Types of Australian Communities

Introduction
This chapter will allow you to understand what a community is (according to geographers) and what basic types of communities exist. In general, we are all a part of several human communities, either through sharing a geographical area (shared space) with a defined population (number of people), or through sharing interests with others in a social organisation (like in a work community or a community group).

What are communities?
A community is a population in a defined area. Within this defined population, people share something in common, such as shared space (like a rural or urban area) or membership of a social organisation (like a workplace or a cultural group). Several factors can make and define a community including beliefs, physical or public space, interests, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic background, location, workplaces and history. In geography, we can now refer to a community of shared space from local to global.

For our immediate study purposes, we will look at two types of communities of interest to Geographers:

1. communities defined by shared space, for example, a suburb or town
2. communities defined by a shared interest or social organisation, for example, the Socceroo's fan club or the Italian community.

Communities tend by nature to provide a sense of community and identity for humans. This means we are all members of many communities that make our lives meaningful and enjoyable. A person can be a member of many communities at the same time. For example, he or she might play soccer in a sport community, be a member of the Italian community through marriage and a member of the Anglo-Saxon (English) community by family origin, have a history of growing up in a rural community or be living in an urban or suburban community. They may have worked in several work communities for employment, but also be playing music in a musical community and a member of a religious community (that's at least seven communities; think of all your communities).
Types of Australian communities

There are many types of communities within Australia and around the world. We can observe and compare community types in order to understand how they function and how they are organised.

A geographer uses community profiles when studying defined populations of humans, like the different cultural groups existing in a particular location. This is a useful and formal way to compare the demographic features of communities in order to monitor population changes over time. Observing the demographics of populations and defined communities also allows us to observe differences or similarities within and between communities. For example, a rural community and an urban community might have similar proportions of cultural groups, yet have very different unemployment rates and social activities (like sport and entertainment).

Sporting communities

Many Australians love sport. Many people are members of a sporting community whether they play sport professionally or for leisure, or whether they like to watch games or follow a particular team. There are around six million people aged 5 and over actively involved in Australian sport communities.

The Sydney Swans fan club, part of the Australian Football League (AFL), is an example of a highly organised sporting community. The fan base is a social organisation spread across at least two States. There are likely to be members and fans nationally and even internationally. The internet is proving to be an excellent way for this sporting community to develop and encourage membership. The Swans’ official website is dedicated to its fans and the ‘Swans community’. It has diverse facilities like a club history, the club anthem, pictures and player profiles, social events and memorabilia. The community has its own ‘Fan Zone’. Like many other communities, sport is big business, so the sport community in general tries to fulfill other community functions. For instance, the business arm of The Swans ensures that groups such as sick children are supported. The community programs also allow a ‘Swans Squad Junior Clinic’ to operate in its Melbourne headquarters, providing signing of new members and an opportunity to meet the big players.

Beach communities

The beach represents an aspect of the Australian lifestyle and is a ‘community’ in terms of shared space. When Australians go to the beach, they enjoy sitting with friends, family and other community members. They also enjoy the sun, the waves, the atmosphere, playing sport and even a BBQ. The beach provides us with a sense of community as it represents an important part of our leisure time and can be an important way for communities to interact (whether it is with our family community, our social community, or the wider community).
**Multicultural communities**

In urban and regional centres we find an array of culturally diverse communities. Around a quarter of Australia's population is composed of citizens who were born overseas and migrated to Australia. Some suburbs in cities and large regionally-based towns and cities are highly multicultural (with an ethnic composition of over 90 per cent). Australia is developing its national multicultural identity. Neighbourhoods and schools are made-up of people from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who often speak more than one language.

**Work communities**

When we go to work and our place of employment, we are in our work community. In the simplest sense, this means we are working with other individuals. The healthiest work communities are the ones where everyone relates well socially and the employees work cooperatively with each other and their managers to complete work duties. As a result, strong work communities tend to have productive and enjoyable workplaces. People do their best work when they enjoy being at work and feel comfortable with their work responsibilities.

