

Paper delivered at the 10th Biennial Conference of the
Australian Population Association
POPULATION AND GLOBALISATION:
AUSTRALIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY
Melbourne 28th November to 1st December 2000
Melbourne Australia

Travelling North and Back – Recent Migration Patterns to, from and within Queensland

Alison Taylor

Planning Information and Forecasting Unit
Department of Communication and Information,
Local Government, Planning and Sport
Alison.Taylor@dcilgps.qld.gov.au

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Communication and Information, Local Government, Planning and Sport

Alison Taylor, Travelling North and Back – Recent Migration Patterns to, from and within Queensland

1. Introduction

Queensland has been the destination of many Australians as a result of a northward drift of population from the south east of Australia over recent decades. After a net gain of 125,000 people during the second half of the eighties (1986-91), the first half of the decade of the nineties saw acceleration in this movement with the net gain to Queensland reaching 146,595 people between 1991 and 1996. Since 1996, net gains have slowed with annual averages half those recorded between 1991 and 1996. However, this northwards pattern of movement continues to be a major contributor to Queensland's growing population and particularly to rapid population increases in some coastal destinations.

Mobility varies according to demographic and other characteristics. Different groups in the population move for a variety of reasons, choose a range of locations and cause different impacts in both their source and destination locations. For example, many young people leave Queensland regional areas in search of the training and employment opportunities most often found in larger cities, particularly Brisbane. This leaves fewer young people in rural and regional areas while concentrations of young people are found in suburbs near tertiary institutions, in inner city locations and in areas of low cost accommodation. Similarly, large numbers of retirement and pre-retirement aged people have significantly altered the age structure of coastal communities like Hervey Bay through continuing movement of people with similar characteristics.

Migration is the main way in which the population is redistributed between states, cities and regions around the country. In some areas, this redistribution has resulted in considerable population growth with its related increase in demand for infrastructure, services and facilities. Much of south-east Queensland and also coastal centres as far north as Cairns have experienced growth as a result of such population redistribution. In other areas, people have moved away causing population declines and challenges to the continuing provision of services and facilities. Much of western and inland Queensland has experienced such population losses over recent decades.

These patterns of population redistribution have been described as comprising:

1. movement from the south and east of the continent to the north and west;
2. movement from the interior to the major cities;
3. movement within the cities themselves to adjacent regions and the coast; and
4. outwards movement from the inner and middle zones of cities to the outer zones and beyond, or suburbanisation (Bell and Hugo, 2000).

There is considerable evidence of these patterns of population redistribution occurring in Queensland. However, in non-metropolitan Queensland, particularly in South East Queensland and other selected coastal centres, significant levels of interstate movement have resulted in high levels of population growth. In addition, evidence has been seen in recent years of an expansion of the population in inner city areas, especially in Brisbane's inner suburbs and city core. In previous years Brisbane

Queensland migration patterns 1991 –1996

Statistical Division (SD) recorded net losses as more people moved out, particularly to adjacent regions like the Gold and Sunshine coasts, than moved in to

Brisbane from other areas in Queensland. However, between 1991 and 1996, a reversal of net migration losses to other areas saw Brisbane SD record a small net gain (2,300 people) from intrastate movement. This turnaround in the popularity of the State's capital for people moving within Queensland, combined with a net interstate gain of nearly 55,000 people, meant a large population increase for Brisbane SD in the five years to 1996.

Future patterns of migration to Queensland will be influenced by factors such as employment creation in the service sector particularly associated with a maturing tourist industry, a continuing trend towards early retirement combined with the sheer number of Australians reaching the age of retirement, plus Queensland's high quality environment and lifestyle attributes. If the future brings a continuation of past trends and migration patterns then Queensland will continue to attract people to the north. However, Queensland's ability to retain these people as well as accommodating its own young residents will depend on the shape, direction and timing of the State's development and future growth. Short term fluctuations in migration patterns such as the recent slowing in Queensland's net gain from Victoria, will also continue to add volatility to these significant patterns of population redistribution.

