THE DEMOGRAPHIC EFFECTS OF IMMIGRATION

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SUMMARY

Given the wide-ranging implications of population trends, it is important to
understand how such trends can be influenced by governments. This paper seeks to
contribute to an understanding of the demographic consequences of immigration.

The impact of immigration on population growth, population composition - by birth-
place, age, sex and marital status, and population distribution are briefly analysed.
It is shown that the composition as well as the size of the intake is important.

Five series of projections are presented to demonstrate the sensitivities of
demographic trends to immigration policy changes. In formulating policy, there needs
to be an awareness of the demographic consequences of immigration.

Introduction

Developments in the size, distribution and composition of
Australia's population are of fundamental importance to a wide range
of policy planning areas. Given that, in Australia, immigration is
the major instrument by which the government can directly and
significantly influence population trends, it is important that the
demographic consequences of immigration be understood. The aim of
this paper is to contribute to this understanding.

One of the more obvious demographic consequences of immigration
is for population growth. Australia's current population profile,
perhaps more than that of any other developed country, is the result
of immigration. It has been estimated that the indigenous population
numbered about 300,000 in 1788 when the First Fleet landed. At the
1981 Census the aboriginal population numbered 160,000 and the total
population 14,576,000.

Whilst immigration has been a major factor in Australia's
development since 1788, this paper focuses on immigration since World
War II because it is largely immigration since this time that has
implications for Australia's future demographic trends. In addition,
World War II is a watershed in the history of immigration to
Australia. For a detailed account of the history of immigration see

Necessary background to a paper on demographic consequences of
immigration is knowledge of immigration trends and policies them-
selves. These are briefly examined in respect of intake size and
composition by policy category to 1984/85.
Like all developed countries Australia's population is ageing. This process is expected to continue and accelerate well into the next century. The implications that immigration may have for Australia's age structure will thus take on growing significance. An examination of the age structure of the intake and its effects on the age structure of the total population is included in a more detailed examination of the intake which also includes discussion on birthplace and sex structure.

A less obvious but equally important way in which immigration contributes to population growth is through natural increase. Of particular relevance is the birthplace composition of the intake as marriage and family formation patterns can be significantly different between birthplace groups.

Whilst Australia is considered by many to be vastly under-populated, the physical environment is such that 80 per cent of the population live in only 3.3 per cent of the land area. In this respect Australia's population is unique and raises important environmental, cultural and economic issues. The impact of immigration on the distribution of the population is examined on a State and regional basis. Particular emphasis is placed on effects on our major cities, which attract over 80 per cent of all migrants.

To examine the possible future effects of immigration on population trends five sets of projections are presented based on different levels of migration. Future trends in population growth, population composition by age and birthplace and population distribution are examined for each scenario.

**Settler arrivals**

The annual intake of immigrants has varied considerably since 1947/48, with numbers ranging between 185,000 and 53,000. Whilst annual fluctuations in intake levels have been common, five phases of immigration can be identified (Figure 1):

1. A period of high immigration between 1947/48 and 1951/52. High levels of immigration were pursued by the Government as a population building exercise.

2. A reduction in immigration levels between 1952/53 and 1962/63 reflecting the minor economic recession of the early 1950s and the 1961 credit squeeze.

3. An increase in settler arrivals to a peak of 185,000 in 1969/70 followed by a slight decline in response to the deterioration of economic and employment opportunities in Australia in the early 1970s.

4. A phase of low immigration during the period 1974/75 to 1978/79, a response to worsening economic and employment conditions.

5. A final phase characterized by some recovery in settler arrivals. In announcing the migration programme for 1986/87 the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs foreshadowed a continuation of this recent trend.