

Population limit

In your document *Refreshing Tasmania's Population Strategy* you propose that Tasmania's population should continue to grow perpetually into the future.

While you say your population target is 650,000 people by 2050 (and that the Centre for Population suggests a population of 646,000 will happen by 2032-33), this is only an interim target, as you give no indication that population growth will stop at that point, and no ultimate population target is considered.

The figures you provide indicate that the population of Tasmania is expected to grow 13% in the 10 years from 2022 (571,517) to 2032 (646,000), which is a growth rate of 1.2% per year. If this rate of population growth is maintained beyond 2032 Tasmania's current population will double in the next 58 years to 1.14 million, quadruple from its current size in the next 116 years to a population of 2.3 million and continue to double every 58 years onward.

You may say that I'm exaggerating, being dramatic, that those time frames are a long way in the future, and that you won't let Tasmania's population get that big; however, unless you develop a plan for Tasmania to function with a steady population size that is what will, and must, happen.

The idea of perpetual sustainable growth of any physical thing in a finite environment is fundamentally irrational and impossible.

While a much larger population than current may be possible (Ireland is only a little bigger (9%) than Tasmania and has a population of over 5 million), eventually the population will be simply impossible to support. However, Tasmania's character, environment, and its human residents' life quality will certainly be radically altered and degraded long before this point.

Once we accept that Tasmania's population cannot grow exponentially forever, we accept that we have to eventually function within the constraints of a non-growing population.

Once we realise that we MUST eventually work out how to function with a stable population size, we can choose stop population grow now, to minimise the damage to Tasmania that results from human use, and to maintain the highest truly SUSTAINABLE quality of life for Tasmanians.

Sustainable population growth

Throughout the population strategy document you refer to "sustainable population growth"; however you don't define what you mean by "sustainable". It's apparent that you don't mean sustainable in any ecological or environmental sense; you appear to only mean that the population growth itself will be sustained.

And yet the population strategy document admits that "population growth comes with... environmental impacts". A growing population must mean a growing use of resources including energy, a growing conversion of the landscape to human uses, a growing release of pollution including green-house gases, a growing loss of biodiversity, a growing diversion of natural water flows for human use, more loss of farmland to housing, more loss of wilderness to farmland and housing, and many other issues. A stable or reducing population can at least limit a lot of this destruction.

The population strategy document has a section titled *What do we mean by wellbeing?*, which says that wellbeing includes environment and climate. A perpetually growing population can only damage the environment, so a perpetually growing population is not consistent with Tasmanians' long-term wellbeing.

The most meaningful suggestion for policies and initiatives that could help address the challenges of perpetual population growth is to work to achieve a stable population size.

The demographic issue

The main concrete justification that you give for a continually growing population is to artificially generate your preferred demographic age spread, with more younger working-age people, and less older non-working people. However, as the population cannot grow forever, we need to learn how to work with the demographic age distribution that will naturally come with a stable-size population. We can't formulate plans that are based on an unachievable, unsustainable, ever-growing population.

To maintain an economically viable, steady-size population we need to consider some difficult options. We may need to increase the retirement age or change the meaning of retirement. We may need to find ways to keep older people contributing longer, either through work or other community-valued endeavours. We also need to look beyond seeing personal contribution to society as being only in the form of taxes paid or jobs created; there are many ways that all members contribute to a society beyond their employment, and not all form of employment contribute equally, plenty not at all.

Conclusion

The idea of perpetually increasing population is flawed, destructive, and irrational. Tasmania, and indeed all communities, need to face this and design a society that can function without perpetually increasing its population.

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