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Lifestyle the Drawcard for New Residents

Focus groups with new residents recently commissioned by Tamworth Regional Development Corporation (TRDC) identified the region's lifestyle as a key reason for moving here.

The finding is the result of a recent research project which sort to better understand why people move to the region and what could be done to assist their transition.

Some 40 new residents participated in the focus groups, of which 42% relocated to the region for lifestyle reasons, 26% for family/relationships and 32% for work reasons.

Participants arrived from a cross section of locations - a third from metropolitan NSW, a third from regional NSW, 10% from both the ACT and Victoria, 8% from Queensland and 5% from overseas. Professionals accounted for around half of participants, 14% were business owners, 24% in domestic duties or part-time work, 5% in trades and 9% studying, semi-retired or retired.

While the focus groups identified a diverse range of experiences, some key points of attraction about the region did emerge, notably 'Tamworth's welcoming and attractive main street (Peel Street)', 'thriving and vibrant regional centre', and 'friendly and relaxed place to live with a great lifestyle'.

However, the change is not all smooth sailing with many identifying finding suitable work a particular challenge.

'Those with specific technical/trade skills are more readily able to find work than generalists,' said TRDC Executive Director, Jo Byrnes.

Professional and senior management positions were identified as particularly scarce and the absence of a professional recruitment agency, rather than Job Network providers or labour hire firms, exacerbated this challenge.

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'Many did not know where to turn for help,' said Ms Byrnes. 'With many jobs still filled by word-of-mouth, new residents can find it very hard to break into the relevant networks.'

Access to health services, notably GPs and dentists who's books were not closed was identified as another major challenge.

The research found that while some information is available to help new residents transition into the community, there is significant opportunity to support this process more proactively.

'One interesting topic of discussion raised by all participants was that the standards of customer service in the region was below their expectations,' said Ms Byrnes. 'This is something the business community needs to be aware of and take on board as technology is widening the competitive landscape.'

TRDC will be considering ways to meet some of the challenges raised by the study over the coming months.

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