In this paper, analysis of data from the 1996 Census of Population and Housing is reported revealing the patterns of movement shaping Queensland's population distribution. A more comprehensive analysis of detailed migration patterns is reported in 'Migration Queensland 1991 to 1996' prepared by the Planning Information and Forecasting Unit of the Department of Communication and Information, Local Government, Planning and Sport.

2. Patterns of migration in Queensland

2.1 Interstate movement

The dominant pattern of interstate population redistribution in Australia over the last four decades has been the accelerating movement northwards and, much less significantly, westwards from the south and east of the country (Bell and Hugo, 2000). Between 1966 and 1971, Western Australia (22,564 people) recorded a higher net gain than did Queensland (15,388 people) due to interstate movement. However over the 30 years since 1966, Queensland has recorded net gains totalling more than 522,000 people while net gains to Western Australia were much lower at nearly 102,000 people.

Net interstate gains to Queensland have steadily increased over the last three decades peaking at about 146,000 people in the five years to 1996. Strong interstate net gains were recorded in much of coastal Queensland with three-quarters of the net gain (about 110,000 people) going to South East Queensland (Brisbane and Moreton SDs). Both the capital city division of Brisbane and the non-metropolitan Moreton SD had large net gains with net increases in each area of around 55,000 people.

Outside South East Queensland, Wide Bay-Burnett and Far North regions had the highest net interstate gains each recording increases of more than 10,000 people over the five years to 1996. These same four regions experienced even larger net interstate gains between 1986 and 1991. Net gains from interstate movement were also recorded in Northern SD (Townsville/Thuringowa region) and Darling Downs SD

(Toowoomba region). In these areas, smaller net interstate gains were due to the outflow being relatively high in relation to the inflow of population. For example, for every ten people who moved to Darling Downs SD from interstate, there were six people who moved away from the area to interstate locations thus resulting in a smaller net gain. This compares to Brisbane SD where for every ten people who moved to the area from interstate, 4.5 persons moved in the other direction.

The three western regions of Queensland had a net loss of population due to movement at the interstate level between 1991 and 1996. This was a continuation of the patterns of net interstate losses in these western inland regions evident in preceding years.

2.2 Intrastate movement

The pattern of intrastate movement was different to that of interstate movement. Only three regions in the State experienced a net gain as a result of movement to and from other locations in Queensland between 1991 and 1996. Moreton SD had the largest net gain (21,597 people), followed by Wide Bay-Burnett SD (3,202 people) and Brisbane SD (2,357 people). All other Queensland regions sustained a net loss in population due to intrastate movement between 1991 and 1996. The largest loss occurred in the western region of North West SD (5,949 people) followed by Darling Downs SD (4,302 people).

In the 1986-91 period, there was a similar pattern of losses from western inland regions and a continuation of large net gains in the south-east of the State. Moreton SD recorded a total net gain of more than 42,500 people over the ten years to 1996, while Brisbane SD turned around an earlier net loss of nearly 3,000 people between 1986 and 1991 to gain 2,300 people from intrastate movement between 1991 and 1996. Moreton SD gained from every region in the State but the gain was dominated by the relatively large net increase from metropolitan Brisbane. Brisbane SD gained from every region except Moreton SD to which it had a net loss of nearly 14,000 people.

Wide Bay-Burnett SD also had net gains from every Queensland region except Brisbane SD where there was a small net loss of 388 people. This loss was predominantly among people aged less than 40 years who were probably seeking employment and training opportunities. In contrast, there was a sizeable net gain to the Wide Bay region from other parts of Queensland of more than 3,500 people aged 40 years or more, many of who were possibly seeking retirement or lifestyle destinations.

Population losses between 1991 and 1996 due to intrastate movement intensified in the north-west of the State while net losses from the central and south west regions slowed compared to the previous five years. These three western regions each had net losses to most other Queensland regions apart from very small net gains in exchange with each other over the five years to 1996. While movement to Brisbane SD was significant for these western regions, the highest net losses were to adjacent regions, continuing the eastward drift from these western areas.

