

General overview

- The Cradle Coast Region Tasmania comprises the nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Burnie, Central Coast, Circular Head, Devonport, Kentish, King Island, Latrobe, Waratah/Wynyard and West Coast. The Region covers an area of 22,492 square kms or 33.1% of the total area of Tasmania and is renowned for its unique and diverse environment, including pristine wilderness, rugged mountainous areas, extensive forests, old mining towns and verdant farm lands. Significant parts of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area fall within the Region.
- With Tasmania's island location in the middle latitudes, the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania enjoys, for the most part, a temperate maritime climate with temperatures moderated by its proximity to the sea.
- After World War II, the Region shared in the prosperity of both the Australian and Tasmanian economies. The post-war baby boom and gains from overseas immigration resulted in strong population growth up to the early 1970s. Population growth in the 1970s and 1980s was more subdued, while over the last decade the population has declined by around 5,100 persons. Major changes to the mining, manufacturing, forestry and energy infrastructure (hydro-electric) industries in particular, have contributed to this population decline.

The people

- In 2001 the estimated resident population of the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania was 106,826 persons or 22.6% of the total population of Tasmania. Since 1991 the population has declined by 4.6%, or 5,141 persons. At June 2002 the population was estimated to have declined by a further 409 persons to 106,417.
- The decline in population has occurred across most areas of the Region. The closely settled Burnie–Devonport coastal strip, which contains around 73% of the Region's total population, declined by 2.3% (1,836 persons) between 1991 and 2001 and the North Western Rural area declined by 4.6%. While much smaller in overall population terms, the West Coast experienced the greatest decline, falling 28% (2,148 persons) from 1991 to 2001.
- Only two of the nine LGAs in the Region showed increases in population from 1991 to 2001. They were Latrobe, up 19.0% (1,317 persons) and Kentish, up 6.2% (323 persons).
- The decline in regional population is a consequence of net migration outflows. In the period between 1996 and 2001, 39% of those who moved out of the Region went to other parts of Tasmania and 61% relocated to mainland Australia, particularly to Victoria (18%), Queensland (16%) and New South Wales (11%).
- It is projected that the Region's population will further decline to around 99,100 by the year 2016.

The people *continued*

- Overall the Region has a similar age profile to Tasmania, but an older age profile than Australia as a whole. The median age for the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania at June 2001 was 37.3 years, compared with a median age of 37.2 years for Tasmania and 35.7 years for Australia. The West Coast had the youngest age profile in the Region, with a median age of 33.4 years at June 2001. The oldest age profile was in Burnie–Devonport with a median age of 38.2 years, while in the North Western Rural area it was 35.7 years.
- The Indigenous population in the Region has increased from 2,232 persons (2.1% of the total population) in 1986 to 5,079 persons (4.9%) in 2001. In 2001 the LGAs of Circular Head, Waratah/Wynyard, Central Coast and West Coast had higher representation (than the regional average) of Indigenous Australians.
- In 2001, over one-quarter of households in the Region were occupied by persons living alone. As a proportion of all households, the number of persons living alone has increased from 20% in 1991 to 26% in 2001.
- Household income distribution patterns for the Region and for Tasmania as a whole were broadly similar with some differences at the lower and higher ends of the scale. At the 2001 Census, a higher proportion of households in the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania had incomes of less than \$500 per week than in Tasmania (44.7% compared with 40.9%). A lower proportion of households in the Region earned \$1,200 or more per week than in Tasmania (15.7% compared with 19.0%).
- According to Australian Taxation Office (ATO) data, average individual taxable income for the West Coast LGA has been consistently higher than the average for Tasmania and for Australia over the past ten years. This is largely attributable to the much higher than average incomes earned by persons engaged in the area's mining sector. In 1999–2000 average annual taxable income for West Coast (M) was \$39,432, compared with \$31,410 for Tasmania and \$36,161 for Australia. For Burnie–Devonport and the North Western Rural area, average annual taxable income has generally been slightly lower than that of Tasmania over the past ten years.
- In June 2001, around 39% of persons aged 15 years and over in the Region were recipients of Centrelink pensions or benefits, a higher rate than for Tasmania (36%) and for Australia as a whole (27%).
- The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (SEIFA) score for the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania in 1996 was 945. In comparison, the index for Tasmania as a whole was 974. With an average score of 1,000 for Australia, this indicates that Tasmania is more disadvantaged than the Australian average and the Region more disadvantaged than both the state and Australia. In general, towns and cities on the North West Coast had comparatively low scores, such as Burnie–Somerset (920), Devonport (922), Ulverstone (924) and Wynyard (906). Most rural agricultural areas in the North West generally tended to fare better than urban areas on this SEIFA index.

