

Refreshing Tasmania's Population Strategy

Dear Madam/Sir,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this vital matter of public importance. I have lived in Hobart for decades, and have seen Tasmania change markedly over the last thirty years. Many places which used to be beautiful, peaceful and in good environmental condition have become overrun by people, both residents and tourists. The damage being done by too many people, and poor management, is obvious and very disheartening.

Here is my feedback on the consultation paper and the policy:

1. The goal of a population of 650,000 by 2050 is very problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is an interim goal. What is the desired eventual population? Is it infinite? 2050 is not all that far away, especially when dealing with something with long term impacts, like population. Someone born in Tasmania today might be expected to live until after 2100, so the decisions we make today will have impacts for at least that long.
2. Have the Tasmanian population been asked what population size they would like, by 2050, 2100 or eventually? I don't believe we have before, and we're not even really being asked in this consultation. My opinion is that we should aim for a stable population as little above the current population as possible. I don't think an infinite population is possible, so there has to be a limit, and that means we have to undergo a demographic transition to an older population at some point, unless life expectancy falls, which I don't believe we want. I certainly don't.
3. Regarding the statement "The desired long-term impact of the Population Strategy is improved wellbeing outcomes for Tasmanians.", this is an excellent aim, but a goal of a rapidly increasing population would seem to be largely at odds with it. The government is greatly to be commended on committing to develop Tasmania's first Wellbeing Framework. I look forward to being part of the consultation on such a framework. Until we have such a framework and can assess the population strategy, I would like to see a moratorium on further attempts to increase the Tasmanian population.
4. The list of "challenges" of continued population growth, on p.4 of the consultation paper, is missing many challenges. They should all be reflected in any strategy. For example:
 - a. Destruction of farmland and natural bushland (and hence habitat for native animals) through expansion of housing, roads and other infrastructure.
 - b. Increased roadkill of native wildlife.
 - c. Increased visitor pressure on natural areas, leading to increased environmental damage and loss of amenity (serenity, peace and quiet, enjoyment of nature etc.)
 - d. Decreased amenity even within urban areas as they become more crowded.
 - e. Reduction in Tasmania's quality of life, and increase in mental ill-health (stress, anxiety etc.) from increased crowding, noise, urban sprawl and loss of natural areas and farmland, longer distances to travel to reach natural areas, and reduction in the mental health benefits of visiting natural areas as they become more crowded and more artificial (more visitor infrastructure etc).
 - f. Increased pressure for commercial developments and greater infrastructure in national parks and other natural areas.
 - g. Greater pressure on ecosystem services such as water and clean air.
 - h. Increased production of waste and environmental costs of handling it.
 - i. Increased conflict over land use and probably decreased effective democracy as governments seek to make it easier to push developments through.

- j. Degradation of what makes Tasmania so wonderful in the first place - the beautiful natural places and rural land, peace and quiet, slower pace of life, friendliness and charm.
- 5. In summary, I think it is highly desirable for Tasmania to have a population strategy, including ways of addressing the challenges brought about by population growth, demographic change and population movements within the state, but I do not think that we should have a goal of increasing our population. Undoubtedly, for the time being, there will be some growth, but our goal should be to stabilise the population and learn to live well (with increased wellbeing) with that stabilised population. In that way, we can protect the health and wellbeing of both the people and the natural environment of this precious island.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Yours faithfully,

David Wanless.