

House of Representatives Select Committee on Regional Australia

Summary – Second Survey of metropolitan attitudes towards regional Australia

Background

The Committee's second survey of metropolitan attitudes towards regional Australia was launched on 28 August 2020. The survey consisted of 12 questions to gain the views of people who live and work in metropolitan centres/capital cities.

Stakeholders were notified of the survey via email and the survey was also promoted via Facebook.

The Survey closed on 21 November 2020 and received 706 responses.

Question 1: How old are you?

This question was responded to by 697 participants. Just over half (53.51%) were aged 46 years or older. The breakdown by age is as follows:

- Under 18 years – 1.72 %
- 18 to 25 years – 9.04 %
- 26 to 35 years – 16.36 %
- 26 to 45 years – 19.37 %
- 46 to 64 years – 34.43 %
- Over 65 years – 19.08 %

Question 2: Do you live in a metropolitan area of Australia?

This question was responded to by 698 participants.

Five hundred and eighty eight respondents (84.24%) live in a metropolitan area of Australia. One hundred and ten respondents (15.76%) did not live in in a metropolitan area and were not asked further questions.

Question 3: How long have you lived in a metropolitan area?

This question was responded to by 574 participants.

- Under a year – 0.70 %
- 1 to 2 years – 2.26 %
- 2 to 5 years – 4.88 %
- 5 to 10 years – 9.58 %
- 10 years or longer – 82.58 %

Attachment 1

Question 4: What best describes your employment?

This question was responded to by 576 participants.

- Private sector – 24.83 %
- Government work – 20.31 %
- Not working / retired – 18.23 %
- Self-employed / business owner – 12.15 %
- Education – 7.12%
- Service industry – 6.08%
- Tourism – 0.87%
- Other (please specify) – 10.42 %

Responses to 'Other' included the not-for-profit / community sector (13 responses – 2.26%), student (12 responses – 2.08%) and not working / retired (10 additional responses – 1.74%).

Question 5: Have you ever considered moving to a regional, rural or remote area to live and or work?

This question was responded to by 584 participants.

Four hundred and fifty three respondents (77.57%) answered 'Yes'. One hundred and thirty one (22.43%) answered 'No'.

Question 6: If yes, would you move to (select multiple):

This question was responded to by 435 participants. Participants could select more than one option.

- Regional town or village – 296 responses
- Regional city – 283 responses
- Rural area – 154 responses
- Remote area – 48 responses

Question 7: How far away from a capital city would you consider living?

This question was responded to by 436 participants.

- More than approximately three hours' drive – 33.26%
- Around three hours' drive or less – 32.11%
- Around two hours' drive or less – 28.21%
- Around one hour's drive or less – 6.42%

Attachment 1

Question 8: How far away from a regional city would you consider living?

This question was responded to by 433 participants.

- Around one hour's drive or less – 75.52%
- Around two hours' drive or less – 15.24%
- More than approximately three hours' drive – 5.08%
- Around three hours' drive or less – 4.16%

Question 9: Has your view of living in regional, rural or remote Australia changed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak?

This question was responded to by 463 participants.

Two hundred and ninety seven respondents (64.15%) answered 'No'. One hundred and sixty six (35.85%) answered 'Yes'.

Participants were also asked why their view had (or hadn't) changed, which attracted 266 free-text responses. The increased use and acceptance of remote working was a common from respondents. Many respondents stated that they were already considering a move to regional Australia, while others stated that they preferred living in cities.

Notable quotes/responses:

- I think those of us in the city have looked longingly at the freedom and simplicity of regional areas; the lack of proper healthcare outside the capital cities however has been thrown into tragically sharp focus.
- The regional areas are a lot safer it seems. The only problem is a big lack of services like internet and medicine.
- I have absolutely no desire to live in regional towns, transport is not efficient enough to allow me to enjoy football and live music, and infrastructure is too poor for anything else.
- I enjoy space... outdoor environments , quieter space.. smaller communities with a mixed choice of population... a growing community provides better interaction .. living off the land is a healthier wiser choice , having a balance of regional life & security of having access to major city is essential... access to train travel is important. & for expanding ground growth.
- Work from home requirements have made the regional move even more a possibility
- Just reinforced the reasons to move already considered
- I have lived in a regional area in the past and would do so again If public transport connections to regional cities was more frequent.
- View that it would disenfranchise my options in running a business. Highlight how it is significantly harder, therefore disadvantaged, to consider living in regional areas.
- Working from home has demonstrated that work location can be flexible. There is an attractiveness to living regionally with less people and lower COVID risk and more time for work/life balance and room for the kids to run.
- I've always been a city person, and still am, but the idea of somewhere with space and views and a place to escape to has become more and more appealing.