**Interest groups as communities**

Interest groups are either political or social communities. Social interest groups are communities that have a common social interest, such as a parenting group or a local conservation group. There are, however, numerous social interest groups across many fields. If you think about your own personal interests, you may be able to think of some. There are dance or music groups, for example, and groups that meet regularly to walk their pets or enjoy viewing the latest films. There are interest groups involving sport, food, drama, travelling, art appreciation and cooking. You would be in a social interest group if you went with people to enjoy your favourite bands. Some interest groups serve particular communities, like in rural or indigenous communities.

Many interest groups are political in nature: they are trying to promote a single issue or meet a number of long term objectives. Political interest groups vary in size, structure, and funding level. An effective interest group uses political strategies to influence decision making; interest groups of a political nature use a variety of strategies in pursuing their aims. Strategies include: petitions or letters to Members of Parliament, lobbying of politicians (arguing a case), advertising, public protest and meetings. No Aircraft Noise is a political party and a lobby group, yet it was formed in 1995 as an interest group. This party is a good example of how a
single issue in the community can motivate an interest group to be formed. No Aircraft Noise, as implied by the name, aim to reduce and remove aircraft noise pollution from Sydney. The main way the group envisage this outcome is by the closure of Kingsford Smith Airport; a new airport or runway can be constructed outside suburban areas. Through lobbying, No Aircraft Noise aims to ensure that the major political parties in Australia put the interests of Sydneysiders first, by minimising air pollution and improving quality of life. Political participation, lobbying, website facilities, newsletters, campaigning and demonstrations are key strategies used.

Indigenous Australian Communities

Introduction
This chapter looks at the main features and trends in Indigenous Australian communities. It looks at their historical and geographical background, demographic and population changes, issues of human rights (related to reconciliation) and signs of positive change for the future.

The historical and geographical context
The Indigenous community in Australia has a long historical and geographical record dating back at least 50 000 years. The inhabitants distributed themselves mainly along the coastal areas before British settlement. Prior to British landing (1788), the Indigenous peoples considered themselves caretakers of the Australian continent. The land was to be preserved and passed on to future generations: a central value binding this ancient community. Early Indigenous communities worked the land to sustain their livelihood. This featured the reproduction of plants and animals, the generation of food crops and systems for catching river life. Indigenous land and environmental management also featured the controlled use of fire, which created food for animals and the production of fire-resistant species of trees, shrubs and grasses. Early Indigenous communities were regarded as nomadic, because of this sustainable use of, and harmonious connection to the land. This involved using land and natural resources in cycles. These peoples also practised collective ownership. No one owned the land and its resources.

The Indigenous communities were devastated by the British arrival in 1788 and beyond. Indigenous peoples were dispossessed of their land when the British declared Australia 'terra nullius or 'empty land'. For much of the 19th Century, the impact of settlement on indigenous culture was negative: the early settlers displayed little tolerance nor respect for indigenous land and human rights, culture, traditions and the obvious spiritual and historical attachment to the continent. In addition, the settlers restricted the tribal movement patterns of Indigenous peoples through their imposed settlement and farming patterns. Genocide (mass killing) and introduced diseases wiped out as much as 90 per cent of the Indigenous population in just 60 years. It is little surprise then that in recent years, Indigenous rights, Indigenous law and Native Title are now being recognised through High Court rulings, public pressure, political initiatives, global human rights activism and an increasingly educated Indigenous population.
Poor demographics and living standards
Australia is the world’s fourth most ‘liveable’ country (standard of living, health, wealth and education levels), according to the United Nations 2003 Human Development Index (HDI); this emphasises the tragedy of poor living standards and issues in many Indigenous communities. Around 2 per cent of our population is Indigenous, yet 12 per cent of this figure is homeless. Around 40 per cent of Indigenous children are in corrective services for crime and juvenile delinquency; a staggering 18:1 ratio of indigenous to non-indigenous exists in our prison population. Almost half of the Indigenous population have a formal education below Year 10 level, which adds to welfare, crime and unemployment statistics. Indigenous health has been considered to be of ‘Third World’ standard (very poor); disease and disability is widespread and life expectancy is up to 20 years lower than the non-indigenous population. Smoking, obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes are particularly serious health issues for these communities as are drug and substance abuse. Many Indigenous people live in isolated communities of less than 20 people, where services are limited.

