Population Growth Raises Fears For Safety And Community

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Growth favoured generally but fears of social problems and diminished quality of life exist.

While most Australians acknowledge population growth will be good for the nation in general, fears of associated social problems and diminished quality of life exist for many, according to TNSâ€™ recent Sustainable Population Growth Study.

The study, which investigated perceived impact of population growth, living preferences, performance of government, energy use and environment, found that Australians fear most aspects of life will change for the worse with long-term population growth.

Issues currently facing the nation such as housing affordability (86%), housing availability (77%), water supply, (79%) electricity supply (67%), and our health system (66%) will change for the worse as a result of population growth in the eyes of a large proportion of Australians.

The nation is also fearful that social challenges such as safety in the community and â€˜sense of communityâ€™ will be impacted upon negatively, with 79% and 61% respectively of the opinion these will change for the worse.

Q: Below is a list of things which may change with an increasing population. For each one, please indicate if you feel long-term population growth will cause change for the better or change for the worse.

Senior Consultant in Social Research with TNS, Robyn Rutley, said the perceived negative impact of population growth across such a wide range of livability and social aspects displayed a need for greater government communication around how these challenges will be faced.

â€œAustralians are worried about a number of aspects of population growth and, in the lead up to the election, will be looking to government for convincing explanation of how challenges associated with population growth will be faced,â€• she said.

â€œThe trepidation towards population growth weâ€™re seeing comes from a mixture of two factors â€“ as Australians we have great pride in our living environment, and there is a desire to protect this, but we also have a â€˜not in my backyardâ€™ mentality which fuels fear of change.

â€œBut, while there are more negatives associated with population growth, there were also many positives.â€•

Q: Below is a list of things which may change with an increasing population. For each one, please indicate if you feel long-term population growth will cause change for the better or change for the worse.

Eighty-eight percent of Australians state that they â€˜really enjoy living in their regionâ€™ and 87% state their quality life is excellent or good.

The top reasons for liking local regions is plenty of green space, feeling safe at home, relaxed lifestyle, multicultural population, weather, and ease of getting around (rated a strength of their local region by 88%, 88%, 85%, 83%, 81%, and 81% of Australians respectively).

Generally, population growth is seen as positive, with 60% of the opinion it is a good thing for the nation and 59% of the opinion it is good for their local region.

Growth was seen as most positive for the local region amongst residents of the ACT and Tasmania. New South Welshmen were the least likely to rate growth as a positive thing.

In terms of preferences, more would prefer to live further out in order to live in lower density; building to be done in already developed areas to maintain green space; and a mix of shops, offices and different housing types close to home.

About TNS
Please visit www.tnsglobal.com for more information.

TNSâ€™ Sustainable Population Growth Study was conducted with a nationally representative sample of 1,378 residents of all states and territories across Australia in March 2010.

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