Sustainable Migration

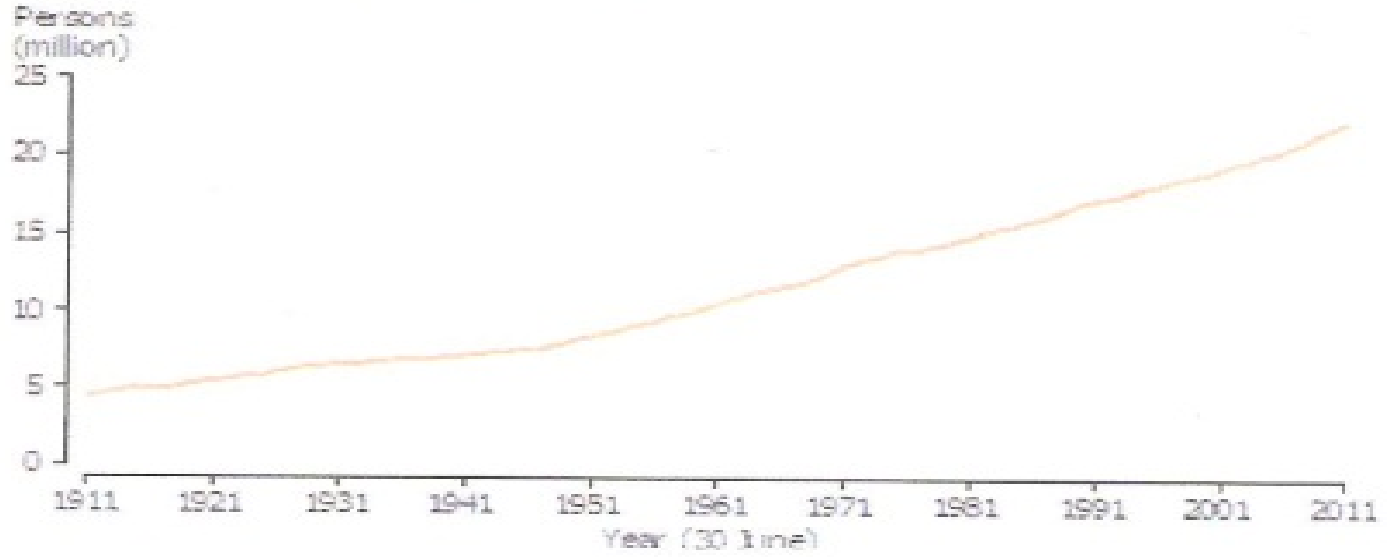
Ian Lowe

The current scale of migration is not sustainable

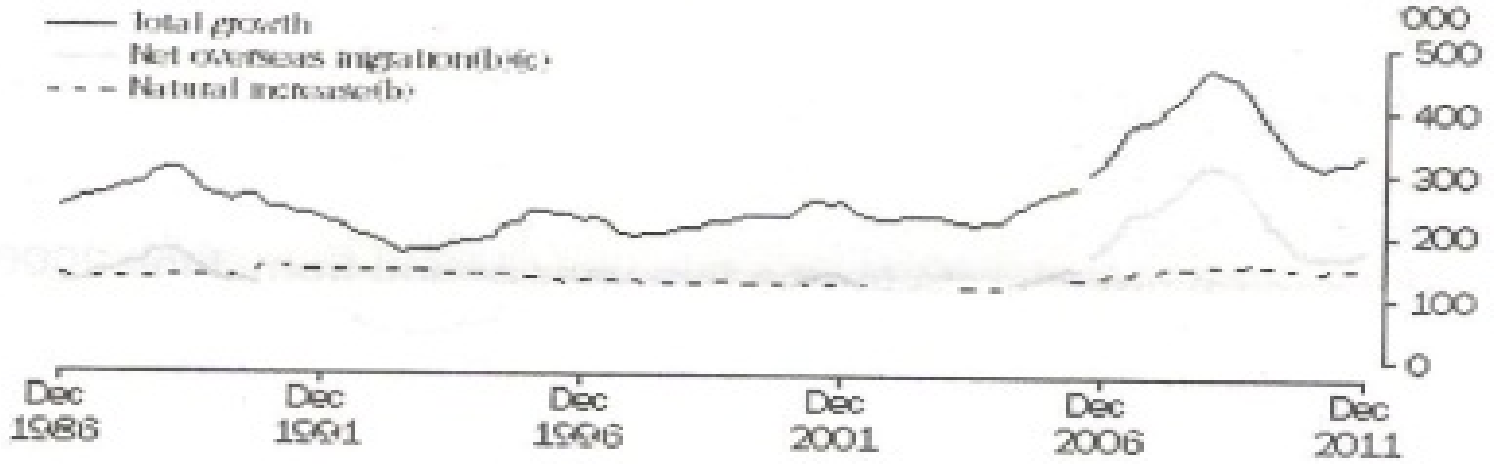
100 years of Australian Lives - Population

Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census

Australia's population(a)(b)



COMPONENTS OF ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH(a), Austr



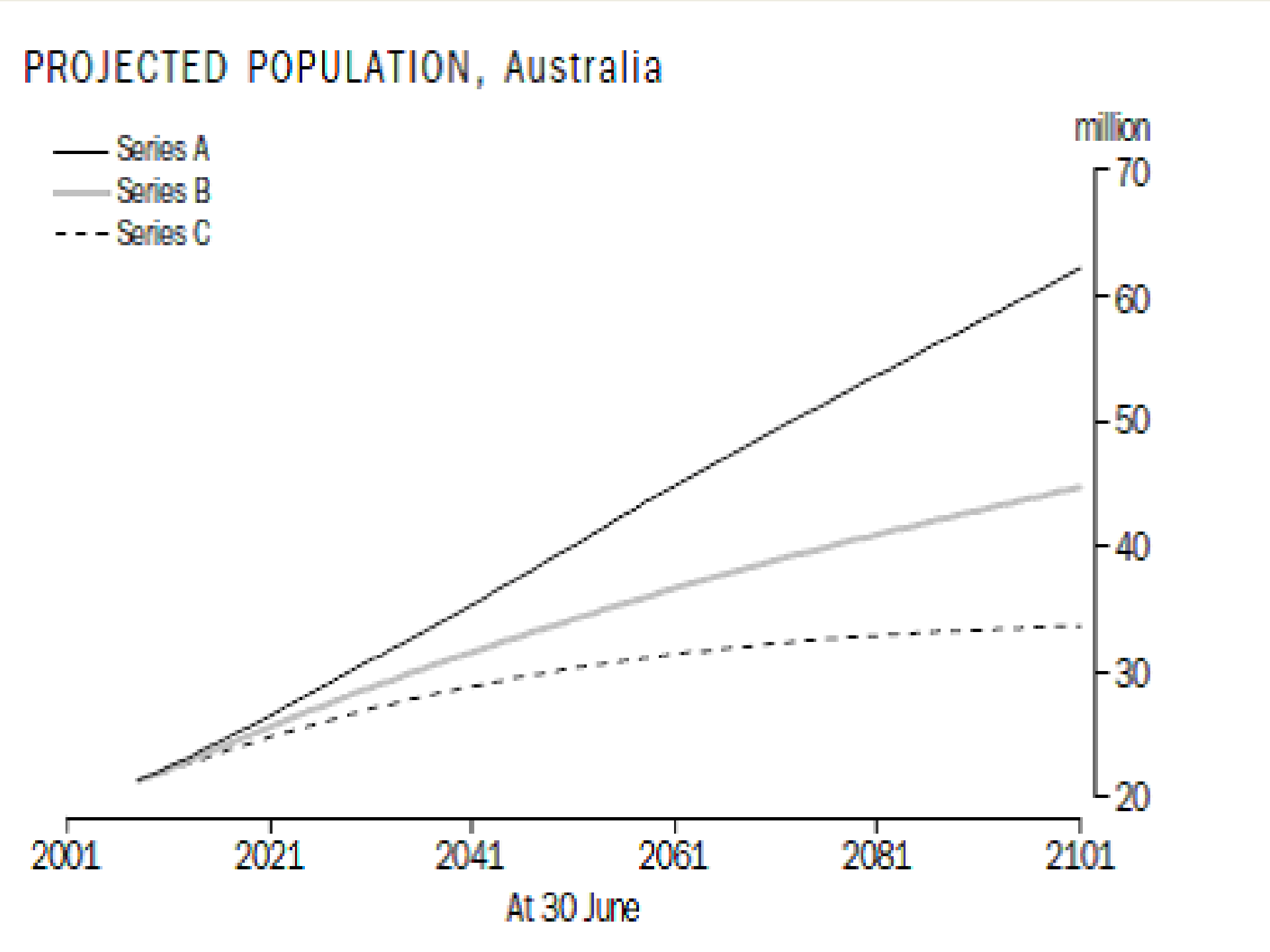
(a) Annual components calculated over each quarter.
(b) Estimates for September quarter 2010 onwards are preliminary.
(c) NOM estimates have been calculated using a range of methods over the period, and include a break in series at September quarter 2005 – see paragraphs 13–20 of the Explanatory Notes.

