

## Media Release

# Population growth exceeding tree growth

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Population growth is exceeding tree growth with the Australian Bureau of Statistics predicting Australia's population is on track to reach 40 million in 40 years, mostly due to increased migration and a lower death rate.

Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan said the current spike in migrant numbers is caused by a skills shortage, a resources boom and a huge increase in temporary migrants, particularly students.

Australia needed population growth to cope with its ageing population but it must grow smarter, he said.

"The answer isn't to stop growing but to grow differently," Mr Swan said.

Greening Australia's Chief Executive Rod Bristow said "to grow smarter and grow differently includes growing trees. Along with built infrastructure, we need environmental infrastructure for the future"

"Australia is leading in terms of investing in built infrastructure - \$22 Billion this year alone will be spent but only \$500 million in natural infrastructure through the Governments Caring For Our Country Program. That's less than \$2 per hectare across the vast Australian continent."

Australians spend more on coffee than on the conservation and repair of native vegetation and the vast array of goods and services it provides, he said.

David Freudenberger, Director of Science with Greening Australia said "Another 10 million Australians equates to an additional 300 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents per year based on current emissions of 30 tonnes per person per year."

To offset just 10 % of this rise in emissions would require Australia to plant 75 million trees. To offset all the emissions due to projected population growth would require 750 million trees, he said.

Investment in built infrastructure needs to be matched by investment in natural infrastructure to ensure population growth results in liveable cities with quality water, food, wildlife habitat, and recreation supplied by intact and robust ecosystems.

"Our organisation has been working with farmers to cope with the increased effect of climate change and the increased need for sustainable agriculture. We can't ignore the real need for money and the support of federal and local governments to deliver on large landscape scale restoration projects."

“We have over 6000 volunteers nationally to help deliver these projects and are uniquely placed to restore Australia’s natural landscapes”

**For more information contact:**

Lainie Grigg on 07 3902 4427 or 04 3325 2503 or email [lgrigg@greeningaustralia.org.au](mailto:lgrigg@greeningaustralia.org.au)

Rod Bristow on 0404 849 652

David Freudenberger on 0447 434 761

