

BALLARAT'S VITAL SIGNS

COMPILED BY THE BALLARAT FOUNDATION

CONTEXT

As one of Victoria's major regional cities, Ballarat continues to offer its population a high quality of life. Ballarat and its region has a proud past, is well-served by good infrastructure, has many heritage-listed buildings, a stable economy, population growth, high quality health care, a liberal selection of government and private schools and its own universities. It also boasts the presence of many sporting clubs, Lake Wendouree, and adjacent botanical gardens. All are surrounded by some of the richest agricultural lands in the country.

DEMOGRAPHY

- Ballarat's population continues to rise. In the five years between 2004 and 2008 the population increased from 85,834 to 92,015, a rise in percentage terms of 7.2 percent.
- The recently-released figure [2009] for the population of Ballarat is 94,008.
- The rise in population over the five-year period 2004-08 in percentage terms exceeds that for the cities of Bendigo, Geelong and for Victoria as a whole.
- The age distribution during the five-year period 2004-08 shows a gradually ageing community.
- Of the total population in 2006, males comprised 48.47 per cent and females comprised 51.53 per cent.

IMMIGRANTS

- In the 2006 census, the percentage of population from overseas totalled 8.2, mostly coming from Europe [5.2 per cent]; Asia [1.8 per cent] and Africa [0.8 per cent]. Anecdotally, the number of immigrants as a per cent of the population has increased since 2006.

A CITY OF MOVERS

- In the 2006 census, 17 per cent of respondents reported they lived at a different address than they did one year previously and 44 per cent of respondents reported that they lived at a different address than five years previously.

ECONOMY

- The total taxable income for the region was 1.9 billion in 2008.
- Major industries and employment areas include: health and social assistance [13 per cent]; retail trade [11 per cent]; manufacturing [10 per cent]; education and training [10 per cent]; and, construction [8 per cent].
- For the local government area of Ballarat, 38,000 hectares were given to agricultural production with 4242 hectares for grain production.
- This supported a total of 151,650 production animals [sheep, cattle and pigs].



GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

THE ISSUE

Until the recent Global Financial Crisis, Australia experienced vibrant economic times, but not all have enjoyed the benefits of that vibrancy.

THE STATS

Average Taxable Income

- Ballarat compares favourably with Bendigo and Geelong with Ballarat residents' taxable income at \$43,661 in 2007. Bendigo residents had a taxable income of \$42,221 and Geelong \$46,736 for the same period. The average taxable income for Victorians for 2007 stood at \$50,818.

Income for Individuals

- In the 2006 census, 63.85 per cent of individuals 15 years and older reported a weekly gross income of less than \$600 and 15.24 per cent reported a gross income of more than \$1000 per week.



Income for Families

- For all families [couples with no children, couples with children, one parent families and other families], 26.11 per cent reported weekly gross incomes of less than \$650, 43.87 per cent with incomes of more than \$1200, and 16.75 per cent reported incomes of more than \$2000 per week.

Couples with Children

- For couples with children, 7.85 per cent reported weekly gross incomes of less than \$650, 63.04 per cent reported incomes of more than \$1200 and 25.28 per cent reported incomes of more than \$2000 per week.

One Parent Families

- For one parent families, 21.88 per cent reported weekly gross incomes of less than \$650, 12.38 per cent reported incomes of more than \$1200 and 2.33 per cent reported incomes of more than \$2000 per week.

THE BOTTOM LINE

While the average taxable income compares favourably with other regional cities, it is clear that there is a wide range of incomes between individuals. There are also marked differences in income between couples with children and one-parent families.

SAFETY

THE ISSUE

A sense of security and safety affects quality of life.

THE STATS

Summary of offences recorded by Victoria Police for the years 2007-2010 expressed as rate per 100,000 population.

| | Person | Property |
|----------|---------|----------|
| Years | 2009/10 | 2009/10 |
| Ballarat | 1228 | 7648 |
| Geelong | 691 | 4736 |
| Bendigo | 974 | 3822 |
| Victoria | 826 | 4739 |

Overall Crime Rates

- While rates of crime against persons in Ballarat have dropped, crime against persons and property in Ballarat remain above those for Geelong, Bendigo and Victoria as a whole.

Crimes against persons

| | Rape | Non-rape |
|----------|---------|----------|
| Years | 2009/10 | 2009/10 |
| Ballarat | 38 | 103 |
| Geelong | 27 | 97 |
| Bendigo | 52 | 305 |
| Victoria | 28 | 93 |

| | Robbery | Assault |
|----------|---------|---------|
| Years | 2009/10 | 2009/10 |
| Ballarat | 37 | 1035 |
| Geelong | 37 | 519 |
| Bendigo | 31 | 582 |
| Victoria | 57 | 636 |

- The rate of rape in Ballarat is lower than Bendigo but is higher than Victoria.
- Ballarat has a marginally higher rate of non-rape sex offences than Geelong and Victoria, but the rates vary markedly from year to year.
- Ballarat has a much higher rate of assaults against persons than its comparable cities and Victoria as a whole.
- Ballarat has a much lower rate of robberies against persons when compared with Victoria as a whole.
- **Crimes against property** Ballarat has a much higher rate of offences associated with property damage, is above the statewide rate for aggravated and residential burglary and for theft of motor vehicles and theft from motor vehicles.

