



Submission to the State Government on Refreshing Tasmania's Population Strategy

March 2023

POPULATION STRATEGY

Population policy should drive growth, promote the advantages of settling in Tasmania and keep Tasmanians fully informed on how growth will affect them.

It's about managing and communicating Tasmania's advantages, challenges, and opportunities – locally, nationally and globally.

When people consider a move to the state, many will be attracted by liveability.

They, and Tasmanians, will want to know how we intend not just to preserve our way of life but to enhance it.

They need to know our challenges in balancing growth, wellbeing and equality of opportunity, and how we intend to deliver.

They need to make their judgements, whether they want to live here or whether they now live here, based on the best information.

OUR POSITION

The RACT has broadened its focus from the motor vehicle and those who own and operate one, to the wider challenges, benefits and consequences that flow from their use.

It addresses a much deeper interest and understanding by our members of the evolving nature of transport in all its forms and their concerns about the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians and of the Tasmanian environment.

The RACT position aligns with the desired impact of a refreshed population strategy outlined in the consultation paper – improving wellbeing outcomes for Tasmanians.

Today's RACT is no longer just a motoring organisation. It is focused on the health and wellbeing of not just its 213,000 members, but of all Tasmanians.

Its advocacy now extends all forms of mobility, workplace health and safety, land-use planning, the environment, and public transport.

In that work it engages with federal, state and local government as the voice for its members.

To be that voice, it has significantly expanded the opportunities for members to engage in the public square through our media channels.

More than 4000 members are regularly engaged through our surveys, the results of which are a powerful addition to our evidence-based advocacy.

The key concerns of RACT members, as drawn from our surveys, are road safety, the quality of our road infrastructure, transport costs, and the quality of the Tasmanian environment. All these issues impact liveability

Across all our advocacy work, the common theme is health and wellbeing . It is the umbrella under which all our advocacy sits.

For example, being safe on our roads – a key pillar of RACT advocacy – is a health and wellbeing issue.

Efficient transport on safe roads is a health and wellbeing issue – not just as a road safety question but in terms of access to services, economic efficiency, environmental outcomes.

Tackling urban congestion is a health and wellbeing issue.

Land use planning is a health and wellbeing issue in terms of protection of Tasmanians from weather events such as flood and bushfires and the provision of housing and community services that are located to reduce travel times and costs and to ensure equity in accessing those services.

Public transport is a health and wellbeing issue in delivering access to essential services, to jobs, to community organisations, to recreation, to personal networks.

Low and zero-emission fuels, a key advocacy issue for the RACT, is a health and wellbeing issue in terms of lowering transport emissions and improving air quality.

All of these issues are critical to a population policy for Tasmania that both maintains our reputation as a safe place while dealing with challenges that threaten to erode that reputation.

The key liveability challenges facing Tasmania in the next five to 30 years are:

- Transport costs, including the impact of traffic congestion.
- Housing affordability and access.
- Dealing with climate change.
- The cost of, and access to, the public health system.
- Regional population decline and the consequent winding back of services.

- Education and training to raise our skills, attract settlers and to ensure a services sector with sufficient capacity and skills to meet the demands of an increasing population across services and infrastructure.
- While an increase in population aims to increase the tax base, population ageing may mean a decline in the workforce that contributed to that tax base. The flow-on effect is that capacity of government and the community to maintain essential services may be diminished.
- How we maintain our reputation as a safe place to live and visit.

The RACT supports the following principles and objectives, outlined in the consultation paper, that will guide the updated Population Strategy.

- Innovation
- Sustainable
- Equitable
- Collaborative

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1.1

In the next five to 30 years, what liveability-related issues do you see impacting your sector, or the community you live in?

Transport pressures from congestion, and transport costs remain the key issues for the RACT and its members. They are inexorably entwined with land-use planning.

Tasmania will not successfully manage congestion and transport costs without a substantial change in the way we manage our urban areas.

The RACT addressed the challenges of population growth with the release of its 30-Year Mobility Visions for Hobart and Launceston in 2019.

