

COASTAL LIFESTYLE IN MID WEST SEEN AS A MAJOR POSITIVE IN AUSTRALIA-WIDE REPORT

# City tops nation's affordable list

FRASER WILLIAMS

The secret is out — Geraldton is the place to be after coming first in a top-10 list of affordable lifestyle locations in Australia, according to new research.

Property trends and insights service Hotspotting has released its Exodus to Affordable Lifestyle report, which lists the country's top 10 locations people are moving to for a more affordable way of life. With regional markets dominating the top 10 ever since the report began five years ago, Geraldton has come out on top this year.

Hotspotting managing director and report writer Terry Ryder said the report was started to track the mass exodus of people moving away from metropolitan areas.

"It's a report we started a few years ago in response to the emerging trend where more and more people are leaving the big cities and relocating to regional areas or smaller capital cities," he said.

"For lifestyle or affordability, enabled by technology which means more and more people can work remotely."

## TOP 10 AFFORDABLE LIFESTYLE LOCATIONS

**Geraldton, WA:** Toowoomba, Qld; Murray Bridge, SA; Gladstone, Qld; **Mandurah, WA:** Hunter Valley, NSW Mitchell Shire, Vic; **Mr Gambler, SA Cairns, Qld:** Lockyer Valley, Qld  
Source: Hotspotting



The report dismantles the misconception that you have to buy in a big city to get the best capital growth, as the top-10 shows how regional markets have been consistently outperforming cities.

"For the past several years regional markets have been outperforming capital-city markets on price growth in percentage terms," Mr Ryder said.

"We still have areas that are providing strong growth and getting strong demand, including Geraldton that seems to be attracting a lot of investor-buyers, as well as lifestyle buyers."

Mr Ryder said Geraldton was the top choice for this year

because it offered similar quality houses to the metro area at a fraction of the price, with the coastal lifestyle of the Mid West hub seen as a major positive.

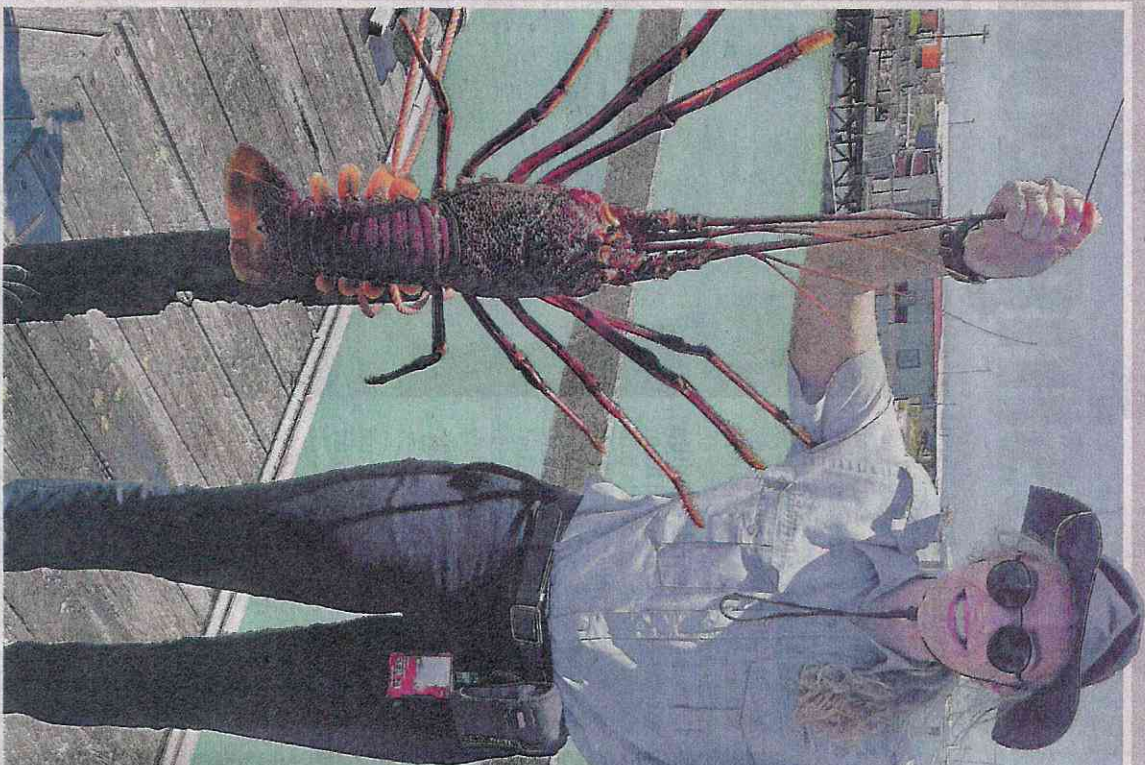
"It is a judgment call that I make based on my knowledge of markets around the country and factors that drive price growth that create what we call hotspot areas that are likely to outperform the general market in terms of growth and prices," he said.

