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## General discussion

The discussion opened with one participant commenting that Australia's relative success in integrating immigrants (compared with the experiences of some European countries) is not a result of selecting migrants by skill or specific policies to induce migrants to integrate; rather, Australia's labour market is much less segmented than European labour markets, where insider-outsider segmentation contributes to long-term and cross-generational unemployment among some migrant groups. In addition, it was suggested, the 'failure of multiculturalism' in some European countries (such as France and Italy) is a misinterpretation of more general problems of social and economic disadvantage that manifest themselves in persistent unemployment and social exclusion.

In response, Professor Corden commented that the effects of immigrant selection should not be under-emphasised. Migrant self-selection can have a significant impact on the extent to which migrants integrate into a destination country. Professor Corden cited the United States as an example where migrant self-selection has contributed to positive outcomes among the second generation of migrants — who are found to outperform their native peers on indicators such as school performance and health risk behaviours. He expressed an interest in seeing similar research undertaken into outcomes for second-generation migrants in Australia, but noted current data limitations in this area.

Dr Hartwich concurred with Professor Corden's emphasis on migrant self-selection, especially in response to policy settings in the destination country. In Germany, for example, the availability of welfare for new migrants — and the widespread awareness of this availability among potential migrants in other countries — had led to the self-selection of migrants who were disinclined towards employment. By contrast, Dr Hartwich said, the lesser availability of welfare benefits to migrants in Australia and the United States has worked well for these countries, by encouraging the self-selection of migrants with greater inclination to succeed through their efforts in the labour market.

Professor Markus cautioned against generalising about the successful assimilation of migrants to Australia. He noted that there have been significant numbers of unskilled migrants entering Australia, through the family reunion and refugee visa categories (as well as migrants entering in earlier decades prior to the current focus on skilled migration), and that this has contributed to 'substantial issues' with

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assimilation among the second generation migrants of some ethnic groups. Dr Hartwich observed that structural changes in developed economies since the 1950s and 1960s have meant fewer jobs for unskilled migrants, so 'it is only right' for migration policy to favour skilled migrants.

The panel was asked whether an increase in temporary or guest-worker arrangements in Australia and other countries should be cause for concern, given the experiences of some European countries with guest workers. Dr Hartwich commented that guest-worker programs are not in themselves a problem, but that countries such as Australia are attractive destinations for settlement and so guest workers may not wish to leave. Professor Markus noted that guest-worker arrangements yield benefits in terms of greater labour market flexibility and shifting some of the risks associated with business cycle fluctuations onto workers and away from governments. However, he foresaw 'very substantial problems' if there were large increases in the number of temporary migrant workers in Australia.

One participant argued that the rules relating to long-term temporary skilled migrants in Australia compared favourably with those found in some European countries, where (for example) temporary workers must return to their home country for a specified period at given intervals. Such restrictions tend to be 'very unsatisfactory' in that they impede migrants' ability and incentive to integrate into the destination country and to continue accumulating human capital with the aim of eventually becoming lifelong residents. In response, Professor McDonald agreed that the temporary (subclass 457) visa program was 'a good way of doing immigration' as it provides for certainty for both employers and employees and gives migrants a pathway to permanent residency if they choose to stay in Australia.

On a different subject, Professor McDonald suggested that countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States may have had relatively greater success with immigrant integration due to their history as 'new settler countries'. His view was that because these countries all have an indigenous minority and everyone else is descended from immigrants, most of the population in each of these countries has the 'notion that we are relatively new' rather than 'having some kind of natural right which goes back thousands of years'.

The discussion concluded with a brief return to the topic of guest workers, as one participant suggested that the success of guest-worker arrangements varies with the particular nature and conditions of the program. An agricultural guest-worker program in the United States around the 1950s attracted many Mexican immigrants and (it was argued) resulted in an ongoing stream of Mexican arrivals that has been difficult to control due to the shared border, and has contributed to illegal immigration.