

Origin loss is a mere aberration in the Sunshine State

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JUST as birds fly north for the winter, so too have several interstate friends who've dropped by over the past month.

The trouble has been getting rid of them. They bring their long Melbourne and Sydney faces to Brisbane then chain themselves to your front fence. Please don't send me back, they whine, citing crowds, traffic congestion, bitterly cold winters and insane real estate prices.

It is no wonder, then, that these Mexicans are crossing the border. Last year, Queensland overtook Victoria as the recipient of the highest volume of interstate migrants.

Who can blame them, the poor

beggars. When I asked a good mate up from Sydney if he was still enjoying it there, tears welled in his eyes as he shook his head slowly.

"Sydney's broken," he said flatly. "As a city, it doesn't work anymore. It's all too hard."

He said he had friends in Sydney who could barely afford food after their monthly mortgage repayments.

"Not much of a lifestyle, is it?" said I, depressing him further.

Still, it's easy to take for granted what life offers in the great city of

Brisbane. And I dared not tell him what was coming up for our city. He might have jumped off the back deck and landed in the brush turkey nest.

Stroll through the CBD and the city's inner-environs and you can already get a sense that in a few short years Brisbane will be transformed into quite possibly Australia's most attractive and interesting capital city.

There's the \$3.6 billion Queen's Wharf "integrated resort development", the \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail, the Brisbane Live precinct down at Roma St, the ongoing sparkle of the old Brisbane Showgrounds at Bowen Hills, the Southpoint development at South Bank, the mega

cruise-ship terminal at Luggage Point, the Howard Smith Wharves under Story Bridge, and on and on it goes.

Has there ever been such an explosion of development in the city's history? The demographer Bernard Salt predicted in his 2017 report *Imagining Brisbane in 2027* that the city would hit the "major metropolitan league with Sydney and Melbourne" within the decade.

I was going to mention this to my mate but I didn't want to rub Salt – boom boom – into his wounds.

But I must admit I did get some sort of perverse pleasure out of hearing his horrible Sydney stories. I lived there myself on and off for

almost 20 years, and largely loved it, before coming "home" to Brisbane.

I patted him on the back, consoling him. I poured him a beer. It was so warm during the day we were both sporting T-shirts.

"Not a bad temperature for winter, eh?" I said, and he howled so hard he scared the brush turkey over the fence. He was due at the airport in a few hours and it occurred to me I might have to call the cops to get him out of the house.

So, NSW, you might have won State of Origin this year.

But guess what? Who cares!

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