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**SUNBELT-RUSTBELT REVISITED
THE CASE OF SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND**

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An analysis of economic trends, income levels and welfare dependency rates in South-east Queensland indicates that the rapid population growth occurring in the region has not yet translated into levels of affluence or competitive industries comparable with Melbourne and Sydney.

According to a recent *Australian* editorial, we are currently witnessing 'The slide towards a divided nation' (December 1994). This is a much repeated idea, which stems from the recent rapid rate of population and economic growth in Western Australia (WA) and Queensland, relative to the allegedly sclerotic south-eastern states. *The Australian* editorialist goes on to conclude that governments should make sure that there are no impediments to the movement of capital and labour from the 'so-called rust belt southern States'. The lesson is that 'As the economy becomes more internationalised, we must ensure that it is developed according to principles of comparative advantage'.

Those who take this position usually assume that it is the economy which drives population movements and in particular that the focal point of economic growth in contemporary Australia is industries selling into the international market place. The rapidly growing WA and Queensland economies are generally put in this category. There is clearly some truth in this idea. But other factors may be involved. Recent studies suggest that a region may experience significant economic growth without parallel population growth.¹ It is also possible that population growth deriving from lifestyle, retirement or other motives may be driving some urban economies, especially those located in Queensland's 'sunbelt' areas. For example, Flood concludes from an analysis of internal migration movements that 'a large group of people on fixed incomes is choosing not to participate in the labour markets of cities and instead is moving to cheaper areas of high amenity'.² This conclusion was endorsed in the recent Resources Assessment Commission Coastal Zone Inquiry.³ The rapid growth of sunbelt regions elsewhere in the developed world, like Florida, adds substance to this thesis.

In exploring these issues we compare the industrial structure of the economies of South-East Queensland (SEQ), Sydney and Melbourne. Where possible, SEQ is disaggregated into its major components: the Brisbane Statistical Division (SD), and the Moreton SD which comprises the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast (in both cases defined to include the coastal urban strip and adjacent hinterlands) and the balance of the Moreton SD. At the extreme, two types of industrial activity are identified. The first includes those industries which provide goods and services for an expanding urban community, like infrastructure and housing, as well as people services, such as retail and health services. One distinctive feature of these industries is that they generally are not subject to competition from providers outside the community in question. The second comprises goods and services which sell locally, elsewhere in Australia or overseas against national or international competition.

If SEQ's expansion reflects the dynamic end of the 'Two Australias' its industries should be reflective of the second category, with the firms involved linked into the global marketplace. We would also expect to find relatively high levels of employment in managerial and professional activities, since such employment is associated with industries capable of competing internationally. Following Robert Reich such persons may be called 'symbolic analysts'.⁴ These are the persons who perform the high level communication, design, planning, financial deal-making, marketing and managerial functions so important to enterprises capable of competing nationally or internationally. Conversely, if SEQ is better understood as a people driven 'sunbelt', its industries would be more reflective of those included in the first, 'people servicing' category.

POPULATION GROWTH IN SEQ

As can be seen from Table 1, between 1986 and 1994 SEQ's population grew at an annual rate of 3.0 per cent, nearly three times that of Sydney or Melbourne over the same period. The total population growth of 165,974 during the three years 1991 to 1994 exceeded that of Sydney and Melbourne combined. Most of SEQ's expanding population derived from interstate sources. Indeed, it is interstate movement, mostly from Sydney in the 1986-1991 period, but in recent years more from Melbourne, which largely explains why SEQ's population has been growing far more rapidly than Sydney or Melbourne.

These interstate sources have been especially important in fuelling the growth of the Sunshine and Gold Coast regions (as defined above).

If SEQ's economic growth was being driven by population growth we would expect to find evidence that many of those moving to the region were being drawn by climate and lifestyle attractions, along with lower housing costs (relative to Sydney or Melbourne). Such attractions might appeal to retired persons holding portable superannuation benefits or those whose income derives from government transfer payments (age pension, unemployment benefits, single parent pensions, and so on). Commentaries on the appeal of the Queensland sunbelt often feature the weather as a compelling factor. Such views gain credibility from the fact that with the exception of the Mandurah area to the south of Perth,

there has been no parallel population movement to southern coastal areas. Melbourne's Mornington Peninsula, for example, has hardly grown at all over recent years.