The numbers are:

- "natural increase" ~ 150,000 per year
- Birthrate ~ 1.9 per adult woman, but number of adult women increasing
- Net migration ~ 250,000 per year

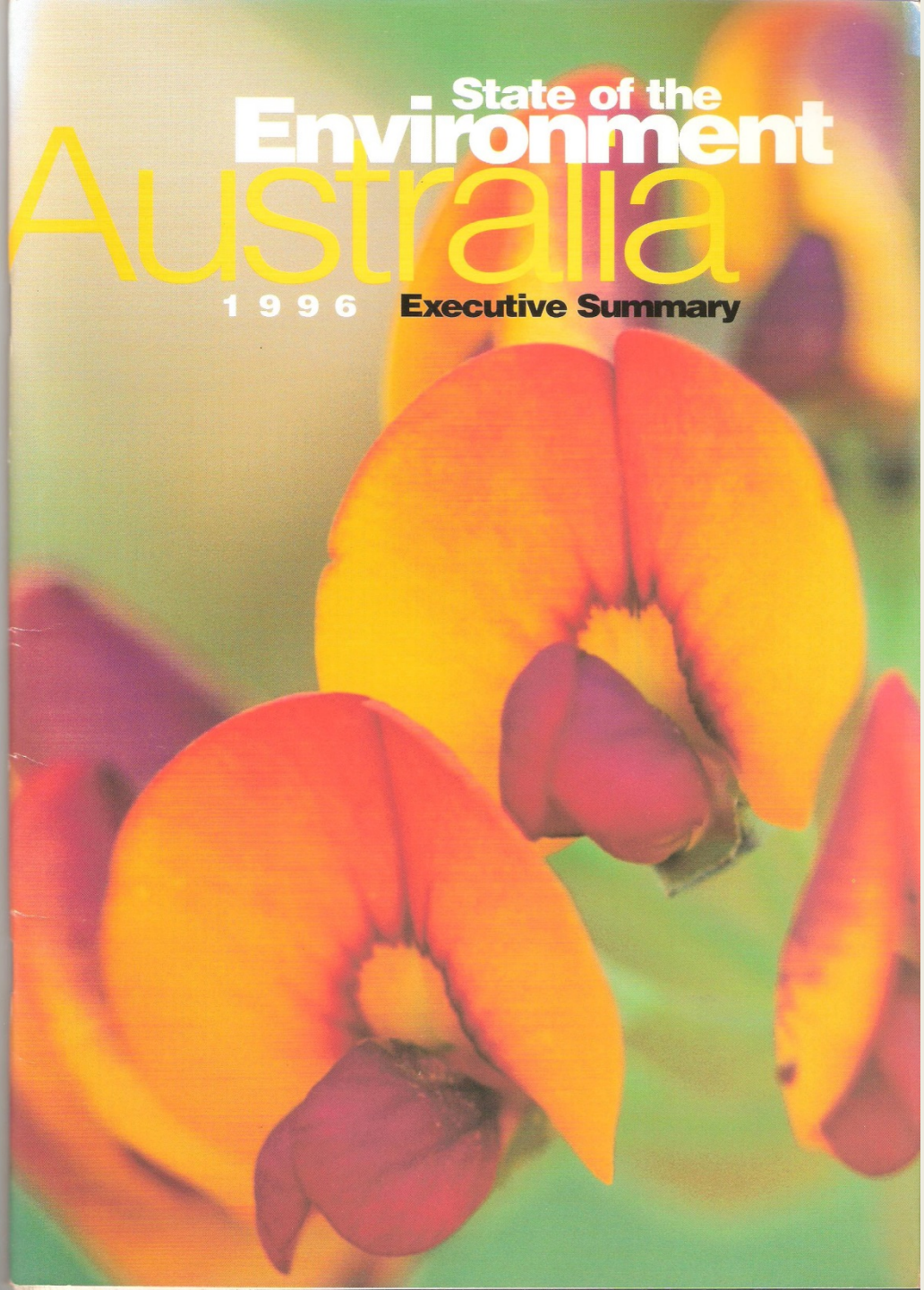
- Population growing a million every 3 years
- Would be growing a million every 7 years if zero net migration

