

More migrants opt to bypass big cities

Pia Akerman

STEPS to encourage migrants to settle in regional and low-growth metropolitan areas appear to be working.

Data from the Department of Immigration has revealed a 43 per cent increase in the number of migrants intending to settle in South Australia last financial year, the highest growth of any state.

South Australia also took 6.9 per cent of the national migrant intake, its highest in at least 20 years, while NSW recorded its lowest portion of the intake, 33.9 per cent, in the same period. NSW remains the most popular state, however, taking almost 45,000 arrivals.

Immigration Minister Amanda

Vanstone said the growing shift to regional areas was a result of higher costs of living in Sydney and "other states and territories more aggressively marketing themselves, and frankly having opportunities".

"They have very aggressively marketed South Australia," Senator Vanstone said.

"They want more people, they have a different view than us... they think there should be a population policy, that is, a focus on numbers.

"I don't share that view, the Government doesn't share that view. We think we should get in as many people as Australia needs and no more and no less, and they should be the people Australia needs."

The number of new settlers in

South Australia has almost doubled in the past two years, following the state's strategic plan to lift the share of international migrants to match its share of the nation's population over the next 10 years.

Migrants to South Australia can apply for the Skilled International Regional visa, implemented in 2004 to encourage skilled workers to settle in regional and low-population-growth metropolitan areas.

Fewer points are needed to qualify for the SIR visa than for ordinary skilled migration.

British migrants are still the largest component of settlers in South Australia, with 3009 of the 9099 arrivals.

The next highest source countries were India and China,

reflecting a national pattern.

Jacob and Mini Varghese, originally from Kerala in southern India, migrated to Australia on the SIR visa with their three young daughters in October after working in Kuwait for 14 years. They chose to settle in Adelaide, turning down opportunities in Canada and the US.

"It's a peaceful place, Adelaide," Mrs Varghese, a laboratory technician, said. "If you want to live permanently in Australia, I think this is a perfect place. It's a good place to settle down, good for the children and their education."

"It's not so fast as the US," Mr Varghese added. "Family life is difficult there."



•Good place for the children*: Jacob and Mini Varghese in Adelaide with Catherine, 6, Donna, 18 months, and Alina, 8

Picture: Kelly Barnes