

Australia's population to reach 25 million



Just after 11:00pm on Tuesday 7th August 2018, Australia's population will tick over to 25 million. Australia has grown by 388,000 people over the past year, which is like almost adding an extra Canberra in just one year, (there are 410,000 residents living in the ACT's capital city). Australia currently grows by 1 new person every 83 seconds. By 2020 we will reach a population of 26 million, in 2030 a population of 30 million, and by 2048 Australia's population will tick over 40 million.

Net Overseas Migration the main driver of growth

Almost two thirds (62%) of Australia's growth is occurring through NOM (net overseas migration), and 38% is from natural increase (births minus deaths). This is in line with the most recent Census results that shows Australia is more multicultural than ever, with [26% born overseas](#), compared to 1966 when only 18% of the population had been born overseas.

Australia exceeding population forecasts

Australia has increased its population by one third in the last 20 years, from 18.5 million in 1997 to almost 25 million people currently. But more remarkable is that this record population growth has exceeded all forecasts. It took just two and a half years to add the last million people. That's a record, as the previous million took two years and nine months. The population increase has never been greater.

In 1998, [the Australian Bureau of Statistics predicted that](#), based on low-growth assumptions, Australia's population would reach 23.5 million people in 2051, a benchmark it went on to achieve in July 2014. The mid-growth forecast of 24.9 million people by 2051 has recently been reached, 33 years early! The upper end forecast of 26.4 million, based on high-growth assumptions, will be reached in mid-2021, less than three years away.

Were the predictions wrong?

It's not that the calculations were wrong, it's that migration policy changes as well as longevity increases and a solid birth rate have defied the trends that were evident twenty years ago. Back then it was assumed that the total fertility rate (babies per woman in a lifetime) would remain low. However, today's TFR of 1.79 is above even the highest assumption allowed for in the 1990's of 1.75.

It was also thought that life expectancy at birth would hit a high of 82 for males and 86 for females by 2051. However, current life expectancy is already closing in on 81 for males and 85 for females and will reach these 2051 targets decades early.

Can Australia handle the growth?

While Australia has the land mass to handle this population growth (we've got a population of 25 million living on a land mass similar in size to the US which has 325 million), the problem is that our population growth isn't evenly distributed across Australia. Our two largest cities captured almost three fifths of this growth (59%). Two out of five Australian residents (40%) live in either Sydney or Melbourne.

Sydney and Melbourne bearing the majority of the growth

According to the data, Melbourne grew by 125,424 (almost the size of Darwin) and Sydney grew by 101,558 people in 2017, (the size of Ballarat). Australia's biggest city Sydney grew at a rate of 2.02% in 2017, while Melbourne has been catching up, growing at an even faster

rate of 2.65%. These major Australian cities are both growing faster than the national average growth rate of 1.59% per annum. Victoria is growing faster than New South Wales, (2.3% p.a. cf. to 1.5% p.a.). Australia's annual national growth rate for the 2017 calendar year was 1.59%.

Melbourne is on track to record its 5 millionth resident in late August 2018, while Sydney has already passed 5 million. Australia's two largest cities will total more than 10 million residents and both are leading global cities with increasing [cultural diversity](#) that result from Australia's overseas migration trends.

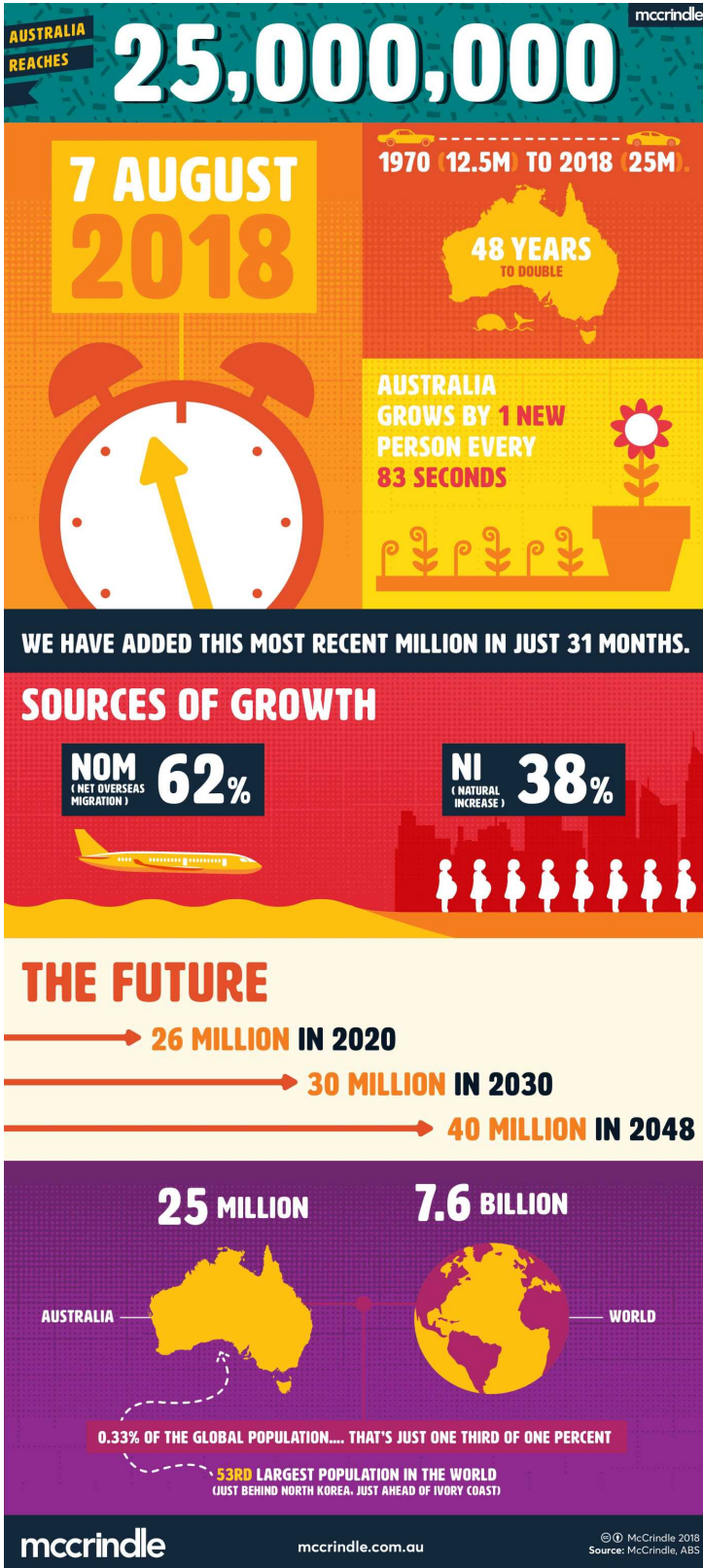
Brisbane is the third largest growing city, increasing by 47,982 people at a rate of 2.03% per annum. There are 2.4 million people who call Brisbane home, half the population of Melbourne.

Certainly if we can get regional growth right and re-balance our population to areas outside of Sydney and Melbourne, our land mass can accommodate this. Infrastructure will also need to keep pace. If we look to Canada which has a similar land mass, they're at 36 million currently — and that's the scale of where we're headed.

Looking to the future

Australia currently grows by 1 new person every 83 seconds. By 2020 we will reach a population of 26 million, in 2030 a population of 30 million, and by 2048 Australia's population will tick over 40 million.

According to the [Greater Sydney Region Plan](#), Sydney is projected to grow to 8 million residents by 2056, while Melbourne is forecast to reach 8 million six years earlier in 2050 according to [Plan Melbourne](#).



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