PROJECTED POPULATION, Australia



Projections

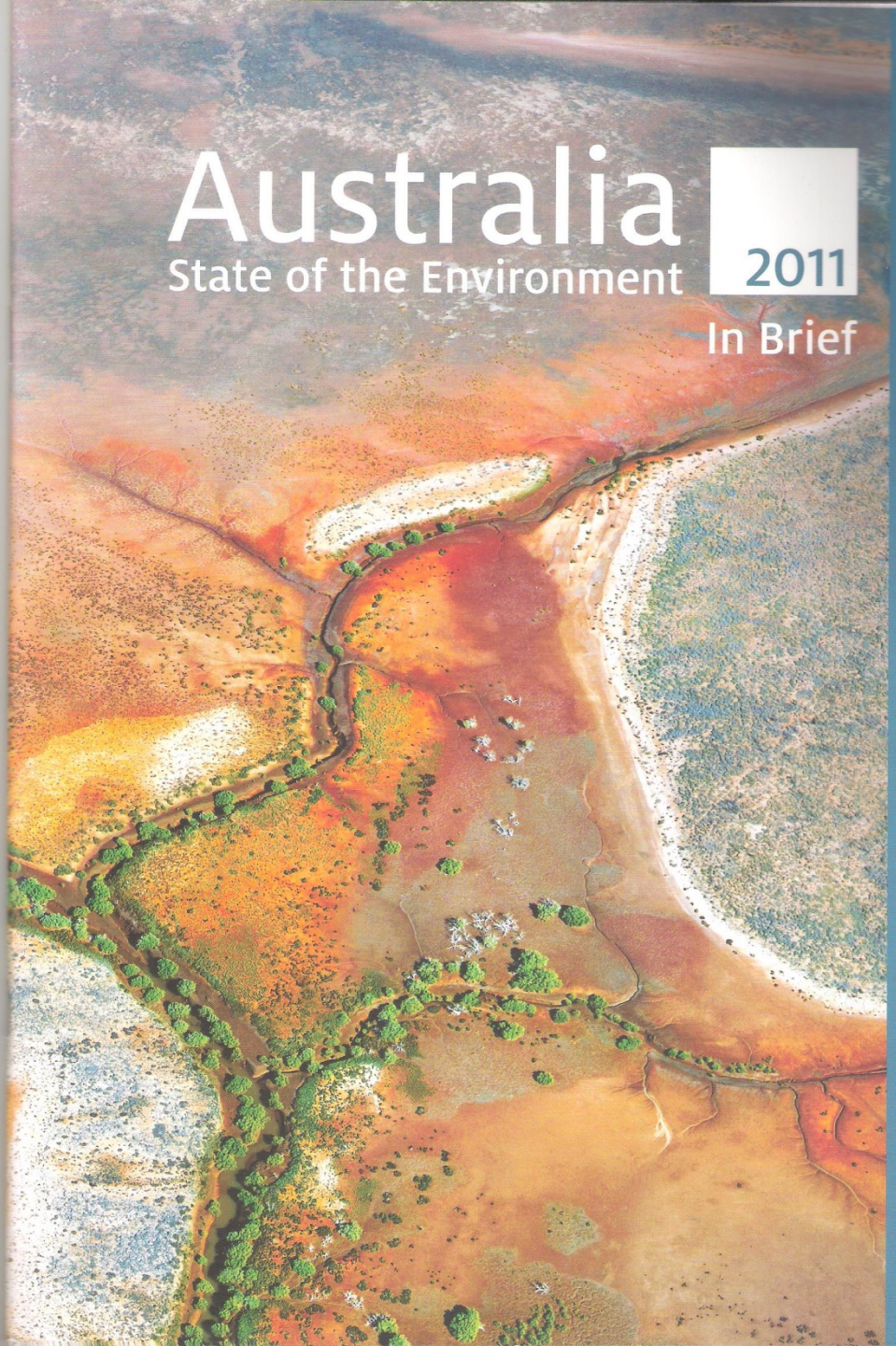
- Population stabilises in 2030s < 30 million if zero net migration
- Population stabilises later at higher level with net migration < 70,000
- At current migration rates and birthrate, 2050 population > 40 million and growing


