

Additional Information – DR 75

I would like to add this additional material to my previous submission, DR 75, where I propose that strategic considerations should inform an Australian population policy. This additional submission focusses on reviewing of the historical experience of the United States in allowing mass inbound immigration and on how large and quickly we should grow Australia's population.

In 1870 the US population was approximately 23 million people, roughly the same as that of Australia today. By 1950 it had grown to 161 million and today the US population is roughly 320 million¹². This rapid population growth, fuelled by immigration from diverse sources, makes it clear that it is entirely possible for societies to absorb very large numbers of immigrants and in the case of the US, become the wealthiest and most powerful nation on Earth. So based on this historical precedent the arguments against immigration that I see in other submissions here and which I hear on a regular basis, that "immigrants won't integrate" or "immigrants will take our jobs" are simply not valid and should be discounted.

Therefore the only real constraint on Australia achieving similar population growth over the course of this century, is the availability of water. I have been unable to find an estimate of what population the Australian continent could support, but I have been able to access other resources which provide a useful estimate. Currently 70% of water usage in Australia is in agriculture³, with 75% of our agricultural production by value being exported to feed approximately 80 million people here and overseas⁴⁵. It has been estimated that Australia could in fact increase its agricultural production to feed 120 million people⁶

With a view to increasing our population to give Australia a greater degree of long term strategic viability, I would suggest that Australia could instead prioritise increasing our population to 80 million people as a population target by 2075, which would match the immigration to the US over the period of 1850 to 1910. We would achieve this by encouraging at least 60 million people, around the number who we are currently feeding overseas, to move to Australia and commit to enjoying and protecting our way of life, just as so many American immigrants have done.

1 <http://www.multpl.com/united-states-population/table>

2 <http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h980.html>

3 <http://www.urbanecology.org.au/topics/wateruse.html>

4 <http://www.aust-immig-book.com.au/business/overview-australian-agriculture>

5 <http://www.nff.org.au/farm-facts.html>

6 <http://www.foodmag.com.au/news/we-re-not-going-to-be-the-food-basket-of-asia-barn>

We could be assured of accommodating the increased demand for domestic water resources by re-allocating water which would otherwise be used to increased agricultural production towards domestic use, though it would of course be preferable to meet these increased needs through new water sources such as desalination plants, dams and improved water efficiency. In considering this we should take note of what the water-poor country of Israel has done to provide water for a population which was also rapidly expanded for strategic reasons, as ideas of how Australia could meet this challenge.⁷

Compared to current projections for population growth in Australia, reaching a population of 80 million people by 2075 would considerably exceed the Australian Bureau of Statistics' current estimation of our population growth over the next century, with the ABS estimating that our population will reach between 36.8 million and 71.1 million by 2101⁸. 80 million people would still be a small population compared to those of other countries in our region, it would allow Australia to adopt a more independent strategic posture than current population projections allow. Essentially while we may never grow enough to ward off a much larger, technologically advanced and committed aggressor, a larger Australian military supported by a larger population would improve the odds of military action against this country being too expensive to be worthwhile. I also believe that with an honest and thorough review of how technology could be applied to provide water for a much larger population in this country, beyond what I am able to provide, that the 80 million by 2075 population goal would in fact be conservative.

The end to which I see Australia growing our population to this level, is for this country to have the resources to adopt a posture similar to that of the European neutral nations such as Sweden and Switzerland, based on well-armed neutrality. Over the last century hundreds of thousands of Australian young people have been duped or forced into fighting and dying in the wars of powerful allies far from home, in the hope that those allies would come to our aid if we were ourselves threatened. As we found out in World War Two with Great Britain's near abandonment of Australia, we cannot rely on this and I do not think that we can rely on the United States always being there for us in the future either.

When this issue is discussed I often hear the comment to the effect of, "Oh well, we are not going to be able to defend ourselves in the future, so don't worry about it". I do not think this is good enough - if we are going to have children we should not put them in a position where this nation's sovereignty and their lives and those of their children are not reasonably assured. Really, I see doing everything in our power to make this country powerful enough to deter any aggression against us in our own right and saving the lives of future generations of young people, as being the greatest moral priority for present Australians, and I would ask that the Productivity Commission use its influence to raise this issue.

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⁷ <http://israelnewtech.com/2012/07/the-secrets-of-saving-israels-water-conservation/>

⁸ [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3222.0main+features52012%20\(base\)%20to%202101](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/3222.0main+features52012%20(base)%20to%202101)