Another possible factor prompting interstate movement is the 1980s and early 1990s restructuring of the primarily southern Australian-based manufacturing industry, and the recession-induced slow down in the southern metropolitan building industry. Many of the (usually less skilled) workers affected may be attracted north by the publicity associated with sunbelt opportunity.

Table 1: Population change 1986 to 1994, South-east Queensland, Sydney, Melbourne and Australia

	Estimated Resident Population			Population change			Annual growth rate % 1986-94	Share (%) of Australia's population	
	1986	1991	1994	1986-91	1991-94	1986-94		1986	1994
Australia	16,017,645	17,283,055	17,843,300	1,265,410	560,245	1,825,655	11.4	100.0	100.0
Sydney SD*	3,471,550	3,672,850	3,738,500	201,300	65,650	266,950	7.7	21.7	21.0
Melbourne SD	2,967,800	3,156,700	3,198,250	188,900	41,550	230,450	7.8	18.5	17.9
Brisbane SD	1,217,337	1,357,986	1,454,774	140,649	96,788	237,437	19.5	7.6	8.2
Moreton SD	190,854	248,768	279,829	57,914	31,061	88,975	46.6	1.2	1.6
— Gold Coast ^b	119,373	164,936	193,956	45,563	29,020	74,583	62.5	0.7	1.1
— Sunshine Coast ^c	65,333	75,918	85,023	10,585	9,105	19,690	30.1	0.4	0.5
Total SEQ	1,592,897	1,847,608	2,013,582	254,711	165,974	420,685	26.4	9.9	11.3

* Statistical Division boundaries as defined in 1991

^b Gold Coast defined as Gold Coast City Statistical Subdivision (SSD) plus Albert Shire Part B SSD

^c Sunshine Coast defined as Sunshine Coast SSD plus the Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) of Noosa Shire Part B, Maroochy Shire Part B, Caloundra Shire Part B and Caboolture Shire Part B.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimated Resident Population publications, various

Table 2: Proportion (%) of the population aged 15+ in receipt of transfer payments, by major payment type and region^a, June 1994

	Age & DVA	Unemployment ^b	Sole Parent	Other DSS pensions ^c	Total transfer payment recipients
Australia	15.3	6.0	2.2	5.4	29.0
Sydney Statistical Division	13.8	5.2	1.9	5.0	25.9
Melbourne Statistical Division	14.1	6.4	1.8	5.0	27.3
Brisbane Statistical Division	15.0	5.0	2.3	4.9	27.1
Moreton Statistical Division	18.5	7.4	2.7	5.5	34.1
— Gold Coast	19.0	7.5	2.6	5.1	34.1
— Sunshine Coast	19.9	8.4	3.1	5.9	37.3
— Moreton SD balance	13.5	4.8	2.1	5.9	26.3

^a Department of Social Security (DSS) and Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) postcode data were assigned to Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) using a concordance supplied by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and then aggregated into the regions displayed here.

^b Unemployment includes Job Search Allowance and New Start Allowance.

^c Other DSS pensions include Disability, Wives/Carers, Widows, Mature Age Allowance, Mature Age Partners, Sickness and Special Benefits.

Source: Department of Social Security, Recipients of pensions, benefits in postcodes, unpublished;

Department of Veterans' Affairs, Recipients of pensions in postcodes, unpublished;

Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Estimated Resident Population by Country of Birth, Age and Sex Australia, June 1993 and preliminary June 1994*, Catalogue Number 3221.0; *Estimated Resident Population by Age and Sex in Statistical Local Areas New South Wales 30 June 1994 preliminary*, Catalogue Number 3209.1; *Estimated Resident Population by Age and Sex in Statistical Local Areas, Victoria, 30 June 1994 preliminary*, Catalogue Number 3207.0; *Age and Sex Distribution of the Estimated Resident Population Queensland, 1994*, Catalogue Number 3224.3

There is the potential for a (temporary) self-reinforcing cycle here. More movers into SEQ (including retirees and those dependent on government transfer payments) means more demand for workers to provide the housing, associated city-building (for education, health, transport, and shopping activities) and for the 'people servers' who provide the retail, educational and related services. Whether this has translated into concomitant growth of internationally competitive industries and high levels of employment of key groups of workers — the 'symbolic analysts', is examined later.

