

City of Hobart submission to Refreshing Tasmania's Population Strategy

March 2023

Introduction

The City of Hobart welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the refresh of Tasmania's Population Strategy.

Preparing for and managing population trends and forecasts are critical roles for government. In a growth context, it's important that governments provide the appropriate infrastructure, housing, transport, and services to maintain and improve liveability and economic opportunity while maintaining a sense of place and growing sympathetically with the natural environment.

A robust evidence base is key. In 2022, the City of Hobart commissioned .id to undertake a population forecast for the Hobart LGA. Based on this forecast, the population of Hobart is expected to increase by approximately 30 per cent (or around 18,800 people) by 2046. The analysis forecasts that Hobart will continue to attract new residents who value the high level of liveability and amenity afforded via relative affordability, climate, natural amenity and a mature arts and cultural offering.

This submission provides responses to the themes of the discussion paper, as well as some direct responses to the consultation questions. The City of Hobart looks forward to continued engagement with the State Government through its population strategy.

Enable planning arrangements that improve liveability

In the next five to 30 years, what liveability related issues do you see impacting your sector, or the community you live in?

Housing availability and affordability

Housing availability and affordability is a key concern for the City of Hobart. Between 2015 and 2020, the median sale price in the Hobart LGA has increased from \$495,000 to \$750,000 (approximately 10 per cent per year) for houses and from \$351,000 to \$575,000 (approximately 12.7 per cent per year) for attached dwellings. A similar trend has occurred in the rental market with rents having increased by seven per cent per annum over the last seven years driven by record low vacancy rates.

In comparison, average wage growth in Tasmania since 2015 is 2.8 per cent per year. While the proportion of renters paying more than 30 per cent of their household income in rent has increased from 12.8 per cent in 2016 to 33.5 per cent 2021. These trends have seen Greater Hobart ranked as the least affordable greater capital city rental market. These affordability challenges have also contributed to increased homelessness or risk of homelessness in Hobart.

In this context, the City of Hobart encourages the State Government support an increase of the so called 'missing middle' typology of multiple dwellings such as conjoined dwellings and townhouses – not just apartments or detached dwellings on greenfield sites. Further, in endeavouring to meet the

target of an additional 30,000 dwellings, identified in the *Greater Hobart Plan 2030*, the State Government adopt a 70/30 split between infill and Greenfield developments.

Climate change

Climate change presents a current and growing issue affecting Hobart. A changing climate is bringing more frequent and intense weather events, as well as increasing our risk of significant natural disasters such as bushfire. It is critical that a population strategy appropriately consider how to manage population growth in a way that minimises climate change, as well as ensuring that communities are resilient in the face of a changing climate. Failure to manage these issues will both affect the wellbeing of the population, as well as negatively impacting our population growth.

Managing urban growth while maintaining a sense of place

Tasmania's urban centres have experienced the majority of recent population growth and are forecast to experience the majority of forecast population growth. In this context, it is critical that urban growth is managed in a way that does not lead to undue urban sprawl, congestion or fails to maintain a sense of place. Managing this growth will require appropriate planning as well as investment in infrastructure, housing and services.

What in your view are the top two opportunities which have the potential to increase liveability? Please share potential partnerships and other approaches that could assist in progressing these opportunities.

Strategic land use planning

Strategic and deliberate land use planning is critical to ensure a coordinated approach to managing growth. To this end, the City of Hobart recommends that the State Government reviews the Southern Tasmanian Regional Land Use Strategy (STRLUS) in light of forecast population growth. An updated STRLUS should identify appropriate land uses at a regional scale to provide local governments with the framework to manage population growth while ensuring adequate provision for other land uses.

Structure planning

The City of Hobart sees great potential in working in partnership with community and across government to shape our key residential and commercial areas. A current example is the draft Central Hobart Precincts Structure Plan. A partnership between the City of Hobart, Tasmanian Government and the community, the draft Plan will enable increased residential density, as well as identifying the infrastructure, open space, transport and commercial opportunities required to meet the needs of a growing population.