Net losses of people from Darling Downs SD to other parts of Queensland increased markedly from 1,362 people between 1986 and 1991 to 4,302 people in the following

five-year period. Small gains from western regions and Northern and Far North SDs failed to balance other net losses resulting in a large total net loss to Darling Downs SD due to movement within Queensland between 1991 and 1996.

The remaining Queensland regions all had similar patterns of sizeable net losses to Brisbane, Moreton and Wide Bay-Burnett SDs combined with small net gains from western regions.

So far there has been convincing evidence of the movement northwards from southern and eastern parts of Australia to Queensland and movement from the western inland regions of the State to the major cities dominated by Brisbane but also including centres such as Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton. Metropolitan overspill from Brisbane has contributed to the large net gain in Moreton SD while smaller areas adjacent to other cities (for example, Livingstone Shire near Rockhampton and Cambooya Shire near Toowoomba) have also grown as a result of urban expansion.

Within Brisbane City, the largest net gains resulted as people moved from inner and middle distance suburbs to outer suburbs in the typical pattern of suburbanisation. Brisbane's inner city suburbs had some net gains of young people (20-24 years) but net losses of young families (people aged 30-44 years) who moved elsewhere in the City. Inner city suburbs recorded net gains for most age groups among people moving from interstate.

3. Changing patterns of population redistribution

Australians are highly mobile with more than four out of every ten people (over the age of five years) having changed address between 1991 and 1996. Mobility rates rose during the 1970s compared to earlier periods, remained fairly stable during the 1980s and rose again in the early 1990s. Bell and Hugo (2000) note that the 1991 to 1996 period saw a reversal of previous trends with rises in the overall level of mobility comprising increases in local and intermediate moves but declines in interstate moves. However, this trend towards short distance mobility must be considered in the context of continuing high levels of interstate migration to Queensland.

The impact of continuing high migration to Queensland over past decades has been significant. Not only is there a cost to be borne by the person moving, but both the source and destination communities also incur costs. These costs may include withdrawal or reduction in services as the population declines in some areas due to people moving away. Meanwhile migration-driven population growth in other areas can cause increasing demands for infrastructure, services and facilities. These sometimes replicate the levels of provision that were available in the source community which now possibly services a smaller population. This demand for new services requires a widening of capital investment, limiting funding available to other areas to upgrade and expand infrastructure or the deepening of existing investments.

Queensland continues to play a significant role in the redistribution of the Australian population. It has long been recognised as having a strong attraction to retirees but a high quality environment and way of life are now proving a strong drawcard for younger people, particularly families. The proportion of older people in Queensland's

net gain between 1991 and 1996 (7.9 per cent) was much lower than for the previous five years (12.9 per cent) suggesting a continued broadening of the age range of people choosing to make Queensland their home. Indeed the increase in the proportion of people of young working age (20-39 years) suggests that lifestyle and employment considerations are strong drivers of the Queensland migration stream. Queensland also attracts its share of people not in the labour force, probably mostly older people, and those who were unemployed at the time of the 1996 Census. Whilst representing only one in ten people moving to Queensland between 1991 and 1996, there were twice as many unemployed people moving to Queensland as moved away to other parts of Australia. This meant an increase in the proportion of the net gain between 1991 and 1996 of people who were unemployed compared to the previous five years.

In addition, Queensland's tourist industry is contributing to the attraction of some coastal areas to younger, employed people. For example, young people favoured Far North SD where the largest net gain from both interstate and intrastate movement was for people aged between 20 and 39 years. This was also the pattern for Mackay SD, but not for Fitzroy and Northern SDs where young families appear to be more significant (largest net internal migration gains were among people aged less than 20 years). For the Wide Bay-Burnett SD, the pre-retirees (40-59 years) age group experienced the largest net gain due to movement within Australia between 1991 and 1996.

