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# Mackay provides jobs, opportunity

Clare Chapman | 14th April 2010

MORE than 3000 people relocated to the Mackay region last year, making it one of the fastest growing centres in regional Queensland.

And while the population grew, the unemployment rate dropped to 3.65 per cent, well below the state average.

Experts say the steady growth and healthy economic environment shows that people living in larger centres are moving to Mackay not only for employment opportunities but also for lifestyle reasons.

According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, Mackay grew by 2.7 per cent in the year to June 2009, taking the population to just less than 120,000.

Gerard Carlyon, one of Mackay's recently relocated residents, was among the 3139 people who moved here last year.

"We partially decided to move up here because there were really good employment prospects... and we wanted to go to a community that was a bit more relaxed than a big city, and one that had a good lifestyle," Mr Carlyon said.

Foundation for Regional Economic Development chief executive officer Peter Bailey said more and more people were seeing the benefits of country living and Mackay's unique combination of the mining industry and diversifying city was attractive to prospective new residents.

"Mackay is effectively becoming the mining capital," Mr Bailey said.

"But what we are also seeing is a development of related industries in Mackay.

"Then there's the lifestyle, things like the harbour, the Artspace precinct and the fact that Mackay is a good stepping point to the Whitsundays.

"Mackay stands out as a community that is going places.

"I am certain this recorded population growth will also have flow-on effects for business."

Mackay Regional Mayor Col Meng said the continued growth was a result of the region's economic stability and ability to provide country-style living in a major centre.

"We don't have the problems that the major cities have but we have enough other things that little country towns don't, for example, marinas, boardwalks, all those things that create the lifestyle that people want," Cr Meng said.

Tourism and Economic Development portfolio councillor David Perkins said Mackay was also a service centre for the wider region.

"Strong activity in the mining and rural sectors, and a role as the service hub for the region, boost employment," Cr Perkins said.

"The Mackay Regional Council area enjoys one of the lowest unemployment rates in Queensland."

The region's unemployment dropped from 3.78 per cent in the September 2009 quarter to 3.65 per cent in the December quarter, well below the Queensland rate of 5.8 per cent.

Since 2001 the Mackay region's population has increased by more than 25,000 people.



Mackay's city centre.

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