

# New data plots baby boomers moving to coast

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**SOME weeks ago (Primespace, March 5), I provided a summary of population projections for Australia's 70 largest towns as prepared by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and published on the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) website.**

As I said at the time, this is exciting stuff. For the first time there is an accessible and credible (meaning all figures add up to an agreed national outlook) projection of the population at the local area level. But it gets even better. The projections not only show how many people are expected to be added in every locality in Australia over the next 30 years, this information is also provided by age group.

This is vital information for businesses involved in the strategic planning process.

From a property perspective, it is important to know which towns will add what number of residents over coming decades. This data converts directly into net dwelling demand. But the projection by age group enables more complex analyses, for example, which localities will add most people in a particular age group or generation.

If you sell baby food or aged-care services, or if you deliver secondary school services, this data allows you to prioritise areas of future demand.

And while all of this is fascinating in and of itself, I think the truly riveting aspect of the small-area age-group projection is the capacity it offers to determine the outlook for different generations such as the baby boomers.

From a commercial perspective, business is interested in the future movement of boomers in order to deliver financial services as well as property options. The reason why this is important is that in 2009 the boomers are aged 47-62 and as such are on the cusp of exiting the workforce. Some people say that the boomers will age in their place and I'm sure many will do exactly that.

However by analysing the DoHA database, an entirely different perspective is provided. I have compared the number of people aged 45-59 in each of the 1415 statistical local areas that comprise the Australian continent in 2007 with the number aged 60-74 in the same areas in 2021. The difference represents the net growth or loss in the baby boomer population over a decade and a half.

There are a few places in Australia that are expected to attract baby boomers on a grand scale.

The leading destination for boomers on the move over the 14 years to 2021 is Queensland's Hervey Bay. In this quiet beachside town the boomer population is projected to grow by 8500 over 14 years to reach 19,500 by 2021.

No other statistical local area in Australia will attract as many boomers as Hervey Bay. Perhaps it should be renamed Baby Boomer Bay.

Other boomer hotspots include the West's Mandurah, which will add 7900 boomers over the 14 years to 2021, as well as the southern end of the Melbourne's Mornington Peninsula (up 6600), New South Wales' Tweed Heads (up 5400) and South Australia's Victor Harbor (up 2400).

Clearly the ABS believes that this nation's baby boomers will be drawn to seachange localities in droves during the decade that lies immediately beyond the global financial crisis.

The projections are largely based on an extension of migration patterns already in place. This means that Hervey Bay most likely has a demographic history attracting people in the post-60 age group. And because baby boomers will push into the post-60 market over the next decade they will submit one-by-one to the undeniable allure of Hervey Bay.

The common denominator between all these boomer destinations is they are on the beach.

At the other end of the scale are places where the baby boomer population is shrinking.

And on this measure there is no place that is more likely to repel baby boomers than the southern suburbs of the City of Joondalup on Perth's northside.

Let's not beat about the bush here. The Perth suburbs of Sorrento, Duncraig, Hillarys, Greenwood and Kingsley are clearly death-traps for baby boomers.

Consider the evidence. In 2007 this collection of suburbs contained 26,300 baby boomers, but by 2021 the projection is that only 17,500 will remain.

That's 8800 baby boomers who will be eliminated from Perth's genteel northern suburbs next decade. But it's not just southern Joondalup that's losing boomers at a rate of knots.

In NSW the upper North Shore municipality of Ku-ring-gai is projected to lose 7400 baby boomer residents between 2007 and 2021. In Melbourne it's the Keilor part of the City of Brimbank that is projected to lose 3400 boomers, whilst in Queensland it is Mt Isa that will lose 1800 boomer residents over the next decade. In Adelaide it is the northern reaches of Tea Tree Gully, and quite specifically around the suburb of Golden Grove, that is moving to a boomer-free environment (down 1700 boomers by 2021).

Stand back from these extremes and something quite extraordinary is evident.

Yes, many boomers will age in situ next decade. But clearly many will not. They will up and off from comfortable middle and even outer suburbia, as well as from remote communities, and seek out lifestyle locations mostly by the sea.

Or at least this will be the case if the age-based migration trends by locality from the recent past can be used as a guide as to how the baby boomers will behave next decade.

In either case the database hidden at <http://tinyurl.com/c5y2wy> is an asset that anyone interested in property trends should be trawling through now in order to take up the best opportunities in the new decade.

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