
Chapter Two: The Global Context

Australia's place in the global economy, its international relations and the diversity of its population mean that permanent and temporary people movements will be increasingly important to its future. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has found that Australia's current immigration policies have been successful in improving the economic returns to Australia, and has attributed this success to Australia's emphasis on skilled stream migrants and its approach to settling new arrivals.

Although international benchmarks for best practice in the delivery of settlement services have not yet been established, comparisons with other countries that have formal resettlement programs suggest that Australia's settlement services are advanced by world standards. It is in Australia's interests to participate in studies that will develop best practice models and international benchmarks for the delivery of settlement services and to be responsive to changes that may occur in the Migration and Humanitarian Programs over time.

Introduction

Planned immigration has been a key feature of the Australian social and economic landscape since European settlement. Over the last two decades, global migration flows have grown in both magnitude and complexity, with significant implications for Australia's planned immigration intakes, as well as for the management of unauthorised arrivals. This chapter places Australia's immigration program in an international migration context and explores how its Commonwealth-funded settlement services compare with those of some other countries with formal resettlement programs, particularly the United States, Canada and New Zealand.

Global migration issues

Globalisation has been responsible for the opening of national markets to trade, foreign investment and improved technology, and for the expansion of global communications. It has also led to a growing number of people seeking to migrate to industrialised countries. A sharp decrease in transport costs and a general expansion of social networking have

contributed to the increased movement of large numbers of migrants and refugees to these countries.

World conflicts and civil unrest have resulted in a number of refugees and others seeking humanitarian resettlement. At the beginning of 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were 19.8 million refugees and displaced persons of concern to United Nations throughout the world.¹ The costs associated with humanitarian resettlement are part of the responsibility that the international community shares in protecting refugees and promoting human rights.

Along with this increasing movement of migrants and refugees, many industrialised countries are facing skilled labour shortages, declining fertility rates and ageing populations.

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) & the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture (VFST), *Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration*, UNHCR & VFST, Melbourne, 2002, p. 2.

In Australia, for instance, the combined effects of the ageing of the post-World War II 'baby boomers' and low fertility rates could lead to a situation where, without immigration, Australia's population and its workforce would begin to decrease within thirty years.² These issues are explored further in chapter three of this report - The Demographic Context.

Many developed countries are now competing for skilled migrants. The expansion of information and communication technologies, for example, has led to a surge in demand for skilled workers across Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.³ These countries also face an increasing challenge from illegal migration, including people smuggling, that has expanded in magnitude and sophistication.

The Australian response

Australia's place in the global economy, its international relations and the diversity of its population mean that permanent and temporary people movements will be increasingly important to its future. It is in Australia's interests to manage these people movements in order to maximise the contribution of immigration to national wellbeing.

Australia's immigration intake comprises distinct Migration and Humanitarian Programs for people seeking permanent residence in Australia. The Migration Program is made up of two streams: the skilled stream and the family stream. The skilled stream targets migrants with skills that contribute to the Australian economy. It addresses skill shortages in Australia; uses specific mechanisms to enhance the size, skill level and productivity of the Australian labour force; and encourages the regional dispersal of migrants. The family stream enables the reunion of immediate family members such as spouses, fiancé(e)s, interdependent

partners, dependent children, and other family members such as parents. The Humanitarian Program caters for people from refugee or refugee-like situations in urgent need of resettlement. The administration of these distinct programs is designed to meet Australia's social, economic and environmental objectives and its international obligations.

In recent years, the Commonwealth Government has initiated a range of measures to fine-tune Australia's immigration program to meet Australia's social and economic needs in the changing global environment. In particular, it has re-focused the Migration Program to facilitate the entry of an increased number of skilled stream migrants. The entry of these migrants advances national economic objectives and helps to address Australia's transition to an ageing population and labour force. Improved selection criteria are admitting younger, more highly-educated migrants, with high levels of English proficiency and qualifications in demand in the Australian labour market.

The explanatory notes at the beginning of this report have described the 2002-03 Migration and Humanitarian Programs and the number of places allocated to each category of migrant in some detail. The 2002-03 Migration Program is the largest and most highly skilled in over a decade, with up to 60% of places allocated to skilled migrants and their family members in the skilled stream. The program also reflects a continuing commitment to family reunion, with around 39% of the Migration Program

² DIMIA, *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Skilled Migration*, DIMIA, Canberra, 2002, p. 18.

