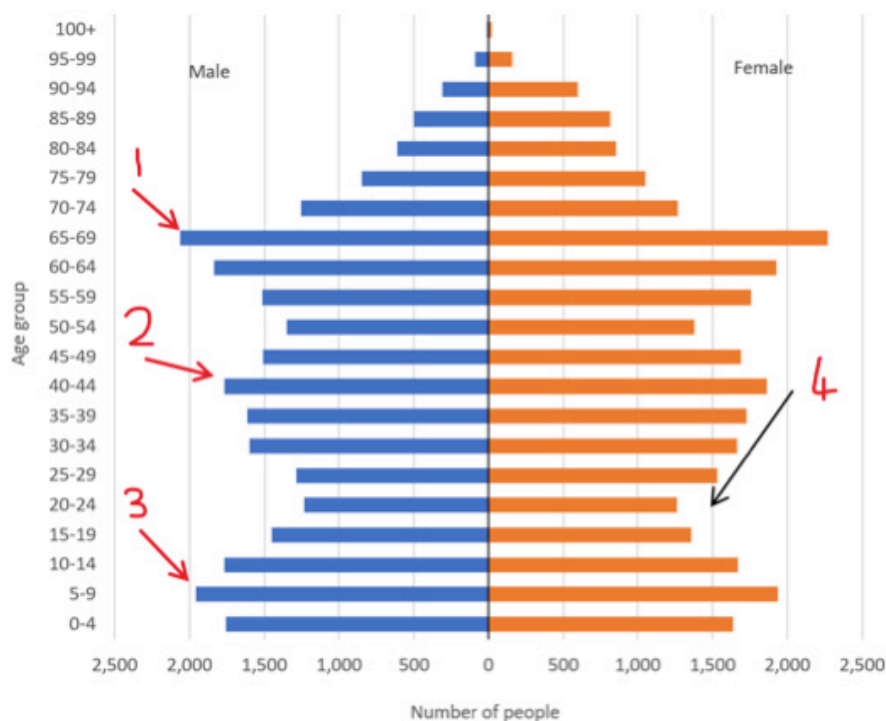# Why is Victoria's Jewish school-aged population projected to decline?

To explain the decline shown in the projection set out in the accompanying report, it helps first to see the full demographic picture. The graph below is a population pyramid for Jews in Victoria in 2016. It shows the number of people, by sex, in 5-year age bands. The size of each age band varies: looking down either side of the chart we see peaks (with relatively higher numbers of people) and troughs (with relatively lower numbers of people).

Arrow #1 on the graph indicates a peak in the 65-69 age band (on both male and female sides of the chart). These are post-WWII baby boomers, a consequence of deferred wartime births and the arrival of Jewish refugees and Holocaust survivors to Victoria forming families. Arrow #2 indicates a second peak at the 40-44 age band. These are the children of the baby boomers, known in demography as an 'echo'. Arrow #3 at the bottom of the chart highlights a third peak, the baby boomers' grandchildren in the 5-9 age band (in 2016), an echo of the echo.

Jewish population pyramid, Victoria, 2016*

* Census data have been adjusted for estimated undercount
Source: ABS Census4

These are the natural, built-in contours of the Jewish population. Their relationship to the projected population decline is explained by the graph's fourth (black) arrow, which highlights the steady shrinkage of the size of the number of females of child-bearing age, from a peak at the 40-44 age band to a trough at the 20-24 age band. All things being equal, the number of babies born is a function of the number of females of reproductive age. So as the number of females in each age cohort steadily declines—which we see here and is due to entirely natural, built-in demographic processes—the number of babies born steadily declines too, hence the decline in the projection.

But the process can operate in the opposite direction and eventually the number of reproductive females will increase again. Therefore, the number of babies born will also increase. Indeed, the projection shows this, since the bottom is reached at the primary level in 2041, when the numbers begin to climb again.