

5 March 2023

Department of State Growth
GPO Box 536
Hobart, TAS, 7001

By email: consultation@stategrowth.tas.gov.au

Dear Department of State Growth,

RE: Refreshing Tasmania's Population Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the [Consultation Paper](#) and the [Population Strategy Consultation Paper: Refreshing Tasmania's Population Strategy Consultation Paper January 2023](#)

I have observed the effects of the rapid increase in population in Tasmania, particularly Hobart, in the last 4 years. The strain is showing in traffic congestion, stress on health services, a crisis in housing and a diminishment of the relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

I will comment on questions below and then add some general comments on the consultation document itself.

Question 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?

I live in St Helens. Three issues will impact my St Helens community:

1. Increased traffic.

St Helens is a tourist town. During holiday periods the population doubles. Parking is affected and the Tasman Highway becomes busier. Many of the visiting drivers are not familiar with the area and are towing caravans or boats. Driving becomes hazardous. The Tasman highway is narrow (two lanes) and is poorly maintained with rutted or non-existent shoulders. The speed limit is dangerously high- 100k in areas which would be limited to 60 in other states. Widening of a short section of the road in 2022 has created black spots at either end of the improvements, and there has already been one fatality.

Since most of Tasmania's roads are similar to those around St Helens, it is clear that an uncontrolled increase in population is going to create even more dangerous driving conditions in Tasmania.

2. Uncontrolled housing developments.

Break O Day council is a small, rural council administering an area that is predominantly low SES. The environment is very beautiful, but there is constant pressure from developers to use some of the most scenic areas for housing, particularly near the ocean. An unmanaged increase in population would increase this pressure, leading to even more corrupt planning decisions made by a council which prioritises 'development' over any other activity.

3. Reduction in Social Capital

The St Helens community is small, and people know each other. The quality of life is high, as is the sense of community. An uncontrolled increase in population could threaten this cohesion if it were not managed so as to allow for the acceptance of newcomers.

Overall, while an increase in population would benefit my community, an uncontrolled, unmanaged increase would not.

Question 1.3 How could all levels of government, business and community organisations work together to design and plan services to improve liveability?

Planning decisions in my local area often put business interests ahead of environmental values and are often not made in a transparent way. However if state population increases meant that planning decisions were taken away from the local council and made at state level it would reduce democratic participation in community decisions.

Question 2.2. What is critical for all levels of government to do to a) attract and retain families and b) support those looking to start a family, to create a life in Tasmania?

Families need houses. These are insufficient for the existing population. An increased population would exacerbate the problem. The state government needs to show some leadership in reducing the number of short stay rentals and putting in place policies that effectively manage the property development/ construction industry. The government of Tasmania has a long history of being controlled by business (electricity, timber, gambling.. now construction?).

Housing and construction policy needs to prioritise the needs of the Tasmanian people, not of developers, and value the outstanding natural environment of the Island. A new population policy is an opportunity for the Island State to manage its housing in creative and sensitive ways, to learn from other small cities, so that Tasmania becomes the only state that does not have the ugly, unliveable urban sprawl of Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth. Letting developers take over is a recipe for disaster.

Question 3.1 What is needed to help support the next generation of 15 to 18-year-old Tasmanians to thrive and choose to continue live in their home state?

It has long been the tradition that young people leave Tasmania and then, if they can, come back when they have families. Research is needed here; what do young Tasmanians want and need? Why do they leave? Why do they return?

Tasmania is still Australia's poorest state. The government needs to make sure that the industries that it is subsidising are those which are attractive to 18 to 44-year-olds.

General comments on the Consultation Document

1. The document assumes that perpetual growth is a good thing and is sustainable on the island. It states that 'economic growth alone is not enough' for wellbeing, and then proceeds to emphasise economic growth above all factors. Economic growth does not guarantee well-being (except for the property industry). The document does not mention that growth can be unsustainable. In fact, much of the discussion of management of global warming emphasises a reduction in growth in developed countries.

2. The Australian community does not support continuing population growth. The Tasmanian government does not have the social licence to create a policy that contradicts community views about population growth. Katharine Betts and Bob Birrell, [Tapri Driving without a licence: voters' views on Labor's immigration agenda](#), the September 2022 Tapri survey.

2. The advantages population growth are emphasised, but the disadvantages are minimised. The document does not mention:
 - impacts on cultural heritage,
 - loss of bushland, scenic landscapes and biodiversity,
 - impacts on urban amenity, quality of life, liveability and well-being,
 - increased traffic congestion and road safety considerations,
 - increased land use conflict,
 - impacts on urban water supplies, freshwater ecosystems and resources,
 - undermines Tasmania's brand,
 - loss of agricultural land,
 - increased pressure on waste management,
 - increased inequality,
 - increased use pressure on recreational and protected areas,
 - increased pressure re fire management,
 - increased pressure on sewerage systems and wastewater.

3. The document lacks important information; where will the population growth occur? Is there enough land for the extra people? What is the ideal population number for Tasmania?

4. The language in the document is unclear; what do terms e.g. *'systems based change for improved outcomes'*, mean? What is a *'future resilient economy'*. Does this: *'Wellbeing can mean different things to different people, but it primarily includes economy, health, education, safety, housing, living standards, environment and climate, social inclusion and connection, identity and belonging, good governance and access and services.'* mean anything at all?

5. The 'Principles' (or 'Principals'?) are meaningless key terms, expressed ungrammatically. The document uses jargon and 'motherhood' statements.

Requirements for a 'refreshed' strategy

1. Academic research should be used as a basis and justification for the strategy before it is implemented, not after. This includes the idea that population growth is good for all.
2. Indicators of the success of the strategy should be specified.
3. The strategy should be based on public support- mandated at an election.

4. The risks and negative impacts of the strategy should be fully described, as well as the method of assessing the effectiveness of the strategy.
5. The strategy should address the idea that reaching targets early is a success.

Yours sincerely,

Jennifer Godfrey