



# BIG AUSTRALIA

## BIG AUSTRALIA: FOUR CORNERS Monday 12th March 2018

*Big Australia: Are we ready?*

The numbers tell the story. Australia's population is growing fast. Across the country, we've added almost 400,000 people in the last year alone. The populations of Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth have expanded by nearly three million extra people in the last 10 years. And we're feeling the strain.

*"You just can't go exponentially like that and not expect there not to be some sort of consequences."* Bernard Salt, The Demographics Group

Australians living in our big cities are experiencing crippling commute times, over-crowded public transport, school shortages and an under supply of affordable housing.

*"It's not a choice, it's forced on people. I don't think that's wonderful for our future."* Dick Smith, businessman



And our population is set to get even bigger. There'll be almost 40 million of us by the middle of the century.

It's time for the nation to have a conversation about how big Australia is going to grow.

*"It might be an uncomfortable conversation but it's necessary. In order for Australia to be the country we want it to be."* Dr Liz Allen, demographer

On Monday night *Four Corners* investigates what a "Big Australia" will mean and the difficult choices that will have to be made.

*"Do you have fences and turnstiles? Do you start to ration access? That's the sort of dystopia that we can see coming at us through the mist."* Bob Carr, Former Foreign Minister and Former Premier of NSW.

We look at the projected rise of Australia's megacities - where some will double their current size - and ask who is planning for this?

*"We've got huge changes coming...we're looking at things like infrastructure needs, education needs, health needs. These are huge issues that Australia is facing as our population grows."* Innes Willox, Chief Exec, Australian Industry Group

We investigate how we got to this point and interrogate why Australia has no national population policy.

*"We've done an abysmal job. You know, there has been really no serious integrated debate around all the key factors that population growth brings to our economy and our national way of life."* Innes Willox

Some are now saying we should pull down the shutters and dramatically reduce the number of migrants arriving in Australia or risk our envied way of life.

*"I see disaster for the way of life that we loved in Australia."* Dick Smith

Others point out that we're facing a tsunami of older Australians, who will not have people to care for them.

*"The oldest baby boomer is about 68, 69. We're going to need more than 24,000 (aged care workers) every five years. We're going to need 50,000. It's not the sort of job that can be digitally disrupted."* Bernard Salt, The Demographics Group



Australians will need to start asking: what sort of place do we want to live in? What are we determined to hang onto and what are we prepared to give up?

The debate begins with *Four Corners* this Monday.

You'll find online features and shareable videos on the *Four Corners* Facebook page and ABC News Online.

And Q&A will keep the conversation going in a special "Big Australia" edition following *Four Corners*.

**Big Australia, reported by Ben Knight and presented by Sarah Ferguson, goes to air on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March at 8.30pm. It is replayed on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March at 1.00pm and Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> at 11.20pm. It can also be seen on ABC NEWS channel on Saturday at 8.10pm AEDT, [ABC iview](#) and at [abc.net.au/4corners](http://abc.net.au/4corners).**

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