

Regional migration reaches equal-record June quarter high as Northern Queensland emerges as a growth hotspot

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Key points

- Regional Australia's appeal remains strong, with capital-to-regional migration reaching an equal-record June quarter high, matching results last seen in June 2021.
- Sydney (52%) and Melbourne (36%) are the biggest drivers of capital city outflows, while regional NSW (33%) and regional Victoria (26%) lead net regional inflows.
- The Sunshine Coast retained its position as Australia's leading destination of choice by share, while Central Goldfields in Victoria was recognised as the fastest growing region in the country.
- Regional growth was concentrated to northern Queensland with Burdekin, Tablelands and Douglas among the nation's most popular hotspots.

Australians are continuing to embrace regional living, with the latest Regional Movers Index (RMI) showing capital-to-regional migration reached its equal-highest June quarter on record, matching levels last seen in 2021.

The RMI is a partnership between the Commonwealth Bank (CBA) and Regional Australia Institute (RAI), and tracks population movements between Australia's capital cities to regions, and region-to-region migration. The latest results show capital city residents moving to regional Australia continued to outnumber those moving in the opposite direction by 30%.

While established destinations continued to attract the largest share of movers, this quarter also points to a broader spread of migration into more regional communities as the benefits of regional living draw people further afield. Northern Queensland was particularly prominent, with the LGAs of Burdekin, Tablelands and Douglas among the nation's fastest growing destinations by annual growth in net internal migration.

RAI CEO Liz Ritchie says movement typically eases during the June quarter as fewer Australians tend to relocate in the cooler months, which makes this result particularly noteworthy.

"The Regional Movers Index recorded its equal highest June quarter on record, matching the height of migration reached during the pandemic in 2021. This tells us the appeal of country living remains incredibly strong all year round, even outside the traditional peak moving periods," Liz Ritchie said.

"While established destinations such as Queensland's Sunshine Coast continue to attract the largest share of movers, we're also seeing strong growth spread into other areas of the state including places like the Tablelands, Douglas and Burdekin. It shows Australians are increasingly considering a broader range of regional communities when deciding where to live, with the benefits of regional living extending beyond popular coastal towns and inland communities.

“Our recent Regional Population Planning report found that regional growth has outpaced government projections by 114,000 people over the past decade. With more Australians choosing regional communities, we need population planning that anticipates growth and ensures housing, infrastructure and essential services keep pace.”

CBA Regional and Agribusiness Banking Executive General Manager Kylie Allen says Northern Queensland’s growth comes alongside broad industry investment helping generate diverse local economies. Burdekin is supported by agriculture, manufacturing and renewable energy, while the Tablelands is strong in both agribusiness and tourism benefitting from its proximity to Cairns. Douglas is backed by a vibrant tourism economy and continued investment in local infrastructure.

“Across Northern Queensland, local investment is helping regions capitalise on their distinct strengths and drive broader economic growth. When local businesses invest and expand, the benefits flow through the wider economy, creating jobs, attracting skilled workers and strengthening the services and supply chains that help regional communities thrive,” Kylie Allen said.

Not to be outdone by the Sunshine State, Central Goldfields in Victoria took out the number one spot for the fastest growing destination in the country. Greater Geraldton in Western Australia recorded the nation’s highest rate of net capital-to-regional migration growth in the June quarter, while the Mid Coast of New South Wales topped the rankings for net regional-to-regional migration growth.

“One of the most significant findings in this quarter’s report is seeing the ripple effect of regional population growth. As established regional centres expand, people are increasingly moving deeper into surrounding areas in search of greater housing, employment and lifestyle opportunities. This provides both metro and regionally based businesses with a unique opportunity to scale their operations and tap into a larger workforce and customer base,” Allen said.

RAI’s Move to More website offers prospective movers’ comprehensive information on nearly 2,000 regional towns across Australia, highlighting opportunities to live, work and invest in regional communities. Established in 2021, more than 1.8 million people have used the site to find their regional home.

“As more Australians embrace regional living, sustained migration is strengthening local economies while underscoring the need for services and infrastructure that keeps pace with growing communities,” Allen said.

Downloadable assets

- Regional Movers Index report, June Quarter 2026
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