



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Communications**

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL AUSTRALIA
INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL AUSTRALIA
SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Following the private briefing on 28 October 2021 requested by the Committee, and attended by representatives of the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications and the Treasury Centre for Population, the Department is pleased to be able to provide the following supplementary information:

- Government policies and programs have continued to support regional communities, with some significant additional funding to major programs such as the Building Better Regions Fund and the Regional Connectivity Program, to name only a couple of examples.
- The Government's ongoing investments in regional Australia are numerous, with over 600 programs and policies specifically targeted at benefiting regional Australians. We recommend the Committee consult the publicly available [Regional Ministerial Budget Statements](#) issued in conjunction with the October 2020 and May 2021 Budgets for details about these many programs (see for example [Regional Ministerial Statement 2021-22: Supporting Regional Recovery and Growth | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, Australian Government](#)). These initiatives have been and are continuing to be funded to assist the regions, particularly to support their recovery from bushfires and drought and COVID and as the foundation for their ongoing growth.
- In this context, and in response to the Committee's question during the briefing as to how much of Australian Government infrastructure funding goes to the regions, the Department can advise that through the 2021-22 Budget, the Australian Government has committed to new projects that bring investment in regional Australia to over \$50 billion from 2013-14 to 2030-31. This represents almost a half of the total of the Australian Government's \$110 billion investment over 10 years in job-creating economy boosting infrastructure.
- The Government has also been tracking, with interest, the internal population flows over the past few years, with particular focus on the growth of regional populations.
- Some key data points from recent Australian Bureau of Statistics releases should be highlighted:
 - As at June 2020, the population in regional Australia was 8,291,001 persons, accounting for 32.3% of the total population (25,697,298 persons).

- Between June 2019 and June 2020, the population in regional Australia grew by 1.1% from 8,204,764 persons.
- Regional coastal cities have had notable long term growth (1.4% average annual growth) over the five years to 2020.
- Inland cities have also grown over the five years, albeit more slowly (0.8% average annual growth).
- Net internal migration from capital cities to regions has increased during the Covid-19 period, which in 2020 was largely due to subdued movements from regions to capitals. In the two quarters to March 2021 there was increased movement in both directions, with arrivals from capitals to regions stronger than usual, and departures from regions to capitals back to normal levels.
- The net internal migration gain to regions has been over 10,000 a quarter since the start of 2020, with the March 2021 quarter figure of 11,845 being the strongest on record.
- Minister McKenzie will be working with the Treasurer on regional population planning over the next months in the context of the development of the Government's Population Plan.
- As the data shows, Regional Australia is becoming a preferred location for many Australians, with a net 43,000 people moving from capital cities to regional Australia in 2020.
- Minister McKenzie's speech on Friday 12 November 2021 at the Regions Rising webinar outlined her vision for increased population and investment in regional Australia over the next decade. A copy of the speech is attached for information.
- The Government's approach is to back in the trends we have seen in regional population growth, actively promoting regions and their potential in Government policies and programs and through the Government's regionalisation agenda.
- Regionalisation is a key element of the Government's commitment to build strong and vibrant local communities and economies. As the programs listed in the annual Regional Ministerial Budget Statements show, the Government does this by:
 - doubling down on opportunities for growing regions, by ensuring regions have the jobs and services they need for growing populations
 - providing targeted support for regions in transition to boost growth in key areas and support to new industries
 - funding nation building initiatives for all regions, which invest in jobs and foundational infrastructure and help ensure regions are great places to work and live.
- As part of its regionalisation agenda, the Government invests across all portfolios in the foundations of regional growth, including:
 - connectivity – infrastructure and digital
 - human capital and skills
 - regional jobs and business innovation
 - leadership and collaboration
 - amenity and liveability
 - sustainable natural resources, such as water security

- The regionalisation agenda is about ensuring these investments work together to support stronger growth in Australia's regions.
- Minister McKenzie, as Minister for Regionalisation, Regional Communications and Regional Education, is meeting with a range of stakeholders to discuss ways to capitalise on the comparative advantage and growth potential of regions.
- The Government has commissioned an independent study to identify the regulatory barriers to business relocation to regional Australia. The study will focus on regulations across all tiers of government that are restricting, delaying or increasing the cost of business relocation to regional Australia.
- The regionalisation agenda has a strong focus on private sector relocation to, or establishment of new operations in, the regions to take advantage of benefits to both businesses and their employees. At the same time, the private sector creates jobs and diversifies local economies. This integrated strategy focuses on encouraging both public and private sector movement to the regions.