It is important that these issues be explored, since if it is the case that SEQ is dependent on the pull of climate and relatively low cost housing as well as the push of structural adjustment in the south, then there are serious policy implications. The Commonwealth government would surely not want to be adding fuel to an SEQ boom if it is was not economically sustainable.

SEQ AND TRANSFER PAYMENT RECIPIENTS

In order to explore the possible links between SEQ population growth and transfer payment patterns data are provided in Table 2 on the numbers of pension and benefit recipients resident in the SEQ regions identified above. For this purpose we have aggregated post code counts provided by the Department of Social Security (DSS) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) to the regions under investigation. Dependency rates for each of these pension and benefit types were then calculated on the basis of the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates (1994) of the age distribution of the relevant population. For comparative purposes, similar dependency rates have been calculated for Sydney, Melbourne and all Australia.

For Australia as a whole at least 29 per cent of the population aged 15 years-and-over were receiving a pension or benefit in 1994. Even this figure understates the full impact since we are unable to include the partners of

unemployment benefit recipients. Since about one third of those receiving Jobsearch and Newstart benefits were doing so as 'couples' in 1994, this would add an additional two per cent or so to the overall transfer payment dependency rate, and around three per cent to the areas with high proportions of the adult population receiving unemployment benefits.

With nearly one-third of Australian resident adults in receipt of more or less portable transfer payments, the potential for these recipients to influence Australia's population location patterns is evident. However, as Table 2 makes clear, Brisbane's population growth cannot be explained in these terms. The dependency rate amongst the population aged 15 years-and-over in Brisbane in 1994 was 27.1 per cent, which was slightly above that for Sydney, but similar to Melbourne.

The data for the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast tell a different story. The proportion of their populations aged 15 years-and-over dependent on transfer payments is high: 37.3 per cent and 34.1 per cent respectively (plus another two to three per cent to include the partners of unemployment benefit recipients). These rates are striking. Some eight to ten per cent more of Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast residents are dependent on transfer payments relative to Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Just over half of this is due to persons receiving old age or DVA pensions. This reflects the older age structure of these two areas. But other transfer payment dependency rates, particularly those for unemployment benefits are high too. Table 3 indicates unemployment benefit dependency rates as a share of the eligible population (aged 15 to 64 for males and 15 to 60 for females). Those for the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast are some 50 per cent higher than the comparable rates in other regions.

These high transfer payment dependency rates in the SEQ sunbelt suggest that the area is attracting interstate movers who are either outside the labour force, only marginally attached to it or not well equipped in skill terms to compete for the employment opportunities that are available. This hypothesis is supported by Census data on interstate arrivals which indicates that a high proportion of those moving to Queensland in the period 1986 to 1991 were outside the labour force as of 1991.⁵ Those moving into SEQ whether from interstate or intrastate sources also were relatively poorly qualified. Indeed,

Table 3: Unemployment benefit^a recipients as a percentage of eligible population,^b by region, June 1994

Australia	7.3
Sydney	6.2
Melbourne	7.7
Brisbane	5.9
Moreton	9.4
— Gold Coast	9.5
— Sunshine Coast	10.8
— Moreton balance	5.7

^a includes Job Search and Newstart Allowances.

^b Eligible population defined as males aged 15-64 and females aged 15-59.

Source: DSS and ABS, see Table 1

Brisbane actually experienced a small net loss of employed professionals moving interstate over the period 1986 and 1991, despite gaining 18,269 employed persons overall through interstate migration.⁶

Nevertheless, given that the Brisbane population's transfer payment dependency rate is similar to Melbourne and Sydney, the transfer payment thesis is clearly only a partial explanation for the overall population dynamics of SEQ. The predominantly low qualifications amongst working-aged movers suggests an additional thesis. This is that many movers are being 'pushed' out of the southern metropolises by a combination of poor job prospects, low income and difficulties of coping with the relatively high costs of housing in these metropolises. For lower income people, Queensland offers the compensating 'pull' of better employment prospects plus more affordable housing and an attractive life style.