³ The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *A New Economy? The Changing Role of Innovation and Information Technology in Growth*, OECD, Paris, 2000, pp. 46-47.

set aside for family stream migrants. There is a wealth of research that shows that the focus on skilled stream migration is delivering strong economic, budgetary and labour market benefits to Australia.

The Humanitarian Program continues to give priority to people in the greatest need of resettlement and to meet Australia's international protection obligations. The UNHCR is the international organisation responsible for working with countries to provide international protection to refugees under the auspices of the United Nations (UN). The international protection framework reflects the acceptance by governments of cooperative responsibility for resolving refugee problems. As a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status for Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the Australian government is strongly committed to helping refugees and other people who face serious abuses of their human rights. In the past fifty years, over 600,000 refugees and displaced people have been resettled in Australia.

The migration programs of other countries

The size of Australia's annual Migration and Humanitarian Programs are equivalent to about 0.6% of its population. This figure compares with three other traditional immigration countries, namely Canada (0.9%), the United States (0.3%); and New Zealand (0.9%).⁴

The OECD has found Australia to be an immigration country 'par excellence'. It has found that Australia's current immigration policies have been successful in improving the economic return to Australia. It has attributed this to Australia's selection policies, with their emphasis on skilled stream entry, and to Australia's successful approach to the settlement of new arrivals.⁵

The proportion of the Australian population born overseas is significantly greater than that

of the other three migration countries. The overseas-born comprise around 18% of the Canadian population (2001), 20% of the New Zealand population (2001) and 11% of the population of the United States (2000). This compares with 23% of the Australian population (2001) who were born overseas.⁶

It is not easy to make direct comparisons between the immigration programs of individual countries due to the different definitions and selection criteria that countries adopt for different programs. However, the descriptions below provide the basis for broad comparisons of the immigration programs of Canada, the United States and New Zealand with Australia.

Canada

In 2001, 27% (67,500) of the 250,000 migrants to Canada entered on the basis of family reunion. Approximately 61% (152,500) of migrants entered under economically-based visa categories, while around 11% (27,500) entered in the refugee class.⁷

In recent years, the labour market performance of migrants to Canada has raised policy questions about the Canadian program. Recent research indicates that, in 1996, new migrants were earning just 60% of average Canadian earnings, compared to

⁴ These percentage figures have been derived from the latest available population and migration and humanitarian entry figures for each country as provided in OECD, *A New Economy? Trends in International Migration*, Sociedad Peruana de Medicina Intensiva 2002, OECD, Paris, 2003.

⁵ OECD, *Economic Survey of Australia*, OECD, Paris, 2003.

⁶ These figures have been taken from the 2001 Canadian Census, 2001 New Zealand Census, and the 2000 United States Census. The Australian estimate is based on data from the 2001 Census which has been adjusted to exclude those who did not state their birthplace.

⁷ Data taken from OECD, *A New Economy? Trends in International Migration*, p. 153.

80% in 1981. One possible reason for this decline in the labour market performance of migrants to Canada is a growing gap between the educational qualifications of migrants and those of the native population.

The United States

In 2000, about 850,000 persons were granted immigrant status. Permanent immigrant status is granted primarily on the grounds of family reunion, with around 69% of all migrants in 2000 entering on this basis (or about 580,000). Migrants entering based on employment criteria (including accompanying family members) accounted for about 13% (about 107,000) of the total, and those accepted on humanitarian grounds (ie refugees and asylum seekers) accounted for about 8% (about 66,000) of the total. Migrants admitted under the diversity program accounted for an additional 6% (about 51,000), and the remaining 5% (about 42,000) were admitted under a number of other immigration provisions.⁸

Leading American researchers believe that the United States' experience since 1965, when immigration criteria began to favour unskilled, family reunion migrants, has dramatically increased inequality by increasing the gap between the wages of unskilled and skilled workers; has been of little economic benefit; has had a negative fiscal impact; and has increased the number of people living in poverty in the United States.⁹

New Zealand

In 2000-01, about 45,000 residence approvals were granted in New Zealand. Around 54% (about 24,000) of all residence visas were allocated to general skills and 28% (about 13,000) to family categories. The remaining residence permits were distributed among business migrants (around 6%), humanitarian entrants (around 4%), Samoans (around 3%), refugees (around 2%) and other (around 3%) categories of migrants.¹⁰

New Zealand's immigration policies for skilled migration now have strong similarities with Australia's policies.

