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Tasmania must keep its youthful appeal for the sake of a sustainable population

Better knowledge of who is moving to Tasmania, and why, may help ensure the State continues to appeal to younger cohorts, demographer Lisa Denny says.

Dr Denny, a research fellow with the University of Tasmania's Institute for the Study of Social Change, says although there are positive signs about increased arrivals and retention of younger people in Tasmania, there is no room for complacency.

The State is still experiencing a net loss of people aged 15 to 24, but this leakage has slowed. Not only is Tasmania attracting more people in younger age groups, but it is also losing fewer people in those groups.

However, in a report released today, Dr Denny says there is currently little knowledge of what is driving the recent change and whether it is a continuing trend or a one-off.

"The increased growth rate Tasmania experienced in 2017 appears to have been an anomaly, which risks becoming a once-off if the appropriate infrastructure and services required to cater to a growing population driven by migration are not provided," Dr Denny says.

"Given the Prime Minister has charged the state and territory governments to 'better understand the drivers of growth in particular locations' and the 'impacts of the pressure points' to inform an enduring national framework for population planning, it is time to start better understanding the drivers of population change in Tasmania."

Dr Denny says likely drivers of the increase in interstate migrants include climate, cost of living and congestion pressures in larger cities, along with the important phenomenon of Tasmanians returning home.

Former Sydneysider Josh Lees, 29, moved to Tasmania in January seeking a better lifestyle and cleaner air. Formerly the manager of Sydney's Royal Albert Hotel in Surry Hills, Mr Lees is now head bartender at Suzie Lucks restaurant in Salamanca.

"For me, Sydney is becoming a bit of a beast at the moment, it's over-populated, and the infrastructure isn't keeping up," Mr Lees says.

"It feels like Tasmania is one of the last places left as far as Mother Earth is concerned. You can feel it, taste it and touch it in Tasmania, especially in Hobart and there's not a lot of places in the world you can do that anymore."

John Austen, 35, returned to Tasmania in September after nine years in Canberra. Now a project manager at the University of Tasmania, Mr Austen says it was always his goal to return home.

"I have always been a very parochial Tasmanian and in my time away I have promoted travelling and moving to the state to any friends and colleagues that will listen," Mr Austen says.

"I still do that now I am back. I love the Hobart city environment, the water, the proximity of the natural environment as well as the arts and food culture. Before moving, I was specifically looking for opportunities to move back."

Dr Denny says while it is easy to make assumptions about why people are moving here, an absence of hard and detailed data means the State is less able to sustain and build on the current momentum, particularly if increased population growth impacts on the State's liveability.

Interview opportunities: Dr Denny and Mr Austen will be available for interview at the University's Sandy Bay campus (in front of Lazenby's Cafe) at 11 am TODAY (Friday, December 14). Mr Lees is also available for interview. Please contact Sally Glaetzer for details.

Full report: *Insight Six: Positive signs, but how can we make it last? Tasmania's changing population dynamics* is available at www.utas.edu.au/social-change

Media contact: Sally Glaetzer, sally.glaetzer@utas.edu.au or 0439 862 420.

Information released by:

Communications and Media Office

University of Tasmania

+61 3 6226 2124

Media.Office@utas.edu.au

Twitter.com/utas_newsroom