GROWTH POINTS IN SEQ INDUSTRY

We now turn to the industrial and employment characteristics of SEQ. It is important to note at the outset that the region is still largely composed of self-contained sub-regions. No more than 15 per cent of the employed workforce living in any of the Statistical Local Areas (SLA) which are part of the Gold Coast or Sunshine Coast, even in areas adjacent to Brisbane SD, travel to work within the metropolis. These subregions are not satellites of a dynamic industrial or service core in Brisbane. Their growth must therefore be evaluated in local terms.

If the region is being driven by population growth we would expect to see this

Table 4: SEQ, Sydney and Melbourne residential dwelling approvals, number and share of Australia, 1991-92 to 1994-95

	1991-92		1992-93		1993-94		1994-95		Population share 1993
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	
Brisbane	13,505	11.3	20,682	12.1	21,923	11.8	18,913	11.1	8.0
Gold Coast	3,356	2.8	5,072	3.0	8,928	4.8	6,525	3.7	1.5
Sunshine Coast	3,540	3.0	5,094	3.0	6,034	3.3	5,043	2.9	1.0
Moreton balance	1,347	1.1	1,544	0.9	1,414	0.8	1,215	0.7	0.5
SEQ	21,748	18.2	32,392	19.0	38,299	20.7	31,696	18.9	11.0
Sydney	13,538	11.4	25,871	15.2	27,069	14.7	32,020	22.6	21.1
Melbourne	15,277	12.8	19,767	11.6	21,797	11.8	21,804	14.1	18.0
Australia	119,177	100.0	170,467	100.0	184,608	100.0	167,132	100.0	100.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Building Approvals, unpublished;
 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimated Resident Population from *Australian Demographic Statistics*, Catalogue No. 3101.0, and various New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland publications

exemplified in the building industry. The housing construction data reported in Table 4 indicates that SEQ has been experiencing boom conditions. Despite the relatively small population of two million as of 1994, the region has generated considerably more residential building approvals than either Sydney or Melbourne. At the peak of the recent boom in 1993-94, 20.7 per cent of Australia's residential building approvals were registered in SEQ, yet the region held just 11 per cent of the nation's population. As would be expected, the region features an accompanying dynamic land development industry and associated public and private urban infrastructure industries. Announce-

ments of new subdivisions, shopping centres, urban centres (like the 'instant' newtown at Robina — which is located in the hinterland of the Gold Coast strip and is to serve as the terminus of the new Gold Coast to Brisbane railway) dominate the business news.

Financial data for non-residential construction indicate that the investment focus in SEQ is on city-building activities (Table 5). The region's overall share of Australia's construction activity in the period 1991-1993 at 11.3 per cent (the latest figures available to us), was equivalent to its population share (11.1 per cent in 1993). Despite this, by comparison with Melbourne and Sydney, there was nothing like the same concentration

Table 5: Non-residential construction, 1991-92 and 1992-93, value of work done (\$'000), by type, and share of Australia totals

	Sydney		Melbourne		Brisbane		Moreton		SEQ	
	\$'000s	%	\$'000s	%	\$'000s	%	\$'000s	%	\$'000s	%
Hotels	347,663	52.3	89,054	13.4	5,941	0.9	64,337	9.7	70,278	10.6
Shops	494,663	36.2	173,539	12.7	96,714	7.1	137,107	10.0	233,821	17.1
Factories	638,928	30.4	598,964	28.5	155,234	7.4	97,954	4.7	253,188	12.1
Offices	1,861,177	42.2	1,163,001	26.4	229,714	5.2	55,476	1.3	285,190	6.5
OBP ^a	1,327,466	41.2	699,713	21.7	254,208	7.9	50,330	1.6	304,538	9.5
Education	404,563	20.7	334,862	17.2	292,816	15.0	43,982	2.3	336,798	17.3
Health	165,928	22.7	92,194	12.6	88,654	12.1	24,557	3.4	113,211	15.5
Entertainment	420,404	29.5	273,222	19.2	90,828	6.4	27,267	1.9	118,095	8.3
Total ^b	3,714,097	34.3	2,231,107	20.6	827,466	7.6	400,370	3.7	1,227,836	11.3

^a Other business premises

^b Total includes religious and miscellaneous construction.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Integrated Regional Database, unpublished

of investment in factory, offices and other business premises. It is only in the construction of shops, education and health facilities — all essentially city-building activities — that SEQ is prominent. Surprisingly, construction in the hotel and entertainment field was subdued during the period in question, at least relative to what might have been expected for a region involved in the buoyant tourist market.

