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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

Over the last seven years, Tasmania has experienced unprecedented population growth and is now one of the fastest growing States in Australia. Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that Tasmania's population was 571,517 persons in June 2022. However, a Tasmanian demographer [says](#) the ABS underestimated the island state's population by about 30,000 between the 2016 and 2021 censuses.

The [Australian Government's Centre for Population 2022 Population Statement](#) anticipates Tasmania's population will grow from 568,000 (as at June 30, 2021) to 647,000 in 2032-33, equating to a total increase of 79,000 people. The bulk of Tasmania's new residents are settling in Hobart. Greater Hobart is predicted to increase its population by 47,000 people, bringing its total population to 298,000 over the next ten years. The rest of Tasmania will have 31,000 additional people, bringing its total population to 348,000.

As reported [here](#) increases in Tasmania's population will be largely driven by growth in overseas migration with 4400 overseas migrants forecast to arrive to the state in 2024-25 alone, with the return of international students and permanent migrants. Tasmania's net interstate migration will become "a larger contributor" to population growth in Tasmania as natural increase falls.

On 18 January 2023, the Tasmanian Government released its new population strategy for public comment.

The [Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania](#) (PMAT) thanks 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](#) (the Strategy) feedback for which closes on the 5 March 2023.



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Our submission covers: 1) What is PMAT, 2) our key concerns and 3) recommendations.

PMAT's key concerns:

1. The notion of perpetual growth on a finite island.
2. No direct relationship between growth and well-being.
3. Lack of community support for continuing population growth.
4. Fails to address what is Tasmania's optimal population size.
5. Fails to outline where the population growth will occur.
6. Conservative population projections.
7. Does Tasmania have enough land to do what the Government wants?
8. Narrow view on the disadvantages of population growth e.g. diminishing democracy, dismantling strategic planning, 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 including river health; 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 and the enormous cost of new infrastructure and its maintenance, and
9. Further stress on the environment as well as public services including health, education, housing and associated infrastructure costs.

PMAT's key recommendations:

1. Tasmania should transition its economy from a reliance on continuous population growth towards an optimal stable population to achieve the best possible sustainable social, environmental, cultural, economic and well-being outcomes. The Strategy should commit to engaging an independent academic research institution to determine how this could be achieved. The outcomes or well-being indicators could be linked to State of the Environment reporting.
2. The Strategy should recognise that it is better to determine a long-term sustainable population size rather than by picking an arbitrary population growth number.
3. The Tasmanian Government should ensure it has a mandate for promoting continued population growth.
4. Establish a dedicated Planning Department.
5. Reinstate the State Architect and introduce a design policy for high-quality urban design.
6. Reinstate the role of local Councils as 'place shapers' underpinning community well-being and enriching our cultural and natural heritage, lifestyle and democracy.
7. Recognise that with sound strategic planning, Tasmania is well-placed to become a world leader in sustainability.



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8. Clearly define the terminology used in the Strategy.
9. The Strategy must identify the environmental risks and negative impacts associated with unsustainable population growth.
10. The Tasmanian Government should ask the Federal Government to implement a National Population Policy which aims to stabilise Australia's population as soon as possible.
11. The Strategy should consider /question the notion that reaching population targets early is a sign of success, and
12. There should be a moratorium on Government efforts to actively promote migration to Tasmania pending:
 - Provision of clear evidence demonstrating that population growth benefits individuals and communities;
 - Definition of an optimal, sustainable stable population size for Tasmania; and
 - Evidence that a clear majority of Tasmanians support continuing population growth.

We would be happy to meet to discuss our submission further.

We are also happy for our submission to be made public.

Yours sincerely,

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1. WHAT IS PMAT

The [Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania](#) (PMAT) is a growing network of [almost 70 community groups](#) from across *lutruwita* /Tasmania which is committed to a vision for Tasmania to be a global leader in planning excellence. Our Alliance is united in common concern over the new Tasmanian state planning laws and what they mean for Tasmania's future. The level of collaboration and solidarity emerging within the advocacy campaign of PMAT, as well as the number of groups involved is unprecedented in Tasmania and crosses community group genres: recreation, environment, urban/local community associations, European built heritage, ratepayers and 'Friends of ' groups.

