



From mining pull to lifestyle push: Driving population growth in regional WA

Canberra, AUSTRALIA – 24 June 2014

Western Australian regions have been leading the way for the nation in population growth. As the mining industry changes gear, promoting the benefits of a regional lifestyle will be the key to ensuring this trend continues.

This challenge is explored in the Regional Australia Institute's (RAI) new report *Pathways to Settlement: Population mobility in regional Western Australia from 2001 to 2011*.

"Growth in regional towns and cities has been unprecedented with nine out of the top ten fastest growing populations in Australia located in regional Western Australia during the peak of the mining boom from 2006 to 2011" Jack Archer, General Manager, Policy and Research at the RAI said.

"Importantly, while mining regions led the statistics, the South West and parts of the Wheatbelt also grew strongly over this period".

The RAI identifies four key drivers of population change in regional Western Australia:

1. Resource industry labour demand driving growth in the mining regions;
2. Demand for affordable housing and lifestyle properties extending peri-urban sprawl into the regions close to Perth;
3. A new level of sea-change, fuelled by increasing numbers of retirees and the development of Fly-In – Fly-Out (FIFO) commuter routes; and
4. Structural adjustment in inland, non-mining, agricultural areas reducing labour demand and contributing to stasis or population decline in some areas.

"What we are seeing now is a clear change in the number one driver – resource industry labour demand" Mr Archer said. "Other growth drivers will now need to take up the slack if we are to maintain the momentum in population change".

Employment, access to education, technology, and the amenities of regional towns and cities are crucial to future momentum.

"Regions have always been great places to live. But this growth, combined with investment in the amenity and services of regional towns and cities, represents a major shift for regional Western Australia." Mr Archer said.

"Building the desirability of a regional lifestyle among current and new West Australians will be key to sustained population growth once that overwhelming pull from major resource investments recedes."

This research was undertaken in a partnership between the Regional Australia Institute and the Western Australia Department of Regional Development.

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Editors' Notes

Pathways to Settlement: Population mobility in regional Western Australia from 2001 to 2011 examines key trends in population mobility and settlement patterns in Western Australia.

An embargoed copy of the summary report, a full research report and a fact sheet can be downloaded via www.regionalaustralia.org.au/pressroom

For more information, please contact Jack Archer, on 02 6260 3733.

Quick Facts

- 30% of the Western Australia population live in regional areas, over 642,000 people in 2011
- Accelerated population growth (more than 5% per annum) was twice as likely to occur in regional areas as in the Perth metropolitan area
- Over 52% of regional LGAs had population growth in 2006-2011 compared to just 20% in 2001-2006
- Top destinations for people moving to regional Western Australia in 2006-11
 1. Mandurah
 2. Karratha City
 3. Shire of Ashburton
 4. East Pilbara
 5. Port Hedland
 6. Busselton
 7. Serpentine-Jarrahdale
 8. Capel
 9. Geraldton
 10. Harvey
- Settlement pathways for new residents in regional areas in 2011 were:
 - 20% moved from international locations
 - 20% moved from interstate locations
 - 38% moved from Perth
 - 22% moved from other regions within Western Australia

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.