



**Australian Government**  
**Productivity Commission**

# A 'Sustainable' Population – Key Policy Issues

Roundtable Proceedings

Canberra, 21-22 March 2011



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ISBN 978-1-74037-358-6

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**An appropriate citation for this paper is:**

Productivity Commission 2011, *A 'Sustainable' Population? — Key Policy Issues*, Roundtable Proceedings, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

JEL code: J11

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The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government's independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians. Its role, expressed most simply, is to help governments make better policies, in the long term interest of the Australian community.

The Commission's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Its processes and outputs are open to public scrutiny and are driven by concern for the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

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# Foreword

The Productivity Commission's 2011 policy roundtable, held at Old Parliament House in Canberra on 21-22 March, examined the topic *A 'Sustainable' Population? — Key Policy Issues*. Participants included government officials, academics, consultants and representatives of non-government organisations.

Population growth has been the subject of much public discussion in recent times. However, widespread misconceptions about the pace, characteristics and implications of population growth means that much of this debate has not been as well informed by the facts as the topic deserves. To enhance public understanding, in December 2010 the Commission released a Research Paper *Population and Migration: Understanding the Numbers*, which describes Australia's main demographic trends and what lies behind them.

The Commission's 2011 policy roundtable aimed to shed light on the potential tensions between the various dimensions of 'sustainability' and projected population growth, and assess the implications for economic growth and community wellbeing. The proceedings are being published to enable access by a wider audience to the information and insights that emerged. The volume includes the papers presented by the speakers, responses by discussants, and summaries of the key points emerging from the roundtable discussions.

The Commission is grateful to all the speakers and other participants for their valuable contributions to the roundtable, reflected in these proceedings. Thanks are also due to Patrick Jomini, Alex Maevsky and other Commission staff who arranged the event and assisted in the preparation of the background paper.

Gary Banks AO  
Chairman

July 2011

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