

## Queensland Growth Summit March 2010

The summit was an opportunity for the pro-growth supporters to relay many of the myths about population growth. Here are a few of the misconceptions raised:

### **Myth 1. We need a bigger population to drive economic growth and prosperity.**

Eight of the top 10 nations in terms of per person GDP have stable populations. They include Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark <sup>1</sup>.

### **Myth 2. We need population growth to tackle our ageing population.**

The Government has put forward data on age dependant ratios. This estimates that by 2050 there will be 2.7 people of traditional working age per person aged 65 and over. They present this as a major reason why population growth should continue. The suggestion is that those who work support those who do not. This assumes that from the day of retirement all those in that category are dependent upon others. However, all of those retiring in 2050 will have worked their entire lives under compulsory superannuation schemes and are very likely, not only to be able to support themselves but also to invest in both their children's and grandchildren's futures upon retirement. In reality, the only age group likely to be dependent are the 0-20 group. In that respect, it is the young who represent the burden not the older.

The fact that life expectancy is increasing is a sign of a transforming society. If government is concerned by this age demographic and its ability to generate revenue it needs to change its taxation regimes, not perpetuate the notion of using one generation to provide for another. Workforce ageing may lead to lower unemployment and higher real incomes.  
2,3,4,5

### **Myth 3. We need to maintain population growth and increase land releases in order to address the housing affordability crisis.**

If we want to make housing affordable then lowering population growth is a sure way to reduce demand pressures.

In 1970 it took 151 times (or nearly 3 years of) the then average adult weekly wage of \$65.40 to acquire a median priced home of \$9,910. Today it's 511 times, or nearly 10 years wages, making houses more than three times more expensive today in real terms than in 1970.

This becomes 784 times (15 years wages) by 2020, 1,090 times (21 years wages) by 2030, 1,514 times (29 years wages) by 2040, and 2,105 times (or more than 40 years wages) by 2050<sup>6</sup>.

It is shown as we continue to grow home ownership becomes more elusive. There is an incorrect view held that simply opening more greenspace and bushland for development will resolve the housing affordability issue, which suggests there is only a supply problem. It should be noted that developers run a deceptive social justice agenda saying more land must be supplied so they can develop and help reduce housing prices. What they don't say is they will not challenge this high growth which is driving the demand in the housing market. In many instances developers actively encourage increased growth.

The State Government talks about balance but there is nothing 'balanced' about taking a half of a half of a half of the greenfield lands/ bushland habitats until there

1. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html>
2. Australian Institute. Population Ageing – Crisis or Transition. Pamela Kinnear. Discussion paper no. 45. Dec 2001.
3. Australian Institute. Population Ageing – Crisis or Transition. Pamela Kinnear. Discussion paper no. 45. Dec 2001.
4. Ageing populations: burden or opportunity? by Denys Correll, National Executive Director, Council on the Ageing (Australia) Published in Dissent, no.7, Summer 2001-2002, p43-45. <http://www.cota.org.au/dissent.htm>
5. 14 Minister for Ageing Carmel Tebbutt will launch The Premier's Forum on Ageing at Metcalfe Auditorium, State Library of NSW, Macquarie Street, NSW. 1st October 2002. <http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/dadhc/Media+Releases/20021001OlderPeopleCelebrateTheirDay.htm>
6. [http://blogs.abc.net.au/queensland/files/JOHNSTON\\_DIXON\\_Report.pdf](http://blogs.abc.net.au/queensland/files/JOHNSTON_DIXON_Report.pdf)

## Wildlife Queensland - Population Growth Myths

is nothing left; this is simply death by a thousand cuts.

### **Myth 4. *To address the impacts of high population growth the best solution is to go up - rather than to sprawl out.***

Infill, densification and high rise buildings are not the solution. Intensification is destroying Australian culture. The family backyard and garden are becoming but a dim memory and once attractive designed landscapes across suburbia are giving way to concrete and steel accommodation. A stable population will allow the character and liveability of the region to be retained.

### **Myth 5. *The Australian community supports population growth.***

A new survey has shed more light on how Australian voters would respond if population growth became a big election issue<sup>7</sup>. The survey by the Australian National University is the largest recent study of social attitudes to population growth and shows that nearly 70 per cent of respondents do not believe Australia needs more people. People were primarily worried about local jobs, urban congestion and the environment.

### **Myth 6. *There is nothing we can do about population growth.***

Our population number depends largely on our net overseas migration. The key reason our population has been skyrocketing is because that number has gone up from around 70,000 in the 1980s and 1990s to 280,000 in 2010. Kelvin Thomson, Federal Member for Wills recently released a 14 point plan to stabilise Australia's population. A major part of this reform is cutting annual net overseas migration back down to around 70,000 with a focus on reducing skilled migration. A net overseas migration rate of 70,000 is not inconsistent with Australia's obligation to be a compassionate international citizen, nor is it inconsistent with a humanitarian approach to allowing family reunion for present Australian citizens. See the Kelvin Thomson [14 point plan](#).

[http://www.kelvinthomson.com.au/public\\_documents.php](http://www.kelvinthomson.com.au/public_documents.php)