Small Area Forecast Information (SAFi)

Product overview

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Contents

1   Overview

How will Australia's population change?

The answer to this question is critical to many organisations. It informs them about how demand for their products or services will change. It enables smart organisations to position themselves to take advantage of these changes.

SAFi tells the story of change across cities, towns and regions. It provides both a macro perspective (for example how much will Melbourne's population increase in the next 10 years?) and a micro perspective (how will the distribution of primary school aged children change across the suburb of Point Cook?)

This is possible because SAFi is delivered for the smallest geographic unit (CCD and smaller) which enables you to aggregate the numbers to any larger area such as a state, suburb, sales territory, or radius.

Independent of government, these forecasts combine a "tops down" with a "bottoms up" methodology, ensuring that very specific local conditions are taken into consideration whilst controlling for overall population outcomes.

We have developed this resource in response to numerous requests from various industries who need to forecast potential demand for their products and services.

2   What will SAFi tell you?

Typically forecasts are produced by government statisticians for large geographic areas which do not provide the flexibility required for custom planning.

Small Area Forecast information (SAFi) is a new way of delivering independent population forecasts. The forecasts are developed at the smallest possible geographic level (sub CCD), providing the user with maximum flexibility to select forecast information for custom catchments and to aggregate the numbers to any larger area such as a state, suburb, sales territory, or radius.

SAFi will tell you how the population in your selected area will change each year from 2006-2031.This includes:

- the population

- number of dwellings

- people in each year of age

- household type (e.g. lone person, couple without children etc).

SAFi currently covers all of Victoria and NSW. ACT forecasts will be available in July 2012.

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SAFi is reviewed and updated regularly (approx every 18 months) to ensure that the underlying assumptions are always current and changes are captured and reflected quickly. This provides users with confidence that the data reflects actual conditions on the ground even in times of rapid change.

3   Why SAFi?

Expert

.id has the largest dedicated population forecast team in Australia. Our knowledge of forecast modelling coupled with extensive local knowledge of housing markets makes us expert at understanding what is driving change.

Independent

.id's forecasts are free from political considerations and policy constraints. They provide an independent and expert view of the population outcomes that can be expected across the State.

Accurate

Forecasts are only as good as the underlying assumptions that drive the model. After the 2006 Census data was released, .id's forecasts were found to be more accurate than either State Government or ABS in two thirds of cases.

Relevant

We build forecasts for the smallest geographic unit possible (CCD and smaller in growth areas). This enables us to provide you with forecasts for catchments that are relevant for your business.

Growth focus

SAFi includes micro forecasts for areas for growth areas on the fringe of cities. These SAFi areas are smaller than CCD (the smallest geographic unit available from the ABS) which is particularly important for assessing the rate at which growth is occurring on the fringe.

Accessible

SAFi can be delivered in any format that suits your organisation. This ranges from a database file that can be incorporated into your own GIS, to delivery in .id's online spatial application, placemaker., which has been especially designed for analysing spatial data.

Stories

SAFi can easily be combined with Census data to tell the story of places – their past, present and future. This enables users to better understand and plan around the changing social characteristics of a place and build a compelling case for funding or investment.

4 How will your business benefit?

Competitive advantage

Having knowledge about the future is gold. Organisations are increasingly embracing demographic information to gain a competitive edge. Accurate population forecasts can give you a heads-up about social and demographic change that your competitors may not be aware of yet.

Build confidence and minimise risk

.id's forecasts provide organisations with the confidence that the major infrastructure investments they are making are based on the best available view of the future.

Target resources

Because .id's forecasts are built for the smallest possible geographic area (around 200 households) businesses can be very targeted in both their investments and promotions, ensuring the best possible returns for their outlay and efforts.

Attract investment

Quality population forecasts are hugely persuasive when building the case for capital investment in a particular project.
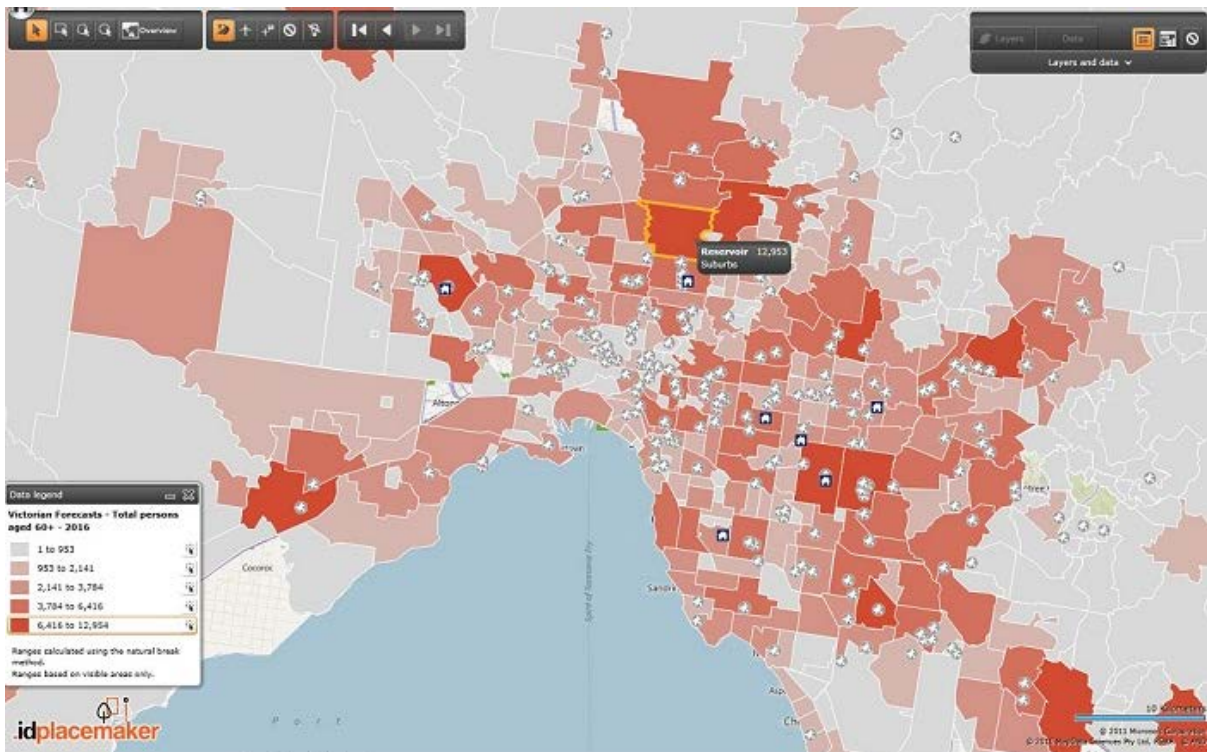
5 Who is using SAFi?