The population predictions in those visions have changed, with the Australian Government's Centre for Population predicting the Tasmanian population will rise to 646,000 by 2032-33 – with 74,483 more people across the state and around 46% living in Hobart.

While the RACT believes the actions needed to deal with projected population growth have not changed, the urgency to deal with that change is much greater. As the consultation paper notes, Tasmania has exceeded the 2030 interim population target of 570,000 eight years early.

Population increases and the concurrent rise in private motor vehicle ownership is already manifesting itself through congestion issues in Hobart and Launceston.

Hobart has the highest percentage of car use for commuting of any Australian capital city. Currently 84% of commuters use a private vehicle to get to work. That is likely to increase unless commuters can be encouraged to use other modes of transport, particularly public transport.

We already have impediments to making that switch with disrupted Metro bus services, driver shortages, no rapid transit bus lanes, and no integrated ticketing and real-time information for bus users.

That reliance on the private vehicle flows on to increased vehicle emissions, longer travel times, increased costs to households, commercial transport inefficiencies and costs.

As the regular transport affordability index from the Australian Automobile Association show, Tasmanians pay more from their household budgets for transport than any other state.

Addressing these transport challenges must involve a whole-of-government approach across land-use planning, transport regulation, infrastructure planning, workplace innovation such as work-from-home, changing work hours and regional work hubs, and environmental outcomes.

The RACT supports the development of settlement strategies for our cities that encourage people to live closer to work, school, public and active transport as well as community spaces.

The RACT wants to see all levels of government develop a long-term settlement strategy for key urban centres and that this be developed on a regional basis, not through individual councils.

The Greater Hobart Plan, which is a partnership between state and federal governments and the four Greater Hobart Councils, is an example of the co-operation required.

The RACT supports mixed-use hubs in urban areas that include infill residential development and densification in proximity to active transport, high frequency/rapid public transit, as well as employment, education, retail, services, recreation and community spaces.

The RACT supports the development of higher density hubs in existing outlying suburbs. These areas can also cater for the decentralisation of industries, services and attractions.

The RACT has also advocated for limiting the size of urban growth boundaries to reduce the continued development of greenfield sites in outer Tasmanian suburbs and on urban fringes.

The further out from city services people live, the greater the cost of transport to access those services.

As past social housing developments on the urban fringes of Tasmanian cities show, residents generally are a lower socio-economic cohort with lower incomes.

They therefore spend more on essential transport, they must travel further in many cases to access services such as higher education, they may have limited public transport options.

The RACT notes there has been progress on a number of initiatives which are championed in the RACT vision and are being delivered by the Hobart City Deal partnership and actions by individual councils.

- The Derwent ferry trial and proposed extension of the service.
- The South-East Traffic Solution (completion of the Airport Roundabout and the consultation on the duplication of the Midway Pt-Sorell causeway.
- The introduction of e-scooters as a mobility choice (but limited to Hobart City local government area).
- Work on introducing an integrated ticketing system for public transport.
- Examining options for a new bus transit centre in Hobart.
- Enforcing clearways in Macquarie and Davey St during peak hours.
- Work on southern transport solutions, which include a fifth, rapid-transit, lane on the Southern Outlet.
- Extending park-and-ride facilities in Kingston to encourage the uptake of public transport.
- Awarding of tenders for the new Bridgewater Bridge.
- Development of network operation plans for Hobart and Clarence.
- Go-ahead for new walkways and protective fencing on the Tasman Bridge.
- The release of a City of Hobart Precincts Plan.

There are also a number of matters unresolved or yet to be progressed that will be critical to the final version of the Greater Hobart Plan and the associated Implementation Plan.

- The future of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor.
- Planning and funding of a joined-up active travel network for Greater Hobart.
- The three-year review of the Hobart City Deal, which is due this year. We note that the Hobart City Deal Implementation Plan update already gives a detailed picture of progress.
- The Tasmanian Housing Strategy, which is flagged to go out for consultation in July this year.
- The formation of the Housing Commission.
- Finalising the Tasmanian Planning Policies.

