South East Queensland Regional Plan Review

A snapshot of the South East Queensland region

South East Queensland is a diverse region stretching from Noosa in the north to Coolangatta in the south and west to Toowoomba.

South East Queensland is the third largest urban region in Australia and has experienced periods of high growth and change. From 1981 to 2011, the population doubled from around 1.5 million to just over 3.1 million.

The South East Queensland Regional Plan will consider our region today and the coming challenges.

People

South East Queensland is now home to about 3.3 million people, accommodating 70 per cent of Queensland’s population in only 1.3 per cent of the state’s total area.

The reported 10-year average annual population growth from 2001 was 65 000 (2.4 per cent), making South East Queensland one of the fastest growing regions in Australia. Annual growth has been lower in recent years, ranging between 41 000 (1.3 per cent) and 76 000 (2.9 per cent) over the decade.

Net interstate migration to Queensland has declined over the decade to 2012, from a high of about 38 000 in 2002–03 to a low of about 7000 in 2010–11, rebounding to nearly 12 000 in 2011–12. In contrast, net overseas migration was the largest contributor to Queensland’s population growth in the period 2005–2010, reaching a high of over 59 000 in 2008–09, and exceeding 30 000 in the years since. Although fluctuating, natural increase has also increased in the later years of the decade to 2012.

The state government’s most recent population projections indicate that South East Queensland is expected to grow to around 5.5 Million people (medium series) by 2041.

In 2011, South East Queensland’s 3.1 million residents lived in just over 1.2 million homes, of which approximately 23.2 per cent were a multiple dwelling such as a townhouse, unit or apartment. The average persons per dwelling across the region was 2.5, having increased slightly since 2006.

The total number of dwellings in South East Queensland increased by more than 240 000 (24 per cent) in the 10 years from 2001–2011. Over the period 2006–2011, approvals for multiple dwellings in the region were about 37 per cent of all dwelling approvals. Brisbane City and Gold Coast local government areas accounted for over 70 per cent of new infill multiple dwelling proposals as at December 2011.

Analysis of land available for residential development in 2011 indicated that there was more than 15 years’ supply across most of the region. In September 2012, there were 59 000 approved residential lots in the supply pipeline. The median size of new residential lots has gradually decreased over the last decade and in the year to September 2012 was 524 square metres.

Dwelling projections prepared in 2013 identified that South East Queensland would require about 1 039 000 new dwellings between 2011 and 2041.

Housing
Employment and economic activity

Employment

Over the year to the December quarter 2012, the total number of employed persons in South East Queensland was estimated at just over 1.6 million which represented almost 70 per cent of total employment throughout the state. The region’s unemployment rate for this period was 5.4 per cent, which was slightly below the overall Queensland figure of 5.6 per cent.

The largest industries by employment in the South East Queensland region, based on Census 2011 data, are health care and social assistance (12.3 per cent of total South East Queensland employment), retail trade (10.7 per cent), construction (9.1 per cent), manufacturing (8.7 per cent) and education and training (8.0 per cent).

Over the year to the December quarter 2012, the South East Queensland region experienced employment growth of 1.0 per cent, which was driven by strong growth in the local government areas of Toowoomba, Ipswich and Gold Coast. Employment growth in South East Queensland was just higher than Queensland, but lower than the growth achieved over the same period by other regions such as Darling Downs-Maranoa (4.9 per cent), Fitzroy (3.0 per cent) and Mackay (2.6 per cent).

Government employment projections prepared in 2013 indicate that employment in SEQ is expected to increase by around 1.1 Million jobs by 2040-2041.

Economic activity

In 2010–11, it was estimated that South East Queensland had a real gross regional product of approximately $170 billion. This represented just under two-thirds of total real Gross Regional Product (GRP) in Queensland for this period.

