

**The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration
into Australia**

Appendices

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1A: Caveats about assessing the social costs and benefits of migration

1. Although it is convenient to differentiate components of social impact in terms of 'capital', it should be recognised that the existing research addresses more than one component. The impacts of immigration, in terms of different 'capitals', need to be combined for an overall assessment of social impact. Importantly, social impact is not easily differentiated from economic and environmental impacts.
2. Some impacts are positive and some negative. Moreover, some are long-term in their nature whereas others are relatively transitory and therefore short-term. Our project has sought to differentiate these where possible.
3. Any consideration of social impact needs to consider the impact on both the migrants themselves *and* the host society as a whole. Our focus group methodology and sources of data have reflected this where possible.
4. Migration to Australia is, by definition, an international phenomenon. Australia is not alone in playing host to substantial net inflows of migrants. As a result, there is an international body of literature on the social impact of immigration. The usefulness of this literature is however significantly limited by differences in the volume, character, and timing of the intake, plus differences in government policy in relation to migrants, both before and after arrival. In particular, Australia has not had a stream of immigrants from former colonies, as is evident in parts of Western Europe. Nor does it have shared land boundaries as in the case of the USA that make borders porous. This limits the ability to draw international comparisons.
5. The nature of the social impact of immigration varies considerably according to the type of visa entry. While our study has attempted to take stock of this where possible, it has been limited by the few studies and little data available that explicitly compares the social impact of different migration streams.
6. There is no simple way of assessing social impact – and certainly no single quantifiable measure. It is therefore difficult to arrive at a succinct overall summary of social impact. Indeed, given the multidimensional nature of social impact, a single measure would be misleading. This report consequently uses a number of different measures of social impact according to the capitals framework which has wide acceptance in the policy and academic community.