Urban development is arguably the most dynamic industry in SEQ. The Queensland Government is well aware of the situation and is anxious to sustain the development impetus. State, regional and local government planning is predicated on and designed to facilitate a growth path similar to that of the past decade. The recently completed SEQ planning exercise took as its starting assumption that SEQ would grow from 1.85 million in 1991 to 3.1 million in 2011. This implied the continuation of recent record high levels of net interstate migration. All the major shires which have participated in recent expansion are expecting to continue to do so in the next twenty years. They will be largely free to chart their own course because the Queensland government has decided to leave detailed land use planning at the local level (without the imposition of a 'Third Tier' SEQ planning authority).

The shires in the active growth areas (in the hinterlands of the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, and on the periphery of Brisbane City (like Pine Rivers, Caboolture and Logan City) have already allocated sufficient land to provide for an additional million or so extra people. With one or two

partial exceptions all are anxious to attract developers and are prepared to facilitate their projects, as evidenced by cooperating with land rezoning applications and their active competition for new urban development projects.

SEQ'S COMPETITIVE INDUSTRY PROFILE

The SEQ urban boom has yet to manifest in parallel growth of industries which would fit the competitive criteria outlined at the beginning of this paper, and particularly industries showing linkages to international markets. In support of this proposition we list in Table 6 several indices of these industries. Sydney, and to a lesser extent, Melbourne clearly dominate as regards telecommunications linkages overseas and as the preferred location of corporate headquarters in Australia. The basic/non-basic industry ratio provides, at the most generalised level, a good indicator of the predominance of locally-oriented people servicing (or non-basic) industries in Brisbane and the Gold Coast, versus the externally-focussed (basic) industries which are more dominant in the Sydney and Melbourne urban regions.

More detailed evidence for these generalisations is provided by recent data drawn from the ABS register of Australian industries. This provides data on the number of enterprises by employment size and locality down to quite detailed industry classification levels. For the purposes of this analysis, we have aggregated these data for 1994 to the regional levels under discussion and to particular industry sub-divisions which best

enable a test of the argument. Table 7 shows that in the manufacturing sector SEQ is reasonably well represented in industries which tend to be limited to local markets, as with the food, beverages and tobacco industry and the wood products and furniture industries. However, it is strikingly under-represented in manufacturing industry at the higher technical and inter-

Table 6: Indices of globalisation and high-level economic activity by major urban centres

	Share (%) of Australian total			Ratio of employment in basic and non-basic industries, ^b 1991
	Outgoing international business telecommunications (IDD), 1992	Top 500 corporate headquarters, 1990	Estimated resident population 1991	
Sydney	46.3	45.6	21.3	1.05
Melbourne	25.9	28.6	18.3	1.05
Brisbane	7.0	6.8	7.9	0.87
Gold Coast ^a	2.2	0.4	0.8	0.53

^a Gold Coast here only includes Gold Coast City SSD, not Albert Shire Part B SSD.

^b Basic industries are defined as those where goods or services are created in a region for use in another. Non-basic industries are those which exclusively serve the needs of the local population.

