

Australia's Immigration Programme for the Period 1968 to 1973

Immigration Planning Council Australia's Immigration Programme for the Period 1968 to 1973, Canberra, Immigration Planning Council, 1968.

A report to the Minister of State for Immigration The Hon. B. M. Snedden, Q.C., M.P., by the Immigration Planning Council

Tabled in the House of Representatives - 10 September 1968.

Commonwealth Immigration Planning Council
c/- Department of Immigration
Canberra. A. C. T.
5th June, 1968

My dear Minister,

I have the honour to present to you a report prepared by the Immigration Planning Council on immigration programmes for the period 1968-1973. This report was adopted by the Council at its meeting on 20th May, 1968. It follows your request to the Council that in addition to advising you on the immigration programme for the ensuing financial year, it should also look much further into the future and investigate long term economic and demographic conditions and trends with a view to advising on total and net immigration requirements several years ahead.

In the preparation of its report, the Committee had the assistance of departmental officers, not only of the Department of Immigration but also of the Departments of the Treasury, Trade and Industry, National Development, Labour and National Service, Housing, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics and had the benefit of information supplied by those Departments and

by the Department of Social Services. The Committee also held consultations with the Master Builders' Federation.

In accordance with your request, the Planning Council will continue its inquiry into long term aspects of immigration planning and it proposes to report to you each year on requirements and prospects five years ahead.

The Council reaffirmed its view that large scale immigration must continue to play a major role in the maintenance of prosperity and growth such as have been achieved in the post-war period.

The report examines some of the implications of continuing immigration at a high level and offers suggestions for government action in a number of fields that would, in the Council's opinion, facilitate the achievement of immigration targets.

It has made these suggestions against a background of the fullest confidence in Australia's continued prosperity and economic growth and in the knowledge that since its inception, the immigration programme has received the unqualified backing of successive governments as a national policy.

Yours sincerely,

E. M. C. FOX,
Chairman.

Section IX

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

The Rate of Immigration

The Committee's task was to examine immigration possibilities and requirements several years ahead and to formulate recommendations based on the principles involved, rather than to recommend targets of forward requirements in precise numerical terms.

The importance of formulating numerical targets some years ahead lay only in giving broad guides of what would appear to be desirable programmes. Actual immigration programmes for individual years would need to be established in the light of conditions as seen for those years, both in overseas source countries and in Australia. These conditions would determine what numbers of migrants could be obtained and what numbers absorbed.

Immigration planning in the past had been based on the traditional concept of adding to population each year a one per cent increase from net migration, but this had been achieved in only six post-war years. The Committee therefore decided to examine the meaning of net migration additions to population, in terms of the actual numbers of settler arrivals required, not only on the basis of the traditional assumption of an increase from net migration each year equal to 1 per cent of total population, but also on a basis that more closely approximated actual achievement in recent years, viz., 0.8 per cent increase in population through net migration.

In this context, the Committee recognised that achievement of a given rate of population increase from net migration had to compensate for both the loss arising from former settlers departing and the loss arising from non-settler movement (i.e., all other movement excepting settlers). This loss had been steadily increasing

in recent years: on recorded figures settler loss had grown from 6,303 in 1959/60 to 20,438 in 1966/67, while non-settler loss (including Australian residents departing permanently) had grown from 20,466 in 1959/60 to 30,865 in 1966/67.

In view therefore of the substantial net outflow from Australia likely to occur in the period under review because of the high level of immigration in recent years, attainment of either the one per cent or the 0.8 per cent annual goals would mean targets of settler arrivals of substantial dimensions.

Attainment of additions to population from net migration each year of the order envisaged would continue to be difficult in the highly competitive and increasingly complex conditions of modern day migration. Since the annual immigration programme had to compensate for both settler and non-settler loss before there was any net contribution to population growth through migration, to the extent that this loss could be reduced, or at least prevented from increasing, the programme of new arrivals could also be reduced or its increase maintained at reasonable levels. It would be wrong to suggest that permanent departures could or should be discouraged in all circumstances, but every effort should be made to reduce or eliminate those elements of population loss that arise from unsatisfactory conditions in Australia. Action directed to this end could help to retain future immigration programmes at reasonable and attainable levels.