Although growth in real GRP in the South East Queensland region was quite strong over the 10 years to 2010–11, it slowed noticeably over the last five years. Growth in real GRP from 2006–07 to 2010–11 was primarily driven by growth in Brisbane (2.0 per cent average annual growth) and West Moreton (3.8 per cent), which were both above the overall figure for Queensland of 1.7 per cent for this period.

In terms of share of total real industry gross value added in the South East Queensland economy for 2010–11, the largest contributions came from manufacturing (9.0 per cent of gross value added), financial and insurance services (8.9 per cent), construction (8.4 per cent) and professional, scientific and technical services (8.1 per cent). Over the five-year period to 2010–11, the largest contributors to total real industry gross value added came from the services industries (i.e. finance and insurance services and health care and social assistance).

Transport

South East Queensland has a large and diverse transport network that reflects the complex travel needs and behaviours of its residents.

Private vehicle use

Cars continue to dominate the way people travel in South East Queensland, with over 80 per cent of all trips undertaken by private vehicle. While car travel is significant, accounting for four of every five trips, the total number of private vehicle movements on the network each year is decreasing (more than 300 000 fewer journeys from 2007–2009). This is because of changing travel behaviours, with South East Queensland residents becoming less likely to make multiple journeys each day. Between 2004 and 2009 there was a 14 per cent reduction in the number of people who travelled three or more times a day using any mode.

Public transport

Significant changes to the delivery of public transport and its associated infrastructure has seen usage rates increase at almost double the rate of population growth over a comparable period—a 19 per cent increase in usage compared to 11 per cent population growth during 2004–2009.

Active transport

There has been a modest increase in walking and cycling trips throughout the region, particularly for employment journeys, reversing a steady decline apparent since 1997.

Work travel

Commuting to and from work continues to be the largest trip purpose in South East Queensland, accounting for roughly one quarter (27 per cent) of all private travel on the network. In terms of total kilometres travelled, however, commuting trips account for a much larger proportion, representing 42 per cent of all private kilometres travelled.

Journeys to work are relatively self-contained within sub-regions across South East Queensland, with a large proportion of Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast employment trips originating and terminating within their local government area boundaries (87 per cent and 92 per cent respectively).
Private vehicles remain the dominant mode of choice for employment trips across South East Queensland (83 per cent), in line with historical trends. Despite this, there is considerable variation in public transport use by residents when accessing employment. Public transport trips to Brisbane’s CBD for work purposes have increased to account for three in every four journeys, while its use in other sub-regions has remained relatively stable.

**Freight movements**

The region has an extensive multimodal freight network that encompasses significant road, sea, rail and air infrastructure including the Port of Brisbane, Gateway Motorway and Bruce Highway. Total throughput activity at the Port of Brisbane has increased 23 per cent since 2007 despite fluctuating economic conditions, indicative of South East Queensland’s significant contribution to the state’s freight task. The region’s 770 kilometres of priority 1 road network largely accommodates these movements, with over 68 per cent of Queensland’s total freight volume transported using on-road vehicles in 2012.

**The environment**

The bioregion encompasses the geographical area of South East Queensland and eastern parts of Wide Bay Burnett. Approximately 13.3 per cent of the bioregion is in protected areas. There are an estimated 877 native animal and 3900 plant species in the bioregion. Of these native species, 114 animals (13 per cent) and 312 plants (8 per cent) are threatened with extinction. There are an estimated 1553 plant and animal species in Moreton Bay.

Other significant environmental features of the region include the Gondwana Rainforests of the Australia World Heritage Area within the Gold Coast and Scenic Rim local government areas and the Moreton Bay Marine Park, which includes a Ramsar wetlands site of international significance.

The South East Queensland environmental health monitoring program measures the health of the water quality across the region, including 17 freshwater catchments, 18 estuaries and nine areas of Moreton Bay. The 2013 South East Queensland report card revealed an overall improvement in freshwater quality and estuarine water quality and a slight decline in marine water quality for the year 2012-2013.

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