Indigenous human and social rights
Socio-economic disadvantage such as poverty, welfare dependency and low income, limited ability to meet basic needs and poor education and health in many Australian Indigenous communities, have led to international pressure on the Commonwealth and State governments to improve human and social rights of these people. Australia is a member of two key organisations supporting and promoting a range of human rights for people: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. There are many declarations of human rights that Australia is in support of; Article 25 of the UDHR is said to be the most relevant. It states: ‘Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control’.

It is these ideas which have prompted a range of government strategies to raise living standards and human rights in indigenous communities. Some programs are controlled by the communities as ‘self-determining’, such as the Remote Communities Initiative; other strategies and programs are aiming to improve access to essential services such as health (Medicare) and schooling. It is unacceptable that Indigenous peoples, the first Australian inhabitants, are living below comfortable living standards, largely due to circumstances beyond their control.

Signs of positive change in indigenous communities
The raised awareness of the problems and issues in indigenous Australian communities has led to some positive changes and community initiatives. For example, the Papunya Indigenous community, located in remote Northern Territory near Alice Springs, has been working with World Vision (an international health and welfare organisation) to improve the community's standard of living. The Papunya community has about 400 residents; the community was set up as a forced settlement in 1959 and is a mix of different tribal groups who lost their traditional way of life. The result was poverty and a reliance on welfare handouts; World Vision was invited by the community to help with health issues in 1996. Their studies found malnutrition, high rates of infection and disease, inadequate housing and water access, low education and participation, substance abuse, and social problems such as vandalism. As a result, programs were developed in health, welfare, aged care, youth, education and leadership. Training of community and aged care workers and improved elderly service provision also occurred.

Another example of positive change is observable in the Indigenous communities of the Kimberley region of Western Australia. In the town of Fitzroy Crossing, there are many Aboriginal-owned and operated businesses that contribute to improved social and economic prosperity. For instance, the Ngiyali Roadhouse sells essentials like petrol and food. The Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency supports local artists and cultural heritage, the Crossing Inn provides accommodation and the Darlingunaya Aboriginal Corporation runs local area tours.
Rural Communities

Introduction
This chapter looks at the basic features of rural communities in Australia and discusses key responses to change. Some rural communities have the industrial and natural capacity to cope well with change. Many rural communities are in decline from a decrease in jobs and population levels.

Rural communities
There are several towns or cities (urban centres) located within rural communities that are found in country areas of Australia. Some rural communities are centred on the dominant type of employment or industry, such as tourism or mining. These rural communities thrive and develop if the industry thrives. A rural community can have a dominant industry and be specialised for this purpose. A community is multifunctional if it has a combination of two or more functions related to mining, manufacturing, administration, transport, communication and service provision (like recreation and tourism).

Rural communities such as those in Queensland and Western Australia have mining as their dominant industry and way of life. Transport is the specialist function in rural communities such as Port Augusta in South Australia, where many people work in rail and road transport industries. Administration is an industry occurring in many rural communities. It involves the operations and services provided by local government and government offices (State and Commonwealth). Service provision such as tourism and recreation is the dominant industry in areas such as the Gold Coast and Surfers Paradise on Queensland's east coast, or Port Macquarie on the mid-north coast of New South Wales. Some rural communities such as those in Sydney's Blue Mountains or The Central Coast act as 'satellite' or 'dormitory' towns or cities. Their function is mainly to provide residences for people who travel to the city for work, but who wish to live outside the city.