- How the proposed update to the Southern Tasmanian Regional Land Use Strategy enables the land-use reform required to allow the ambitions of the Greater Hobart Plan to be realized.
- Growth outside the four Greater Hobart councils.
- The complexion of councils after the October local government elections.
- The report to the State Government on the future of local government.

The RACT recognises the unity of purpose already demonstrated by the four Greater Hobart councils and the State Government in settling on one vision and one Greater Hobart Plan. That plan is critical to managing an increasing population.

Good land-use planning is pivotal in ensuring the Tasmanian quality of life is not only maintained but enhanced as our population grows.

- We want to see Tasmania's planning system used to help reduce congestion.
- We want to see governments focus on how major development can impact traffic congestion.
- We support the development of settlement strategies for our cities that encourage people to live closer to work, school, public and active transport as well as community spaces.

The RACT wants to see all levels of government develop a settlement strategy for key urban centres. They must consider mixed-use hubs in urban areas that include infill residential development and densification in proximity to active transport, high frequency/rapid public transit, as well as employment, education, retail, services, recreation and community spaces.

Government should take account of future economic and social opportunities, including development, as well as minimise impacts to the road network by ensuring the community has universal access to a range of transport options.

The RACT supports the development of higher density hubs in existing outlying suburbs. These areas can also cater for the decentralisation of industries, services and attractions.

Government should also consider behaviour change programs that encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport and make more efficient use of existing infrastructure. Those mode shifts will directly impact future land-use planning in the provision of transport options.

It therefore follows that the impact on road networks should be considered during the assessment of residential or commercial development, particularly if there are mode shifts to public transport or shorter travel times because of the development of higher density residential and commercial hubs on city fringes.

The RACT has also advocated for limiting the size of urban growth boundaries to reduce the continued development of greenfield sites in outer Tasmanian suburbs and on urban fringes.

In the longer term, regional land use planning will be critical to the successful implementation of new transport technologies, particularly how regional transport corridors—vital to regional economies and the health of regional businesses -- are upgraded to deal with autonomous vehicles as they are introduced into the heavy vehicle sector for freight.

The location of transport hubs close to roads that are technologically enabled for autonomous vehicle use will be a vital planning consideration in the decades ahead.

Land use planning is also vital in encouraging mode shift from the private vehicle to public transport as a means of easing city congestion.

The autonomous vehicle technology will also extend to public transport, where the RACT wants to see:

- High-frequency, fast, reliable and affordable public transport in our cities.
- Easy and safe access for people walking or riding to public transport.
- Other public transport options, such as ferries, light rail, electric buses and trackless trams.

These emerging technologies will usher in a revolution in regional transport and in infrastructure strategies in the decades ahead. That means Tasmania's planning policies will need to inform those strategies, the action plans that flow from them, and how they integrate into planning regimes.

Integration is the key to the policy framework as outlined in the consultation paper. In that regard transport and infrastructure is a vital component across economic development, settlement and liveable communities.

In particular, the impact of emerging technologies outlined above needs to be considered across the suite of policies.

In transport and infrastructure alone, emerging technologies will have a significant impact on transport efficiency, safety and the environmental outcomes.

As they will be the driver of strategic decisions by all levels of government, the planning policies need to reflect the growing influence of emerging technologies on how we move about, where we work, and where we live.

They will also be an important influence when potential new settlers judge whether Tasmania should be their new home.

The RACT's policies on land-use planning and emerging mobility technologies can be found here:

<https://www.datocms-assets.com/49357/1626740671-ract-land-use-planning-and-mobility-policy.pdf>

<https://www.datocms-assets.com/49357/1626740666-ract-emerging-mobility-technologies-policy.pdf>

1.2

What are the top two opportunities which have the potential to increase liveability?

Local government reform and highly targeted **education programs** are critical to the success of a population growth strategy.

Local government

At a local government level, Tasmania needs a regional response to demographic change and the predicted increase in population over the next decade. Having 29 councils, often with competing interests, is an impediment to that response.

As we have outlined in the matters of transport and land-use planning, there are already regional responses, such as the Greater Hobart Plan and the Launceston Transport Vision, but not in a consistent and statewide way.