Land use planning impacts every inch of Tasmania. We hold that good planning is fundamental to our way of life and democracy. PMAT works to raise community awareness about planning and encourages community engagement in the planning process.

PMAT is an independent, apolitical, not-for-profit [incorporated association](#), governed by a [skills-based Board](#). PMAT is funded entirely [by donations](#).

In 2020 PMAT was named Australia's Planning Champion, a prestigious honour awarded by the Planning Institute of Australia that recognises non-planners for their advocacy and for making a significant contribution and lasting presence to the urban and regional environment. PMAT was awarded the Tasmanian Planning Champion title in 2019.

PMAT's purpose is to achieve a values-based, fair and equitable planning scheme implemented across Tasmania, informed by [PMAT's Platform Principles](#) and delivering the objectives of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*.

As outlined in [PMAT's Strategic Plan 2021–2023](#), 'PMAT's vision is for Tasmania to be a global leader in planning excellence. We believe best practice planning must embrace and respect all Tasmanians, enhance community well-being, health and prosperity, nourish and care for Tasmania's outstanding natural values, recognise and enrich our cultural heritage and, through democratic and transparent processes, deliver sustainable, integrated development in harmony with the surrounding environment.'

Planning schemes must offer a balance between development, individual rights and community amenity, and not just make it easier for development and growth at the cost of community well-being and natural and cultural values. PMAT aims to ensure that Tasmanians have a say in a planning system that prioritises the health and well-being of the whole community, the liveability of our cities, towns and rural areas, and the protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage. PMAT considers that the incoming [Tasmanian Planning Scheme](#) will weaken the protections for places where we live and places we love around Tasmania.



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2. KEY CONCERNS

Perpetual growth on a finite island

The notion of ever-expanding economic growth has been promoted so relentlessly that “growth” is now entrenched as the natural objective of collective human effort.

The public has been convinced that growth is the natural solution to virtually all social problems—poverty, debt, unemployment, housing, and even the environmental degradation caused by the determined pursuit of growth.

Meanwhile, warnings by scientists that we live on a finite planet that cannot sustain infinite economic expansion are ignored and even scorned.

The Strategy should change its lens and focus on transitioning Tasmania’s economy from a reliance on continuous population growth (e.g. Big Tourism and Big Population) towards an optimal stable population to achieve the best possible sustainable social, environmental, cultural, economic and well-being outcomes.

No direct relationship between growth and well-being

The Strategy should acknowledge that there is no simple correlation between population size and economic performance. As stated by UTAS Demographer Dr Lisa Denny [population growth does not automatically equate to economic growth](#). Nor is there a simple correlation between economic performance and societal and environmental well-being. Indeed, even on narrow economic grounds, unless accompanied by improvements in productivity there is unlikely to be any net increase in average individual economic wellbeing associated with population growth.

It is an outdated world view to think that population growth is an essential prerequisite of economic growth and that economic growth can continue on an exponential trajectory regardless of the consequences to the natural environment, equity and social cohesion.

The desired impact of the Strategy states “*The desired long-term impact of the Population Strategy is improved wellbeing outcomes for Tasmanians.*” **However, the Strategy fails to adequately outline how population growth will positively impact on wellbeing.**

Lack of community support for population growth

In January 2023, *The Mercury* Big Issues Survey [revealed](#) that ‘Out of those surveyed, 58.69 did not think it would be beneficial to increase the size of Tasmania’s population.’

A [new report](#) released in March 2023 by The Australian Population Research Institute (TAPRI), and covered by the Herald Sun on the 1 March 2023 [here](#), states that two out of three Australians say the nation is full with little support for a return to pre-pandemic immigration levels.



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The report is based on the September 2022 Tapri survey of voters' attitudes to population growth and a high immigration program.

