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The Changing Nature of Australia's Country Towns

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Much has changed since 2000, when the first national conference on The Future of Australia's Country Towns heard a great deal about the decline of the bush, and many appeals against the callousness of governments. Today the very varied circumstances of towns are better understood, non-government initiatives increasingly prevalent, and (some) governments more sensibly attentive. Growth, stasis and decline are not just employment-driven, nor is all employment agricultural. The most interesting and encouraging trend of recent years is toward many different kinds of self-help and mutual aid. Towns are identifying their problems, articulating their intentions, and finding ways to solve and achieve them.

The ideas and actions described in this book are those of academics and inhabitants of country towns (sometimes the same people) often working closely together. They reflect our growing understanding of the realities, sometimes harsh, frequently hopeful, of non-metropolitan Australia. The book covers 5 themes: people and the changing social and economic trends as drivers of rural and regional development; the art of engaging people in their own development; new modes of development - re-seeing the old and making it new again; water and its management at the community level; and the planning processes and frameworks including a detailed look at Australian local government and the New Rural Economy program in Canada.

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