Stephen Castles and Ellie Vasta

Australia's Immigration Dilemma
Introduction

Australians have mixed feelings about immigration. Since 1945, debates on immigration
have been high on the public agenda. Planned mass immigration has been a key factor in
transforming Australia from a small, insular society looking mainly to Britain for its values
and heritage, to a larger and more diverse society, including people from every part of the
world. One Australian in four is an immigrant, and a similar proportion is the off-spring of at
least one immigrant parent. No other developed country (except Israel) can match such
quotas. Since 1945, 6 million immigrants have come to Australia, of whom 600,000 were
refugees or displaced persons. As a result the population has grown from 7.6 million in 1947
to 19.2 million in 2000 (DIMIA 2001c). Yet immigration and asylum remain highly
controversial. The last Federal Election was fought and won on the issue of excluding asylum
seekers, and the nation remains deeply divided.

Herein lies Australia's immigration dilemma: like the USA and Canada it is an immigrant
nation, yet many Australian see immigrants as a threat to national identity and even survival.
The indigenous inhabitants of Australia were indeed overrun and dispossessed by immigrants
– namely the British colonists who arrived in 1788. Ever since, white Australians have
dreaded a similar fate. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, were decimated,
dispossessed and socially marginalized. Their numbers fell from an estimated 500,000 in
1788 to just 50,000 by the late 19th century. This near-genocide was legitimated through the
racist beliefs of the time (Reynolds 1987), yet dispossession and marginalization continue to
this day. The failure to deal with this historical stain and to achieve reconciliation with
indigenous people is at the roots of a deep anxiety. As inhabitants of a 'European outpost' on
the rim of Asia, Australians have always feared that they would in turn be colonized by
people from the far more populous countries of the region. Opinions and policies on
immigration have always had a sub-text of concern about race.

Australia was first settled as a penal colony, but free settlement was encouraged as awareness
of the continent's agricultural potential and mineral wealth grew. The population expanded
sharply in the 1850s following the discovery of gold. Employers called for recruitment of
non-British labor to keep down wages and restrict the power of trade unions (de Lepervanche
1975). Organized labor was strongly opposed to such immigration, demanding wages 'fit for
white men'. Racist propaganda accused the Chinese of undercutting wages, crime, disease
and coveting white women. The colonial governments of Victoria, NSW and South Australia
introduced measures to exclude Chinese immigrants. There was a close link between racism
and the emerging feeling of Australian identity and nationhood (MacQueen 1970). The
White Australia Policy was established by the *Immigration Restriction Act* – one of the first
laws passed by the new Federal Parliament in 1901.

European immigration remained relatively low in the early 20th century, due to economic
stagnation. However, the Second World War convinced policy-makers that Australia needed
a larger population and a stronger manufacturing sector to safeguard national sovereignty. A

Department of Immigration was set up develop a national immigration policy. The slogan used to sell this policy to a suspicious population was 'populate or perish'. The immigration program was designed to keep Australia white and British, and to hold the 'yellow peril' of Asia at bay. However, labor demand quickly outstripped the availability of British migrants. In the late 1940s, the Department of Immigration started recruiting displaced persons in European camps. Recruitment was soon extended to Italy, Greece and Malta. Trade union opposition to non-British immigrants was overcome by promises that they would be tied to unskilled jobs for two years and would not displace Australian workers. The 1950s and 1960s were marked by high levels of European immigration. Migrant workers became heavily concentrated in the expanding manufacturing industries of Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide (Lever-Tracey and Quinlan 1988).

The 1970s were a watershed in immigration history. The long boom was replaced by a more uncertain economic environment, and postwar full employment seemed to be at an end. The reaction of the Australian Labor party (ALP) Government of 1972–75 was to cut immigration sharply, and to emphasize the need for skilled labor. The White Australia Policy was replaced: by a non-discriminatory selection system, modelled on the Canadian Points Test. Successive governments also followed Canada in introducing a policy of multiculturalism as the basis for social policy toward immigrants. In the mid-1970s, Australia experienced the arrival of the first boat people since 1788, when Vietnamese refugees arrived on Australia's northern shores. Despite public suspicion, the Liberal-National Coalition government developed a resettlement program.

