

Australia: More migrants than economic sense

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Foreign workers are using student or backpacker visas as a back door to work in Australia, study findings claim.

The Gillard Government's immigration policy is out of sync with the current economic climate, causing many Australians to compete with migrants in the struggle to find work, according to new research.

In the [most recent report](#) (PDF format: 1.4MB) compiled by Monash University's Centre for Urban and Population Research (CPUR), researchers argue that Australia's immigration intake is too high.

Lead researcher and Head of the CPUR, Dr Bob Birrell, said the report shows that under the current employment conditions, several of the major visa subclasses need to be culled.

"Australia has been in the grip of a boom mentality over the last decade," Dr Birrell said.

"In such booms, government and business enterprises seem to lose the capacity to put claims of economic growth to a reality test – claims such as those from the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, which say demand for workers will increase."

[Immigration policy](#) settings have been adjusted to accommodate this boom mentality, with the permanent migration program for 2012-13 set at a record high figure of 210,000. The Government's 457 temporary-entry visa program is also running at record high levels.

"The immigration program is set on full throttle, whereas the net growth of the employed workforce in Australia has slowed to a crawl," Dr Birrell said.

"The net growth in the employed workforce in Australia was just 58,000 between the 2011 and 2012 August quarters. Yet, in the past year, at least 100,000 migrants who arrived found employment in Australia."

The report shows that due to the current immigration policies, domestic job aspirants are being crowded out, particularly young people seeking to enter the workforce. Australian-born [youth unemployment](#) has increased and, as of August 2012, there were 666,830 unemployment benefit recipients, up from 626,969 in August 2012.

"The most serious implication of migration for domestic workers is the huge presence of migrants on temporary visas in metropolitan lower-

skilled labour markets," Dr Birrell said.

"Though allegedly here for various educational, holiday and cultural exchange purposes, large numbers are primarily in Australia to work."

The research found the current rules regulating temporary entry are excessively generous. Once in Australia, tens of thousands of migrants then extend their presence in the labour market by moving from visa to visa.

"There is an urgent need for a review of the temporary-entry visa subclasses, which examines the impact on young domestic workers of the flood of [migrants](#) competing with them for available jobs," Dr Birrell said.

Provided by Monash University

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