As per [TAPRI's media release from March 1 2023](#) the report shows that *'in regard to high immigration, only a small minority of voters (18 percent) endorse the policy to expand immigration to 'Big Australia' levels, a policy that was not put forward during the election campaign. Most voters (65 per cent) do not think Australia needs more people.'....' Most voters think that immigration-fed urban expansion feeds congestion, and competition for health services and increased housing costs.'* And *'The Tapri survey shows that a high proportion of voters (45 per cent) feel financially insecure and that this insecurity is concentrated among people who are renting. The Labor Government is making the situation worse for renters, and for all voters who hope to enter the housing market, through its high immigration policies. Housing availability in the major cities is already very tight. Immigration at 'Big Australia' levels will require a huge expansion of housing stock, especially in Sydney and Melbourne. This will be above and beyond that needed to accommodate the requirements of existing residents. This extra demand will surge at a time when there is already a desperate shortage of rental accommodation and when housing construction levels have fallen. The Labor Government has also recently announced that overseas students who graduate in Australia will be treated as an integral part of the Government's strategy for boosting the supply of skilled workers. This will be at the expense of opportunities to for domestic workers. It is a policy repeatedly opposed by most voters and one that will add further tinder to voters' concerns about the 'Big Australia' agenda.'*

Fails to address what is Tasmania's optimal population size

The Strategy fails to provide any solid evidence on the benefits of continuing population growth and does not consider the optimal population size for Tasmania. It fails to address the fundamental question of *'what is the optimal population size for Tasmania to achieve best sustainable social, economic, environmental and well-being outcomes?'*

Arguably, Tasmania should be transitioning its economy from a reliance on continuous population growth towards an optimal stable population to achieve the best possible sustainable social, environmental, cultural, economic and well-being outcomes.

As per advice from an expert strategic planner, in over twenty years only three State Policies have eventuated in Tasmania *'for coastal development, protection of agricultural land, and protection of water quality. Vital topics such as settlement, demography, transportation, industry location, impacts of climate change, biodiversity, cultural heritage, hazards, infrastructure staging, urban design and inter-agency coordination, were ignored, fragmented or resisted. Furthermore, the relationships between those aspects of physical land use planning and priority community needs were not explored, particularly in planning for areas of concern such as public health, education, workforce skills, energy supply, information technology, recreation, shelter and human service provision. The opportunity to link strategic planning with then Premier Jim Bacon's 'Tasmania*



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Together' process was not appreciated or pursued. Settlement policy in particular, and its linkages to transport and infrastructure planning, has been neglected. Settlement expansion has occurred, not in a deliberate planned manner, but by default in locations not ruled out by the State Policies on agricultural land and coastal development.'

Fails to outline where the population growth will occur

The Strategy fails to provide detail about where and how population growth will occur. Will there be large scale land rezonings around Hobart and Launceston? Will planning laws and strategic planning become largely academic if there is substantial demand via population growth for rezoning and property development?

Conservative population projections

Over the last seven years, Tasmania has experienced unprecedented population growth and is now one of the fastest growing States in Australia.

If the recent growth trend continues, a much higher population growth scenario is very possible – we could reach far in excess of the original 650,000 by 2050 goal.

What implications will incorrect projections have on the health and well-being of Tasmanians?

Does Tasmania have enough land to do what the Government wants?

The Tasmanian Government wants to not only increase population and visitors (Pre COVID in 2019, Tasmania attracted 1.35 million visitors. This was a 2.7 per cent increase on the previous year and part of steady growth achieved over the past decade. Tasmania's visitor economy has been dominated by Australian travelers and **966,500 for year ending September 2022 Tourism Tasmania data**) but it also wants to increase food and agricultural production ([AgriVision 2050 target of \\$10 billion by 2050](#) and Rural Water Use Strategy 2050) aquaculture (e.g. The Tasmanian salmon industry has a growth target of being a \$2 billion industry by 2030), advanced manufacturing, forestry, mining, and renewables (Marinus/Battery of the Nation).

