

Population Flows: Immigration
Aspects

Department of Immigration and
Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

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“Australia is an immigration country par excellence” says the OECD.

This is confirmed not only by external experts but also with the release of the 2001 Australian Census of Population and Housing. We have never before had so much information measuring the diverse nature of our country. The census reveals a nation rich in cultural diversity. It paints a picture of Australia as a nation with an increasing population, where many were born overseas or have parents who were born overseas, and where neighbours are often overseas born or second generation Australian. It is a nation where over 200 languages are spoken and over 100 religions are practiced.

The 2002-03 edition of *Population Flows* has been expanded to include these results. It also includes new chapters on State-Specific and Regional Migration; Citizenship, Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services; and the Economics of Immigration.

This edition also introduces the concept of Permanent Additions to Australia's population, which combines those persons arriving as migrants with those who arrived in Australia on a temporary basis but subsequently obtained approval to stay in Australia permanently. This new concept recognises that onshore permanent visa grants have increased markedly in recent times and are likely to continue to increase.

Several important population related milestones have occurred in recent times. In December 2003, Australia's population reached 20 million. Within the next thirty years, more Australians are likely to die than be born, and thus immigration is the key to achieving a sustainable population in the future. In 2002, Australia's six millionth migrant since World War II arrived. Today's migrants are a very different group to those of fifty years ago. In the years immediately after the war, most migrants arrived as displaced persons or as 'blue-collar' workers employed on projects such as the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. Now, many are highly skilled, young and English speaking (generally as a second language).

One of my most important tasks is to ensure the Migration Program maintains the integrity and public support that it has earned. The emphasis must continue to be a program which provides tangible economic, demographic and social benefits.

The 2002-03 Migration Program was the largest in over a decade and the most highly skilled program ever on record. This emphasis on attracting skilled migrants reflects the positive impact on Australian living standards and the highly beneficial impact on Commonwealth and State budgets that migrants, especially skilled migrants, provide. It also reflects the critical importance of having the right skills available at the right time if Australia is to increase its competitiveness in a global market place.

However, it is not only our migrants who are contributing to our economy. In recent times, record numbers of temporary entrants have come to Australia. Long-term movements to Australia now contribute much more to our economic success than they did previously. It is well known that tourists generate large export earnings. However:

- the Commonwealth budget will benefit by over \$2 billion and State budgets by around \$800 million over a four year period from the annual flow of temporary business entrants (based on the number who arrived in 2002-03);
- overseas students contribute more than \$5 billion in export earnings annually, and contribute about 43,000 jobs for Australians; and
- working Holiday Makers spend over \$1 billion annually, creating about 49,000 jobs.

Population Flows provides a wealth of information on the people of Australia, as well as on the nature and size of flows of people into and out of Australia. It is important that demographic changes are well understood, not only by those responsible for immigration policy, but by the whole community. It is with pride that I, as the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, present this, my first edition of *Population Flows*.

Amanda Vanstone

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
March 2004



For many years, this very successful publication has documented the ebbs and flows of migration to and emigration from Australia.

This year's edition has a very important additional focus - on the *post arrival* aspects which relate to Australia's migration story, and on the steps taken to build a cohesive, diverse and harmonious society.

The Australian Government delivers a planned migration program which is demonstrably in the national interest. Nevertheless, strains in society can emerge if people have difficulty adjusting to their new circumstances or if they are marginalised economically or socially, or simply if they do not feel a real part of the Australian community.

Recognising this, the Australian Government provides a comprehensive package of settlement services and programs, supported by multicultural and citizenship programs, which together assist us all, migrant and Australia-born alike, to live harmoniously and productively, making Australia the wonderful place it is.

The Australian Government's settlement package includes English language tuition, interpreting and translating assistance, counselling and referral services and targeted programs for refugees and humanitarian entrants. These services help to ensure the successful settlement of migrants so they can participate equitably and effectively in Australian society.

Special initiatives are also in place to promote Australian citizenship as the single most unifying force in our community, and to encourage eligible permanent residents to acquire citizenship. Australian citizenship is a 'cornerstone' of our inclusive and culturally diverse society, providing a unique identity and full membership. Becoming an Australian citizen is perhaps the ultimate step for new arrivals, marking the conclusion of the immigration journey and the beginning of life as a new and full member of the Australian community, with all the responsibilities and privileges that this entails.

When you consider the diversity of our community, which is made up of people from around 200 different countries and language backgrounds, it is a remarkably harmonious one. This is due in no small part to the approach taken by the Australian Government to provide multicultural and citizenship programs, about and for all Australians, to foster community harmony and cohesion.

Australian Government multicultural programs include the *Living in Harmony* initiative which is all about helping all Australians get to know each other. As well, the Australian Government deliberately focusses on getting all of us to work and use our skills and experiences to advance us all. This is promoted through productive diversity and access and equity programs. Together, these help to ensure people have the freedom to be different while they also have the security of belonging, with an overriding commitment to Australia and its basic structures and principles.

A couple of pointers to the success of Australia's settlement, citizenship and multicultural programs can be found in recent research commissioned by DIMIA, which found that 90 per cent of our new arrivals are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their life in Australia. Another significant indication is the current high 75 per cent take-up rate of Australian citizenship. High levels of lifestyle satisfaction were also reported among Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds in research commissioned by SBS.

These very positive outcomes are not accidental - they are underpinned by the Australian Government's and our community's positive and welcoming attitude to migrants. These outcomes are a pleasing result of the Australian Government's investment in settlement programs which directly support and benefit our new arrivals, in multicultural programs which encourage all members of our community to express and share their cultural heritage, and in the promotion of Australian citizenship as a common bond for all Australians.

In turn, our investment in all of our people is rewarded by a commitment and contribution to a society that is united in its diversity and at peace with itself.

Gary Hardgrave
Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister
March 2004



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