

Longer term view needed of ageing migrants

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One of Australia's leading demographers says governments should be paying more attention to the needs of older migrants, not just to the younger ones who arrive to fill skills shortages, or who arrive as refugees.

Professor Graeme Hugo AO, Director of the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre at the University of Adelaide, says the issue of ageing migrants is important to a range of policy areas in Australia.

"Ageing and [migration](#) are two dominant issues in all Western countries, including Australia, but the two issues are not separate," Professor Hugo says.

"While many people think of migration as a 'silver bullet' solution for an ageing workforce, the reality is that those migrants will naturally age too. In fact, we currently have millions of people ageing in our community who came to this country as migrants.

"Typically, the main interest in migrants - from a policy and government perspective - is when they first arrive in the country. But what happens 30-40 years after they migrate? We need to be doing more to understand their needs and how to make policies that respond to their unique circumstances," he says.

Professor Hugo says Greek and Italian migration in the 20th century is a good example. "Hundreds of thousands of Greek and Italian migrants came to Australia to seek a better life and to fill skills shortages over a

number of decades in the 20th century. Today, we have a large ageing [migrant population](#) in those communities," he says.

"Many older migrants in the Italian and Greek communities now circulate between their mother country and their new home, which creates an interesting situation for governments. For example, the last Census showed that 32,000 aged pensions are being paid every year direct to Greece and Italy.

"I don't think policy makers have got a grasp of this situation, and what it will mean for today's migrants in another 30-40 years in a range of areas, such as housing and health care," he says.

Professor Hugo says ageing is just one of many issues impacting on population and migration globally. "The world's population is currently 7.2 billion. It's projected to increase to 8.1 billion by 2025, and up to 10.9 billion in 2100," he says.

"Almost all net population increases will occur in less developed countries, especially the least developed. In more developed countries, the population will increase only slightly from 1.25 billion in 2013 to 1.28 billion in 2100. If it weren't for [migrants](#) and their children, the [population](#) in Western countries would be declining.

"This has enormous economic and social implications for Australia," he says.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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