Crimes associated with drugs

- Ballarat and its comparable regional cities have a lower rate of crime associated with drugs than Victoria as a whole.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In general terms Ballarat is a safe place to live, especially for serious crimes such as murder, robbery against persons and drug related offences. However, it is noteworthy that Ballarat has a higher rate of crimes against persons including personal assaults and a higher rate of property damage and motor vehicle theft.

EDUCATION/LEARNING

THE ISSUE

Education and prosperity are closely linked; successful cities depend on continuous learning

THE STATS

| | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
|---|------|------|------|
| Retention rates (per cent) for years 7-12 in government schools | | | |
| Metropolitan | 81.5 | 87 | 85.8 |
| Regional (overall) | 67.9 | 70.9 | 67.2 |
| Barwon South Western | 69.3 | 72.8 | 65.3 |
| Grampians | 69.3 | 67 | 64.6 |
| Loddon-Mallee | 71.8 | 75.8 | 72.4 |
| Hume | 63.6 | 68.2 | 65.2 |
| Gippsland | 64.4 | 67.9 | 66.8 |

**From Summary Statistics Victorian Schools-April 2010. Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood.*

- The retention rate for all regional areas was consistently below the metropolitan rate.
- Retention rates for the Grampians region fell from 69.3 per cent to 64.6 per cent, and is among the lowest retention rates in regional Victoria.

Retention rates for government schools years 10-12

- The retention rate in the Grampians region has decreased from 1999 to 2009 and is among the lowest for the regions.
- The retention rate in the regions was consistently below metropolitan schools and the gap has increased from 7.4 percent in 1999 to 13 per cent in 2009.

Destination of School Leavers

- University enrolment is higher [15-20 per cent] for metropolitan Melbourne students than the regions.
- The Grampians region is equal top with Barwon with respect to university enrolment.
- Participation in VET Certificate 4 and above is significantly higher in metropolitan Melbourne [16.8 per cent] than for the regions [8.8pc].
- The participation in full-time employment is higher in the regions [15.7 per cent] than for metropolitan Melbourne [6.4 per cent].

- For Ballarat, students from government schools enrol in TAFE courses and apprenticeships at a much higher rate than do students from independent schools. The reverse is true for university enrolment [29.3 per cent for government schools and 41.8 per cent for independent schools].
- A much higher percentage of students from government schools enter the workforce straight after leaving school than do students from independent schools.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A chequered report card, with low student retention in government schools is a significant issue. Also noteworthy is the sometimes remarkable difference between the destination of students from government schools when compared with independent schools. One reflection of the difference is the higher percentage of students from independent schools who take gap years compared to students from government schools.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

THE ISSUE

A healthy lifestyle and access to services is a key to health.

THE STATS

Life Expectancy [2001-05]

- Life expectancy in the regions is marginally, but consistently, lower than life expectancy for Victorians as a whole.
- For the Central Goldfields the female lifespan is 82 years whereas the male lifespan is 78 years.

Comparative Prevalence of Diseases in the Regions

- Asthma and other chronic diseases are more common in the Central Highlands, Bendigo-Loddon and Grampians-Pyrenees regions than it is for Victoria.
- Depression is more common in Central Highlands and Bendigo-Loddon than it is in Barwon, Grampians-Pyrenees or Victoria.
- The prevalence of heart disease, stroke, cancer, osteoporosis and diabetes in the Central Highlands does not differ from the prevalence of these diseases for Victoria.

Indicators of Health Outcomes

- The Rate of Hospitalisation for Preventable or Avoidable Conditions [Ambulatory Care Sensitive Conditions- (ACSCs)] was developed as an indicator of health outcomes for evaluating the adequacy of primary health care. It provides an evidence-based platform for policies which aim to reduce demand on hospital services by offering opportunities for targeted interventions at the Primary Care Partnership level.
- The rate for ACSCs in rural areas was consistently higher than that for metropolitan Melbourne for the six-year period ending in 2005-06.
- Over the six-year period, the rate for ACSCs increased both rurally and for metropolitan Melbourne.
- Of the regions, the Grampians region, which includes Ballarat, has one of the lowest rates [43.64] for ACSCs, with the Eastern Metropolitan Region the lowest at 33.83.