"Geraldton, from my viewpoint, fits the bill pretty well. It offers lifestyle and affordability . . . people can buy a home of similar quality and maybe half the price in a targeted regional area."

Mr Ryder said Geraldton had been quietly performing well for the past few years and investors were starting to notice the opportunity it provided.

"It's got an economy which is strong and with potential to show growth based on the number of significant investment proposals that are sort of targeted on Geraldton," he said.

Geraldton also featured in the top 10 last year. The only other WA location in this year's top 10 is Mandurah, which came in fifth.



## THAT HIGHLIGHTS THE EXODUS OF PEOPLE MOVING AWAY FROM METROPOLITAN AREAS

# Why Gero is best place to work, play and stay

ANNA COX

Young pilot Briana Nicholson is not alone in her love for her new home of Geraldton.

After all, the Mid West city has experienced a growth spurt recently, with the number of Australians moving here jumping fourfold.

Research from the Commonwealth Bank and Regional Australia Institute reveals Geraldton recorded a 395 per cent increase in total net internal migration over one year – the biggest jump in Australia.

For 24-year-old Ms Nicholson, coming to Geraldton was a career move that would help her progress in the aviation industry, with many pilots expected to complete regional work before moving into commercial flying.

"Geraldton seemed like the perfect place," she said. "It's warm and sunny and on the coast. Living regionally was appealing to me because there is more opportunities and progression for pilots in the early stages of their career."

While some enjoy the fast-paced metropolitan life, the quiet regional lifestyle was another factor that drew Ms Nicholson when she moved from Perth in 2021.

Geraldton and its surrounds boast an estimated population of 41,514, giving it the feel of suburban life without the peak-hour traffic – something Ms Nicholson said was one of her favourite aspects of life in the city.

### TOP FIVE INTERNAL MIGRATION SPOTS

Greater Geraldton, WA (up 395 per cent)  
Mid-western regional NSW (up 236 per cent)  
Waroona, WA (up 206 per cent)  
Townsville, QLD (up 164 per cent)  
York, WA (up 152 per cent) Source: RAI/CBA



Briana Nicholson progressed as a pilot.

"Geraldton is regional so it's quieter, and there's less commuting but it's still big enough to have everything close to home, and it's still close to Perth so you don't feel isolated," she said.

Ms Nicholson's role as a pilot takes her to the Abrolhos Islands on a weekly basis – a sight some people only see once in their lifetime.

"That view definitely doesn't get old," she said.

While the population is on the rise, it is putting more pressure on a stressed property and rental market.

Originally from Brisbane, Ms Nicholson has lived in Tasmania, Adelaide and Perth before making the move to the Mid West.

"It's quite tricky to find a house,

even teaming up with people for a share house – Geraldton is such a transient place, not everyone is comfortable signing an 18-month lease, but that is what you have to do to secure a rental. It's even trickier if you're coming from outside not knowing anyone and trying to find a rental on your own," she said.

Although Ms Nicholson said finding a rental was difficult, she felt it was worth it compared with the cost of city living.

"You get a lot more space for the same rent you'd pay in Perth," she said.

"Petrol is sometimes more expensive but you make that back easily by not having to drive as far for anything."

While Ms Nicholson came for work, it is the abundance of friends she has made that has kept her in town.

"I've lived in regional towns before, but Geraldton was much easier to meet people and make friends," she said. "Young professionals come to Gero for a few years and are very open and keen to explore.

"Other towns, I've lived in have a lot of locals who have lived there their entire lives and already have established friends and routines, which made it a bit harder."

Originally thinking she'd be here for six months, Ms Nicholson has surprised herself, celebrating 18 months in Geraldton in July, and she plans on sticking around for another year.



Briana Nicholson has embraced life in Geraldton.