Attachment 1

Question10: Please rank the following in order from most important to least important to you:

This question was responded to by 466 participants.

Participants were asked to rank priorities from 1 (most important) to 7 (least important). The overall rankings and percentage of first preference responses are as follows:

- Work/life balance – 28.33% of first preferences (overall score 5.09)
- Employment opportunities – 25.54% of first preferences (overall score 4.56)
- Access to services – 14.81% of first preferences (overall score 4.45)
 - 20.82% of respondents ranked this item 2nd.
- Access to nature – 11.59% of first preferences(overall score 4.2)
 - 20.82% of respondents ranked this item 4th.
- Strong community – 9.23% of first preferences (overall score 3.92)
 - 22.53% of respondents ranked this item 4th.
- Larger block sizes – 5.15% of first preferences (overall score 2.93)
 - 31.76% of respondents ranked this item 7th.
- Less crowded township – 5.36% of first preferences (overall score 2.87)
 - 29.18% of respondents ranked this item 6th.

Question 11: Please rank the following considerations from most to least important to you in the context of deciding where you will live:

This question was responded to by 466 participants.

Participants were asked to rank priorities from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important). The overall rankings and percentage of first preference responses are as follows:

- Job security – 42.06% of first preferences (overall score 3.41)
- Access to services – 16.31% of first preferences (overall score 3.02)
 - 24.03% of respondents ranked this item 2nd.
- Connectivity (digital) – 12.02% of first preferences (overall score 2.94)
 - 27.04% of respondents ranked this item 3rd.
- House and land prices – 19.31% of first preferences (overall score 2.83)
 - 28.33% of respondents ranked this item 5th.
- Connectivity (infrastructure) – 10.3% of first preferences (overall score 2.79)
 - 27.47% of respondents ranked this item 3rd.

Attachment 1

Question 12: Are there any reasons that you would not move to a regional, rural or remote area of Australia?

This question was responded to by 365 participants.

Issues that featured prominently in the free text responses included a lack of services, work/employment, distance/isolation, entertainment, family and connectivity.

Notable quotes/responses:

- Access to nature and accessible housing are unfortunately not enough to overcome the lack of services - healthcare, most of all, but also proper schools and shopping districts; the variety and energy of the cities is hard to imitate elsewhere.
- Distance from friends and family would definitely be a strong reason
- Can't afford to, lack of access to transport, lack of access to family and friends and lack of access to certain services and infrastructure.
- I want to move but it's knowing I can move somewhere there is work to afford a mortgage and living
- The area must cater for my complete family... if uprooting the family is worthy to their needs, it makes the move worth taking.. gradual change options and improvements are necessary
- isolation and lack of connectivity with arts and culture
- I love the idea of closer living, and the big thriving metropolis, however this may be a young person's attitude, still full of excitement!
- The appalling state of the NBN in rural areas - the first thing we do is contact local providers to get realist speeds. Shockingly slow, we could not work there
- No I live in the Blue Mountains already and wouldn't live in a major city again, except for a short stint for work
- Worried I might not meet new people - fit in.
- Regional train services in Australia are generally poor in frequency, or non-existent. Toowoomba to Brisbane for example is just two trains weekly in each direction. Anywhere else in the world a city of 100,000+ 125km from a city of 1,000,000+ would have a train service thus: On the hour, in the hour, every hour. How about zero further investment in expanding roads until every town of 10,000 or more has at least one daily train service to and from its capital?
- I think it's hard to move regionally knowing that the support isn't there. You read a lot of articles about the struggles of moving away from your established network. In addition, Childcare places in regional cities are limited as there isn't enough childcare workers. Then, you have the border closures which makes it hard to attract quality and skilled workers to do jobs in retail, childcare, hospitality and agriculture. This would reduced liveability services for the region. If you want someone young like me moving to Regional Area then there needed to be an incentive, there needed to be more liveability attractions for the region. We could have incentives such as: * Free stamp duty * Moving FBT incentives from employers to employees * Cheaper airfares, I'm talking about airfares should cost on average between \$100 to \$175 one-way * Waterparks like adventure world to attract all ages * Better access to healthcare professionals * Fresher produce and varieties in remote regional cities * More entertainment - arts & culture, live music, music festivals, food trucks festival etc.,