Total and Standardised Hospital Admissions for Ambulatory Care Sensitive Conditions by Primary Care Partnership (PCP) (2005-2006)

| PCP | No. of Admissions | Standardised Rate/1000 persons |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Southern Grampians Glenelg | 2716 | 62.80 |
| Wimmera | 2776 | 59.09 |
| Grampians Pyrenees | 1863 | 51.32 |
| Bendigo Loddon | 4674 | 40.41 |
| Central Highlands | 5647 | 37.62 |
| Barwon Primary Care Forum | 10441 | 36.58 |

THE BOTTOM LINE

Possibly the most significant outcome is the higher and progressively increasing rate of call on hospitals for treatment for Ambulatory Care Sensitive Conditions, although there is some comfort in the fact that the Central Highlands region has one of the lowest rates in regional Victoria.

WORK

THE ISSUE

Work that pays a living wage and the availability of pensions are essential to the overall economic health of Ballarat and the region.

THE STATS

Trends in Employment [Participation Rate]

- For 2010 the region's participation rate [proportion of the population between the ages of 15-64 either working or looking for work] stood at 63.08 per cent. This compares favourably with the Barwon-Western District region [63.08 per cent] but it is not as high as the Victoria-wide rate of 65.56 per cent.

Trends in Unemployment

- Unemployment rates for Ballarat varied over the five-year period 2005-09 and peaked in 2005 and 2006 at 8.9 per cent. However, the rate never fell below 7.1 per cent over the five-year period.
- Unemployment rates in Ballarat for this period remained above those for Geelong and Victoria as a whole.
- In 2010, the unemployment figures remained much the same with the wider region [Central Highlands-Wimmera] having an unemployment rate of 7.53 per cent compared to the Victorian rate of 5.35 per cent. In these figures for the Central Highlands-Wimmera, 106,000 people were employed and 6200 were unemployed.
- In the 2006 census, for those who completed year 12 but had no post-school qualifications, the unemployment rate was 9.2 per cent, whereas those with bachelor degrees or higher, the unemployment rate was 2.6 per cent.

Pensions Accessed Through Centrelink

- More than 11 per cent [11.03 per cent in 2009] of the Ballarat population received the age pension.
- More than 5 per cent [5.05 per cent in 2009] received a disability pension.
- While the percentage of people in Ballarat receiving the age pension did not materially differ from the rate for Victoria, the disability pension rate was 5.05 per cent for Ballarat residents compared with 3.25 per cent for residents of Victoria.
- From the latest administrative data from the Commonwealth Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations [2010], about one-in-four [24 per cent] of people of working age [15-64 years] in the Ballarat area are in receipt of a Centrelink benefit. Of this 24 per cent, 33 per cent were on disability support, 19 per cent received the Newstart allowance and 16 per cent received parenting payments.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Unemployment remains one of the most significant issues for Ballarat and its region. Also of significance is the much higher percentage of people who receive a disability pension.

HOUSING

THE ISSUE

Accommodation needs to be available and affordable.

THE STATS

Home Ownership in Ballarat

- For Victoria about one-third of dwellings are owned outright, about one-third are owned, but subject to a mortgage with just under one-third being rented.
- For regional Victoria there is a marginally higher rate of home ownership [about 71 per cent] than for Victoria as a whole.

Renting in Ballarat

- Just on 24 per cent of dwellings are rental properties, marginally lower than the figure for Victoria as a whole.

- Anecdotal evidence suggests that the vacancy rate for rental accommodation is very low.



Housing Approvals

- Housing approvals [houses and units] in Ballarat in the period January 2005 to December 2010 totalled 8248. Beginning in 2005 with 1305 starts, approvals dropped to 1166, 1218 and 1140 in 2006, 2007 and 2008 respectively. Approvals jumped to 1643 in 2009 and to 1776 in 2010.
- In 2009, on a per capita basis, Ballarat compares more than favourably with housing approvals when compared with Greater Geelong, Greater Bendigo and Victoria as a whole.
- In 2009, Ballarat had 11.04 housing starts per 1000 head of population followed by Greater Bendigo with 10.01, Victoria as a whole at 9.23 and Greater Geelong at 7.93.
- The average value of private sector new houses [excluding land costs] rose from \$182,700 in 2005 to \$195,400 in 2009.

Public Housing

- The public housing waiting list for Ballarat as at December 2010 stood at 981 compared with 2370 for Geelong and 1021 for Bendigo. When adjusted for population, the waiting list across the three regional cities is comparable.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The high rate of home ownership is a plus as is the comparatively high number of housing starts in recent years indicating a strong recovery.

ENVIRONMENT

THE ISSUE

Greening our environment now ensures a healthy city and region for our children.

THE STATS

Energy Use

- The City of Ballarat acts as a leader in reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, with a target of 30 per cent reduction in annual emissions by the end of 2010.
- A number of businesses and educational institutions in Ballarat have active greenhouse gas emission-reduction programs.

