

Immigration and the resources boom

July 18 2011



New research from Monash University has found that Australia's population circumstances demand an immigration program which addresses problems of sustainability, particularly as they affect the quality of urban life in the big cities.

Dr. Bob Birrell from the Center for Population and Urban research at Monash and co-author of the research paper *Immigration and the Resources Boom Mark 2*, launched today, said that population growth is not compatible with resolving sustainability problems.

“The Labor Government's current immigration target of 180,000 people per year means that Australia's population will grow from approximately 22 million to 36 million or more by 2050.

“Industry is claiming that, unless overseas migration is kept at 180,000

people or higher, there will not be enough skilled workers to meet employer requirements and to sustain aggregate economic growth,” said Dr. Birrell.

But the report challenged many of the assumptions reinforcing the arguments for continued high levels of immigration. It showed that with overseas migration at 90,000 people a year, and labor force participation rates unchanged, the workforce will expand by 1 million people between 2011 and 2021.

“We found that if these participation rates increase, as they have over the past decade, workforce growth will be nearer to 1.7 million people over this period.

“[Australia](#) needs a lower, but better-targeted immigration program. The bulk of current migration has little to do with providing scarce skills to the resource industries,” said Dr. Birrell.

The research findings showed that current migration is delivering two major streams: a predominantly professional flow to the big cities where [immigrants](#) are being employed in people-servicing industries such as health and welfare; and a mass of [people](#) on temporary visas such as students and working holidaymakers.

“As is now widely recognized, the resources boom will lead to the contraction of some metropolitan-based industries, mainly because of the appreciation of the Australian dollar. In this context, it makes little sense to pursue a high immigration policy which promotes rapid metropolitan [population](#) growth,” said Dr. Birrell.

More information: The full report can be found at arts.monash.edu.au/cpur/

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Immigration and the resources boom (2011, July 18) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-07-immigration-resources-boom.html>

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