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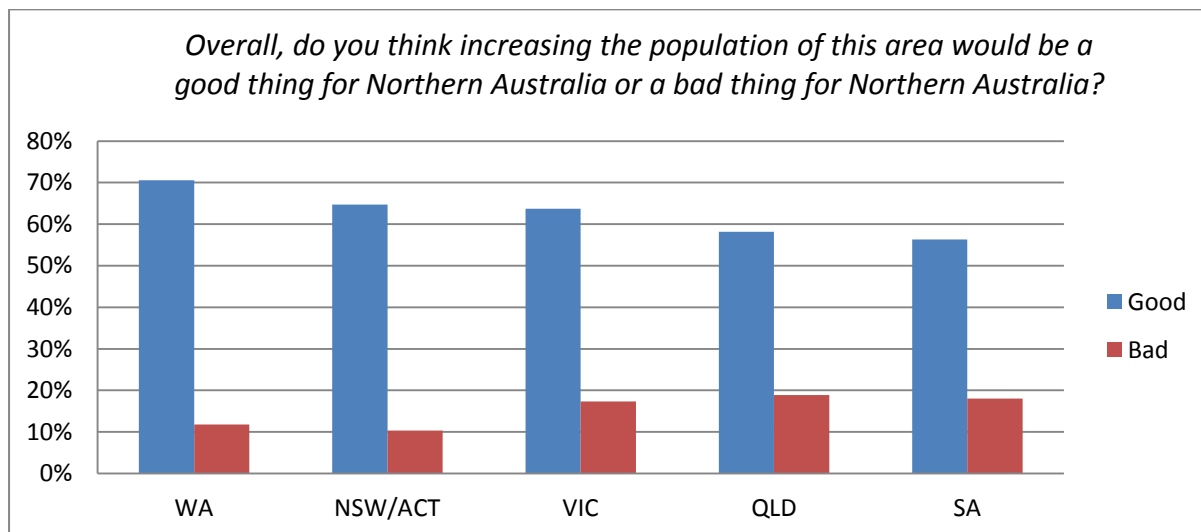
Friday 25th May 2011

LANDMARK POLL ON POPULATION GROWTH IN NORTH AUSTRALIA

The Newspoll conducted exclusively for the Institute of Public Affairs shows that a majority of Australians believe increasing the population of Northern Australia would be a good thing for the region.

63% of Australians have said that North Australia would benefit from a higher population. Only 15% have said that a higher population would be bad for North Australia.

For the poll, North Australia was defined as the Pilbara and Kimberley regions of West Australia, the Northern Territory, and Far North Queensland.



Population growth in North Australia

According to the Intergenerational Report (IGR) 2010, Australia's population is projected to increase from 22.2 million in 2010 to 35.9 million in 2050.¹ This figure was adopted as a target by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd upon the release of the IGR.

Research reported in *The Daily Telegraph* earlier this week showed that 51% of respondents were opposed to any form of immigration to Australia.² The same research indicated that the number who believe the country has room to accommodate more people also plunged to less than a third, down from 42 per cent a decade ago. This is despite the fact that Australia remains the least densely

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, *Intergenerational Report*, 2010, p. 5.

² 'The tide of public opinion is turning against immigration', *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 May 2012, <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/national/the-tide-of-public-opinion-is-turning-against-immigration/story-e6freuzr-1226362835067>

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populated developed country in the world at 2.9 people per square kilometre.³ Only Namibia (2.6/km²) and Mongolia (1.7/km²) are less densely populated than Australia.⁴

When prompted on which region population growth could take place in, namely North Australia, a clear majority of respondents believe the region would benefit from an increased population.

At present, over half of skilled migrants end up in Melbourne or Sydney. A new category of skilled migration should be investigated which has a specific condition that migrants live in Northern Australia for the duration of their visa. This would help boost economic development and alleviate skills shortages that are holding back many industries in Northern Australia.

