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THE FIRST FLEE: Aussies bail on bleak Britain for more pay at home



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AUSTRALIANS are abandoning UK jobs and returning home for work, eager to cash in on the booming Australian economy and escape unfavourable exchange rates.

Figures show the number of Australians entering Britain for work has dropped 35 per cent to 17,100 since 2007; the number of Kiwis fell 40 per cent to 5210, the Guardian newspaper reports.

Many Australians already working in the UK believe there are more opportunities and better wages back home.

Have you recently left the UK to come back to Australia? We want to hear why. Email us at news@news.com.au

Simon Taylor, of recruitment company Venn Group, told the Guardian that the exchange rate was major reason for the fall in Australians seeking work in the UK. When the pound was strong, Australians knew they "could work and save at the same time. Due to the recent fall in exchange rates there is less incentive for candidates to remain in the UK."

Kevin Ellis, who publishes TNT Magazine, a free weekly for Aussies, Kiwis and South Africans in the UK, said: "The reason Australians are going home is because their economy is booming and some of these professionals can earn a lot more back home."

The ailing British job market is another reason for the Australian exodus - there are simply not enough jobs to go around and competition is high.

Phillip Dagnall, 41, told news.com.au the main reason he returned home was the state of the UK economy. He arrived in the UK in 2007 with his wife and nine-month-old daughter and planned to stay until after the London Olympics but the downturn changed his thinking. They came back in 2010 - with another daughter in tow.

"We wanted to stay on until 2012 and return after the Olympics, but alas we weren't happy with the state of the UK economy. The exchange rate also changed drastically," he said.

"On our return we noticed that the cost of living in Australia increased by a good 30 per cent since 2007, but there are greater opportunities for us (in Australia) and it's a much better place to raise a family."

Mr Dagnall, who works as for South Bank Corporation in Brisbane, described living in the UK a "hard slog". "Wages and opportunities are much better here in Australia."

He added: "I have a number of Aussie mates in the UK who are seriously considering returning soon. Three of my English mates have even taken the plunge and re-located here because the opportunities are better."

Abby Hastings said she and her husband were thinking of quitting London soon. "My husband was in the process of buying a property management portfolio but it's not smooth sailing. We have a six-month-old daughter and we just can't see much of a future here. Most of our friends with families have left in the last year and seem to be happier back home."

Those who get a job can find visa restrictions another turn-off.

The working holiday visa, which allows those aged 18-30 to work in the UK for two years, is still the most popular entry point and has remained unchanged. However, there are fewer options for those who wish to stay beyond their two years.

In April this year the UK Government put a 1000 annual cap on tier 1 visas, which covers those who want to stay in the UK as a highly skilled migrant, and a 20,700 annual cap on tier 2 visas, which covers employer-sponsored visas.