

OUR GROWING CITY

Families seeking out new over old

TIM MCINTYRE

Why these children are the centre of attention

SYDNEY'S population centre may be balancing just east of Parramatta, but the top five largest-growing suburbs are all on the western side, according to research by the ABS.

The growth corridor north-west of Parramatta has become a hive of activity, with families flocking to fill new developments, on the back of improved infrastructure and new job opportunities.

"There has been a whole lot of new development out there," said Andrew Howe, from the ABS Regional Population Unit.

"New housing is being built from scratch rather than the more medium-density consolidation that is happening in a lot of the rest of Sydney."

Kellyville Ridge was Syd-

HOT SPOTS

Sydney's largest growth suburbs

1. Kellyville Ridge
2. Stanhope Gardens
3. Parramatta
4. Blacktown
5. Kellyville

ney's most dynamic growth suburb in the last financial year, with its population rising from 9529 to 10919 — an increase of 15 per cent.

Neighbouring suburb Stanhope Gardens was next best, growing by 13 per cent over the same period. Young families entering these suburbs are bringing the average age brackets down a notch.

"The newer suburbs with the new houses, for example Kellyville Ridge, are certainly attracting parents with kids, whereas in the more medium-density growth in the east is not. So there are not as many kids moving to those areas," Mr Howe said.

Parramatta was placed third for one-year growth — the population of Sydney's unofficial second CBD going from 21,289 to 22,361, an increase of five per cent.

Another established council, Blacktown, was fourth on the list, while Kellyville itself came in at number five.



Zain El Soussi, Rhys Fourro-Huggett and Tairrell Gillon are the centre of attraction at Rydalmere Public School. Picture: Justin Lloyd

BRENDAN WONG

PRIMARY students at Rydalmere in northwest Sydney are now right in the middle of the action — literally — after a local public school became Sydney's official population centre.

New Australian Bureau of Statistics figures revealed the centre of population has moved northwest in the past three decades to land slap bang on the playground of Rydalmere Public School at 397 Victoria Rd.

Principal Bek Zadow said it was wonderful to find out her school was right in the heart of the city.

"We're a small, close community that is made up of families from all different backgrounds," she said.

"We all have a common cause in that we care about Rydalmere. The parents are extremely supportive of our school and the events that happen in the community, like sporting events. Many of our families are working in local business so it is a real community feel."

The latest movement of the population centre reflects a changing of the guard from old to new, with the Rydalmere Bowling Club holding the honour in 2011.

According to the ABS, the centre of population for the

greater Sydney region has moved 3.1km northwest in the past 30 years with the population changing from 3,269,000 in 1983 to 4,146,000 in 2013.

In 1983, the centre was in Blandford Riverside Park and, over two decades, it shifted across the Parramatta River to Silverwater Rd in Ermington, then on to Victoria Rd in Rydalmere.

Since 2003, the centre has remained around Rydalmere. Andrew Howe, from the Regional Population Unit, said the slowdown was due to growth in Sydney's east.

"Traditionally we think of Sydney as moving west, northwest and to the south-

west with a lot of development out there," he said.

"What's happening is it's being matched by medium- and high-density population in the east. Growth in the west is actually being cancelled out by the growth in the east."

Another factor was the resurgence of inner-city living. "In the 80s, the inner city wasn't the place to be," Mr Howe said.

"It really shot up in the past 10 to 15 years and I wouldn't be surprised to see that continue."

Echoing Mr Howe's views, demographer Mark McCrindle said Sydney had reached a unique growth equilibrium where growth in the west was

being balanced by higher density living in the east.

"If you look at new home approvals in Sydney over the last few years, more approvals have been medium-density or high-density living than detached homes," he said.

"Certainly those growth corridors, the new housing developments and homes with backyards, will continue in the western outskirts of Sydney. You've got units and townhouses in the east."

As a result, Mr McCrindle believed Sydney's centre of population could eventually move east. Mr Howe said he expected the centre to remain where it was now if current trends continued.

COW'S POOL RESCUE

FIREFIGHTERS had to rescue a cow found treading water in the deep end of a pool in the Hunter Valley yesterday.

A woman returned to her Matildand home to find her dogs barking at the cow after it wandered through a gap in the fence and fell into the pool.

Firefighters put a rope around its neck and pulled it to the shallow end until it could stand, then walk out of the pool via the steps and back out the fence.

Journo in running for top award

WALKLEY Award winning News Corp reporter Paul Toohey has been long-listed for the prestigious John Button Prize for writing on policy and politics.

Toohey, 50, said it was nice to have his Quarterly Essay That Sinking Feeling: Asylum Seekers And The Search For Indonesia Solution recognised.



Paul Toohey.

Toohey's 30,000-word essay tells the dramatic stories of asylum seekers heading from Java to Australia, investigates people-smuggling and recounts the aftermath of a sinking at sea.

The John Button Prize awards \$20,000 to the best piece of writing on public policy and politics in the past 12 months.

The winner will be announced at the John Button Oration to be held as part of the Melbourne Writers Festival on Saturday August 23.

AGE-BUSTING SCIENCE

AN experimental treatment that reverses ageing in mice — the equivalent of wiping 40 years off a human — is fuelling the development of drugs that could help people live more healthily into their 80s.

Geneticist Professor David Sinclair told the Australian Society for Medical Research that the ageing process could be reversed if caught early. He is preparing to start human clinical trials in Australia and the US using the molecule NMN.