

Economic boom draws in blokes

SHANE WRIGHT
ECONOMICS EDITOR

Girls, if you can't find a bloke in WA, you're just not trying.

New figures show that there is not a man drought in the State, but really a dearth of women — and the situation is getting worse.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that the State population reached 2.06 million in the September quarter, an increase of 10,600 over the previous three months, or about 115 people a day.

The jump in population maintained WA's position as the nation's fastest-growing State or Territory, with an annual growth rate of 2 per cent — just ahead of Queensland with 1.9 per cent.

But it was the make-up of the change that should put a grin on any woman looking for a man.

There are now 1.035 million men in WA, compared with 1.026 million women, a shortfall between the sexes of 9397.

Just a year ago, the difference was 6461, suggesting that the overall

strength of the economy is sucking more men into WA than women.

Queensland (5747) and the Northern Territory (11,937) similarly have more men than women and strong economies but the jump in the WA imbalance was by far the largest recorded.

Of the 10,600 new West Australia-

'Australia's current baby boom is certainly a reflection of the buoyant economic times.'

CRAIG JAMES, COMMSEC ECONOMIST

lians, 4122 were due to natural increase; the difference between the number of births and deaths. It was the biggest quarterly jump for natural increase in almost 12 years.

Another 5582 people were added through net overseas migration, while 889 came via net interstate migration.

The increase in people from the

Eastern States was the second highest in eight years.

Nationally, Australia's population now is estimated at 20.7 million, an increase of almost 270,000 over the previous year.

In absolute terms, Victoria boosted its population by 18,800 in the September quarter, just ahead of Queensland (17,000) and NSW (16,500). Over the full year, Queensland's population swelled 75,500 to more than four million.

NSW has 6.8 million people, followed by Victoria's 5.1 million.

CommSec chief equities economist Craig James said strong economic growth and the Federal Government's baby bonus were encouraging people to have more children.

The population had also been boosted by 137,800 migrants, the biggest overseas intake in 17 years.

"Australia's current baby boom is certainly a reflection of the buoyant economic times," he said.

A concrete picture on the nation's population will be released with the results of last year's census, due to be made public mid-year.