However, these growth reforms and initiatives are not grounded in the actual socio-physical geography of Tasmania and fail to consider conflicting requirements.

For example, pressure points of competition between land uses such as between farming and residential expansion on the urban fringe has not been quantified.

The Strategy should strategically identify and quantify the physical constraints/opportunities (including climate change considerations) that exist before determining an appropriate population total.

For example, as per advice from an expert strategic planner 'if a typical gross residential density of 20 persons per hectare is to be aimed for, an additional 130,000 persons would require the allocation



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of an extra 6500 hectares (65 square kilometres) of residential development by 2050. That is roughly equal to the area of urban Launceston. This estimate does not include the tourism land needed to accommodate 1.5 million visitors per year. Assuming full occupancy of tourist premises and that each tourist stayed for five days, that would be equivalent to the demands of a resident population of $5/365 \times 1,500,000$ or over 20,500 people. How are these, and other conflicting, quantitative land use demands to be reconciled?

In addition, the Tasmanian Government has identified key reforms and major initiatives to drive economic growth in food and agriculture, tourism, advanced manufacturing, forestry and mining, as well as other sectors of our economy. In recognition of agriculture being a key strength of the Tasmanian economy, the Tasmanian Government has committed to grow the value of the agricultural sector in Tasmania tenfold to \$10 billion by 2050, backed by a long-term Agrivision 2050 Plan.

The need to intensify food production must be balanced with increasing urban and residential development, community preferences and environmental concerns, and be consistent with other policies and legislation on land use.” (White Paper, p.36) Tasmania is not a magic ‘cut and come again’ land use pudding! Even if the average productive capacity of every agricultural hectare could be doubled, which is questionable, a ten- fold increase in value of production implies a five-fold increase in the area of the agricultural estate”.

Narrow view on the disadvantages of population growth

The Strategy has a narrow view of the disadvantages of population growth. Table 1, outlines the ‘Benefits and Challenges of Population Growth’ but fails to consider impacts on a wide range of issues. The Strategy must identify all the risks and negative impacts associated with unsustainable population growth, examples of which are outlined below.

Democracy – eliminating the role of communities and Councils in planning decisions

The planning system is likely to become less transparent and be further dismantled to meet the demands of a growing population and big tourism.

Communities and Councils are likely to have less and less say on development applications with no opportunity for planning appeals.

We have already seen a significant step towards this with the introduction of the [Tasmanian Planning Scheme](#) which reduces the community’s right of say and in many instances removes appeal rights, weakening democracy. More and more uses and development will be able to occur without public consultation or rights of appeal.

Councils and communities are already unable to shape their future. Under a growing population they are likely to further lose their autonomy, self-determination, their local voice and identity. The [Tasmanian Planning Scheme](#) already makes it very difficult to protect or maintain local character.



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We are already seeing a push by the Local Government Review, [to remove Councils as a Planning Authority and force amalgamations](#). These changes would fundamentally alter Local Government and planning in Tasmania and how the community has a say on future developments. See PMAT's Local Government Review submission [here](#) and our *The Mercury* Talking Points [here](#) and [here](#) which argue against removing Councils as a Planning Authority and forced amalgamations.

Dismantling strategic planning

Increased housing demand, to serve a growing population, will likely lead to the further undermining of strategic planning in Tasmania.

We have already started to see this with the introduction of the [Housing Land Supply Orders](#) fast track land rezone process. It is the large [Housing Land Supply Orders](#) that are of most concern to PMAT.

The [Huntingfield Land Supply Order](#) for example allows for one of the largest and most dense subdivisions in Tasmania's history but the land rezone proposal bypassed the Kingborough Council, the Tasmanian Planning Commission and was not advertised for public comment.

The Kingborough Council would have rejected that level of dwelling density in that location (i.e. equivalent of an inner residential density on the outskirts of Kingborough) with insufficient hard and soft infrastructure and because it is inconsistent with the strategic direction of Kingborough.