In addition to these strategic planning priorities, it is critical that the Population Strategy includes activation of key growth opportunities for the State, including those identified through the Hobart City Deal such as the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor.

How could all levels of government, business and community organisations work together to design and plan services to improve liveability?

The State Government should engage closely with local government and with community to ensure that there is a shared vision for improving or maintaining liveability and that there is a genuine partnership approach which recognises the important role that local government can play as a critical delivery partner. It is also important that services are regularly evaluated to ensure they are continually improving or evolving to meet community need.

It is also important that government have the resources required to deliver the required infrastructure and services to manage growth while maintaining or improving wellbeing. The introduction of developer contributions (applied in most mainland jurisdictions) is one way such resourcing could be made available.

Reduce unnecessary barriers to those wishing to have children

Given the scope of the Population Strategy, what is critical for all levels of government to do to a) attract and retain families and b) support those looking to start a family, to create a life in Tasmania?

As the consultation paper notes, it's important that a population has a diversity of age groups. In recent years, Tasmania has experienced record growth in young adults (25-34 years old) with this growth particularly pronounced in the urban areas of Hobart and Launceston. Drivers of this change include the opening up on economic and employment opportunity (including the rise of remote work), as well as natural and cultural amenity and relative affordability. In order to retain this cohort, it's important that Tasmania continues to offer these competitive advantages and to provide the infrastructure for family friendly cities'.

Further, this cohort will soon be making major life decisions so it is critical that governments consider a holistic approach to retaining and attracting this cohort, including ensuring access to appropriate health, childcare and education services, and housing choices are in place.

Align emerging employment opportunities, changing workforce needs and overseas and interstate migration

When we consider the next generation of 15 to 18 year old Tasmanians, what is needed to help support them to thrive and choose to live in their home state?

While a lot of the drivers will be similar for other cohorts, genuine consultation with this cohort should be undertaken to understand what future they want and how governments can support the realisation of this future.

What can be done to attract and retain more 18 to 44 year olds from interstate and overseas to address labour and/or skills shortages over the next five to 30 years?

The drivers for this cohort are likely to be similar for other cohorts (affordability, lifestyle, amenity, economic opportunity, access to services etc.). This could be complemented with additional supports to help people integrate into the community.

The City of Hobart recommends that the focus of this question be broadened away from a narrow focus on the potential of this cohort to simply fill a labour shortage to encompass to their potential to add to the richness and diversity of the Tasmanian community and economy.

What is needed to support successful settlement for skilled migrants and newly arrived community members in different parts of Tasmania?

There is a range of supports that can help newly arrived community members. These can vary based on the individual's and the community's situation. The City of Hobart recommends that the State Government engage with local government, local communities and service providers to identify where it can best support these activities. At a state level, promotion of the skills and community benefits that migrants bring to Tasmania would improve settlement outcomes for newly arrived community members.

How might emerging workforce needs across a range of sectors and industries be met through joined up efforts?

As a significant employer, government has a key role to play in relation to workforce planning. The City of Hobart would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with Industry sectors and the State Government to explore the feasibility of a shared workforce development strategy. Particularly in high value sectors such as the Antarctic sector.

A Greater Hobart workforce development strategy could explore opportunities for sharing of staff between jurisdictions, including identifying and addressing potential barriers.

Manage a structurally ageing population

Demographics should be a key input into decision making in planning, infrastructure and service provision, including ensuring a diversity of housing stock (for example, to support ageing in place).

The City of Hobart is committed to a positive ageing approach which supports people's ability to have control over their quality of life and encourages continuing participation in all aspects of community life.

Key aspects of this commitment include:

- Strengthening the social inclusion of older people
- Celebrating older people's diversity
- Encouraging older people to feel valued, listened to and empowered
- Facilitating positive ageing opportunities within the community
- Promoting events, information, programs, and support for older people.

It is important that the financial and health impacts of social isolation, particularly for older people, are recognised and that there is a focus on increasing opportunities and access to facilities and programs which increase social connection.