

Migration and Population Study
Productivity Commission
Melbourne
VIC

I would like to address item 6, "the impact of migration and population growth on labour force participation and economic growth more broadly".

At the outset I would like to state that the terms of reference mean that attention is paid to the methods of achieving the 1.5% productivity improvement target as outlined by the Commonwealth Government's Inter-Generational Report (IGR) , while I wish to draw attention to the costs of an increased population.

I think a lot of the issues associated with population growth have been documented in the excellent CSIRO publication that may be found here:

<http://www.cse.csiro.au/publications/2002/fulldilemmasreport02-01.pdf>

The report makes some mention of building Canberra sized cities around the country, mainly I think to make better use of the available water. While this may be a "future" idea, as I live in Canberra, I would like to use Canberran water as an example of the issues.

1984 Population : 245,000

In 1984 I was informed that Canberra did not have to worry about water as we had the Googong dam and we had plenty.

2004 Population : 324,000

Twenty years later Canberra is on water restrictions and paying a lot more for water usage.

It was just taken as a given that the Canberra population would accept a lower standard of living and pay more for it.

The current lowering of our lifestyle just means inconvenient things like

a) We cannot play sport this week because the local oval cannot be watered.

b) Peoples lawns die. I know it is said that we should not have lawns any more but I bet Steve Waugh's children will have a lawn to play Cricket on.

In future, however, further restrictions could have a more drastic effect, Goulburn for example was in a desperate state before recent rains.

2024 Population : 500,000

Recently a Canberra politician said he wanted to raise the Canberran population to 500,000. He said we needed to do this because of the current skills crisis Canberra has.

Recently the Canberra Government accepted the local water authorities plan to divert more water from upstream into the Googong dam. This was done so that the ACT people would not have to have increased rates to pay for a new dam. In other words this is just a stopgap measure to provide adequate water for a few years.

From the above it appears as if one Minister thinks more people are required, the other thinks that less people are required or at least they will all miraculously use less water.

As I see it into the future we need to either keep the Canberran population the same to match its current water supply, or if we want the population to reach 500,000 we must make sure that there is a corresponding increase in available water(along with all the other resources).

I have used Canberra and water as an example, however, I believe the issues are generic.

I would like to see any population growth tied to the availability of resources to support it, not to the requirement of Government to achieve a productivity target.

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