Uncovering Regional Population Trends

Population trends in regional Australia are widely misunderstood. A series of work by the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) has revealed three key trends shaping regional communities: international migrants, Regional Returners and Super Boomers.

While a third of Australia’s population live outside major capital cities, population growth is largely concentrated in regional cities, communities surrounding the major capital cities and coastal areas. Rural and remote areas generally have stable or declining populations, but there are some standout exceptions such as regions experiencing industry booms.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

International migrants are revitalising regional communities. Between 2006 and 2011, 187,000 international migrants settled in regional Australia.

Migrants are often young and a vital source of new labour. They enable population stability, revitalise the local community and bring diversity.

Attracting international migrants is a unique opportunity for small inland towns to offset population decline. Communities like Dalwallinu (WA) and Nhill (Vic) are evidence of the success a proactive, community driven approach can achieve.

International migrants make a vital contribution to the regional communities they settle in

- Help to fill workforce shortages
- Create new jobs
- Important source of population growth
- Revitalise the local community

Regional Australia’s population is diverse, dynamic and growing.

8.8 million people live in regional Australia.

1.4% annual average growth rate of regional Australia

For the good of Australia
SUPER BOOMERS

Regional Australia is ageing faster than the capital cities, meaning the regions are at the forefront of the national ageing trend. Two million people aged 50-69 live in regional Australia.

Through entrepreneurship, staying in the workforce, mentoring, community leadership and volunteering, baby boomers in regional Australia are transforming themselves into Super Boomers.

Twenty one regions are experiencing accelerated rates of ageing. These regions need to lead the way on how to make the most of the ageing population.

REGIONAL RETURNERS

Regional Australia is experiencing an inflow of working age people from the major capital cities. More Australians aged 25-44 are moving from cities to regional areas than vice versa.

Critical to this group are the ‘Regional Returners’, people who left the regions as young adults but are choosing to come back later in life.

The increasing value of lifestyle, affordable housing, proximity to friends and family and access to schools, childcare and health services make regional areas an attractive alternative to capital cities.

‘I think everyone should try it – living in rural Australia! The rent is cheaper in most places, the air is cleaner, the pace gentler, the space is luxurious and the people are fabulous. It’s the best place in the world to raise children too.’

Amanda Salisbury, Regional Returner

To find out more about population trends, how they play out in your community or to share your experiences, visit regionalaustralia.org.au

About the Regional Australia Institute

Independent and informed by both research and ongoing dialogue with the community, the Regional Australia Institute develops policy and advocates for change to build a stronger economy and better quality of life in regional Australia – for the benefit of all Australians.