Far North and Mackay SDs, with their larger scale tourism industry, had higher proportions of employed people in their net interstate gains compared to some other coastal regions which were more attractive for retirees. More than three-quarters of the net interstate gain to Far North SD were employed people compared to only 50.0 per cent of the net interstate gain to Moreton SD and 27.9 per cent of that to Wide Bay-Burnett SD. Employed people also made up a relatively high proportion of the net interstate gain to Northern SD (68.2 per cent).

More than three out of every ten people in the net interstate gain to Far North and Mackay SDs were employed as clerical or service workers in 1996. This was higher than for several other regions (Northern SD, Fitzroy SD and Wide Bay-Burnett SD) however, it was comparable to occupation patterns of the migration stream to the south east corner of the State (Brisbane SD 35.5 per cent and Moreton SD 35.3 per cent).

The analysis suggested a hierarchy of Queensland destinations based on past migration patterns resulting from people moving within Australia. The first level comprised the major centre of Brisbane with its employment, education and cultural attractions. Brisbane SD recorded the highest net interstate gain of any Queensland region plus a small net gain from movement within Queensland. Major centres attractive for lifestyle and retirement options formed the second level of the hierarchy. These included the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Redland areas (Moreton SD), Far North SD, Mackay SD and Wide Bay-Burnett SD each of which were attractive to people moving from interstate. Moreton and Wide Bay-Burnett SDs were also popular with people moving within Queensland (recording net gains), while each of the remaining areas recorded net losses.

Areas growing from metropolitan overspill formed the third level of this destination hierarchy. These areas have gained as a result of young families pursuing housing options, often entailing a move over the metropolitan boundary. The areas include Pine Rivers (S) and Caboolture (S) to the north of Brisbane and Logan (C) and Gold Coast (C) to the south. Ipswich (C) to the west of Brisbane also recorded a relatively large net gain from Brisbane (C) of 577 people despite experiencing a net loss of 2,822 people as a result of total movement within Queensland.

Areas growing as a result of the urban expansion of regional cities recorded smaller net increases and formed the next level of the hierarchy. One example was Beaudesert (S) which gained from adjoining Gold Coast and Logan Cities. Cambooya (S), Crow's Nest (S) and Jondaryan (S) recorded net gains from Toowoomba (C), while Livingstone (S) had a net gain from adjoining Rockhampton (C) and Thuringowa (C) recorded a net gain from adjoining Townsville (C).

Smaller, more isolated coastal centres could be considered to represent the fifth level of the destination hierarchy. Areas such as Douglas (S), Sarina (S) and Miriam Vale (S) are examples. These areas have experienced growth as a result of their intrinsic attractiveness. However, their smaller size suggests the scale of migration gains has been comparatively small.

This hierarchy of Queensland destinations distinguishes between areas according to the scale of population increase due to migration as well as by the likely reasons people are attracted to these locations. Such distinctions are useful in trying to estimate future patterns of migration and why some areas continue to attract migrants while other areas are no longer favoured.

5. Future migration patterns

Patterns of migration have shown some continuity over time although the scales of impacts vary and the location of these impacts is often constrained to selective areas within a region. However the constituent flows contributing to these migration patterns have varied considerably. As the size and nature of the migration flows alter, the patterns of net gains and losses may also change. Levels of migration have shown considerable volatility over time and the large range of contributing factors make varying contributions.

Factors affecting future levels of migration to Queensland are likely to be as diverse as those contributing in past years. These factors are difficult to quantify but may include continuing structural adjustment, particularly among manufacturing jobs in other states. In the early 1990s, a surge in displaced workers mostly from New South Wales and Victoria contributed to Queensland's high net interstate gains. With increasing globalisation and continuing post-structural changes, further shifts in traditional occupational areas may lead to ongoing flows of people seeking new opportunities in the north. In addition, the continuing growth in the service sector also favours Queensland with its developing tourist industry and continuing appeal for early retirees and people of retirement age.

Restructuring and growth in information technology-led industries has also contributed to the increasing number of self-employed people and those with no specific work location who therefore have greater freedom of choice of residential

location. Queensland's attractive environment, warmer weather and relaxed lifestyle is likely to continue drawing such people.