From the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, there was a consensus between the major political forces on a non-discriminatory immigration policy and multicultural policies towards ethnic communities. Immigration remained relatively high, with family reunion as the largest component of entries. The ALP Government's 1989 *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* emphasized the need to recognize cultural diversity as a basis for Australian social policy, citizenship and identity. However, anti-immigration and anti-minority sentiments began to grow. In 1984, historian Geoffrey Blainey warned against what he called the 'Asianization of Australia' (Blainey 1984), (Castles et al. 1988, 16-38). Other critics claimed that immigration would exacerbate unemployment or cause environmental degradation. In 1988, the then opposition leader John Howard called for curbs on Asian immigration. In 1996, with the election of a new conservative government, Australian immigration policy was to enter a new era, with a shift away from multiculturalism, cuts in family reunion, and draconian measure against asylum seekers.

In comparative terms, Australia is closest to Canada and the USA as a country whose founding myth is intertwined with its immigration history. It has taken over important elements of immigration and multicultural policy from Canada. It differs from the USA in the strong involvement of the state in selecting (and at times even recruiting) immigrants. Since colonial times, the Australian state has also played a role in social policy and service provision for immigrants. With the emergence of multiculturalism in the 1970s, this role became even more marked, taking the new form of close collaboration with ethnic associations. Australian social policies towards immigrants have much in common with those of some European welfare states like the Netherlands and Sweden. The key feature of Australian immigration policy for many years has been the highly effective control of entries, facilitated by Australia's uniquely remote and inaccessible position. This has been challenged in recent years through trends to easier movement connected with regional and global change. The response has been an attempt to re-assert control – however extreme the means.

At the same time, a new scepticism about multiculturalism has paralleled trends in other immigration countries, especially those of Western Europe.[1]

Recent immigration patterns

Ever since Australia started its postwar immigration program in 1947, the country has had a planned intake of 'permanent immigrants' or 'settlers'. These have the right to work, bring in dependents and remain permanently. Settlers are expected to become citizens, and can apply for naturalization after two years – the shortest qualifying period anywhere. Australian immigration debates focus mainly on permanent immigrants – yet it is important to realize that, with increasing regional and global integration, migratory patterns have become more complex. Australia now has large numbers of temporary foreign migrants. At the same time, growing numbers of Australians live and work abroad.

Migration flows

Entries of permanent immigrants have been high in boom years like 1950 (185,000) and 1989 (145,000); and relatively low in recession periods like 1976 (53,000) and 1984 (69,000) (BIR 1991,28). Ten-year averages (see Table 1) show that immigration has been fairly constant, though the average of about 90,000 a year for the 1990s represents a slight decline in numbers compared with previous decades.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Another way of measuring migration is to look at both arrivals and departures, and to calculate net permanent migration. Table 2 give figures on these categories since 1992-93.[2] It shows an increase in permanent arrivals in the early 1990s, and a decline followed by a new upward trend in the latter half of the decade.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

In recent years long-term temporary visitors (overseas visitors who intend to stay for 12 months or more but not permanently) have grown in numbers, and in 2000-01 outnumbered permanent arrivals for the first time. The Temporary Residence Program is designed to help Australia recruit skilled workers (such as managers, IT workers and technicians) from overseas. The category also includes working holiday-makers, entertainers and sports-people. In 2000-01, a total of 160,157 temporary residence permits were granted, of which 45,669 were for skilled workers. Overseas Student Visas are also a growing category: 86,277 were issued in 2000-01, a growth of 16 per cent over 1999-2000. Most students come from Asia, although the USA is also an important source (DIMIA 2001a).

The net long-term movement for 1999-2000 was 56,100 people. If this is added to the net permanent migration of 51,200, and adjustment is made for people who changed category (-8200 people), this give a net overseas migration figure of 99,100. This is the figure by which Australia's total population grew through immigration in 1999-2000, compared with 120,800 through natural increase. This was the highest figure since 1995-96, indicating that downward trends in immigration in the mid-1990s have now been reversed (ABS 2001). The increased Migration Program for 2002-3 (announced in May 2002) indicates that this upward trend will continue for the time being: The target figure is 100,000 to 110,000.