Source: Newton, Brochie and Gipps, 1995

Table 7: Employment by selected service and manufacturing industry subdivisions for Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Moreton and SEQ, 1994

	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Moreton	Total SEQ	Ratio (%) of SEQ to Melbourne
Finance & investment	72,466	51,400	16,566	3,580	20,146	39
Insurance & services to insurance	27,012	22,876	7,030	761	7,791	34
Property & business services	201,606	155,056	61,573	17,043	78,616	51
Entertainment & recreational services	34,483	27,604	9,823	6,093	15,916	58
Restaurants, hotels and clubs	83,964	55,684	21,322	18,974	40,296	72
Personal services	16,381	12,247	6,217	2,118	8,335	68
Food, beverages & tobacco	30,335	30,326	16,186	3,624	19,810	65
Wood, wood products & furniture	16,268	13,827	8,225	2,710	10,935	79
Paper products, printing & publishing	34,232	31,020	7,816	1,779	9,595	31
Fabricated metal products	25,681	22,964	10,372	1,660	12,032	52
Transport equipment	17,136	31,039	7,178	888	8,066	26
Other machinery & equipment	42,472	38,733	8,372	990	9,362	24
Miscellaneous manufacturing	18,461	22,678	5,456	656	6,112	27

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Integrated Regional Database, unpublished

nationally competitive end of the manufacturing spectrum. This applies particularly to the transport and machinery and equipment subdivisions. The ratios of SEQ employment in these divisions relative to that in Melbourne are also shown in Table 7. Though the SEQ population was 63 per cent the size of that of Melbourne in 1994, SEQ employment in these subdivisions was just 25 per cent of that in Melbourne.

In regard to finance, investment and property, SEQ has a decidedly low presence in the finance and investment and insurance subdivisions. Their predominant location in Sydney and to a degree, Melbourne, reflects the location of corporations at the top of the commercial hierarchy in these cities. On the other hand SEQ does much better in the property and business services subdivision. This reflects the region's prominence in residential development activities.

THE SHAPE OF THE SEQ COMMUNITY
Queensland is battler country — a 'working class state' as some describe it. SEQ is little different. Brisbane has historically acted as an administrative and commercial hub for the state but, apart from some processing of primary products, has not generated a nationally-oriented manufacturing base nor served as a locus for corporate head offices linking Australia to international markets. Brisbane's leaders are now caught up in the dynamics of a people-led boom and are

somewhat belatedly searching for an economic mission which might make sense of, and sustain, the boom. Thus the recent 'Gateway Strategy' in which Brisbane becomes a 'transportation and communication node comparable with Singapore, Hong Kong or Los Angeles'.⁷ Perhaps things will change. But at present the occupation, industry and income characteristics of the region are a long way from those which might be expected if it was part of the economically advanced vanguard of Australia's urban centres.

The point can be best be illustrated by data on income distribution. The household income profile for Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast is low, relative to Melbourne and Sydney. Only 7.5 per cent of Brisbane households earned more than \$70,000 in 1991 compared with 12.9 per cent of Sydney households and 9.8 per cent of those in Melbourne. The proportion of households in this income group for the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast were even lower at 6 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively. As Table 8 shows, the pattern is reversed at the other end of the scale, with a much higher proportion of SEQ households earning less than \$35,000 than households in Melbourne and particularly Sydney. Sydney clearly stands out as the most affluent city.

Data on Additional Family Payments (AFP) provide another measure of income welfare. The households with children

resident who are in receipt of these payments are by definition located in the lower income brackets, either because they depend on a Commonwealth pension or benefit (classified as 'auto' in Table 8, or because of their low income (classified as 'work'). A relatively high, 32 per cent of children living in Brisbane reside with families in receipt of AFPs (compared to the 28 per cent level in

Melbourne and Sydney). But what might surprise, given the prevailing images of sun and affluence for places like Noosa on the Sunshine Coast, is the exceedingly high 48 per cent share of children living on the Sunshine Coast whose families are AFP recipients.

Sydney's affluence is a product of its dominant role as the centre for Australian corporate headquarters and its role as the national gateway for international trading and international business and finance. These enterprises, in turn, provide the basis for the high level of employment in the managerial and professional occupations and the high incomes that flow from them. To judge from the non-residential construction statistics presented earlier, Sydney's position is strengthening relative to Melbourne and Brisbane.

There appears to be no positive relationship between population-induced city growth and either per capita affluence or the advance of internationally competitive industries in the three urban areas under discussion. The recent slow down in Sydney's population growth to 0.6 per cent per annum between 1991-1994 (compared with 2.9 per cent in SEQ) appears to have had no negative effects on Sydney's advance as the locus of internationally-competitive activities. This implies that international competitiveness and increased affluence appear to be decoupled from population growth.