Water Use and Water Conservation

- Ballarat and its region have just emerged from a prolonged and severe drought. Much effort, energy and money was directed to alleviating the effects of the drought including the building of the Goldfields Superpipe.
- With the advent of the superpipe and heavy rains in 2010, water restrictions have been eased, storages are filling and the Goldfields Superpipe has been turned off after delivering 22 billion litres of water since May 2008.
- Recent data from Central Highlands Water shows that the average daily residential water consumption sits around 230 litres per person per day.
- The City of Ballarat has been a leader in the conservation of water, especially the harvesting of stormwater and reducing its annual potable water consumption over the last decade.

Garbage

- In the City of Ballarat's Annual Report for 2008-09 it appears that it is not meeting its target on waste management based on responses through the annual Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey. Residents expect green and hard waste collections which at present are not available. Council is presently looking in to the matter.
- The City of Ballarat has active programs for the collection of recyclable materials, an autumn leaf collection, removal of waste via the transfer station and a user-pays green-waste collection.
- E-waste such as mobile phones, computers, televisions and ink cartridges can be recycled through a number of businesses in the city.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Ballarat and its region should receive top marks for its approach to water availability, water conservation and water use. The conservation of energy through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is still in its infancy and will require greater efforts right across the region in the next decade. The City should be commended for its approach to waste management, but will need to address the issues of hard and green waste collection.

ARTS AND CULTURE

THE ISSUE

The availability of, and participation in, cultural activities increases social engagement and a sense of belonging.

THE STATS

- The city and the region are well known for artistic and cultural activities. It has one of the oldest regional art galleries in Australia containing many works of national significance. It also has major libraries, and Sovereign Hill, an iconic historical theme park.
- The performing arts are also prominent including regular performances of national and local productions at the heritage-listed Her Majesty's Theatre, Royal South Street and productions of plays and musical theatre by students from the University of Ballarat.
- Musically, orchestral performances are a regular feature of each year's calendar as is the summer event, Organs in the Goldfields.
- Each of the above is complemented by local amateur acting and musical societies.

Sovereign Hill

- Income for the financial year 2008-9 was \$21.5 million with over 450,000 visitors for the same period. As a mark of its continued success, Sovereign Hill was recently admitted to the Victorian Tourism Hall of Fame.

The Art Gallery of Ballarat

- The Gallery, which is primarily funded by the City of Ballarat, had total revenues of \$1,858,673 in 2008-9 of which \$556,307 was derived from sources other than from the City of Ballarat. This translates to \$20 per head of population. The gallery was visited by 92,505 people over the same period.



Libraries

- The Central Highlands Regional Library had revenues of just under \$4.7 million in 2008-09 which translates to about \$51 per head of population.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The arts and cultural scene is, for all intents and purposes, vibrant, especially when the size of the region's population is taken into account. However, continued low levels of recurrent funding may lead to volunteer exhaustion.

GETTING AROUND

THE ISSUE

Transportation is central to environmental sustainability as well as access to work.

THE STATS

Public Transport

- Ballarat appears to be well-served by regular bus services with 19 local bus routes with the more popular routes running every 30 minutes. The services were increased in mid-2008 with the addition of an extra 778 services a week including 73 additional Sunday services.
- The public bus service is governed by three 'Performance Thresholds'. They are that: No timetable bus will leave early; No more than 5 per cent of all services provided on any day or 10 per cent of services provided on any route on any day will operate more than five minutes late at any point on the timetable; 99 per cent of all scheduled services on any day operate and are completed.
- Regional trains [V/Line] are held to similar Performance Thresholds and for all regional trains the latest quarterly figures [September 2010] show that 84.8 per cent were on time [to within six minutes], and only 0.9 per cent of timetabled trains were cancelled. Additionally, 73.8 per cent of customers expressed satisfaction with the service compared with 59.5 per cent of customers expressing satisfaction with metropolitan trains, trams and buses.



Car Ownership and Age of Cars

- In 2008, Ballarat had a total of 768 motor vehicles per 1000 people.
- Of that number there were 587 motor cars per 1000 people.
- From the 2006 census, of the 31,959 dwellings in Ballarat; 8.8, 35.2, 36.2, and, 10.8 per cent had none, one, two, or three cars per dwelling respectively.
- The age of vehicles has decreased marginally over the five-year period 2004-08 with 53 per cent of vehicles being greater than 10 years old in 2004 compared with 51 per cent in 2008. This was balanced by the percentage of vehicles greater than five but less than 10 years old increasing from 24 per cent in 2004 to 26 per cent in 2008, while the per cent of vehicles less than five years old remained static at 23 per cent.

THE BOTTOM LINE

As a regional city there is a remarkable dependence on private vehicles for transport, but this is supplemented by adequate public transport with the caveat that there are always issues around the frequency and timing of such transport.