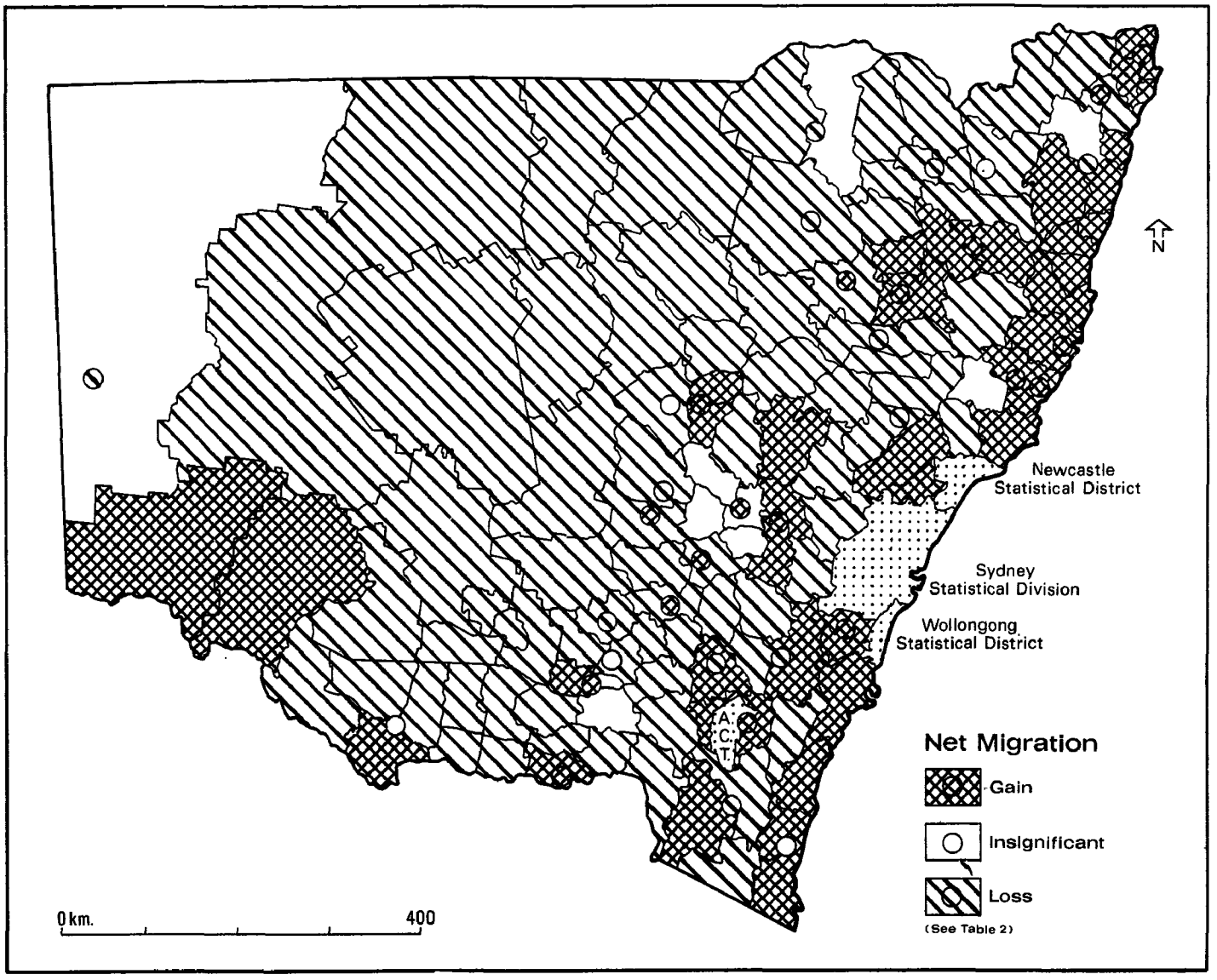

Figure 3: Net migration, 1971-79

thirds of all LGAs located outside the metropolitan core experienced either more rapid growth or less rapid decline after 1971 than in the previous decade.

Care must be taken, nevertheless, not to exaggerate the spread of growth away from the major cities. Most LGAs in the western half of the state continue to experience the traditional regimes of out-migration and population decline, the areas of renewed growth being located predominantly along the coast and on the tablelands. Likewise the revival is not in the main a rural phenomenon; rather it is biassed toward the urban municipalities and, on the coast, toward the small resort-retirement communities which are experiencing rapid growth as a result primarily of migration from Sydney. The rural component is to be seen not in the commercial farming sector, in which population numbers continue to fall as a result of farm enlargement and the out-migration of young adults in search of work and education. Instead it originates in the proliferation of hobby and weekend farms and other types of 'rural retreat' around the metropolitan core and surrounding several of the larger inland centres. Another equally highly publicized development is the growth of the so-called 'alternative lifestyle' movements whose adherents seek self-sufficiency in food production and a minimum of contact with the commercial economy: in New South Wales this development is most significant (in terms of numbers of people involved) in the several communes and land co-operatives of the north coast between Coffs Harbour and the Queensland border. In a literal sense, of course, people who have migrated from the metropolitan core (whatever their destinations) can be said to have sought lifestyle alternatives different from those which they previously pursued.

