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Tasmanian Economic Development, 1985–2005

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This paper is part of a wider investigation, by the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics, into the nature and drivers of Tasmania's economic performance over the last two decades. The Tasmanian economy has performed relatively poorly for many years, but more recently economic conditions have improved and are reflected in a number of indicators such as employment, private investment, consumer spending, and population growth. This paper focuses on the changes occurring in the Tasmanian population and the contribution these changes have made to Tasmania's economic performance over the past two decades. Throughout the 20th century, the literature charts slow population growth and high out-migration levels. However, in the past several years Tasmania has seen a positive turnaround in its population levels coupled with a return to net in-migration. A possible impact of the increase in inter-state migration is to accelerate the *structural ageing* process. This, combined with the fact that Tasmania is already the fastest ageing state in the country, presents a challenge for the State. Therefore, this 'welcomed' increase in the population provides an opportunity to consider the impact on the current and future capacity of the Tasmanian economy.