Table 8: Proportion of households earning above \$70,000 and less than \$35,000, 1991, and proportion of children aged 0-19 yrs whose families received DSS Additional Family Payments in 1994, by region

	Proportion of households > \$70,000	Proportion of households < \$35,000	Proportion of children aged 0-19 for whom Additional Family Payments were made		
			Work	Auto	Total
Australia	8.2	48.2	13.7	19.1	32.7
Sydney	12.9	40.8	10.1	17.7	27.8
Melbourne	9.8	43.6	10.9	16.8	27.7
Brisbane	7.5	47.8	14.3	17.3	31.6
Moreton	4.8	56.3	18.2	22.7	40.9
—Gold Coast	6.0	53.5	14.7	20.9	35.6
—Sunshine Coast	3.5	61.0	21.0	27.0	48.0
—Moreton SD bal.	3.5	55.3	21.5	18.8	40.3
Total SEQ	4.8	50.3	15.3	18.7	34.1

Source: Income: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census, 1991
Family Payments: DSS; Estimated resident population: ABS (see Table 2)

On the other hand, some negative implications of population-induced growth appear to be emerging in SEQ. The recent October 1995 unemployment figures revealed a seasonally-adjusted rate of 10.1 per cent for Queensland, compared with 8.7 per cent for the nation. In some of the political squabbling about who is to blame for this state of affairs, it has been suggested that interstate movers are the problem. The reality is that if this flow did cease it would exacerbate the Queensland and particularly the SEQ unemployment problem. SEQ's economy is currently dependent on population-driven growth. One consequence is that Queensland authorities have a strong interest in sustaining the conditions conducive to its continuation. In an attempt to sustain SEQ population based-growth, state and local authorities in Queensland could be tempted to relax standards related to the urban development process, thus jeopardising the long term sustainability of both the built and physical environments.

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PREMATURE EXULTATION: HOW THE DEMISE OF INEQUALITY HAS BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED

■ Tanya Castleman

Criticisms of equity programs in higher education and employment purport to show that gender and culture are no longer barriers to achievement. Such arguments fail to recognise the complexity of gender and culture privilege and thus present a misleading picture of the position of women and those from non-English speaking backgrounds in higher education and the workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Two articles appeared in this journal during 1995 which argued against the continuation of equal opportunity and affirmative action measures for women and people of non-English speaking background on the basis that these groups are doing as well as (and have even surpassed) men and those of English speaking background. The first of these articles, 'Female Achievement in Higher Education and the Professions' by Birrell, Dobson, Rapson and Smith¹ (hereafter, BDR&S), analysed data from the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and concluded that young women perform better than young men as measured by secondary school retention rates, higher education undergraduate commencing enrolments, degree level qualifications and employment rates. On the basis of these figures, the authors argued that the Commonwealth Government's policy statement, *A Fair Chance for All*,² has outlived its usefulness and that 'it is men who could be regarded as being members of a disadvantaged group'.³

Stephen Rimmer's paper, 'Attaining equity: An assessment of federal government programs',⁴ analyses data on Australian Public Service (APS) employment and concludes that women and those of non-English speaking background are not, in fact, disadvantaged. The author argues that equity-oriented pro-

grams (including affirmative action) 'should be wound-up once they have attained their goals' and warns that 'continuation and extension of these [EEO] programs could result in the target groups becoming systematically over-represented compared to individuals not targeted, such as lower-socio-economic-status English-speaking-background males'.⁵

The mass media feasted on these conclusions, amplifying the impression that men are hard done by and that migrants are displacing the native-born. Whatever the intentions of the authors, the articles gave comfort to those who believe that government equity initiatives disturb the natural operation of education and employment and give women and the children of migrants an unfair advantage. This picture, however, does not sit well with the experience of scholars and practitioners working on these issues. In Australian universities and workplaces there is still wide evidence of exclusionary practices and attitudes which challenge the legitimacy of those who do not meet the male, English-speaking standard. These claims that there is no longer any need for equity measures are, at best, premature and, at worst, seriously misleading.

Quantitative analyses of workforce data which include analyses of gender and cultural background are a useful contribution to our assessment of employment equity and evaluation of policy measures. But it is a