State of the
Environment
Australia
1996
Executive Summary

The issue

- "Australia has some very serious environmental problems. If we are to achieve our goal of ecological sustainability, these problems need to be dealt with immediately.
- "The problems are the cumulative consequences of population growth and distribution, lifestyles, technologies and demands on natural resources"

Australia
State of the Environment 2011
In Brief



A summary of Australia ■ State of the Environment 2011

The update

- **"Much of Australia's environment and heritage is in good shape, or improving. Other parts are in poor condition or deteriorating… Our changing climate, and growing population and economy, are now confronting us with new challenges."**

Environment

- SoE 1 (1996): cause of problems
- Sydney 1970 – 1990
- SoE 2-4: every major problem worsening
- ACF EPBC Act submission

- Environmental impact **I = P. A. T**, so proportional to **P** unless **A**ffluence declines or **T**echnology improves faster than population grows

The solution

- For a sustainable future, we must stabilise and then reduce impacts of the human population on natural systems

- We need both to stabilise population and also reduce per capita impacts

- Increasing population compounds the task of reducing impacts

Economic Impacts

- Overall GDP grows proportionally
- GDP / person might grow slightly
- GPI certainly declines
- Qld Treasury: 3% - 0.2, 0.6, 2.2
- 50% wealthier than 1990, but 40% more people [46% wealthier if no growth]
- 2030 projection: 30% wealthier if growth "tightly constrained", 38% [with 50% more people] if rapid growth allowed

The infrastructure problem

- Thurow 1987, O'Sullivan 2010
- Average life ~ 50 years
- So normal replacement ~ 2% total cost
- If population grows 2% p.a. Cost doubles !
- Revenue base only increases 2 %
- Forced to sell assets or negotiate public – private partnerships…

- State elections Victoria, NSW, Qld

The social issues

- K. Rudd "I believe in a big Australia"
- "The focus groups went ballistic"
- Most migrants go to large cities
- Urban Australians' quality of life declining, infrastructure not keeping up with demand
- Political blame game: migrants visible
- AAFI, Hanson, "Reduce Immigration"
- Risk of losing community support

Conclusion

- Currently degrading natural systems
- Our policies on track > 40 million

- Sustainability requires stabilising impacts, hence stabilising future population and considering distribution
- Migration policy should have this basis
- Only then will migration be sustainable

- No more important issue for debate


Bigger or Better?
Australia's population debate
Ian Lowe