

Australians are already fleeing south to escape climate extremes

Poppy Johnston 19 Dec 2025

More and more, real estate agent Wendy Wade is selling Tasmanian homes to interstate buyers fed up with climate extremes.

The business owner of Stone Real Estate Southern Tasmania specializes in homes around the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, south of Hobart, which tend to appeal to well-heeled buyers from other states.

Increasingly, those buyers - especially from Sydney or anywhere further north - are citing climate change and the weather extremes it brings as reason to migrate south (where, in Australia, it's cooler).

"It's people generally coming down just saying, 'We're fed up with the heat, the torrential rain, the storms and the flooding,'" she told AAP.

"We're just over it."

Ms Wade operates in the lifestyle market and stresses trends in more affordable markets could be quite different.

Extreme heat is the sticking point for many buyers Ms Wade speaks to, including older couples worried temperatures are only going to keep climbing and seeking a cooler climate for retirement.

Tasmania is indeed viewed as the top "climate haven" by Australians considering relocation under human-driven global warming, according to surveying by Charles Sturt University and Roy Morgan Research.

Two in five Australians selected the island state as the safest place to reside under climate change, with southern Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory considered the next best locations.

The same survey of almost 2000 adults confirms Australians are already making moves in response to changing climate, in not insignificant numbers.

Of the people who had moved in the past six years, 14 per cent said climate change had influenced their decisions.

That was more likely to be the case for those who had experienced a flood, fire, cyclone or other extreme weather event, and for people from regional NSW, Brisbane and regional Queensland.

Charles Sturt professor of public ethics Clive Hamilton **said the emerging phenomenon of internal migration from high-risk climate zones to safer ones was largely absent from public discourse.**

“When you look at internal migration or demographic change and the data that government are basing their planning on, they don’t take account of climate change,” Professor Hamilton told AAP.

“It’s as though it exists in another universe.”

Despite the information vacuum, community views on the climate havens broadly align with the science, with the nation’s most southern state indeed less vulnerable to global warming than other places.

“Not that Tasmania is immune to the effects of climate change, by no means, but it is much less prone to some of the more severe effects, including heat waves,” he said.

As temperatures rise and climate anxiety climbs, Prof Hamilton expects to see more people packing up and moving house, and worries governments and communities are not well prepared.

“Tasmania is very unprepared for the possibility of an influx of mainlanders,” he said.

“What that would mean for the state?”

Social equity could come under strain, for example, as wealthier folk are better able to afford to live in climate safe areas and poorer households are left to cope with the floods, wildfires and extreme heat.

(AA note: this is beginning to happen in the US, with wealthier people moving away from high-risk zones. It is the beginning of the inevitable flood of people moving.)

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