Food bowl

The expansion of Asia's middle class represents a massive new opportunity for Australia to increase agricultural exports. The 2010 OECD report *The Emerging Middle Class in Developing Countries* makes clear the economic opportunities for Australia. By 2020, more than half the world's middle class will be in Asia and Asian consumers will account for over 40 per cent of global middle class consumption.⁵

It is expected that as hundreds of millions of people to Australia's north increase their incomes and purchasing power in coming decades, that their diets will change to reflect this, with a greater demand for protein-rich foods.

Both Prime Minister Julia Gillard and the Federal coalition have announced that they want North Australia to become the food bowl of Asia.

Mr Andrew Robb, federal opposition spokesman for finance and chair of the Coalition's dams and water management taskforce, has said: "We are starting to form the view that, in the next couple of decades, we can materially develop the north and get to a point where we can feed not 60 million people but 120 million people."⁶

On May 3, 2012, Prime Minister Gillard said that Australia has the potential to become the region's food superpower, just as it is a minerals and energy giant.⁷

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010-11, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/3218.0~2010-11~Main+Features~Main+Features?OpenDocument>

⁴ http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2008/wpp2008_text_tables.pdf

⁵ OECD, *The Emerging Middle Class in Developing Countries*, 2010, p. 6.

⁶ 'Tony Abbott's plan for northern foodbowl', *The Australian*, 17 September 2011.

⁷ 'Australia's potential to be food superpower in Asian Century', *ABC Radio Australia*, 3 May 2012, <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/asia-pacific/australias-potential-to-be-food-superpower-in-asian-century/937926>

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In order to take these opportunities and develop a food bowl in Northern Australia, the region will need a major boost in human capital, which can only occur through an increase in population.

Special Economic Zone

Northern Australia is currently a key driver of Australia's economy and makes up a substantial part of federal and state government revenues. Yet government regulation and a lack of vision constrains the North from further economic growth.

The North is currently underpopulated and under-developed, yet contains a wealth of natural resources. Australian policy-makers should be taking advantage of this huge potential by implementing policies that encourage investment, increase infrastructure and create opportunities to manage skills shortages.

Special Economic Zones (SEZs) have been used as part of national growth strategies around the world to stimulate development and economic activity in under developed areas. In 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron announced plans to establish 21 new economic zones across the United Kingdom. There are around 3,000 Special Economic Zones operating around the world.

SEZs are designated areas where tax and regulation are significantly relaxed or reduced. The focus of such a zone in Northern Australia would be to promote investment, create jobs, encourage skilled migration and transform depressed and under-developed regions into areas of considerable economic activity.

A zone that covers North Queensland, North Western Australia and the Northern Territory would invigorate these underpopulated, underdeveloped and resource-rich regions.

Since 1945, Australians living above the 26th parallel have received income tax breaks in recognition of their comparatively difficult living environment. Family living costs are high, local services are poor and community infrastructure is minimal. A Northern Special Economic Zone would be a logical extension of this policy assistance for North Australians.

The *North Australia Project*, a joint initiative of Australians for Northern Development and Economic Vision and the Institute of Public Affairs, aims to encourage economic development in Northern Australia.

The Newspill was conducted over the weekend of 18-20 May 2012. A media release is available from the IPA at www.ipa.org.au. More information is also available at www.andev-project.org.

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TABLE 1 STANDARD ANALYSIS PANEL I *BY* A1. GOOD \ BAD THING FOR NORTHERN AUSTRALIA IF INCREASE POPULATION IN FAR NORTH QLD \ NT \ PILBARA \ KIMBERLY AREA

BASE: WTD. RESP.(000's)

