

CUMMINGS ECONOMICS

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Note on Comparative Transient Population Levels Australian Cities

There is a widespread myth that Cairns has a highly transient population.

Certainly, Cairns has a high level of visitor population, some of whom will seek work during their visit, especially backpackers. However, when population excluding visitors is looked at, a very different picture emerges.

Table 1 gives information from the 2006 Census on the proportion of the population 'usually resident' in a range of Australian cities that lived at the same address (or in the same statistical local area), one year ago and five years ago. The table shows the proportion resident five years ago were relatively low in the Queensland cities and Darwin (with the exception of Rockhampton), but with Cairns having a higher proportion than the Gold Coast, Townsville and Darwin.

However, this measure heavily is affected by population growth as opposed to transitory movements.

Column (c) of Table 1 gives 2001 to 2006 population growth for the cities listed. The highest percent growth over the five years was for Gold Coast, Cairns and Townsville.

When this percentage is added to the percent not resident five years ago, it gives a measure of net non-transient population.

**Table 1: Percent Same Address or Same Statistical Local Area
Census 2006, Population by Place of Usual Residence**

	1 Year Ago	5 Years Ago	<u>% Resident Population Growth (2001-2006)</u>	<u>Net Non-Transient Proportion</u>
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Greater Hobart	91%	75%	4%	79%
Sydney	90%	71%	4%	75%
Melbourne	90%	69%	8%	77%
Rockhampton	89%	72%	9%	81%
Adelaide	88%	69%	3%	72%
Perth	87%	66%	9%	75%
Brisbane	84%	57%	12%	69%
Cairns	82%	56%	16%	72%
Gold Coast	81%	50%	20%	70%
Townsville	79%	50%	15%	65%
Darwin	77%	49%	7%	56%

Source: Cummings Economics from ABS 2006 Census data.

Based on this, Table 2 sets out the percent of net transient population for the cities, highest to lowest.

Darwin	44%
Townsville	35%
Brisbane	31%
Gold Coast	30%
Cairns	28%
Adelaide	28%
Perth	25%
Sydney	25%
Melbourne	23%
Greater Hobart	21%
Rockhampton	19%

Source: *Cummings Economics* from *Table 1*.

It can be seen that Cairns, far from being exceptionally high in this measure of transient population, is lower than most of its growing Queensland and northern counterparts including Brisbane and the Gold Coast. It is on a par with Adelaide and just above Perth and Sydney. The lowest levels are associated with the slow growing non-metropolitan centres of Hobart and Rockhampton.

The reason for the high levels of transient population levels in Darwin and Townsville can probably be found in the very high levels of defence and other government workforce in those cities, subject to periodic transfer.