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BIOGRAPHY

Geoff Cockfield lectures in politics and economics at the University of Southern Queensland. His research interests include rural politics and policy, recently focussing on the impact of demographic change on rural representation.

ABSTRACT

Governing a Hollow Country

Australia is 'hollowing out' as people are more and more concentrated in or near metropolitan and particular coastal areas. Wealth, economic decision-making, educational attainment and political representation are concentrated in the cities and particularly the inner metropolitan areas. This paper uses census and electoral data to illustrate some aspects of this concentration and then a picture of Australia as a series of coastal centres with radial links to inland resources regions is developed. It is argued that this political geography is reflected in an implicit 'hubs and spokes' approach to Australian regional policy and that more explicit discussion of the realities of the political and economic concentrations could then be used to improve governance of the regions, including and especially those outside the hubs and spokes.