

Boom draws population west

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WESTERN Australia has confirmed its position as the boom state, overtaking Queensland as having the fastest-growing population in the nation.

The state's population grew by 2 per cent in 2005-06, the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show.

And Perth was the fastest-growing city, with inner Perth recording a growth rate of 12.4 per cent in just 12 months.

Overall, Australia's population grew by 265,700 to 20.6 million. Natural increase, or the excess of births over deaths, contributed 131,200 people, while net overseas migration contributed 134,600.

Professor of geography at the University of Adelaide, Graeme Hugo, said that although Queensland was continuing to show strong growth, "for the first time for a long time Western Australia has grown faster ... It is clear the resources boom translates into growth in the capital city, rather than necessarily in regional areas."

Queensland (on 1.9 per cent), the Northern Territory (1.6 per cent) and Victoria (1.4 per cent) all grew faster than the national average of 1.3 per cent.

But some of the areas showing the greatest loss of people, or the most rapid declines, were also in Western Australia. Esperance and Manjimup had the fourth- and fifth-largest decreases in population, while Moora had the

NATIONAL GROWTH

State	Population (millions)	Rise in 2005-06	Capital city	Population (millions)	Rise in 2005-06
NSW	6.83	0.9%	Sydney	4.29	0.9%
Victoria	5.09	1.4%	Melbourne	3.68	1.3%
Queensland	4.05	1.9%	Brisbane	1.82	1.6%
WA	2.05	2.0%	Perth	1.51	2.0%
SA	1.55	0.8%	Adelaide	1.14	0.9%
Tasmania	0.49	0.7%	Hobart	0.21	1.0%
NT	0.21	1.4%	Darwin	0.11	2.5%
ACT	-	-	Canberra	0.33	0.9%
Australia	20.6	1.3%	-	-	-

Source: ABS

biggest decline, of 4.1 per cent.

"The resources boom is sucking people out of the non-metropolitan areas," Professor Hugo said. "They tend to be dry farming areas which are losing people, also some of the older mining communities."

Queensland gained the most people, up by 76,400, followed by Victoria, up 68,500, and NSW, up 58,800.

NSW had the biggest number of migrants from overseas, but also experienced the largest net loss — 24,500 people — to interstate migration.

Professor Hugo said the figures pointed to the increasing dominance of capital cities after a period when a large part of the population growth occurred outside the capitals.

Australia's population is moving a little further north each

year. The centre of national population is now estimated to be 55km east of the town of Ivanhoe, in western NSW.

The ABS reports that between June 2001 and 2006, the centre of population moved 8km north, because of strong population growth in northern Australia and southeast Queensland in particular.

Melbourne had the largest increase in population, with the equivalent of an average increase of 940 people a week.

Nearly 1000 people a week moved to southeast Queensland. Over the five years from June 2001, Brisbane recorded an annual growth rate of 2.2 per cent, but that slowed in the 12 months to June 2006 to 1.6 per cent, a figure still above the average growth rate.