Impacts on cultural heritage

Under the [Tasmanian Planning Scheme](#) there is likely to be further impacts on cultural heritage to meet the demands of a growing population. For example, the [Tasmanian Planning Scheme](#) provides no provision for impacts on Aboriginal Heritage to be considered in development assessment.

There are also limited protections for heritage places, buildings and landscapes. This will compromise Tasmania's important cultural precincts and erode the heritage character of listed buildings and streetscapes.

Loss of bushland, scenic landscapes and biodiversity

Table 1 fails to consider the environmental, biodiversity and scenic landscape impacts associated with unsustainable population growth.

As per the 2021 national [State of the Environment Report](#), *'Human activity and population growth are major drivers of many pressures on biodiversity. Impacts are associated with urban expansion, tourism, industrial expansion, pollution, fishing, hunting and development of infrastructure. The impacts from population growth are extensive and increasing in many areas.'*

Impacts on urban amenity, quality of life, liveability and well-being

There is a link between increasing density, Tasmania's flawed residential standards and population growth.



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Population growth is highly likely to lead to reduced liveability due to urban sprawl, urban intensification including loss of backyards and gardens, sunshine into homes, open space, loss of tree canopy and biodiversity, increased flooding risk and heat island effects, and stormwater pollution.

The standards of the General Residential Zone of the [Tasmanian Planning Scheme](#) lead to poor housing outcomes and loss of residential amenity. For example the General Residential Zone allows for no maximum limit on impervious surfaces (concrete or roof space) leading to increased potential flooding issues and hotter living environments; no requirement for sunlight into habitable rooms or gardens; bigger sheds allowed with no permit required; and removal of rear boundary setbacks impacting privacy and shadowing. Rights to challenge inappropriate developments across the General Residential Zone are very limited which has led to amongst other problems, mental health issues for affected homeowners.

Transport - increased traffic congestion and road safety considerations

The Strategy does not recognise the further stress that increasing population will have on roads, transport and safety.

Tasmania already has the highest per capita road death toll of any state in Australia according to a report [released by the Australian Automobile Association in January 2023](#). Since this report was finalised, the road death rate for 2022 in Tasmania has actually increased to 51, making Tasmania's figures even worse.

Transport experts have also [warned](#) that Hobart will become a less liveable city if it prioritises road transport over public transport, walkability and cycling. We are already seeing commuter times [doubling in two years in areas of Hobart](#).

Rapid growth of our population demands a rapid increase in infrastructure, but this will be impossible to deliver in Australian cities. The increasingly obvious reason is that our cities have reached diseconomies of scale. Diseconomies of scale are the forces that cause governments to produce infrastructure - like schools, hospitals, road and rail - at *increasing* per-unit costs. In short, governments do not receive enough proportionately extra tax from each new citizen to provide for this disproportionately expensive infrastructure.

Increased land use conflict

Land-use conflict occurs when there are conflicting views on land-use policies, such as when an increasing population creates competitive demands for the use of the land, causing a negative impact on other land uses nearby.

Land use conflict can occur when there are incompatible land uses such as between residential and industrial areas and residential and agricultural uses. Conflicts can arise for example with complaints about noise, odour, increased fire risk and pollution.



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Anecdotal evidence suggests that we are already seeing increased land use conflict under the [Tasmanian Planning Scheme](#).

Impacts on urban water supplies, freshwater ecosystems and resources including river health

How will an increasing population further impact Tasmania's freshwater resources, including river health?

A DPIPWE report entitled [Temporal and Spatial Patterns in River Health across Tasmania](#) already indicates that numerous rivers in Tasmania are in environmental decline. Related media: [Tasmania has a reputation for being clean and green, but experts are worried about its rivers](#), [Tasmanian report showing waterways deteriorating was kept secret, department did not want a 'bombshell' documents show](#), and in [Parliament](#).

Despite this the Tasmanian Government proposes to quadruple the economic output of Tasmania's agricultural sector by 2050. A large proportion of this growth will be focused on high-value, water intensive industries such as dairy farming and aquaculture.

