

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

On 9 March 2012 the Hon Richard Colless MLC asked the following question without notice in a hearing of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development.

Question:

CHAIR: Just going back to the population projections, on the graph on page 3 there is a historical quite sharp increase in the projections between 1996 and 2000. What was the factor that was driving that, can you recall?

Mr REYNOLDS: Can I take that on notice and come back to the Committee? It is about a 3 per cent growth over that five-year period, which is quite steep compared with what has been projected for the rest. But I can come back to the Committee on that.

Answer:

I am advised that the population increase for Central Western NSW for the period 1996 to 2001 is taken from historical Estimated Resident Population data published by the ABS. The graph referred to shows that the population in the region increased by 9,900 people between 1996 and 2001, an average annual growth rate of 0.54 per cent.

The apparent sharp rise is related to several factors:

- The graph does not show long term past patterns, which are characterised by fluctuating population growth for Central Western NSW. Annual average growth was three per cent for the period 1986-1991, but was only 0.24 per cent for the period 1991-1996. This volatility is not reflected in the projected population, which is based on long term average trends.
- The population of Central Western NSW is small, comprising approximately 376,000 people in 2006. Small populations are much more likely to experience variability in population growth, because a small change in the number of births, number of deaths, number of people who move elsewhere, or number of people who move to the region is much more noticeable than in larger populations.
- The key difference between 1996-2001 and 2001-2006 where the rate of population increase slowed was a change from natural increase to natural decline in the local population. This was contributed to by a decline in the number of births to women living in Central Western NSW alongside an increase in the number of deaths among the Central Western NSW population. The decline from these factors was slightly outweighed by gains through net migration in the period 2001-2006.

HON BRAD HAZZARD MP
Minister for Planning and Infrastructure

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