Other countries of interest

Countries not viewed as traditional immigration countries that are also stepping up their efforts to attract migrants (particularly young, skilled migrants) include the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Spain, Norway, Singapore, Iceland, Italy, Finland, Korea, and Ireland.

In response to labour shortages in key areas of the United Kingdom economy (for example, in the information technology and health sectors), the government has adopted a more liberal approach to migration than in the past, including the commencement of a pilot scheme to attract more business innovators. The United Kingdom has also begun to develop a migration program to meet its increasing need for highly skilled workers.

Germany has recently introduced its first immigration bill providing for a small permanent migration program of 50,000 places for the first year. To improve the integration of migrants and foreigners already living in Germany, the bill includes provision for migrants to sign an integration contract, committing them to attend 600 hours of courses in the German language, the labour market and social studies. The legislation has been passed in the *Bundestag* (Lower House) but was blocked, in February 2003, in the *Bundesrat* (Upper House) as a result of debate about the need for tighter controls on the numbers of migrants allowed each year.¹¹

⁸ Data taken from OECD, *A New Economy? Trends in International Migration*, p. 278.

⁹ G Borjas, *Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999, and S Camarota, *The wages of Immigration: The Effect of the Low Skilled Labour Market*, Centre for Immigration Studies, 1998.

¹⁰ Data taken from OECD, *A New Economy? Trends in International Migration*, p. 226.

Japan is facing a rapidly ageing and declining population, with the current population of 127 million expected to decline from 2009 and the proportion of the population aged 65 years or over expected to increase significantly in the next 25 years. In this context, Japan is looking to increase the numbers of skilled foreign workers. The Japanese government recently announced plans to ease rules for business visas, increase funds for Japanese language training for Indian software engineers and boost ties between Japan and India on technology issues.¹²

Post-arrival settlement services

If the benefits of Australia's immigration program are to be maximised, new arrivals need to be equipped to move towards full and active participation in Australian society as soon as possible. Chapter one of this report - The Policy Context, has highlighted the importance of offering new arrivals early access to appropriate settlement services to achieve this aim. One way of ensuring that Australia's settlement services are appropriate is to compare them with other countries that have formal resettlement programs.

Unfortunately, no international benchmarks have yet been established for best practice in the delivery of settlement services. However, the OECD Working Party on Migration has proposed a review of integration policies in several countries during 2003 and 2004. This presents Australia with an opportunity to benefit from an independent, international assessment of its settlement services.

Recommendation 1

That Australia participates in the proposed Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Working Party on Migration's review of integration policies and contributes to the development of international benchmarks for successful settlement.

The UNHCR has outlined broad planning goals that countries with formal resettlement programs should strive for in order to foster the successful settlement of humanitarian entrants. While these planning goals do not impose formal obligations on countries, and their focus is confined to humanitarian entrants, they nevertheless provide a useful guide in relation to the successful settlement of migrants generally.¹³

In the absence of any formal international benchmarks for assessing the capacity of countries to deliver appropriate settlement services, the planning goals outlined in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook can be used to gauge how Australia is generally performing in its delivery of settlement services. The goals and Australia's response (in broad terms) are set out in table 2.1.

This description of Australia's response is illustrative rather than comprehensive and focuses particularly on DIMIA-funded settlement services. More detail on these services is provided in chapters eight to twelve of this report. The table does not take account of other wide-ranging work being provided at the Commonwealth, State/Territory government, local government and community levels to assist migrants and humanitarian entrants with the settlement process.

Country comparisons

Australia's settlement services compare favourably with other countries with formal resettlement programs. A brief outline of the major settlement services and programs provided in some other countries with formal

¹¹ From the final report of the German Independent Commission of Experts on Immigration, *Shaping Immigration, Promoting Integration*, July 2001.