Undermines Tasmania's Brand

Unsustainable population growth will undermine Tasmania's brand by diminishing our strengths and points of difference that set us apart from mainland Australia and the rest of the world. The Government's own website [Make it Tasmania](#), an information portal about great reasons to move to Tasmania, identifies values about Tasmania that will be put at risk with unsustainable population growth. Such as a 'world-class urban environment', 'open spaces within easy reach' short commuter times, views, 'good size blocks' and lifestyle and beauty.

It is PMAT's view the Tasmanian Government is not doing *density* well. There are poor to no opportunities for public or private open space and continued urban sprawl. The same density provisions that apply to our cities also apply to our regional coastal/rural towns where local character is being destroyed or put at risk by high density developments. People come to Tasmania for its charm, which is sadly being eroded by the new Tasmanian Planning Scheme.

This is why PMAT dedicated a significant amount of resources to commenting on the Local Historic Heritage Code (Attachment 2), residential standards (Attachment 3) and the Natural Assets Code (Attachment 4) as part of the review of the State Planning Provisions, which form the core of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme. See PMAT's submission [here](#).

The Strategy also fails to consider impacts on a range of other problems including:

- loss of agricultural land
- Increased pressure on waste management
- Increased inequality
- Increased use pressure on recreational and protected areas
- Fire management - stressed on urban fringes



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- Increased pressure on sewerage systems and wastewater
- the enormous cost of infrastructure to support population growth and the inability of government to be able to keep up with infrastructure needs

Further stress on public services including on health, education, housing and associated infrastructure costs

Tasmania's current population already exceeds the Tasmania Government's capacity to deliver adequate and effective services.

Increasing Tasmania's population will only place further stress on existing stressed services.

Health

As media reports keep highlighting, Tasmania's health system is in disarray with difficult to access GPs, long waits for hospital services and understaffing of healthcare workers.

Recent media reports include: [Tasmanian government hoses down concern over hospital strain as Facebook rant goes viral](#), [Tasmania doesn't have enough GPs to meet the growing demand — and experts warn it will get worse](#); [Regional towns are struggling with GP shortage — this one just lost three](#); and [New federal figures reveal extent of GP shortage in state](#) where as at February 2023 Tasmanians have the worst access to general practitioners of any state bar Western Australia.

Increasing population will most likely further negatively impact Tasmania's health system as more and more demands are placed on it.

Education

Will increasing the population further impact educational outcomes in Tasmania as more demands are placed on the education system? There are already very disturbing reports from 2022: '[Tasmanian education staff survey finds 20pc don't feel safe in workplace, 25pc not happy to speak up](#)', '[Tasmanian state school teachers hold two-hour strike over pay and conditions](#)' and '[Tasmanian educators quitting in record numbers, report shows](#)'. The Department of Education's 2022 Annual Report showed 271 Tasmanian educators walked away from the teaching profession over the past year — up 49 per cent on the year prior. It also showed stress leave claims spiked at an all-time high, jumping 46 per cent on the previous year to 91.

Also, almost 50 per cent of Tasmania's population is functionally illiterate.

As per the [Tasmanian Literary Alliance](#) '*Almost one in two Tasmanians of working age are functionally illiterate. Without functional literacy skills as an adult, an individual has difficulty engaging in the activities of daily life as well as in the broader economy and community, including meaningful employment. Not only do poor functional literacy skills have lifelong implications for individuals, but the consequences for the economy are also wide-reaching.*'

Housing



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Increasing population could see increased cost of housing and lack of housing availability either for purchase or rentals and flow on impacts on the 'housing crisis'.