The people *continued*

- In the period 1997 to 2000 the West Coast municipality had much higher than average standardised death rates from malignant neoplasms (cancer) and ischaemic heart disease, the two most common causes of death in Australia. Burnie–Devonport was similar to the national average for these two causes of death, while the North Western Rural area experienced lower than average rates, particularly for ischaemic heart disease. The Region as a whole exhibited higher than average standardised death rates for cancers of digestive organs and also for cerebrovascular diseases. Standardised death rates were also higher than average for chronic lower respiratory diseases, for accidents and for diabetes. On the other hand the Region was a little lower than the Australian average for deaths attributable to cancers of the trachea, bronchus and lung and also for deaths by suicide.
- At the 2001 Census, a total of 35,400 residents of the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania reported that they had used a personal computer at home in the week prior to census night. This represents 34.0% of the total population in the Region, which is slightly lower than that reported for Tasmania (37.2%) and well below the rate for the nation (42.0%).
- Gaming machines were introduced to hotels and clubs in Tasmania on 1 January 1997. Data from the Tasmanian Gaming Commission show that in 2001–02 a net total of \$28.7m was lost to electronic gaming machines in the Region. Net player losses were \$270 per capita in the Region, compared with \$197 for Tasmania. West Coast and Devonport LGAs had the highest per capita net player losses at \$376 and \$373 respectively.

The labour market

- The average unemployment rate in the Region for 2001–02 was 9.3%, significantly lower than rates experienced in the early 1990s of around 13–14%. However, it remains above the rate for Tasmania (8.8%) and Australia (6.7%). The Region, Tasmania and Australia have all experienced a generally declining trend in unemployment rates over the last ten years. However, there are persistent pockets of high unemployment, particularly in urban Burnie and Devonport and other north west coastal towns and also in the rural Kentish LGA.
- At the 2001 Census there were 39,075 residents of the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania who were employed either full time or part time. In 1991 the equivalent number was 40,583. This represents a decrease of 3.7% in the Region's number of jobs. Over the same period the population has declined by 4.6%.
- The industry sectors which had the highest number of employed persons at the 2001 Census were Retail trade (5,965 employed persons), Manufacturing (5,645), Agriculture, forestry and fishing (3,935), Health and community services (3,900) and Education (2,861). It should be noted however, that for the purposes of comparison, some industry sectors have high rates of part-time employment, such as Retail trade and Health and community services.
- Industry sectors showing declines in employment between 1996 and 2001 included Finance and insurance and Mining. Both of these sectors have been undergoing restructuring and downsizing in many parts of regional Australia. In terms of the decline in the overall numbers of persons employed, the Manufacturing sector had the largest fall, down 378 persons (or 6.3%) over the five-year period. A large manufacturing sector employer, the Burnie pulp mill, closed its operations in 1998, which was a setback for local manufacturing employment. Conversely, there were small increases in employment in the Retail sector, in hospitality (Accommodation, cafes and restaurants) and in Property and business services over the period 1996 to 2001.
- At the 2001 Census, 39.1% of employed residents of the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania held some form of post-school qualification. This was lower than the rate for Tasmania (42.5%) and for Australia as a whole (46.8%). However, the level of qualification of the Region's employed labour force has increased since 1996. At the 1996 Census, 34.5% of employed residents of the Region held some form of post-school qualification.
- Just 9.4% of employed persons in the Region held a university degree at the time of the 2001 Census, while the equivalent figure for Tasmania was 15.1% and for Australia 18.7%. However, the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania had a higher proportion of employed persons with a skilled vocational qualification, with 20.8% having completed a Certificate III or IV level compared with 17.7% for Tasmania as a whole.