The RACT, in its recent submission to the Local Government Review Board, said the key to delivering on health and wellbeing is a consistent and uniform management and delivery of assets and services.

Local government in Tasmania, as currently structured, does not deliver that consistency and uniformity. Therefore there is inequity because of an unequal distribution of services and assets.

This may be exacerbated over the next 10 years if the distribution of new arrivals in Tasmania is concentrated on our cities and we see population decline in some Local Government Areas.

Local government is critical to a population strategy, given its role in land-use planning, and the provision of local infrastructure (such as roads, and buildings used by the community) and community services.

A regional, rather than a council-by-council approach, is required. The RACT has suggested council-owned regional entities to manage the road network, 80% of which is controlled by local government in Tasmania.

Education

Tasmania education system must be nimble, accessible and cooperative in its response to population growth.

Tasmania's challenges are our levels of poor literacy and numeracy and lower average incomes.

These impact Tasmania's workforce capacity, social inclusion, the capacity to lead a good life, and inter-generational poverty.

We also lose Tasmanians to other states where there are greater education opportunities.

A population strategy must:

- Identify what industries and skills will be needed.
- Have a plan to attract those businesses and skills.
- Map how we will we upskill our workforce to meet the demands of business.
- Ensure cooperation between technical and further education and higher education, to deliver the education programs required.
- Put more resources into high schools (up to year 12) to help students map their job ambitions and for the TAFE and University sectors to respond to those ambitions.
- Plan to deliver education and training in regional Tasmania so there is equality of opportunity, the retention of skills – both vital in arresting regional population decline.
- Attract people to the regions by matching regional needs with skills and delivering education and training at a local level.
- Ensure we compete with other states in terms of education, training, remuneration and opportunity.
- Ensure we structure workforces in terms of workplace conditions so families can effectively balance life, work and education.
- Having a program to encourage the return of Tasmanians to their home state, bringing with them new skills and experience.
- Encourage the growth of entrepreneurialism as an attractor for new settlers and residents.

To use the compounding interest analogy, the more you invest in skills through education, the greater the return. You receive an increased tax dividend, which then can be further invested in education and training, health and community services, which delivers a dividend in liveability. Which then attracts more people to Tasmania.

1.3

How could all levels of government, business and community organisations work together to design and plan services to improve liveability?

Population planning at a local level should be a joint national-state-local government exercise, conducted at a regional level as a shared service.

The importance of that partnership is already recognised in the National Population and Planning Framework, of which the Australian Local Government Association is a signatory.

The Framework is a template for action on population growth and its succinct summation is worth repeating as part of the RACT's position.

The National Population and Planning Framework seeks to enhance the ability of jurisdictions to manage their individual population circumstances by offering all levels of government greater visibility of each other's population planning processes. It also seeks to encourage greater cooperation and transparency, with a focus on areas of mutual interest.

The framework seeks to “promote greater integration between governments in managing and planning for population changes, such as growth and declines in national, state, regional and remote population levels, and demographic change.

It seeks:

- Better sharing of information, especially data, across governments.
- Greater coherence of population management and planning across governments.
- Increased publicly available information of population change and its effect on skills, infrastructure, service usage and other issue.

These are the ideals, but unless all levels of government embrace complete transparency in data and information-sharing, business and community organisations will be unable to contribute to, or to begin, their long-term planning to address the challenges they see in the next 30 years.

The contributions in this consultation can be the building blocks to a forum where there is two-way sharing of information that can inform not just a strategy for the coming decades but to arm organisations with the information they need to make decisions now.

2.1 and 2.2.

To increase workforce participation, how can workplaces in Tasmania become more adaptable as the future of work changes?

For the purposes of brevity and avoiding repetition, comments on the education challenge listed above are applicable to these questions.

Building an adaptable workforce rests on the foundation of quality education, including access to ongoing training to build a range of skills and versatility in the face of changing patterns of work.

Again, the influence of land-use planning is important in planning work and education closer to where people live. That in turn reduces transport time and transport cost and can deliver more non-work time for families.

Land-use planning should also function to deliver a wide range of community services. That ease of access and equity of access in turn delivers a liveability dividend.

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