Retirement and pre-retirement aged people form an important component of migration flows to Queensland. Large numbers of Australians will reach these ages over the next decade followed by the 'baby boomers' reaching retirement age from 2010 on. The large numbers in these cohorts suggest that Queensland will continue to receive an ongoing stream of people moving from southern states seeking a northern retirement location.

In summary, all these factors indicate that young families of working age, self-employed lifestyle-seekers, cashed-up superannuants and retirees will continue to see Queensland as an attractive destination in the future.

Some people who move to Queensland later return to their previous location or move on to another location. This may result from the loss of a partner, a desire to be closer to family and friends, an increasing need for support with age or due to ill health. Whilst the data analysed here could not provide any detail on return migration, recent patterns of increased outflows from Queensland to most other parts of Australia suggest some return movement is occurring. All states and territories apart from Australian Capital Territory recorded increased average annual outflows from Queensland over the three years to 1999 compared to averages from the early 1990s.

Over the three years to June 1999, annual average outflows from Queensland to Victoria were only slightly less than the inflows, resulting in average net gains of just over 3,000 people per year. This contrasts with larger annual average flows between 1991 and 1996 where the outflow to Victoria was only half the average inflow to Queensland. This resulted in large net gains to Queensland averaging 14,000 people per annum. In other words, movement from Queensland to Victoria has been more significant to net migration patterns in recent years. There have been similar increases in the ratio of the outflow to New South Wales compared to the inflow to Queensland and an accompanying lowering of the net gain.

However, not all people moving out of Queensland are people who have previously moved from another state and the relatively young age structure of the outflow suggests it is predominantly driven by employment and training factors. More young people aged between 20 and 29 years moved interstate from Queensland in the year to June 1999 than moved to Queensland from other parts of Australia. This exodus of the young to experience life in southern states, predominantly in Sydney and Melbourne, will probably continue so long as options remain comparatively few in Brisbane.

All future migration patterns are unknown at this point. However, recognising that migration patterns are cyclic and likely to be a continuation of past trends unless unpredictable events occur gives some basis on which to anticipate the outcome, at least for the short-term future. Within Queensland, ongoing movement from the interior to major cities, particularly those along the coast appears likely. Whilst losses from western regions are expected to continue, these losses will become smaller as the population is even more sparsely distributed through much of western Queensland.

The continued popularity of some regional centres to people moving both within Queensland and from interstate looks set to continue although, based on recent trends, at reduced levels from that of the early 1990s. Main centres will continue to attract people from their surrounding hinterlands as well as people from interstate resulting, in some cases, in urban overspill into adjoining localities.

The attractiveness of South East Queensland will probably be maintained through infrastructure improvements, expanding markets and continuing population growth. However this attractiveness will be tempered by the environmental and social impacts of continuing growth and development of the region. Brisbane will continue to be a magnet for people from both interstate and within Queensland as it retains its dominant position as a provider of education and training, employment, social and cultural options. Continuing fringe development towards the City boundaries will probably be complemented by the ongoing popularity of selected inner city locations by certain age groups and family and household types. Strong popularity for the Gold and Sunshine Coast areas over recent years will probably continue especially for those able to afford increasing housing costs while movers with fewer economic resources will seek out lower cost options further westwards from the coast.

While we might expect current migration patterns to continue at least in the short term future, a certain volatility is associated with these movements and demands that close and ongoing attention is paid to recent changes. This close scrutiny is warranted given the significance of migration to population growth in Queensland, accounting for more than 60 per cent of new Queenslanders over the decade of the 1990s. The direct influence on State economic conditions, the growth and decline of regional and inland areas and the resulting local impacts of migration patterns will also ensure our continuing interest in this most significant pattern of population redistribution.

6. References

Queensland Department of Communication and Information, Local Government and Planning, 1999, *Migration Queensland 1991 – 1996*, QDCILGP, Brisbane

Bell, M., and Hugo, G., 2000, *Internal Migration in Australia 1991 – 1996*, Population, Migration and Multicultural Research Program, Canberra