Economic activity

- At September 1998, there were 6,982 business locations in the Region, of which 1,957 were in the Agriculture sector, 1,168 in Retail trade and 579 in the Construction sector. There were 43 business locations that employed 100 or more persons, of which 16 were Manufacturing establishments, 7 were in the Health and community services sector (mainly hospitals and nursing homes), 6 were in the Mining sector and a further 6 were Retail trade locations.
- Manufacturing has for many years been a vitally important activity in the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania. Important manufacturing plants are engaged in such activities as dairy product manufacturing, vegetable processing, textile product manufacturing, sawmilling and wood product manufacturing, paper manufacturing, cement production and mining equipment manufacturing. At the 2001 Census 5,645 persons were employed in the manufacturing sector. Manufacturing sector turnover in the Region was \$1,421m in 1996–97 (the latest year for which regional manufacturing turnover is available), 30% of the state total.
- The mild climate, relatively high rainfall and fertile soils of this area are ideal for dairying, vegetable growing and beef cattle, the Region's principal agricultural activities. In 2000–01 the value of agricultural commodities produced was \$315m, or 41.7% of the total for Tasmania (\$755m). In terms of value, the Region had 64.7% of the state's vegetable production, 59.6% of its milk production and 55.1% of its beef cattle disposals for slaughtering.
- Circular Head LGA, (with agricultural production valued at \$95.8m) is the largest dairying and prime beef producing area in Tasmania. Agricultural production in Central Coast LGA (\$60.3m in 2000–01) is dominated by potatoes and other vegetable growing and also hops, dairy and beef cattle. Latrobe LGA (\$44.0m), in the east of the Region, is also mainly a vegetable producer. Burnie, Devonport, Kentish and Waratah/Wynyard combine vegetable production with dairying and beef production. The north west also has significant production of oil poppies and pyrethrum. King Island is renowned for its high quality dairy produce, particularly cheeses, and also its prime beef. The King Island 'brand' is well known throughout Australia and is synonymous with high quality gourmet food products.
- The implementation of the national Dairy Deregulation program (on 1 July 2000) has led to some restructuring within the dairying sector, such as amalgamation and consolidation of dairy farms and increased efficiency by some producers. In general, the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania benefits greatly from Tasmania's 'clean, green' image with its food exports to mainland Australia and to the rest of the world.
- Tourism has long been important to Tasmania and to the Region. Just under half of all visitors to Tasmania in 2001–02 travelled within the North West Tourism Region, the majority of whom stayed overnight. Just under one-third of all visitors to Tasmania ventured to the West Coast Tourism Region—to Strahan, Queenstown and other areas.

Economic activity *continued*

- In 2001–02 the Region’s hotels, motels, guest houses and serviced apartments took \$18.5m in accommodation takings. Room occupancy rates were 41.0% in 2001–02, up from 39.6% in 2000–01.
- A recent addition to the tourism infrastructure of the West Coast is the restored West Coast Wilderness Railway that operates between Strahan and Queenstown. It was officially opened by the Prime Minister in April 2003.
- A significant proportion of the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania is forested. At the 2001 Census, 530 persons in the Region were employed in the Forestry and logging industry. A further 1,030 were employed in Sawmilling and wood and paper product manufacturing. The Region has a wide range of native forest-based industries. These vary from veneer manufacture and sawmilling to woodchip, pulp and fine-paper making. Forests also have significant tourism, recreational and educational values.
- For well over 100 years the mining of metallic minerals has been the main economic activity of the West Coast and, in more recent times, parts of Waratah/Wynyard (Savage River). The histories of towns such as Queenstown, Rosebery, Zeehan and Savage River are closely associated with mining activity. In 2000–01 the value of production of metallic minerals was \$444.8m, down slightly on the \$460.9m produced in 1996–97, but up on the \$388.8m produced in 1991–92.
- There has been quite a substantial downturn in employment levels in the mining sector in the Region over the last twenty or so years. In the 1970s and early 1980s mining employment levels were above 3,500, but by 2001 had declined to only 1,100, or less than one-third of the level of twenty years ago. This is because of mine closures, productivity-driven retrenchment programs, and the less labour-intensive nature of mining operations used today.
- According to Land Information System Tasmania (LIST), median sales values for houses in Burnie and Devonport, the two largest cities in the Region, have essentially remained flat or have declined over the last five years. Devonport’s median house price was \$81,000 in 1996–97 and had increased slightly to \$84,000 in 2001–02. Burnie’s median house price declined over the same period from \$70,000 to \$60,000. Both Burnie and Devonport have experienced declines in their populations over this period, with Burnie’s rate of decline greater than that of Devonport. This may partly explain why residential property values in these two cities are so restrained.
- Tasmania’s energy needs are provided primarily by Hydro Tasmania, which has around 40% of its hydro-electric generation capacity within the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania. There have been no major hydro-electric projects under construction in Tasmania since the early 1990s and it is generally accepted that further hydro-electric developments are no longer viable for Tasmania, either economically or environmentally. Over the decades up to the early 1990s many thousands of Tasmanians were employed on major hydro-electric construction projects, a form of work that no longer exists.
- Recent energy infrastructure initiatives include wind farm developments, the Basslink project, linking Tasmania to the National Energy Market, and the natural gas project, also linking Tasmania with the mainland via pipe under Bass Strait. These additional power sources will boost industrial development in the Region as well as across the whole of Tasmania.

