

We The People  
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We the People 298 Bigger is Not Better



**Good Day to You.** No one living, working or travelling in Sydney today needs to be reminded of the costs of the unprecedented growth the city has been undergoing. With close to 100,000 people being added each year, citizens experience the clogged roads, crowded trains and endless delays. Congestion costs Sydney \$6 billion every year, and it's getting worse. Infrastructure Australia warns we will need to spend billions more just to make up for our current planning failures – let alone what's coming.

"If you can imagine adding two more cities the size of Melbourne or Sydney to Australia by 2047, you'll appreciate the enormity of the challenge," says Infrastructure Australia except they've got it wrong. We aren't building new cities, we are squeezing more and more people into the cities we have. Mostly that means Sydney and Melbourne which together absorb 60 per cent of Australia's rapidly growing population. And what do our infrastructure gurus recommend..... simply move people elsewhere. So there you have it. Fuelled by the demands of the developers, ordinary citizens are being told to get out of town to be replaced by wealthier new arrivals. Fine for rich people but deeply unfair for most. Do any of us really want to live in a city of 8 million? That's where we are told Sydney is headed by mid-century, as if it's a foregone conclusion. Yet no one in power seems prepared to answer a simple question, why are we doing this, who benefits and who asked us if this is a good idea? I am yet to see a convincing argument that proves more is better for the majority of people. In 1998 under John Howard, the Australian Bureau of Statistics predicted we would have a population in 2051 of about 24.9 million. Well, we have already exceeded that number 33 years ahead of schedule which tells you a lot about the quality of long term planning in Australia. This has mostly happened because successive governments have allowed our immigration figures to rise out of control. Pushed by the growth lobby, and in the absence of a real debate or plan, the politicians have encouraged a massive expansion of our immigration program without seeking our permission.

It is staggering that while every Australian family will have a plan for the size of their family, our governments don't have a population plan for the country. Gone are the days when we needed more and more people to make things in factories. Now with automation, robotics and artificial intelligence, the jobs of the past are rapidly disappearing. We need to prepare for this future, not rest on the lazy economics that relies on a rapidly growing population to keep our economy afloat. Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison says a Big Australia means a bigger economy. But he fails to mention that in slicing up the economic pie between more and more people, we are actually going backwards in our quality of life. We are well beyond the sweet spot that allows us to plan for sensible development. It is amazing that none of the major political parties reflect what most Australians want. They are sensitive to the developers who fund them, and also of being labelled as "xenophobic" or "racist". Yet the problem we are creating affects everyone - new arrivals and old. We are conducting a risky experiment that has no parallel among developed nations, with a population growth rate that exceeds most developing countries. But none of this is inevitable. We can all have a say in our future and it starts with a proper plan endorsed by the people. We should bring our immigration down to the long-term average of about 70,000 per year, as it was during the time of Hawke and Keating while keeping a generous allocation for refugees. This would stabilise our population at about 30 million, not the 100 million we are heading for now. Others may disagree, but sooner or later we have to accept that there are limits to growth for our city and our nation. And the decisions need to happen now, not delayed so that our grandchildren are left with the consequences.

These are not my words but those of Dick Smith and commonsense and we the people should demand to have a say on population size in Australia because at the moment this dry arid continent looks to a crowded inhospitable future.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**