¹² A Shimbun, 'Japan should accept more refugees', *Financial Times*, London, 9 January, 2003.

¹³ UNHCR and VFST, *Refugee Resettlement*, p.17.

Table 2.1: UNHCR planning goals

Goal	Australia's response
<p>To restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society.</p> <p>To promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society.</p>	<p>The IHSS provides for the basic needs of humanitarian entrants through: pre-embarkation information; on-arrival accommodation support; initial information and orientation assistance; assistance with household formation; access to early health assessment and intervention services, including counselling for survivors of torture and trauma; support for humanitarian entrants sponsoring families or friends; and support and guidance to service providers working with newly-arrived humanitarian entrants.</p> <p>Migrants arriving under from offshore under the Humanitarian Program are eligible for Medicare, income support and a full range of employment assistance programs.</p> <p>Australia facilitates communication through TIS and by providing, under the AMEP, 510 hours of free English language tuition to eligible migrants and 610 hours to eligible humanitarian entrants with special needs. It also provides settlement information through a dedicated web site in community languages.</p>
<p>To promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families.</p>	<p>The Migration Program includes a family stream to enable the reunion of immediate family members. Holders of permanent Humanitarian Program visas can sponsor immediate family members for humanitarian entry.</p>
<p>To promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support.</p>	<p>The Community Support for Refugees program under the IHSS registers volunteers who play a crucial role in providing social support and friendship to new humanitarian entrants and in raising community awareness of the refugee experience.</p> <p>The Home Tutor Scheme is staffed by trained volunteers and helps eligible adult migrants and humanitarian entrants who cannot attend AMEP English classes. Tutoring takes place in the client's own home.</p>
<p>To restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law.</p>	<p>All permanent entrants are able to apply for Australian citizenship after two years.</p> <p>Australia is a signatory to the 1951 Convention and to the 1967 Protocols relating to the Status of Refugees. It also has a range of domestic anti-discrimination legislation.</p>
<p>To promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in, community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity.</p> <p>To counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities.</p>	<p>Australia employs a number of strategies to promote and celebrate cultural diversity and counter racism and xenophobia. They include: grants and promotional activities under the Living in Harmony initiative; the promotion of Productive Diversity initiatives; and the implementation and promotion of the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society.</p> <p>Australia also has a range of anti-discrimination legislation.</p>
<p>To support the development of strong cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership.</p>	<p>Under the CSSS, community organisations are funded to undertake community capacity building. Migrant leadership is fostered through management of MRCs/MSAs and other leadership activities.</p>
<p>To foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees taking into account the impact of age, gender, family status and past experience.</p>	<p>All new arrivals can access a range of settlement services provided under the CSSS and by MRCs/MSAs.</p>

Source: UNHCR & VFST, *Refugee Resettlement*, p. 17.

resettlement programs, namely Canada, the United States and New Zealand, is provided below. These particular countries have been chosen because, along with Australia, Canada and the United States are among the three largest resettlement countries in the world. New Zealand is included due to its close proximity to Australia and the similarities between the Australian and New Zealand welfare systems.¹⁴

Differences in political structures and fiscal policies between Australia, Canada, the United States and New Zealand hinder meaningful quantitative comparisons on provision of settlement services. However, some broad comparisons can be made.

Canada

Canada has provided a range of federally-funded settlement services for migrants and humanitarian entrants for at least the last three decades. Canadian settlement services aim to achieve multicultural objectives through language assistance and through close involvement by the wider community.

Canada's Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program funds not-for-profit and educational organisations to provide reception and orientation, some translating and interpreting, counselling, and referral to mainstream services and employment-related activities (such as job-finding clubs and training in resumé preparation and interview techniques). The program also funds projects designed to complement or improve the delivery of settlement services. Projects include planning improvements for the delivery of settlement programs, undertaking research projects, hosting seminars, and organising conferences to share information about settlement activities and training of workers.

