

Queensland's population has topped the five million mark

DARYL PASSMORE, The Courier-Mail
May 16, 2018 12:00am
Subscriber only

- [Queensland hits magic five million mark](#)

QUEENSLAND'S population has topped the five-million mark as the state's lifestyle attracts more newcomers from around the country and across the world.

The milestone was reached yesterday as a leading demographer revealed the rapid expansion had even taken the experts by surprise.

Social demographer Mark McCrindle hailed the event as "an important milestone".

"It's a big deal," he said.

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk said it was a great development for Queensland.

"Our brightest days are well and truly ahead of us," she said.

"There can be no greater display of confidence than people choosing a life in Queensland. Overseas and interstate migration is up by 50,000 people in the past year."

Business leaders welcomed the economic opportunities that more residents created, but expressed concerns over whether planning and infrastructure were keeping pace.

It took 79 years for the population to rise from the 23,520 people at the time the new colony of Queensland was created in 1859 to one million in 1938.

Hitting two million took 35 years and the pace continues to accelerate, with just 12 years between the four million in 2006 and yesterday's five-million mark.

On current projections, the population will reach six million by 2029, eight million by 2048 and today's population is expected to double to 10 million by the early to mid-2060s.

But Mr McCrindle said even those figures were likely to be eclipsed as the growth was running 20 years ahead of previous official projections.

The past decade or so has brought a big switch, with overseas migrants replacing those coming from interstate as the main factor in population increase.

Between 1992 and 2006, net migration from other states generated 41 per cent of the extra million people, and just under a quarter came from overseas. But since 2006, foreign arrivals

have accounted for 45 per cent of additional residents while and newcomers from other states made up just 14 per cent.

“Cultural diversity is increasing quickly,” Mr McCrindle said. “The proportion of the state’s population born overseas has grown from 700,000 to 1.1 million from 2006 to now.”

Mr McCrindle said the state’s decentralised nature made it easier to successfully absorb population booms.

undefined

“Queensland has 11 of the top (largest) 30 cities in the country so the population is more dispersed, It’s quite different to New South Wales, where two-thirds live in Sydney, and Victoria where three-quarters are concentrated in Melbourne,” he said.

“While some Queenslanders might feel the growth is a bit too much and is transforming the state too quickly, by national and international standards, it is sustainable.

“Notwithstanding some congestion and (housing) price issues in southeast Queensland, it is being managed overall.”

SEQ’s “region of cities” approach — including Brisbane, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Ipswich, Logan, Moreton Bay and Redland — allowed communities to have identities, while creating the collective clout to host events such as the Commonwealth Games or a potential Olympics bid.

Australian Industry Group head Shane Rodgers said the milestone should trigger “a serious and urgent debate about the type of state we want to be”.

“We are rapidly running out of capacity to make incremental changes to the way things have always done,” he said.

“Queensland’s return to high levels of population growth and migration intake highlights the need for the state to have a robust population plan that takes our thinking to a bigger scale.

“Population growth creates ... opportunities, but if it isn’t managed well, it can also have a significant detrimental impact on our standard of living.

“Population movement and net growth produces a large amount of economic activity, increases the tax and spending base.

“It allows us to reach critical mass points that take our financial, social and cultural offerings to a different level.

“On the flipside, quick growth can come with significant growing pains as roads and transport systems clog up, hospitals and schools become crowded and the nature of our urban landscapes change. We need to plan to avoid that.”

Infrastructure Association of Queensland chief executive Steve Abson said population was a key driver for infrastructure needs such as transport, health and education facilities.

Good land planning, linked to transport, was crucial to responding to that challenge.

“That’s what we need to get better at — where are going to put these people with the connectivity needed to future-proof rather than constantly playing catch-up,” he said.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland advocacy manager Kate Whittle said Queensland’s “spurt” reflected older Sydneysiders and Melburnians cashing in on property to seek more value and liveability here and younger people moving north to enter the property market.

Queensland Resources Council chief executive Ian Macfarlane welcomed the 5 millionth Queenslander and said the industry would continue to make a major contribution to the state’s economy.