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Why city families are off to bush

By SHARON LABI

SYDNEYSIDERS considering a move to the country are after friendliness and an old-fashioned way of life.

A survey of people at the Country Week Expo in Sydney found exorbitant house prices and traffic snarls were pushing more families to sell up and go bush.

But the most important factor was the desire to live in a friendly community, followed closely by a change in lifestyle.

University of Sydney honours student Amanda Tsioutis found "wanting to get back to the way things were" was another reason why tree changers chose places far away from Sydney.

"People in pursuit of the way things were did not like how cities were changing and longed for past times," her analysis of Country Week found.

Regional centres began showcasing their towns to Sydney at the Country Week Expo on Friday, aiming to lure families to plug population and skills shortages.

Dr Phil McManus, senior geosciences lecturer at the University of Sydney, said resource-rich areas such as Gunnedah and Oberon were booming.

Coastal spots such as Port Macquarie and Nambucca Heads didn't want more residents, while other towns were desperate for a family or two each year to preserve teacher and police numbers.

A survey of real estate prices in regional NSW found big savings on city mortgages.

A three-bedroom house costs about \$250,000 in Kempsey, Armidale and Leeton. The average Sydney house price is more than \$500,000.

Rents were also cheaper, with three-bedroom houses for \$250 a week in Albury, Mudgee and Nambucca.