

Urban or rural

There are advantages and disadvantages to any of the places in which people choose to live. In this unit we focus on urban areas and rural and remote communities.

Urban areas

Most Australians now live in large cities, usually near the coast. Because of their large populations, cities are able to provide a wide variety of services. For example, the largest hospitals are all located in big cities because that is where the need is greatest. Large cities also provide a range of entertainments and recreational activities not found in smaller centres. Urban areas also have better employment opportunities. This is one of the key advantages of living in an urban area.

Some Australians dislike living in cities, however, and **tree changes** and sea changes have become popular forms of escape.

Overcrowding is one of the main disadvantages of city living. A large population means that there is higher demand for housing, and this causes prices to rise. Traffic and public transport congestion are other problems. Heavy traffic also leads to increased air pollution. Other concerns include a perception that crime is more common in cities.

Rural and remote areas

The environment is one of the key advantages of living in rural and remote areas. There are fewer people, cars and factories. As a result, rural areas tend to be cleaner. Fewer people means more space. The demand for housing is often lower, resulting in cheaper house prices and more affordable rent.

As the distance from the city increases and areas become more remote, populations shrink and access to services declines. This is the key disadvantage of living in rural and remote areas. Australians living in very remote regions, such as far northern Western Australia, may have to travel hundreds of kilometres to the nearest shop. Health care can be so far away that doctors fly to their patients (see Figure 9.8)!

9.8

People living in remote Australia live so far from health services that they rely on the Royal Flying Doctor Service for their health care.



WHEN THE TREE-CHANGE DREAM TURNS TO DUST

Peter Munro

CAROLINE Harlow knew that relocating from the city to the country 18 months ago would be life-changing. But she didn't realise just how different the lifestyle would be. Her first trip to town ended abruptly when the supermarket closed at midday on a Saturday. There was no public transport to speak of and a lack of doctors.

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Increasing numbers of Melburnians are fleeing the stressful grind of the city for what they dream will be a peaceful country retreat. But tree changes do not live up to the harsh reality of life in rural Victoria, a new study has found.

In fact, 90 per cent of those surveyed say they are so disenchanted they plan to move on—to another town, the coast or back to the city—within five years.

Most say they are stressed by high living costs, poor work opportunities, a lack of services and the effects of drought. Many feel unwelcome and isolated.

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Only 2 per cent researched their new locale before relocating from the city and as a result, there were 'deep chasms' between city residents' expectations of country life and their experience.

'People bought the dream about the idealistic country life, then they moved there and were confronted by the reality: poor health care,

poor road quality, fewer work opportunities, expensive food, lack of entertainment, obesity, lack of ethnic diversity, difficulty making friends, conservatism and narrow-mindedness,' says Charles Sturt University researcher Dr Angela Ragusa.

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Tree changers were mainly stressed urbanites with a romantic view that life in the country would offer a better lifestyle. Many subsequently discovered living costs were higher than expected, complaining of a lack of cheap rental housing, overpriced properties and expensive food and petrol. One disgruntled man said his 'cost of living is considerably higher in the country ... because you've got transport in and out to cope with.'

Source: *The Age*, 19 April 2009

ACTIVITIES

Knowledge and understanding

- 1 Outline the advantages of living in large cities and other urban areas.
- 2 Identify the disadvantages of city living.
- 3 Describe what attracts people to a rural lifestyle.

Applying and analysing

- 4 Think about the location in which you live. Is it urban, rural or remote? List the advantages and disadvantages that you feel there are in living where you do.

- 5 Read the newspaper article 'When the tree-change dream turns to dust', then complete the following tasks.

- a Outline the disadvantages Caroline Harlow encountered when she moved from Melbourne to a rural area.
- b Describe the factors that attract people such as Caroline Harlow to life in rural areas.
- c What types of things to do you think people should check before they decide to move to a new area?