

ACROSS THE DITCH, EXPLORING WHY SO MANY KIWIS ARE NOW CALLING AUSTRALIA HOME

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From Better Job Opportunities and Greater Hopes for the Future, more New Zealanders are making a break for Australian shores than ever before.



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Taylor Masters up and left her comfortable country life in Ahipara on the North Island of New Zealand, to pursue a life of opportunity that her country could no longer provide for her. Packing up her entire life and hauling it across the Tasman to what Kiwi's see as the land of opportunity in Australia, where now she is 'the freest version of [her]self' with an abundance of kiwis to keep her company.

Taylor, like many others, have hopped on the bandwagon of leaving their homeland to grow and pursue careers and lives that are limited within the borders of Australia's closest neighbour.

The move to the land down under is often not a difficult sell to the average Kiwi, with over 120,000 emigrating out of the country in the two last years, with those numbers continually rising with each year that passes.

The trend of Australia-New Zealand emigration is largely thanks to the close relationship between the two countries, and their bond on the mostly quite side of the globe they share.

A distinct commonality between the two nations in both culture of its Indigenous people and overall laid back lifestyles have grown to make each other their greatest ally. Such great allies and friends, the process of moving between the two is one of the simplest in the world.

The Trans-Tasman Travel Agreement is the program in which allows New Zealanders to live and work in Australia without needing to possess any form of a visa, meaning that there is an enticement of ease for incoming Kiwi's to move to Australia over any other country.

The migration to Australia from New Zealand is currently at an all-time high, with 55,300 Kiwis moving across the ditch in 2024... a jump from the 26,000 who moved in the previous year and has continued to rise since the reopening of borders following the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the arrival of Kiwis to Australian shores is not a new trend, first spiking in response to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, with the highest recorded number in New Zealand's history, with 39,000 migrant arrivals.

Since then, there has been a steady and mainly consistent (not including COVID-19 years of 2020-2021) number of migrants moving to Australia, mainly sitting between 30,000-50,000 individuals arriving in all areas of Australia each year, with an average age of 46 years, and men slightly outnumbering women, with most arriving identifying themselves as 'skilled independents.'

In order to gain understanding of New Zealand migration, there needs to be an acknowledgement of why its people would leave one of the world's most liveable countries, and it is done through a series of factors pushing them away.

The New Zealand dollar is on average weaker than the Australian, thus the country suffers a stronger cost of living crisis than its neighbour, with the median house price sitting at around \$850,000 AUD, where in New Zealand it is closer to 1 million.

The value of Australian money in New Zealanders pockets is able to stretch further, as well as comparisons between wages being inconsistent with the rising inflation. The minimum wage in Australia has been raised five times in the past five years, reaching a 3.4% increase with its adjustment for inflation, compared to New Zealand's 2.8% growth in that same time period.

New Zealand is currently facing a 'jobs drought', a long and sustained period of plateau within their limited job market, leaving many highly educated and strongly skilled workers in the lurch, almost forcing them to turn their heads towards the west.

The unemployment rate within New Zealand has risen to 4% in the last financial year, with four out of ten Kiwi employees seeking job opportunities elsewhere, including the vast amount that Australia can offer.

Senior Lecturer of Sustainability, Urban Planning and Migration at RMIT, Iris Levin, attributes the loss of New Zealand citizens to the fact that there is nothing attracting them to stay, 'compared to Australia where they have everything and more to gain', making the land down under a much more eye-catching and easier place to build a future.

For younger New Zealanders, the lack of opportunities once they become adults is the main factor driving them out of their country. Morgan Morrogh has lived in Australia for a little under a year, following the completion of her university degree in nursing at the University of Otago in Dunedin. Following her graduation, she searched for a way to enter her chosen field for over six months and was unable to find any sort of position that would enable her progression.

It was then and there when she chose to fly across the ditch where she now has landed a permanent full time role within her first two weeks, saying 'the desire for a person like me is stronger here than it ever was at home'.

Australia is a country built on migration as a settler state, thus has always been willing to welcome all who wish to be a part of it, funding its world renowned level of multiculturalism, with New Zealanders being no exception.

The use of incoming migrants to build up industry allows for Australia to entice people to become part of its population, such as the ever booming mining and gas trades that are some of the highest paying sectors for fly in and fly out workers offers a massive attraction to New Zealanders, by offering opportunities to use their strongly developed skills to earn a stronger wage than back home.

Culture and climate also evoke a New Zealand response, a change in surroundings to a warmer environment, available in various areas along the vast coasts of Australia as well as a limited change in culture allows for an easier transition than another country could provide. A continual lifestyle appeal that can be provided by the abundance of built up urban environments that are not as easily accessible in New Zealand, who thrive on strong rural towns.

One of the biggest factors that drives New Zealanders to Australia is the opportunity for growth and advancement. Taylor describes New Zealand as having opportunities, but 'there is almost a ceiling that exists in every industry' that once you reach a certain point, you can go no further.

Hoping to pursue a career in the finance industry, never wanted to be restricted by the career limitations that her homeland put on her, choosing Australia's wealth of options to be the best choice for her future.

The often disregarded part of this issue is the overall impact of loss of civilians has on New Zealand as a whole, with the decreasing numbers of its population finally showing its impact.

When compared to nations such as Japan, Iris Levin identified that their main issue lies in their unacceptance of foreign citizens, with their death rate now exceeding its birth rate, plunging the country into uncertainty. The same cannot be said for New Zealand who are openly accepting those who wish to enter their country but are not doing enough for them to stick around.

The Kiwi nation is currently in a period of population decline as a result of mass emigration, paired with a falling birth rate are all powerful factors that can have damming economic impacts on the country as a whole, with less people around to prop up economies and fill industry.

There are a total of 94 regional towns in New Zealand that house a substantial amount of its population, and are being greatly impacted by mass migration, as the loss of young people are grinding these towns to a halt. The fewer young people existing in a town means they are only being left with an aging population who are past the period of having children who can continue to fund and keep small areas like this running.

The issue of a lack of response of the New Zealand government to the mass loss is impacting the nations stability. Despite having rolled out an array of domestic policies to counteract the insurgence of departure from their citizens, no improvement or seen impact has been noted, as New Zealand continues to lose more of their own.

The continual flow of New Zealanders out of their country to the bright lights of Australia, highlights the deep need for change on home soil, a grave frustration that its people hold, against what their country is doing to help them thrive. Without action from those who hold the power to make real and substantial change, Aotearoa will suffer the loss of the people who make their country theirs, handing over the Lucky Country all it needs to succeed.

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