However, it is important to realize that emigration by Australians is also increasing. It has become an important part of professional or personal experience to live abroad, and it is believed that as many 800,000 Australian citizens currently work overseas. Many are in the traditional destination countries of the UK (where one London neighbourhood is popularly known as 'Kangaroo Valley') and the USA, but there is an increasing trend towards employment in the fast-growing economies of Southeast and Northeast Asia.

Entry categories

Permanent immigration has two components: the *Migration Program*, which falls into *Family Stream* and *Skill Stream* entrants; and the *Humanitarian Program*, for refugees and others admitted on humanitarian grounds. In addition, New Zealand citizens can enter and remain freely on the basis of the 1973 Trans-Tasman Travel Agreement.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

As Table 3 shows, Family Stream program levels have been kept fairly constant in recent years, while Skill Stream targets have been increased. This reflects the Government's aim of focusing on economic migration, while reducing family reunion. At the same time overall Migration Program levels have risen, and are now close to those of the early 1990s. However, it appears that many of those who enter in the Skill Stream are actually dependent spouses and children accompanying the primary applicant. This statistical quirk means that not all those who enter in the Skilled Stream actually join the labor force.

About 80 per cent of those accepted in the Family Stream are spouses or fiancé(e)s of Australian citizens or residents (who may be earlier immigrants). The next largest categories are children and parents of existing citizens or residents. It is very hard for other relatives, such as siblings, nephews or nieces, to enter as dependents. Until 1996-97, members of this group who entered to take up employment were counted in the Family Stream as *Concessional Family*, although they were still measured against the Points Test, which assesses employability according to criteria of age, education, professional experience and English-language knowledge. Since 1997-98, this group has been counted in the Skill Stream under the category *Skilled-Australian Linked/Sponsored*. This device reduced family entries and increased skilled stream entries by 6000-8000 per year – another statistical quirk.

The Skill Stream is divided into a number of categories, of which the largest is *Independent* (25,100 in the 2001-02 Progam). This is for applicants whose education, skill, English language ability and ready employability (as measured by the Points Test) will contribute to the Australian economy. The other categories are: *Employer Nomination*, for workers nominated specifically by an employer; *Business Skills*, for entrepreneurs who make a commitment to invest in Australia; and *Distinguished Talents*, for people with outstanding records of achievement in a profession, the arts or sport.

Humanitarian Program targets – not shown in Table 3 - have been fairly constant at around 12,000 since the early 1990s. Australia remains one of only about ten countries in the world that have resettlement programs to select refugees in countries of first asylum in collaboration with the UNHCR. Until 1999-2000 the Humanitarian Program had three components: *Refugees* as defined by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention; the *Special Humanitarian Program* (SHP) for people who suffer gross human rights violations but would not qualify under the 1951 Convention; and the *Special Assistance Category* (SAC) which

was established to allow people displaced by violence in such countries as Former Yugoslavia to join relatives in Australia. In 2000-01 the SAC was phased out. In recent years an additional non-Program category has grown in importance: *Onshore Protection Visa Grants*, for people who claim asylum after arriving in Australia.

Actual arrivals do not correspond with Program figures because some migrants granted a visa in one year may arrive in the next year, while others may not come at all. Moreover, *New Zealanders* are included in arrival figures, but not Program figures. In addition, the Government counts Onshore Protection Visa Grants towards the Humanitarian Program figures, even though they are not counted as permanent arrivals.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Table 4 shows how successful the Government has been in reducing Family Stream arrivals relative to Skill Stream arrivals. In 1995-96, the last year of the Labor Government, Family entrants made up 69 per cent of all non-humanitarian entrants, while Skilled entrants were only 29 per cent. By 2000-01, Family entrants were down to 45 per cent and Skilled entrants were up to 53 per cent. However, some of this apparent change may be due to the statistical quirks mentioned above. At the same time, the number of New Zealanders has grown rapidly, in response to economic conditions in both the sending and receiving country. In March 2001, it was estimated that 450,000 New Zealand citizens were present in Australia, of whom 78 per cent were in the labor force. (DIMIA 2001b).