The Housing and Community Research Unit of the University of Tasmania, [Tasmanian housing market: update 2020-21](#) key finding was that *'Tasmania's housing market continues to be under extreme pressure. Despite some localised fluctuations linked to the effects of COVID-19 restrictions, house prices and rents remain high, while the private rental vacancy rate remains very low.'* And *'There are significant affordability challenges across the state due to continuing low wage growth and relatively static income support payments. The temporary alleviation from the coronavirus supplement to selected income support payments has now ended and many income support recipients are again living below the poverty line.'*

Social and affordable housing – Tasmania's population growth is contributing to a crisis in affordable housing. The Housing and Community Research Unit of the University of Tasmania, [Tasmanian housing market: update 2020-21](#) key finding was that the *'Need for social housing remains high, as does need for assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services. This indicates that despite new government investment in the social housing and crisis housing systems, demand still exceeds the available supply.'*

Rental Market - The new [Rental Affordability Index \(RAI\) rating, released in November 2022](#), shows Greater Hobart is the least affordable capital city to rent in Australia. Hobart has been the least-affordable Australian city since 2019 and, in 2022, it dropped to its most-unaffordable level in RAI's records. Regional Tasmania has also reached a "historic low" after a large drop in affordability over the past year. The Tasmanian University Student Association has, via the Tasmanian Parliament, launched in February 2023 an [Empty Homes Levy](#) petition. Where they request the House to pass legislation to introduce a levy on vacant properties to increase the immediate supply of housing as governments have in Vancouver, Scotland, Ireland and Melbourne. They say *' Tasmanian rents are at crisis point and unaffordable for many, the Housing wait list continues to grow with little hope in sight for those most in need, and unchecked short-stay accommodation has ripped significant housing stock from the rental market. There simply are not enough homes to go around, but some are just being left empty. Tas water data shows there are more than 2700 homes sitting empty across Hobart, Glenorchy and Launceston alone.'*



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3. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Tasmania should transition its economy from a reliance on continuous population growth towards an optimal stable population to achieve the best possible sustainable social, environmental, cultural, economic and well-being outcomes. The Strategy should commit to engaging an independent academic research institution to determine how this could be achieved. The outcomes or well-being indicators could be linked to State of the Environment reporting.
2. The Strategy should recognise that it is better to determine a long-term sustainable population size rather than by picking an arbitrary growth rate.
3. The Tasmanian Government needs to establish a dedicated Planning Department.
4. The Tasmanian Government needs to reinstate the State Architect and introduce a design policy for high-quality urban design. Tasmania is the only Australian state or territory that does not have a government architect. Tasmania has not had a State Architect since 2012.
5. Reinstatement of the role of local Councils as 'place shapers' underpinning community well-being and enriching our cultural and natural heritage, lifestyle and democracy. It is these values that underpin why people want to live, move and visit here.
6. The Strategy should recognise that with sound strategic planning, Tasmania is well-placed to become a world leader in sustainability.
7. Clearly define the terminology used in the Strategy such as '*sustainable*' and '*unsustainable*' population growth as well as '*liveability*' and '*well-being*'.
8. The Strategy must identify the environmental risks and negative impacts associated with unsustainable population growth.
9. The Strategy should clearly identify all the risks associated with unsustainable population growth such as those outlined in our submission.
10. The Tasmanian Government should ask the Federal Government to implement a National Population Policy which aims to stabilise Australia's population as soon as possible.
11. Rename the Department of State Growth.
12. The Tasmanian Government should ensure it has a mandate for promoting continued population growth, given the survey evidence that most people oppose ongoing population increase. This could be tested by holding a referendum or plebiscite on the issue.
13. The Strategy should consider /question the notion that reaching population targets early is a sign of success. It could be argued that uncontrolled growth over the last ~5 years has contributed to many issues, particularly those around housing. If a land use strategy for example



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allocates a 25-year supply of residential land for an area but all that land is developed within 15 years, then the strategy has not been effective and would be labelled as poor strategic planning. The target of 650,000 should be reached no earlier than 2050 to avoid compounding existing issues.

14. There should be a moratorium on Government efforts to actively promote migration to Tasmania pending:
- Provision of clear evidence demonstrating that population growth benefits individuals and communities;
 - Definition of an optimal, sustainable stable population size for Tasmania; and
 - Evidence that a clear majority of Tasmanians support continuing population growth.