

Finding the rural allure for creative workers

24 January 2014, by Rogini Moorthi



Diverse terrain such as the Stirling Ranges near Mt Barker WA was seen to be a major drawcard to creative workers. Credit: Graeme Nicol

Creative workers are more likely to be drawn to live in rural locations offering diverse physical landscapes and high socio-economic and cultural settings, according to new research.

The University of Western Australia, Curtin University and the University of New England explored the relationship between amenity, creative class and [employment growth](#) in rural locations across Australia including Mount Barker in WA's Great Southern.

Lead-author and University of New England's Neil Argent says there have been discussions in literature about the increasing importance of amenity in bringing creative class workers into rural communities.

"This project was trying to develop a better grasp of those processes and subject them to critical scrutiny," Associate Professor Argent says.

"Within our study, an amenity-rich rural area was defined as having good accessibility to the regional centre, the capital city, beaches or rivers, relatively high rainfall as well as diverse terrain and having a

reasonable proportion of its workforce employed in tourism and related services.

"Creative class workers as defined within the study primarily consist of key-decision makers in the private and public sector, who possess high-level education such as scientists, architects, academics, non-agricultural business owners and entrepreneurs."

A/Prof Argent says amenity, as a predictor on its own doesn't seem to have an enormous influence on creative people in drawing them into [rural areas](#).

"Nonetheless, the number of creative class workers in rural areas is better determined by amenity in some ways, particularly ... high rainfall, diverse terrain landscapes, population density and the relative income level of a community area."

The researchers looked at migration data from the 2001 and 2006 census, the associations between in-migration and net migration change as well as amenity by using statistical testing based on simple correlation and linear regression analysis.

They also investigated the relationships between the presence of a creative class, local business numbers and change in total employment.

They found creative workers had no substantial impact on business and employment growth in many rural community areas.

"We hypothesised that this could be because many creative class workers are working for large organisations such as the CSIRO or universities and rarely move into rural areas with the intention of starting up their own companies," A/Prof Argent says.

He says the study shows how the creative class can be drawn into rural communities but also highlights the kind of contribution they can make to the economic development of [rural communities](#).

More information: Neil Argent, Matthew Tonts, Roy Jones, John Holmes. "A creativity-led rural renaissance? Amenity-led migration, the creative turn and the uneven development of rural Australia." *Applied Geography*, Volume 44, October 2013, Pages 88-98, ISSN 0143-6228, [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2013.07.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2013.07.018).

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