The Humanitarian arrival figures in Table 4 show an apparent decline in recent years. This is due to the increase in Onshore Protection Visas from 1588 in 1997-98 to 1834 in 1998-99, 2458 in 1999-2000 and 5577 in 2000-01. Some of these visa were granted to people who arrived by plane on a visitor visa and then claimed asylum, but increasing numbers have gone to boat people, mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. The number of persons arriving in Australia without permission averaged only a few hundred per year up to the late 1990s, but went up to 920 in 1998-99, 4175 in 1999-2000 and 4141 in 2000-01 (Crock and Saul 2002, 24). Although asylum seeker numbers are still very low compared with other parts of the world, especially Europe, the growth is seen as undermining the tradition of strict Government control of entries, which has hitherto been possible because of Australia's remote location.

Immigration and population

Australia's immigration program has significantly changed the size and composition of the population. The 1947 Census counted 7.6 million people, of whom 90 per cent had been born in Australia, while most of the overseas-born came from the United Kingdom and Ireland. By the 1996 Census, the population had more than doubled to around 17.9 million, of whom 3.9 million (22 per cent) were overseas-born. The most recent official estimates for June 2000 put the overseas-born population at 4.5 million, 24 per cent of a total population of 19.2 million. Table 5 shows how the overseas-born population has steadily increased both absolutely and as a share in the total.

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

In 1971, 85 per cent of the immigrant population were from Europe, of which half were from the UK. By 1996, the European share had fallen to 57 per cent, while those from the UK and

Ireland were only 29 per cent of the total immigrant population. These older groups were declining, while the share of persons born in Asia and the Middle East was up to 26 per cent. New Zealand-born people made up 7.5 per cent, and were increasing fast. There were also 353,000 Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders (2.1 per cent of the population) – the only true 'non-immigrants' in Australia. However, apart from the Italians (1.4 per cent of total population), no group of non-British origin makes up more than 1 per cent of Australia's population. By contrast, in some European countries certain ethnic groups constitute substantial minorities, eg. the 2 million Turks in Germany or the million-plus people of Algerian origin in France. The Australian people today consists of an Anglo-Australian majority, and a large number of relatively small ethnic groups.

The dramatic impact of immigration on the size and composition of the Australian population is further illustrated by census data on second generation Australians (children of immigrants). In 1996, 22 per cent of the population were born overseas, while 27 per cent of the population had at least one overseas-born parent. First and second generation together made up 49 per cent of the Australian population (ABS 2002a).

Demography is a political topic in Australia. In the early colonial period, governments encouraged high immigration in order to 'people the empty spaces'. Today, however, migration is concerned primarily with economic goals, and population growth is not generally seen as an important objective. This is perhaps curious, considering that Australia is one of the most sparsely populated countries in the world, with only about 2.5 persons per square kilometre. Australia's population is about the same as that of Tokyo, yet is dispersed over an area almost as large as the USA. In fact much of Australia's interior is desert, and the overwhelming majority of people live in the coastal zones, where the population density is about 50 per square kilometre – still low compared with most developed countries.

Currently, natural increase and net migration each contribute about 0.5 per cent annual population growth. Since 1962, falling fertility has led to a decline in the rate of natural increase. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) population projections indicate that continued low fertility, combined with the increase in deaths from an ageing population, will result in natural increase falling below zero around 2035 (ABS 2002b).Ageing and long-term population decline are beginning to be seen as problems. The total fertility rate was down to 1.85 by 1994 –below the reproduction rate of 2.1, but still more favorable than in Japan or most European countries. By 1996, 12 per cent of the population were over 65, and the figure is projected to reach 23 per cent in 2051 (Castles et al. 1998, 26). However, the rates of net migration needed to significantly slow this process would be very high, and there is little support for this approach.

