

Outer suburbs and satellite towns key to federal poll

By **STEPHEN LUNN**, SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

11:01PM MARCH 20, 2022 •  1 COMMENT

Policies that support the rapidly growing population in Australia's outer suburbs and satellite towns could prove a decisive factor at the upcoming federal poll, the peak body for local governments in the nation's growth areas says.

The National Growth Area Alliance says that since the last federal election in 2019 about 250,000 people have moved into outer urban regions, increasing the overall population to more than five million, or one in five Australians, and their political allegiances are largely unknown. A third of all federal electorates are in growth areas, and 11 are held by a margin of 6 per cent or less, NGAA chairman Matthew Deeth said.

"The political weight and standing of growth areas is undeniable. Growth areas cannot be ignored any longer, and it's in politicians' interests to ensure they aren't," the Deputy Mayor of Wollondilly Shire in Sydney's outer south said.

Mr Deeth will tell the NGAA's national congress this week that population growth in the outer suburbs and towns surrounding capital cities is running at more than twice the pace of the rest of the nation, and may build even quicker with new land releases by state governments and residential building approvals, but the infrastructure needs of residents continues to fall short.

"For too long, investment in vital infrastructure has not kept up ... leading to postcode discrimination, nightmare commutes, reduced productivity and declining liveability. This is categorically wrong," he said.

"We deserve access to quality infrastructure, schooling, healthcare and education ..."

Mr Deeth said marginal electorates at play included Cowan and Swan in Western Australia, Greenway and Werriwa in NSW, La Trobe and McEwen in Victoria, and Mayo in South Australia.

“The party that claims victory in the federal election will be the one that successfully prioritises the one in five Australians living in the outer suburbs,” he said.

Leading economist Saul Eslake will tell the conference the 24 local government areas on the fringes of the nation’s capital cities accounted for almost one-third of the growth in total population since 2010.

Mr Eslake said residents of the growth areas had different demographic characteristics, which policymakers should be considering. But they had missed out on their rightful share of infrastructure spending because of political factors.

“Traditionally most ... are in safe Labor seats, so both parties know there is little electoral dividend in putting much money into them,” he said.

STEPHEN LUNN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

Stephen Lunn is The Australian's Social Affairs Editor, covering social policy issues including ageing, disability, welfare, immigration and population policy. He has previously been the paper's environment wri... [Read more](#)