In the Committee's view the continuation of large scale immigration would require a re-examination of a number of Government policies. On the basis of the evidence placed before it the Committee believed that attainment of a goal of one per cent net population gain through migration would require sustained and expanded effort in the field of recruitment, flexibility of methods, and special measures of an economic and social character to attract migrants and to retain them after they had arrived here.

In this context the Council accepted that the rate of increase in per capita real incomes, in Australia will need to compare favourably with the rates achieved in source countries and in countries competing for migrants if Australia is to continue to attract and to hold migrants in the numbers required.

General economic policies aimed at promoting and maintaining the highest possible rates of economic growth consistent with other objectives will be necessary and it is important, in the Council's view, for the needs of the immigration programme to receive full consideration at all stages of the process of formulating economic policy.

Recommendations

1. Annual immigration programmes should continue to be established each year on the basis of conditions as actually seen for those particular years, both in Australia and in overseas source countries.
2. Progressively higher levels of annual immigration programmes were, in principle, quite practicable objectives, but if the traditional concept of an annual one per cent increase to population from net immigration was to be retained, there should be sustained and expanded effort in the field of recruitment, increased flexibility of methods, and special measures implemented of an economic and social character to attract migrants and to hold them once they arrived in Australia.

Capacity to Absorb Migrant Intakes

The Committee received the following papers:-

- (a) "The Australian Economy" - Commonwealth Treasury
- (b) "Future Prospects for Manufacturing

Industry" - Department of Trade and Industry

(c) "Development of Natural Resources" - Department of National Development

(d) "Future Prospects for Primary Industry" - Bureau of Agricultural Economics

(e) "Work Force and Employment Opportunities" - Department of Labour and National Service.

On the basis of their study of these papers the Committee concluded that:-

(i) a steadily rising level of immigration could be accommodated by the Australian economy without difficulty, and that the upper limit was well above the level of immigration being achieved at present. So far as conditions in Australia were concerned therefore, it saw no reason why (subject to its previous remarks on a rate of immigration) annual programmes of settler arrivals necessary to achieve a pre-determined growth objective could not be absorbed progressively without undue strain on the economy.

(ii) increasing employment opportunities would be sufficient to warrant the continuation of migration at higher levels, and in fact, indications suggested that there would be a slight increase in the proportion of migrants employed in the work force, relative to the entry of indigenous persons, in the next five years.

(iii) because there would be increased employment opportunities for females, the female work force would expand more rapidly than the male work force. This was significant for immigration because of the high incidence of migrant married women seeking employment.

(iv) manufacturing industry would continue to provide a substantial proportion of the opportunities for new entrants to the Australian work force and would require a continuing supply of workers from migration programmes.

(v) a number of major developmental projects could be expected to be past their peak demands for labour and were thus, in total, unlikely to generate significant additional on-site job opportunities for newly arrived migrants. However, the effects of the exploitation of Australia's mineral wealth would be considerable in creating off-site employment in supporting and servicing industries. The labor requirements of new development projects would also have to be met.

(vi) the prospective increase in the age group 20 to 29 could be expected to give rise to increased demand for housing, and therefore some increase in the work force employed in the building industry in the latter part of the period under review could be expected. This would be important for immigration programmes, as the industry was labour intensive and a major direct employer of migrant workers.

(vii) tertiary industries, on current trends, would become increasingly important as a major area of the absorption of migrants in future intakes. The demands of these industries would cover the whole range of skills from professionally qualified workers and tradesmen to "white-collar" and unskilled workers.

Recommendation

The changing pattern of Australia's labour requirements should be kept under constant review and the methods of attracting migrant workers adjusted to meet new needs as they develop.

Attraction and Training of Migrant Workers

(i) In relation to skills, the rate of demand for qualified tradesmen would continue to grow as industry expanded, but there would also be a demand for other workers with manual dexterity who could be trained on the job, analogous to the demand created by German industrial expansion in recent years.

(ii) The availability of skilled workers for Australia would depend on the counter attractions offered by the level of European prosperity, and Australia might therefore have to develop a different approach to the present practice of open recruitment of workers in Europe for vacancies in Australia.