Immigrants and the economy

In the early postwar years, Australia's immigration program was mainly concerned with recruiting workers for low-skilled jobs in factories, construction and the services. Many of the migrants – especially those from Southern Europe – were of rural, low-skilled background. But some immigrants did have educational qualifications and vocational skills that were not accepted in Australia, leading to downward mobility on arrival. The stereotype of the migrant was summed up in the pejorative phase 'factory fodder'. Construction sites or heavy industrial plants (such as the Snowy River Hydro-Electric Scheme, the mines and the steelworks) served as entry points for successive waves of immigrants, with few workers

staying on, due to hard working conditions and poor industrial relations (Collins 1991; Lever-Tracey and Quinlan 1988). Labor shortages during the boom years provided opportunities: in time many skilled people gained recognition of their qualifications – though some never did. Others achieved promotion to skilled or supervisory positions. Yet others improved their situation by setting up businesses (Collins et al. 1995).

Since the 1970s, the characteristics of new immigrants have changed. Recessions and industrial restructuring have reduced the need for unskilled labor. The stress is now on attracting skills that are in short supply in the domestic labor force. The average level of qualification of recent immigrants is higher than that of the Australian work force as a whole. However, entrants in the Humanitarian Program and the Family Stream often have lower skill levels. There is considerable evidence of upward occupational mobility in Australia (Wooden et al. 1994, 247-51). Many immigrants start their working life at lower levels than prior to migration, but make up the deficit once they gain language proficiency and local knowledge. On the other hand, the returns on pre-migration education are often low, particularly if that education was obtained in a non-English-speaking country. Immigrants who receive education or training in Australia seem to do as well as the Australian-born with similar qualifications.

Research also indicates substantial inter-generational mobility. Children of immigrants often do well at school and university, and gain access to professional and executive employment. Success rates vary: for example 1991 Census data showed that 18.8 per cent of male Australians of Greek parentage had university degrees, compared with only 2.5 per cent of their fathers. Several European immigrant groups appeared to share this pattern, although usually to a lesser degree. As for Asian immigrants, settlement is so recent that adequate data are not yet available, but mounting evidence indicates a similar picture (Birrell and Khoo 1995). However, other researchers argue that the evidence for educational success is patchy. Although there has been upward mobility in some ethnic groups, others – including those of Maltese, Dutch, German, Turkish and Khmer parentage – have had far less positive experiences (Cahill 1996). In any case, the upward mobility of the children of postwar European immigrants was based on such favorable circumstances as full employment, increasing egalitarianism in education and a growing tertiary sector. It is uncertain whether these conditions will exist for the children of more recent immigrants.

Some immigrants do still suffer disadvantage in the labor market. Immigrant workers, both male and female, continue to be over-represented in industrial sectors and occupations which are particularly vulnerable to job losses. Between 1986 and 1995, 32,000 manufacturing jobs disappeared, yet in the same period, Australian-born workers increased the number of jobs they held in this sector by 19,000. It appears that they were displacing immigrants who were often unable to obtain the training needed for higher skilled jobs. Many older immigrants left the workforce through early retirement or invalidity (Commissioner 1995). One consequence of such changes is that unemployment during the first three postwar recessions – 1974–75, 1982–83 and 1990–91 – was much higher for non-English speaking background (NESB) immigrants than for English speaking background (ESB) immigrants or the Australian-born (Ackland and Williams 1992).[3] Economic restructuring has led to growing inequalities and polarized living standards, with increasing numbers of both wealthy and poor people. NESB immigrants and their children are disproportionately represented among those in poverty and unemployment.

[TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE]

Table 6 shows the unemployment rates of various groups in the Australian labor force. Unemployment rates for ESB immigrants are lower than for any other group. Unemployment rates for NESB immigrants were nearly twice those of ESB immigrants and considerably higher than those of the Australia-born. The heterogeneity of the NESB group is shown by the very high Vietnamese and Lebanese unemployment rates. Aboriginal unemployment figures are also very high. Differences unemployment rates are partly a reflection of differences in employment patterns of the various groups. Australia-born and ESB immigrants have a fairly similar distribution across industries, while NESB immigrants are more strongly concentrated in manufacturing, and less strongly represented in the services sector. (Foster 1996). However, such differences are themselves a reflection of other social factors. NESB immigrants may have less skilled jobs and work in more vulnerable types of industry because of lower levels of education, lack of vocational training and poor English proficiency.