Victorian Electoral Commission

The VEC use SAFi to allocate electoral boundaries that will contain an equal population distribution over three electoral cycles as the population grows and changes.

Uniting Aged Care

Uniting Aged Care (UAC) provides aged care facilities and services across Victoria and Tasmania. The develoment of a new aged care facility requires a significant investment, and people's decision to relocate to an aged care facility is complex.

Combining SAFi with Census and client data is enabling UAC to build an evidence-based approach to their location and product mix decisions.

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SAFi Victoria, total persons aged 60+, 2016

Catholic Education Office

The Catholic Education Office (CEO) have been using SAFi for over six years to assist them match their school services to the current and future student base across Victoria.

The forecasts assists CEO to make evidence-based decisions about where and when to open and close schools, what capacity those schools will need to provide for at what time; and crucially, where and when they need to invest in land and other assets for future school development.

"The evidence-base provided to us by SAFi assists us to confidently make strategic decisions about when and where to invest for future school development across Victoria."

Mr Patrick Love Manager Planning, Catholic Education Office, Vic

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6   About .id – the population experts

.id is a company of demographers, spatial analysts, urban planners, forecasters, Census data and IT experts.

We understand how cities, towns and regions are growing and changing. Name a place and we can tell you about its population's past, present and future!

We use spatial data to tell this story in powerful web applications.

We share this knowledge with our clients so they can make confident decisions about when and where to invest.

Our clients are organisations who contribute to building our cities and communities. They include local & state government, education providers, housing developers, retailers, health care providers, utilities companies, banks & insurers, sporting clubs and planning consultants.

During our 14 years in business, we have built over 500 websites delivering analytical and spatial decision making information to more than 250 clients Australia-wide covering 85% of the population.

Our information products meet the challenge of delivering meaningful information to users with diverse information needs and skill levels – from analysts to the general public – by organising and presenting complex data in an intuitive format. As consumers of spatial data ourselves, we fundamentally understand how users want to consume that data.

We believe that by making demographic information accessible to the broadest possible audience, and promoting evidence-based decision making, we are contributing to a fairer and more sustainable society.

7   .id's forecast credentials

.id's forecasting expertise is based on a collective 45 years of demographic forecasting for state and local government in all states in Australia.

.id's forecasting team originally worked together in Victorian State government in the 1990s to fulfill the requirements of the Metropolitan Services Co-ordination System (MSCS) which introduced a cross government approach to budget allocations for specific areas based on need. Land release and redevelopment information was gathered to inform the age and sex forecasts and were presented for Local Government Areas and Statistical Local Areas across the state and fulfilled the needs of state government's objectives at the time.

.id's team believe that demographic profiling and forecasting needs to address a geography that is much more relevant to planning at the local area level (much more refined than the LGA level) and at a level that ideally reflected communities of interest (eg suburbs, neighbourhoods). This was the basic idea behind starting .id as a business.

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.id's forecast models, while using similar cohort component techniques as the work developed for the State Government of Victoria (similar to techniques used also in Queensland and South Australia), have been developed to project reliable results for small geographies. We know the models are reliable because we can use them to 'forecast' actual or known historical change (i.e. 1996 – 2006), based on actual known assumptions and results.

.id's forecast team are students of 'place' and use their significant knowledge of the role and function of place and how this is changing to provide the context and basis of the assumptions underlying the forecasts. We apply the suburb lifecycles observed consistently across Australian cities both from our local knowledge and extensive data bases to understand how places are likely to change in future.

.id directly addresses the factors driving demographic change that are unique to each area in which we undertake our forecasting work. Changes in regional area's populations are largely driven by the characteristics of the local economy; change in metropolitan areas is driven by land supply and housing market characteristics.

8 Methodology

.id's forecast methodology is the product of over ten years work by a team of specialist forecasters who are passionate about population dynamics and understanding the changing nature of Australian cities and communities. A detailed methodology paper is available separately.