

## The Returners: there's no place like home (in regional Australia)

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As many regional-born Australians return to the city after visiting family and friends over the break, daydreams of resettling their roots in familiar ground may linger long after the smells of Christmas ham and summer BBQs have faded away.

And with more Australians aged 25-44 moving from cities to regional areas than vice versa, it might be a more common occurrence than we think. According to the Regional Australia Institute, 'Returners' make up a significant pattern in internal migration that often fails to be recognised as a positive - and popular – life choice for many Australians.

Drawing on conversations with 'Returners' from across regional Australia, the RAI says the increasing value of lifestyle, proximity to friends and family and access to schools, childcare and health services are making regional areas an attractive alternative to capital cities. Affordability is also key, with the reduced cost of housing and overall cost of living in many regions a definite drawcard.

For Kerry Grace, a local from Macksville, New South Wales, it was the appeal of bringing her three children up in a familiar place, and owning her own home, that first led to the decision. Now having returned over 10 years ago, Kerry is running her own strategic planning and coaching company, and says she hasn't looked back.

"With the city only a short flight away and access to online work, so many opportunities have been opened up to regional Australians," she says. "I've made new and beautiful friendships, my business is flourishing, my kids go to a good school. It might not be for everybody, but for the people who are considering it I would say don't stop and think – just do it. The quality of life, affordability, environment and lifestyle really make it a no brainer."

The RAI's General Manager of Research and Policy, Jack Archer, says that this is a real win-win for regions and Returners alike. Not only do Returners help to revitalise regional areas, but they also bring with them important professional skills that help to grow and develop their communities.

"Obviously there is a natural drawcard in regional areas that resonates strongly with many Australians," he said. "We want to encourage more people to give it a go and help regions connect with people who might be looking to make the move, and promoting it as a real, positive and achievable life choice."

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## Editor's Notes

Talking point: *returning to the regions* shares the experiences of current and potential regional Returners, and identifies where the driving forces of making the transition back to regional Australia lie.

Between 2010 and 2011, over 135,000 people in Australia left a capital city to move into a regional area. Of these:

- 2,374 people moved from Hobart to regional TAS
- 34,551 people moved from Sydney to regional NSW
- 30,576 moved from Melbourne to regional VIC
- 37,016 moved from Brisbane to regional QLD
- 11,252 moved from Adelaide to regional SA
- 19,981 moved from Perth to regional WA

This domestic mobility led to an increase in Australia's regional population of 10,597 people.

To help inform people making the move to regions and regions themselves, the RAI is creating platform for people to connect and share their experiences. Returners can connect with each other and share their experiences through the RAI website and social media channels.

For more information or to schedule an interview please contact Holly Reid, Communications Manager, on 0438 668 972 or [holly.reid@regionalaustralia.org.au](mailto:holly.reid@regionalaustralia.org.au)

## About the Regional Australia Institute

Independent and informed by both research and on-going 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. The Regional Australia Institute was established with support from the Australian Government.