

Paul Collits

Paul Collits has worked in regional development for over 15 years. He is currently Research Fellow in Regional Development at RMIT University's Hamilton campus. For over 10 years he was a regional policy adviser to the NSW Government, working in the Department of State and Regional Development. While in the Department, he developed the Community Partnerships Program, bringing regional universities and communities together to drive local economic development.

In 2002 he completed a PhD at the University of New England in geography and planning. His thesis examined regional policy change in Australia since the 1960s and the decline of decentralisation as a policy objective.

Paul has presented and written extensively on such topics as the role of government in regional development, small town decline and survival, community economic development, regional leadership, professional development for regional development practitioners, the creative class and rural youth out-migration.

He is currently working on a book of essays on Australian regional development.

Paul has also been involved extensively in university teaching, having taught courses for eight years on economic development and spatial policy in the planning program at the University of New South Wales. He was an adjunct Senior Lecturer there from 1999 to 2003. He contributed a chapter on regional planning in the *Planning Australia* text book edited by Susan Thompson (Cambridge University Press), which recently won an excellence award from the Planning Institute of Australia for planning scholarship, research or teaching.

He is currently undertaking research into the effectiveness of local economic development efforts and the drivers of regional economic performance. He is also developing an international collaborative research and community learning project examining rural community decline and survival in "heartland" regions in Australia and the United States.

Paul has been a President of the Australian and New Zealand section of the Regional Science Association International, has served on the editorial board of the *Sustaining Regions* journal, and continues to be actively involved in Association affairs.

On behalf of RMIT University, he recently won the contract to provide professional development programs to Economic Development Australia, to be delivered in collaboration with the University of Western Australia.