

Migrant Intake into Australia

Productivity Commission

Issues Paper

May 2015

Below please accept my personal opinion on this issue:

Australia's Carrying Capacity:

The core point to be addressed is the question of how big a population Australia can absorb without unduly stressing its environment, causing major damage and possible collapse.

Australia may look a big continent, but it is also the oldest and driest continent. Less than 10% of its surface area is suitable for human habitation, almost all of it along the seaboard. Water shortages, poor soil conditions, extreme climates, catastrophes, species extinctions on land and in the sea are all major reasons why Australia is not suitable to accommodate a large human population.

Yet, with an ever increasing population we enlarge the residential and commercial areas of our cities, build more physical infrastructure, all at the expense of agricultural and recreational land.

Such scenario would lead in the not too distant future to a situation where we would have to become dependent upon food imports instead of being exporters.

Esteemed environmental scientists, such as Tim Flannery, calculated long ago that Australia's carrying capacity is more like ten million, and not the almost 24 million we currently have, and definitely not a possible 50 million or more by mid to late 21st century.

We must listen to our scientists, and we must stabilize our population over time.

I therefore propose to reduce our annual net intake of permanent immigrants to not more than 70,000 gradually reducing to zero net immigration.

The natural birth rate must not exceed replacement level, and ideally will stabilize at below replacement level, In order to reduce the total population to a size that is environmentally comfortably sustainable – assumed to be at or near ten million.

I would envisage this target to be reached by the end of the century.

Social Carrying Capacity:

The huge intake of permanent and temporary residents in recent years has led to a significant shortage of social and physical infrastructure. Public transport, roads, housing, health, education, social services are all breaking under the strain of this onslaught of 'invaders'.

The Treasurer and his team are desperately trying to make ends meet.

To my knowledge, provision of infrastructure costs upwards of \$200,000 per newcomer. In addition, this newcomer requires ongoing 'maintenance'. If a newcomer is single, skilled, educated, healthy, has a strong work ethic and adapts well, he/she may not require 'maintenance' but becomes an instant contributor to society. However, where the newcomer lacks these characteristics and in addition arrives with a family tribe in tow the 'maintenance' costs are horrendous.

I propose, that Australia declares a short-term moratorium of a couple of years on all permanent migration in order to absorb the large number of permanent arrivals of recent years that put so much pressure on the physical and social infrastructure.

Permanent Residence and Citizenship

There is currently a proposal under consideration to make a permanent resident visa subject to a payment of \$50,000, in order to attract the economically active migrant. The merit principle would then be abolished.

I fail to see how \$50,000 can balance the books when the cost of a new arrival is upwards of \$200,000 plus ongoing maintenance.

Politicians from all walks of life want to turn Australia into a clever, or smart, or educated country. We are a long way from beating the best of the world in this respect, and replacing merit with a lousy \$50,000 per arrival, will only make the situation worse.

If Australia really wants to be the best then we have to invest far more into the education and training of those who were born and raised here.

New arrivals should be assessed on merit, not just skills and education – both can be acquired.

My definition of merit is that we select newcomers on their ability and willingness to adapt, conform, integrate, comply with modern secular Australian traditions and values, display a strong work ethics, ingenuity, entrepreneurialism, enthusiasm, contribution to society, personal responsibility, honesty, good character, mental and physical health.

I do not expect these characteristics to be assessable through an application form and interview.

Any permanent resident visa should therefore be preceded by a probationary visa for up to five years.

Citizenship should only be awarded after ten years of permanent residence.

There should not be dual citizenship of equal value. There should only be one primary citizenship; all others should be secondary. Only a primary citizenship would permit a person to vote, stand for office, join the defence force and hold similar public office positions.

There should also only be one category of permanent visa, namely that based on merit, with all other permanent visa categories to be abolished, such as humanitarian intake, family re-union and others.

There should not be an easy backdoor entry into the country.

I therefore propose that all permanent resident visas and citizenship awards be conferred on merit only bearing in mind the points outlined above.

Temporary Residence

I have no objection to a large variety of temporary resident visas, be these 417 (working holidays), 457 (guest workers), business visas, tourist visas, and more. However, it must be assured that these visas are strictly regulated, do not lead to exploitation (I also refer to the Four Corners Program of 4 May 2015 in this respect), will not be issued if it means job losses among the local population.

Furthermore, they should only be issued if reciprocal arrangements are in place with the source country/countries. To illustrate this latter point: if we issue 417 visas to European backpackers, then Europe must issue working holiday visas of a similar nature to Australian backpackers.

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