

Prof. John Hicks

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BIOGRAPHY

John Hicks is Professor of Economics at Charles Sturt University where, for 16 years, he was Dean of the Faculty of Business. He has published on a range of regional issues - including regional airline access to KSA, the economics of petrol supply to regional Australia, the regional nursing labour market and older workers in the regional work force. In addition he has published on China and its economic relationship with Australia. As an adjunct of the Institute for Land Water and Society, John is now engaged in a number of projects with a regional and sustainability orientation. He has previously been a Regional Development Board member in the Central West of NSW and a director of the Western Research Institute.

ABSTRACT

Transformational Change in Climate Change Impacted Regions

We focus on the potential for policy action to assist optimal transformative change in agricultural districts affected by drought and climate change. The primary research issue acknowledges that current forms of agriculture no longer seem viable in some areas impacted by increasing water costs and/or drought resulting from climate change. Transformation of these areas is inevitable. Is there a role for policy intervention? In relation to this issue, the paper endeavours to address the question: what has been happening and what is likely to happen to the communities of drought and climate change affected areas where irrigation is a dominant part of the economy. Our initial focus will be on NSW where we will analyse the apparent impact of drought between the 2001 and 2006 censuses by regions with a view to identifying what has been happening to their economic base in terms of both levels and patterns of production and whether or not there is there evidence of adapting to change. In particular we want to examine how the local labour market and its response.

The paper concludes by identifying the major questions remaining in order to answer what can or should be done for the communities involved to mitigate the effects of drought and climate change and the issues that further research needs to address to ascertain what elements of comparative or absolute advantage each region has, the communities understanding of challenges and opportunities confronting them and the assistance they need to take advantage of these opportunities.