

COUNTRY TOWNS DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

A recently launched book demonstrates that the future of Australia's country towns is not all doom and gloom, with local communities taking control of their future.



Jointly edited by La Trobe academics Professor John Martin and Associate Professor Trevor Budge the book, entitled *The Sustainability of Australia's Country Towns: Renewal, Renaissance, Resilience*, contains many examples of regional and rural communities that have successfully tackled the issues surrounding sustainability.

'The great diversity that is Australia's country towns reveals that each addresses its sustainability in innovative and creative ways, which may be similar to other places, but is essentially unique for each town,' said Professor Martin, director of La Trobe University's Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities.

Professor Martin said the examples provided in the book across a variety of themes highlight the fact that the social contract embodied in Australia's Federal Constitution was challenged given the contemporary relationship between metropolitan and rural Australia.

'The challenge for government at all levels is not to do it for these towns but to empower them to be able to continue doing it for themselves.

'If governments are to maintain the social contract with our country towns then it is as much about this empowerment as it is about the provision of basic services,' added

Professor Martin.

This book is based on the third Australian Country Towns conference held in Bendigo late in 2010. Over seventeen chapters, the book considers the sustainability of these places from a number of perspectives: leadership; decentralisation policy; mobility; lifestyle choices; ageing; housing; agriculture and forestry; retail; youth; health; and finally art and culture.

'This eclectic mix of papers reveals the multidimensional nature of sustainability as applied to Australia's country towns,' said head of La Trobe University's regional planning program Mr Budge.

'This publication is a timely reminder of the diversity of Australia's country towns and the unique challenges each faces.'

Mr Budge said the insights from the book will be a valuable contribution to the planning courses at the La Trobe Bendigo campus.

La Trobe University authors include Trevor Budge, Andrew Butt, Edgar Burns, Jane Farmer, John Martin, Jeni Warburton, Evan Willis and Rachel Winterton.

The book emphasises the important role regional associations and local government play in ensuring the sustainability of our country towns.

MORE INFORMATION

Further information on research opportunities in the Centre for Sustainable Communities can be found at: latrobe.edu.au/cscc/current-research/research-opportunities