WEIGHTS: HIGHEST LEVEL OF SCHOOLING COMPLETED/AGE\SEX\AREA

	SEX		AGE							GROCERY BUYER		CHILDREN		MARITAL STATUS		WORK STATUS			
	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	18-24	25-34	TOTAL 18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	TOTAL 50+	YES	NO	YES	NO	MARRIED	NOT MARRIED	FULL TIME	PART TIME	NOT AT ALL
RESPONDENTS	1203	602	601	110	135	245	407	275	276	551	831	372	454	749	757	446	494	243	466
WTD. RESP.(000's)	17311	8535	8776	2274	3191	5465	4698	4058	3090	7148	11587	5724	6638	10673	10308	7003	7301	3521	6488
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
A1. GOOD \ BAD THING FOR NORTHERN AUSTRALIA IF INCREASE POPULATION IN FAR NORTH QLD \ NT \ PILBARA \ KIMBERLY AREA																			
Good thing	10879	5595	5285	1419	1971	3390	3048	2319	2123	4442	7172	3707	4337	6543	6463	4416	4661	2232	3986
	62.8%	65.5%	60.2%	62.4%	61.8%	62%	64.9%	57.1%	68.7%	62.1%	61.9%	64.8%	65.3%	61.3%	62.7%	63.1%	63.8%	63.4%	61.4%
Bad thing	2587	1180	1407	311	480	791	632	691	473	1164	1785	802	1011	1576	1624	963	951	486	1150
	14.9%	13.8%	16%	13.7%	15%	14.5%	13.4%	17%	15.3%	16.3%	15.4%	14%	15.2%	14.8%	15.8%	13.7%	13%	13.8%	17.7%
Neither \ don't know	3845	1760	2085	544	740	1284	1019	1048	494	1542	2630	1215	1291	2554	2221	1624	1690	803	1352
	22.2%	20.6%	23.8%	23.9%	23.2%	23.5%	21.7%	25.8%	16%	21.6%	22.7%	21.2%	19.4%	23.9%	21.5%	23.2%	23.1%	22.8%	20.8%
TOTALS	17311	8535	8776	2274	3191	5465	4698	4058	3090	7148	11587	5724	6638	10673	10308	7003	7301	3521	6488
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



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2012

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TABLE 2 STANDARD ANALYSIS PANEL II *BY* A1. GOOD \ BAD THING FOR NORTHERN AUSTRALIA IF INCREASE POPULATION IN FAR NORTH QLD \ NT \ PILBARA \ KIMBERLY AREA

BASE: WTD. RESP.(000's)

WEIGHTS: HIGHEST LEVEL OF SCHOOLING COMPLETED/AGE\SEX\AREA

	AREA									S.E.S.		HIGHEST EDUCATION COMPLETED			HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
	TOTAL	5 CAP CITY	X-CITY	NSW\ ACT	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	WHITE	BLUE	PRIMARY\ SECONDAR Y SCHOOL	COLLEGE\ APPRENTICES HIP	UNIVERSIT Y DEGREE	LESS THAN \$50,000	\$50,000 TO \$89,999	\$90,000 +
RESPONDENTS	1203	701	502	350	301	201	151	150	50	650	553	404	419	380	316	272	368
WTD. RESP.(000's)	17311	10690	6621	5948	4383	3485	1302	1799	394	9240	8071	6083	6290	4937	4239	3691	5476
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
A1. GOOD \ BAD THING FOR NORTHERN AUSTRALIA IF INCREASE POPULATION IN FAR NORTH QLD \ NT \ PILBARA \ KIMBERLY AREA																	
Good thing	10879	6993	3887	3851	2792	2030	733	1269	204	6176	4703	3488	3929	3462	2747	2175	3793
	62.8%	65.4%	58.7%	64.7%	63.7%	58.2%	56.3%	70.6%	51.9%	66.8%	58.3%	57.3%	62.5%	70.1%	64.8%	58.9%	69.3%
Bad thing	2587	1469	1118	613	757	660	235	213	110	1170	1417	1095	886	605	624	693	697
	14.9%	13.7%	16.9%	10.3%	17.3%	18.9%	18%	11.8%	27.8%	12.7%	17.6%	18%	14.1%	12.3%	14.7%	18.8%	12.7%
Neither \ don't know	3845	2228	1617	1484	835	796	334	317	80	1894	1951	1500	1475	870	868	823	986
	22.2%	20.8%	24.4%	25%	19%	22.8%	25.6%	17.6%	20.3%	20.5%	24.2%	24.7%	23.5%	17.6%	20.5%	22.3%	18%
TOTALS	17311	10690	6621	5948	4383	3485	1302	1799	394	9240	8071	6083	6290	4937	4239	3691	5476
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

