



REGIONAL AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE



International migration is transforming small towns

FACT SHEET

The Missing Migrants

International migrants are missing from our vision of a successful regional Australia.

Often international migrants are seen as an option of last resort for regional communities that need more people. In many parts of regional Australia, it should be the top priority.

International migrants make a vital contribution to the regional communities they settle in



Help to fill workforce shortages



Create new jobs



Important source of population growth



Revitalise the local community



187,000

international migrants settled in regional Australia 2006 – 2011



Less than
20%

of the international migrants that came to Australia

International migration is responsible for over half the population growth in Australia. However, regional areas are attracting comparatively fewer migrants and as a result have lower population growth rates than the major capital cities.

If more international migrants settled in regional Australia, our regional population would grow at the same pace or even faster than the capital cities.

A better balance of regional and metropolitan migration will also help to reduce the congestion issues in our big cities. It can also result in much better outcomes for migrants.

FOR THE GOOD OF AUSTRALIA

	Proportion of international migrants settling in regional Australia	Average annual population growth rate of regional Australia	Average annual population growth rate of major capital cities
2006 to 2011	20%	1.4%	1.8%
Scenario: Increasing regional settlement of international migrants	32%	1.7%	1.6%

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SMALL TOWNS

International migrants make their most important contribution in small rural towns that are experiencing population decline.

For more than 100, mostly small rural areas, international migration was their only source of population growth between 2006 and 2011.

These are typically places with ageing populations, and migrants offer a new source of population growth as they are often young and ambitious. Migrants provide population stability, build diversity in the local community and help to create new jobs.

Proactive regions can attract more international migrants and re-invigorate their community. There are several standout communities who have transformed their region in relatively short periods of time.

Dalwallinu, Western Australia leveraged international migration to break their trend of decline and attract almost 200 new residents. International migration helped to create more than 70 new jobs in Nhill, Victoria.

Lessons from Nhill and Dalwallinu



Identify suitable employment opportunities



Ensure local services and infrastructure is able to meet the growing demand and diverse needs of new entrants



Involve local leaders and the community in the settlement process



Work with incoming migrants



Be prepared to start small

Attracting new migrants is a unique opportunity for small inland towns. Proactive, locally led strategies should be a top priority for local leaders who want to grow their community.

Visit regionalaustralia.org.au to join the population dynamics conversation and find out how you can transform your community.

About the Regional Australia Institute

Independent and informed by both research and ongoing dialogue with the community, the Regional Australia Institute develops policy and advocates for change to build a stronger economy and better quality of life in regional Australia – for the benefit of all Australians.