Recommendation

Methods of attracting skilled workers in Continental Europe should be supplemented by arrangements for recruitment against specific vacancies in Australia on the lines of group nomination schemes currently undertaken by Australian employers under the British assisted passage programme.

(iii) In respect of some of those migrants who had been recognised as tradesmen in their own countries but who were not accepted as tradesmen in Australia, facilities were available in Australia to obtain additional training in order to achieve full recognition as tradesmen.

Recommendation

Opportunities for skilled migrants to obtain additional training in order to secure acceptance as tradesmen in Australia should be made available more widely, and every encouragement should be given to such migrants to use these opportunities.

(iv) While the demand for professional workers in some fields exceeds the supply in the years ahead, appropriate steps will have to be taken to attract professional people to this country in competition with other countries that give more ready recognition to foreign qualifications.

Recommendation

Early action should be taken to give full recognition to equivalent overseas professional qualifications on a basis of uniformity in all States, and to simplify

and make more realistic procedures for recognition where these already operated.

Social Factors

The Committee considered that there was a distinct co-relation between the success of migration programmes and such major social factors as housing requirements and social service benefits, which migrants now took into consideration when making emigration decisions. This was particularly true today, as Australia had lost much of its former relative attractiveness in terms of the employment, wage levels, and the standard of living it could offer compared with those of migrants' home countries, or of Australia's competitors. Incentives had not only been eroded considerably in recent years, but in Europe itself rising living standards accompanied by slower rates of population growth (e.g., Italy), would tend to increase recruitment difficulties.

Action was necessary to improve Australia's attractiveness through the taking of measures that might appear, *prima facie*, as special privileges to new settlers, but in reality did nothing more than off-set the disadvantages at which re-settlement placed migrants *vis-a-vis* indigenous Australians. Continuation of these disadvantages placed severe limits on Australia's ability to attract and hold migrants.

Recommendation

Policy generally should be re-appraised and geared to the needs of today's new migrants who were much less committed to permanent settlement than their predecessors of the early 'fifties, and in the context of this policy, positive measures should be implemented to improve Australia's attractiveness to ensure that selection, travel and reception arrangements, transitory accommodation, and opportunities for establishment in employment and in permanent housing, continued to keep pace with

developments in source countries.

Housing

The Committee examined at considerable length the question of housing and discussed this factor with representatives of the Department of Housing and the Master Builders' Federation of Australia. Although it considered housing a major social consideration, the Committee did not attempt to concern itself with total housing policy as such, which was outside its province of activity, but it felt very strongly that migrants had special needs and faced a very difficult real estate market on arrival; in this respect they were at a disadvantage compared with Australian residents.

The Committee agreed that if Australia were to attract the migrants she required in the years ahead, positive action would be needed to meet the special housing needs of settler arrivals.

Recommendation

Positive action should be taken to meet the special housing needs of settler arrivals. This action should take the form of increasing the availability of low rental or low deposit dwellings within the capacity of migrants to pay, especially the migrants who passed through Commonwealth Hostels, and this provision should be additional to the current Housing Authority programmes.

Social Services

Because comparisons of social security benefits between countries would be misleading (they presented a bewildering variety of financing methods and benefits) the Committee agreed that it could not reach any meaningful conclusions on whether the level and scope of Australian social security benefits were, in total, less attractive than in other countries. However, because these benefits undoubtedly influenced emigration decisions (even though migrants'

comparisons might be invalid) and because it was difficult to see anything in the Australian system that would prove a positive attraction to migrants, the Committee expressed strong doubt whether social services in Australia were sufficient to attract settlers in the present migration climate in Europe.

The Committee welcomed the recent statement of Government policy on the opening of the Second Session of the 76th Parliament on 12 March 1968. This indicated that the Government would review the field of social welfare with the object of assisting those in most need while at the same time not discouraging thrift, self-help and self-reliance and that the Government would set up a Standing Cabinet Committee including the Ministers for Health, Social Services, Repatriation and Housing, which would direct its attention to co-ordinating the approaches and proposals of the various Departments concerned with social welfare.