There is a range of general demographic features in rural towns and communities compared with urban communities: lower incomes, higher unemployment, a lower proportion of working women, more people are married, more cars per household, more men than women, a higher proportion of Aboriginal peoples, younger school leavers, more children per couple, higher levels of home ownership, more Christians, fewer immigrants and fewer young adults. Tamworth is a large rural community based on the Peel River in northern NSW. Its major demographics could be regarded as characteristic (typical) of rural communities: 90.5 per cent Australian born, only 1.7 per cent speak a language other than English at home, only 0.3 per cent are non-Christians; an Anglo-Australian culture dominates in a current population of 35,500. Many of you may know Tamworth as the 'country music centre' of Australia, with its annual country music festival and culture. See image 2

Responding to change in rural communities
Some rural communities adapt well to change by finding alternative ways to create jobs and sustain lifestyles. For example, some rural communities have successfully changed their land use to maintain a standard of living. New crops like sunflowers and grapes provide jobs and economic stability; so does the conversion (change) of small farms into larger ones and the conversion of unproductive farms into bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Technology has been used innovatively, for example, with satellite monitoring of soil salinity and health.

The reverse problem can of course occur. When employment and industry decline, a rural community may decline (meaning a reduction in job numbers, weekly pay and a drop in living standards). For example, rural communities centred on industrial manufacturing of building or industrial products have suffered from an industrial downturn, leading to the need to diversify forms of employment. In short, many of Australia's rural communities are experiencing the pressure of change: globalisation leading to falling commodity (goods) prices, droughts, and job losses from technological change. A signal of this change is often a significant decline in the population of a rural community, whereby people move to urban areas and cities in search of new employment (such as to Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst or capital cities like Sydney and Melbourne). The major problem and demographic trend in rural communities is population decline; as discussed, there are long term social and economic impacts on rural communities. See image 3 and animation 1

There has been immense pressure on farmers to sustain their farms and livelihood. A combination of drought, lack of rainfall, poor export prices and cheap imports has forced many farm closures. In some cases, large businesses or corporations have moulded smaller unprofitable farms into larger operations, with a range of outcomes for the traditional farmers. The catch-cry is 'adapt,
change or perish’. Many rural communities have had their government-funded railways suspended or closed, with negative effects for human and goods transport. Many large banks have closed rural branches to cut costs, with little regard for the communities they once served; many small rural businesses and individuals have gone bankrupt without crucial financial support. There has been a retail downturn in local and small rural businesses, with improved transport to the larger ‘urban’ regional centres (for example, Dubbo and Tamworth in NSW).

There are many associated demographic trends and issues occurring in rural communities. Young male suicide is alarmingly 3 times higher than it was 30 years ago. Over 120 bank branches have closed, whilst over 30 000 public service jobs have been cut; unemployment is on the increase, as are crime rates. Meanwhile, the income average in rural communities is low compared to national averages and the population growth rate has decreased. Overall, one in three towns is ‘dying’, as their youth are forced to internally migrate to the cities in search of educational opportunities and employment.

**Multicultural Communities**

Introduction

This chapter outlines the basic demographic features of our multicultural communities. In 2006, our population was increasingly multicultural: a higher proportion of citizens who were born overseas have made Australia their home. Our multicultural population is highly diverse, with people bringing their national cultures, religions and languages to add to our changing Australian society.

Our emerging multicultural communities

Multiculturalism and the building of a culturally diverse society is a direct result of immigration; there have been 5 million permanent migrants to Australia since 1945. Around a quarter of the present population was born overseas. Diverse cultures and multicultural communities add to the cultural heritage and identity of our multicultural nation. Australia initially embarked on a program of immigration due to a low fertility (birth) rate and an inadequate population for industry needs. The ‘Ten Pound Tourists’ from the United Kingdom arrived in Australia under the ‘populate or perish’ slogan.