The environment

- Tasmania's environment is one of its most important key strengths. Environmental issues and sustainability are now at the forefront of policy and planning decisions.
- Environmental issues in Tasmania had a high national profile during the 1970s and 1980s with the controversies over Lake Pedder, the Franklin Dam and Wesley Vale and their subsequent outcomes. In retrospect, these issues and their outcomes proved to be 'watersheds' in Tasmania's and Australia's recent environmental history leading to much greater emphasis now being placed on environmental values. The site of the proposed Franklin Dam and also the site of the proposed Wesley Vale pulp mill are both located within the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania, while Lake Pedder is located just outside the Region's boundary.
- The *Tasmania Together* document, issued in 2002 after very extensive community consultation, reflects the high value Tasmanians place on their environment—its protection, conservation and future management.
- The Commonwealth Government and the State Government share a vision of ecologically sustainable management of the forest estate that integrates environmental, commercial and community values and uses. These values are embodied in the landmark Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) negotiated with the Tasmanian State Government in 1997.
- The Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (WHA) was entered on the World Heritage List in 1982 and covers 1.38 million hectares (approximately 20% of Tasmania). Significant parts of the WHA fall within the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania. The WHA features a diverse array of both natural and cultural features of global significance, e.g. pristine habitats for plants and animals that are not found elsewhere in the world and the most significant and extensive glacially modified landscapes in Australia.
- The World Heritage Convention requires those responsible for the management of the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA to conserve, protect and pass the WHA on to future generations. At the same time Tasmania is required to 'present' it, i.e. to assist people to see and experience the area.
- Managing a large natural area like the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA is not without its problems. Many of the threats to the values of the area are due to, or made worse, by people visiting the WHA. A well developed Tasmanian Wilderness WHA Management Plan (updated in 1999) sets out principles and practices to be followed in management of the area.
- According to the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, the fox represents the single most devastating threat to Tasmania's native mammals and birds. This island state is recognised as a national and international fauna haven due to the lack of foxes, but should the species become established nearly all of Tasmania's native land animals would be at risk. The Fox Free Tasmania Taskforce was established in 2002 to assist in keeping Tasmania 'fox free'.
- Tasmania places a high value on its remaining early nineteenth century cultural heritage sites. Examples of such sites within the Cradle Coast Region Tasmania, that can be readily accessed by visitors, include Sarah Island in Macquarie Harbour near Strahan and Highfield House at Stanley (Circular Head).

Summary—Key Points

SELECTED SUMMARY INDICATORS, Cradle Coast Region Tasmania, Tasmania and Australia

Indicator	Reference period	Unit	Cradle Coast Region		
			Tasmania	Tasmania	Australia
Area	June 2001	sq kms	22 492	67 914	7 703 581
Estimated resident population	June 1996	persons	110 209	474 443	18 310 714
	June 2000	persons	107 322	471 409	19 153 380
	June 2001	persons	106 826	471 795	19 413 240
Rate of population change	1996 to 2001	(annual ave) %	-0.6	-0.1	1.2
	2000 to 2001	%	-0.5	0.1	1.4
Population density	June 2001	population per sq km	4.7	6.9	2.5
Proportion of total population					
Aged 0–14 years	June 2001	%	21.9	21.0	20.5
Aged 65 years and over	June 2001	%	13.8	13.8	12.5
Median age	June 2001	years	37.3	37.2	35.7
Indigenous persons					
Number	2001 Census	persons	5 079	15 856	410 003
% of total population	2001 Census	%	4.9	3.4	2.2
Sole-parent families					
	2001 Census	families	4 366	20 476	762 632
	2001 Census	% of all families	15.3	16.5	15.4
Average annual individual taxable income(a)	2000 tax year	\$	31 647	31 410	36 161
Centrelink income support customers(b)					
Number	June 2001	persons	32 473	134 496	4 191 816
Proportion of persons aged 15 years and over	June 2001	%	38.9	36.1	27.2
Unemployment rate(c)	2001–02	%	9.3	8.8	6.7
Employed university graduates					
Number	2001 Census	persons	3 689	27 721	1 552 875
As % of all employed persons	2001 Census	%	9.4	15.1	18.7
Manufacturing turnover	1996–97	\$m	1 421	4 720	208 348
Agriculture—value of production	2000–01	\$m	315	755	34 237
Value of building approvals					
New residential	2001–02	\$m	34	224	24 438
Non-residential	2001–02	\$m	34	166	13 287

(a) Source: Australia Taxation Office, *Taxation Statistics*.

(b) Source: Department of Family and Community Services, *Centrelink Customers by Postcode*.

(c) Monthly average.