TABLE 2: NET MIGRATION EXPERIENCES OF NON-METROPOLITAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS IN N.S.W., 1961 - 71 AND 1971 - 79

Net Migration	1961 - 71			1971-79		
	Shires	Municipal-ities	Total	Shires	Municipal-ities	Total
Gain (50+)	12	15	27	36	20	56
Insignificant (50)	0	3	3	7	5	12
Loss (50+)	104	20	124	73	13	86

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Population and Elements of Increase in Population of Local Government Areas, 1961-66, 1966-71, 1971-76; Handbooks of Local Statistics, N.S.W., 1978, 1979, 1980.

TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION

In New South Wales the century-old trend of increasing population concentration (and thus increasing levels of metropolitan primacy) appears to have been halted and a new pattern of settlement initiated. Such a departure from the establishment norm demands an attempt at explanation. An appropriate starting point, given that the change has arisen as a result of alterations in movement patterns, is an examination of the factors responsible for the 'traditional' and 'modern' migration flows within the state.

The traditional flows, which focussed largely on Sydney, were composed of people for whom the motivation for moving was largely economic. Some such migrants were displaced from the land, as was the case with thousands of farm labourers and their dependents, together with those farmers who were financially unable in the face of competition for land to enlarge their holdings and thus achieve a higher level of economic viability. The sons and daughters of farmers, unable to obtain work on the land or in the often economically-moribund service centres, also joined the movement to the city in search of jobs and educational opportunities. For some of these people, particularly the young, the 'bright lights' of the city were doubtless more attractive than the restricted social life available nearer to home. Nevertheless, the social reasons for movement were probably, in most cases, secondary. The generally higher rates of unemployment in non-metropolitan areas (Stilwell, 1974, 50), together with the higher incomes and greater variety of job opportunities provided by the city appear to have been more decisive in engendering migration. Many who moved did not do so voluntarily, but rather because in economic terms there was little choice.

The recent reversal of the migration flows appears to owe less to economic factors than to a freely-exercised choice for a non-metropolitan environment. In particular it represents a search for a quality of life which significant numbers of city people feel is not obtainable in large cities. Recent opinion surveys suggest that dissatisfaction with metropolitan and suburban life is strong. A poll taken in Sydney in 1973, for example, showed that significantly more than half the respondents would consider living elsewhere if they were able - mostly to escape the polluted air, congested conditions and the 'city rat-race' (Daly et al., 1974, 30). The popular preference of these people was the north coast, which in the seventies was the most rapidly-growing region of New South Wales. A later poll, conducted in both the metropolitan and non-metropolitan portions of the state, revealed that only about half of Sydney's residents wished to live in a city the size of Sydney or Melbourne, the remainder expressing preferences for smaller cities, towns or rural environments (Sydney Morning Herald, 21/9/78). Clearly many people believe that Sydney's 'liveability' is under threat from its size. The Herald survey implies that a considerable latent potential exists for movement out of the metropolis: if the state's population were distributed according to the preferences expressed in the poll (Table 3), the population of Sydney would be reduced to about 1.6 million. Such a reduction is, of course, unthinkable, and so far only a comparatively small number have actually left. For most people who live in Sydney, there remain severe constraints to migration. The major constraining influence is the need to work: one of the principal features of primacy is that many job skills cannot be marketed outside the big city.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION OF N.S.W., BY PREFERRED & ACTUAL PACE OF RESIDENCE

	Preference (Sample of 1004 people, 1978)	Actuality (Total population 1976 Census)	
Big city, e.g. Sydney or Melbourne	29	58.0	(Sydney)
Middle-sized city, e.g. Adelaide or Perth	13	9.4	(Newcastle, Wollongong)
Good sized country town, e.g. Tamworth or Orange	27	9.3	(18 urban places with populations 15,000-55,000)
Small, quite country town	22	12.2	(all other urban centres and bounded localities, population 200 or more)
On the land as a farmer	9	5.5	(farm population, estimated)
		5.6	(non-agricultural rural population, estimated)
Totals	100	100.0	

Sources: Sydney Morning Herald, 21/9/78; Australian Bureau of Statistics: Census of Population and Housing, 1976.

SUMMARY

The evidence presented here suggests that migration flows during the seventies took different forms from those of earlier periods, and that the resulting distribution of population growth represented a departure from the traditional norm for New South Wales. The significance of these apparent changes cannot be easily ascertained: so far the flows out of the metropolitan core are not of large volume, and it may be that they are of a temporary nature (Jarvie and Browett, 1980, 144). Yet quite large areas of eastern New South Wales have experienced a demographic revival which apparently coincides with a trend for people to break away from the big city in search of quieter, more fulfilling lives outside it. Interestingly, the turnaround to higher non-metropolitan and lower metropolitan rates of population growth is not unique to this state. The same phenomenon characterized other parts of Australia (Bell, 1980; Burnley, 1980, 87-90) and several other western countries (Vining and Kontuly, 1978) during the nineteen-seventies.

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