There were also early concerns that Australia was vulnerable to attack or invasion from neighbouring countries if it did not boost its small population (such as during the 1960s, when Australians were led to believe that communists from Asian countries, such as Vietnam, China and Cambodia would invade). There are calls in recent times to bring more skilled migrants to Australia so that our economy can remain competitive and prosperous (35 000 skilled migrants were brought to Australia in 1998-99).

There is a range of interesting statistics on our multicultural communities. For example, in 1947, the proportion of the population born overseas was 10 per cent, with 81 per cent of this figure coming from English-speaking countries; in 2001, 22 per cent were born overseas with 33 per cent originating from North-West Europe, 18.9 per cent from Southern and Eastern Europe and 12.1 per cent from South-East Asia. These figures tell us that we are becoming more multicultural with an increased proportion of migrants drawn from an increasing variety of nations and cultures. This makes our national community diverse, unique and one of constant change. The top five overseas-born communities (by number of people) are the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Italy, Vietnam and China.
After World War II (after 1945), Australia brought a wave of migrants from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece, Italy and Yugoslavia. Many migrants and refugees have come from Asian countries since the 1970s (Vietnam, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Cambodia and China).

The 1970's also featured arrivals from Turkey, Lebanon and India. The 1980s and 1990s saw a significant increase of migrants practising the religions of Buddhism and Islam; relatively new migrant intakes have been sourced from Iraq, Iran, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Islam is one of the fastest growing non-Christian religions in Australia and this is an example of our religious tolerance.

**Policies on non-discriminatory immigration**

Migration, or emigration, is the permanent or semi-permanent movement of people from nation to nation. Immigration programs bring migrants into a country. Migrants are able to return to their original country permanently if they have dual citizenship.

Australia's annual immigration quota (amount) is based on non-discriminatory grounds (does not give preference to any particular race, religion, gender, or cultural ethnicity). There exists a range of immigration programmes based on family circumstances, skill levels, humanitarian issues (like refugees made homeless from war) and issues of sustainable development (concerns the people needed for employment and the strengthening of communities, with regard to minimising our impact on the natural environment).

Migrants to Australia are accorded the same citizenship rights as others in the population. We have a Multicultural Policy of rights based on values of respect, tolerance, inclusion and recognition. Responsibilities are bestowed upon all Australian citizens, based on the application of these rights (like loyalty to Australia, acceptance of laws and the institutions and norms of our system; and mutual respect for each other).

**The influences of multicultural communities**

Multicultural communities provide Australia with new sources of cultural heritage. The cultural richness covers the wide variety of food, leisure pursuits, arts, visual aspects such as streetscapes, and cultural traditions. Multicultural communities are being supported and strengthened by our governments, for economic and social reasons. Cabramatta in Sydney's South-West is an example of how multiculturalism can unite and integrate different cultures. Around two thirds of Cabramatta was born overseas; many Asian migrants make up the population (for example, 29 per cent were born in Vietnam out of a population of 19,315).

Cabramatta is known for its Asian-Australian identity and cuisine, Buddhist temples, European cafes, alternative medicines and annual street festivals. Multicultural communities are, in a way, like 'global' communities: cultures of the world work together in a defined population for the purpose of work, sport, socialising, raising families and community life.

Within multicultural communities we find strong cultural and social relations among people. Australia is a great place to live and the new lifestyle here encourages diverse peoples to work together to develop the community. We find distinct cultural zones or regions, restaurants, places of worship, community information and education programs, traditional and Australian entertainment
and an array of cultural imports. Over time, migrants tend to disperse into the wider Australian community, leaving their unique cultural influence behind; examples include the Germans in the Barossa Valley of South Australia, Vietnamese in Cabramatta and Springvale (Melbourne) and the Middle-Eastern influence in Auburn (for example, Iraqis and Lebanese).