Recommendation

The Committee welcomed the recent statement of Government policy on social welfare and recommended that the inquiry referred to take into consideration the impact of social services on immigration, with a view to ensuring that migrants are not placed at a disadvantage in comparison with Australians.

External Considerations

The Committee examined information made available to it on actual and potential source countries and agreed that:-

(i) The United Kingdom:

The United Kingdom appeared likely to remain Australia's major source of assisted migrants. There had been a downward trend in the rate of applications over the past two years, but this had been reversed towards the end of 1967. The long-term trend was therefore difficult to

predict and it depended on a number of factors which could all have substantial effects on future immigration prospects from the United Kingdom.

Recommendations

1. While the United Kingdom will remain Australia's major source of assisted migrants, there should be no relaxation of effort there if Australia is to continue to attract a satisfactory number of people with the skills and other qualities Australia needs.
2. In order to meet the targets implied in this report, it will be necessary also to diversify and develop assisted migration from non-British European sources.

(ii) Other Established Source Countries:

In respect of non-British European sources the Committee noted that increasing prosperity in home countries and the attractiveness of short-term work contracts in Europe had tended to reduce the flow to Australia in recent years. The Committee therefore also noted, with satisfaction, that the Australian Government had signed new agreements with Italy and the Netherlands, had negotiated with Spain for the resumption of assisted migration from that country, and had undertaken a number of new developments to stimulate migrant inflow. While it agreed that these arrangements would increase the flow of assisted settlers from traditional sources in the period under review, it considered that inducing an increased flow of settlers generally from source areas may in the long term become increasingly difficult in future in the light of rising living standards and demographic trends in those countries.

Recommendation

In the changing patterns of living standards, mobility of workers and employment conditions in Europe, all aspects of immigration promotion and

procedure should be kept under constant review and innovations introduced where necessary to ensure that Australia can compete on at least equal terms, with the attraction of short-term work contracts in Europe and extra-European movement to other countries.

(iii) Special Passage Assistance Programme:

The Committee noted that a significant factor bearing on the direction and volume of future inflows of settlers was the development of a much greater mobility of labour within Europe, and the scope this offered to bring these workers to Australia. As short-term contracts were terminated many were not anxious to return to their homelands, and this provided an important source of potential migrants under the provisions of the "Special Passage Assistance Programme". This Programme, which was introduced in July, 1966, had considerable prospects for growth as it gained momentum.

(iv) New Source Countries:

The Committee learned with satisfaction that the Australian Government had negotiated an agreement with Turkey, an entirely new source country, and that prospects existed for a working arrangement to be concluded with Yugoslavia to commence assisted migration from that country. It thought that in due course these two sources could add substantially to the number of assisted passage migrants coming to Australia. It also agreed that its study of Portugal indicated that this country offered prospects for development as an immigration source, particularly if an agreement could be negotiated with the Portuguese Government..

Recommendation

Portugal and Yugoslavia offered good prospects for immigration as potential new areas, and every effort should be made to develop these sources.

(v) Passage Assistance:

The Committee expressed its satisfaction that distinctions between the passage assistance given to British and non-British assisted migrants had virtually disappeared.

Recommendation

Any other distinctions that might remain should be eliminated.

Major Competitors

The Committee noted that Australia had to face serious competition from other migrant-receiving countries particularly from the North American continent, which enjoyed substantial geographical and other advantages with consequent cheaper travel and ease of return visits to Europe.

General

The Committee wished to make it clear that its inquiry and recommendations should be viewed in the context of some twenty years of planned immigration which Australia had commenced in 1947.

In this period the evidence showed clearly that immigration had received the unqualified backing of successive Australian governments, both as a national policy and in the direction of full financial support for its implementation. There had been a high degree of co-operation between all government departments and instrumentalities involved, and the Commonwealth Department of Immigration had been most flexible in initiating new policies and developments to meet changing conditions and circumstances.

Against this background, and in the light of Australia's tremendous capacity for growth and development, the Committee expressed its confidence in the future of immigration and agreed that programmes of the order discussed in this report would continue to be an essential element in Australia's future development.