The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada program aims to facilitate the social, cultural and economic integration of new

arrivals by providing basic language instruction in French and/or English. All new migrants older than the legal school-leaving age are able to participate in this program for a maximum of three years. Program partners such as educational institutions, non-government organisations, private sector businesses, community groups, and provincial and local governments provide language instruction. These organisations apply to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for funding on a year-by-year project basis. Funding covers wages, administration, assessment and overhead costs, and there is provision for contributions towards childcare and transport services. Trainers must meet set quality standards. The language proficiency of the new arrivals is assessed under Canadian language benchmarks and all participants receive a formal accreditation at the end of their training.

The Host Program funds community organisations to recruit, train, match and monitor Canadians who volunteer to serve as hosts to newly-arrived migrants. Volunteers assist new arrivals to settle in Canada by facilitating employment contacts and assisting with day-to-day services and general community participation. Publicity material for the program emphasises the benefits to volunteers in terms of making new friends and learning about new cultures.

The Adjustment Assistance Program provides cash assistance and reception housing to

¹⁴ This information has been sourced from a variety of references including:

the Citizenship and Immigration Canada web site (<http://www.cic.gc.ca>);

the United States Department of State web site (<http://www.state.gov>);

the United States Immigration and Naturalisation Services website (<http://www.ins.usdoj.gov>);

and M Fletcher, *Migrant Settlement: A Review of the Literature and its Relevance to New Zealand*, Department of Labour, Wellington, 1999.

migrants and humanitarian entrants in need in their first twelve months after arrival. Although open to all migrants, the major focus of the program is on assisting humanitarian entrants. The Resettlement Assistance Program funds community organisations to assist humanitarian entrants with reception, housing and income support for up to one year after arrival.

The United States

Settlement services in the United States are mostly federally funded but provided at the State and local level. Historically, federal assistance for migrant settlement has been based on funding for specific localities with high concentrations of new arrivals.

The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement contributes to specialised services for refugees that are delivered at the State and local level through State or municipal government agencies or through voluntary organisations. These services include housing, food, clothing, cultural and community orientation, a range of employment training and placement programs, English language training and cash assistance. Assistance is limited to four months after arrival.

New Zealand

New Zealand provides limited publicly funded settlement services for migrants and humanitarian entrants. Historically, a combination of high employment levels and a focus on English-speaking migrants has meant relatively low demand for specific settlement services.

In general, new arrivals pay a settlement information fee to receive pre-arrival and post-arrival information on establishing themselves in New Zealand. They can also receive a quarterly magazine for up to two years after arrival and access other publications on ethnic communities and local government services. Skilled migrants and

their families who do not meet minimum language requirements must pre-purchase English language training prior to arrival. Family migrants are not provided with language training after arrival.

New Zealand's refugee reception centres provide six-week live-in orientation courses, including language training, to humanitarian entrants. The centres also provide medical and dental treatment, counselling, assistance with accessing social welfare entitlements and connections with community sponsors.

How Australia compares

In both Canada and Australia, post-arrival settlement assistance is the responsibility of a dedicated department or ministry, with the expectation that general service needs will be met by mainstream agencies. Both countries recognise that community groups and migrant associations have an important role in settlement and fund these organisations to assist new arrivals. Australia and Canada are the only countries that provide a nation-wide English tuition program to new arrivals without functional English.

All four countries offer orientation information to assist new arrivals. Canada provides comprehensive orientation material, including a dedicated web site, free of charge and in six languages: English, French, Chinese, Punjabi, Russian and Arabic. The United States compiles specialised information only for humanitarian entrants, although some State governments provide State-specific information in English over the Internet. New Zealand supplies comprehensive orientation in English and in Maori in exchange for a fee. In comparison, Australia provides extensive orientation material free of charge in English and twenty-one other community languages. A dedicated settlement web site offers up-to-date orientation information, including links to mainstream agencies.

Australia is the only country with a Commonwealth-funded translating and interpreting service that provides a national, twenty-four-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week telephone interpreting service.

Conclusion

Australia's settlement services reflect the nature of its immigration program and seek to maximise the benefits of migration. DIMIA-funded settlement services appear advanced by world standards, although a comprehensive comparison with other countries has not been undertaken to date. It is in Australia's interests to participate in studies that aim to develop best practice and international benchmarks for the delivery of settlement services and to be responsive to changes that may occur in the Migration and Humanitarian Programs over time.