The current emphasis on skills, age and language proficiency means that new biases have entered the immigrant selection criteria, discriminating in favor of those with good educational opportunities rather than on the basis of race or origins. Changes to immigration rules in mid-1999 aim to make the use of the qualifications gained by full fee-paying overseas students in Australian universities. The new selection system allocates additional bonus points to those with Australian credentials. Whereas in the past students had to leave Australia and stay away for a two-year period before applying to migrate to Australia, they are now allowed to remain in the country as they pursue their immigration application. Many of these full-fee overseas students come from Asia and are concentrated in the business and information technology (IT) fields. Such trends are leading to a brain drain from less-developed countries (eg strain on health care system in the Philippines due to nurses being attracted overseas), while reducing the incentive to improve education and vocational training in Australia (Birrell 2001).

The immigration policy regime

The importance of immigration for Australia is reflected in institutional structures. In 1945, the ALP Government set up a Department of Immigration, which had the task of organising the postwar immigration program. There has been an Immigration Minister ever since. The Department soon took on the additional function of providing 'post-arrival services' for immigrants, such as hostels, job-finding services and language courses. It also became responsible for naturalization and citizenship matters. In the late 1960s, the ministry was renamed the Department for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA), as a reflection of the growing recognition of the emergence of ethnic communities. The tasks expanded to include social and educational policy for immigrants. The 1972-75 ALP Government set up a restructured Department of Immigration and Labor. With the consolidation of multiculturalism in the late 1970s, government involvement expanded further, with the (restored) DIEA developing consultative arrangements to bring ethnic leaderships into the planning and delivery of social services. In 1987 the ALP Government brought multicultural issues to the centre of the Federal Government by setting up an Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The responsibility for immigration policy and service delivery remained in the (renamed) Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethic Affairs (DILGEA)

In 1996, the Howard Liberal-National Coalition abolished OMA. Responsibility for multiculturalism returned to an (again renamed) Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). This represented a downgrading of multiculturalism and an upgrading of immigration policy, symbolized by the elevation of Minister Ruddock to Cabinet rank. By the end of the 1990s, most state governments had also abolished or down-graded their ethnic affairs units. Ruddock has pursued a policy of increasing skilled intakes, reducing family reunion, keeping humanitarian intakes constant, and introducing a harsh regime for asylum seekers including censoring groups seeking to represent them. He was rewarded after the 2001 Election by being given an even bigger portfolio in the (yet again renamed) Department of Immigration, Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA).

Despite all the name changes, the main function of the Department throughout this half century has been to plan and manage the immigration program. The broad lines of policy are laid down by the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Department officials then draw up proposals for annual admission quotas in the various categories of the Migration Program and the Humanitarian Program. This is accompanied by a process of consultation with interest groups (see below). In the early part of each year, the Minister and his officials travel around Australia holding meetings on the planned program in state capitals and regional centres. These open town-hall meetings allow both local associations and individuals to make representations.

Program implementation is the responsibility of the Department in Canberra and its Immigration Officers who are stationed in Australian high commissions and consulates around the world. Prospective immigrants (up to one million each year) apply to the nearest of these, and may be interviewed, and given medical and occupational tests. Decisions are made centrally by DIMIA, which issues visas to successful applicants. DIMIA is also 'responsible for programs to combat and deter people smuggling' and for 'proactive negotiations with overseas governments, international organizations and other agencies to stem unauthorized entry to Australia' (DIMIA 2002). This function of control and repression is reinforced by DIMIA's responsibility for a chain of detention centres to implement the mandatory detention of all persons who enter illegally (including asylum seekers). Some centres are in remote areas like Port Hedland (in north-western Australia) and Woomera (a former rocket range in the South Australian desert). However, actual management of the camps is sub-contracted to the private company Australasian Correctional Management, a subsidiary of a US security corporation.

The Department is also responsible for issuing statistics and informing the public, and has a small research section. Until 1996, Australia had a Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR), funded by the DILGEA (as the Department then was), but with considerable autonomy to carried out independent peer-reviewed research. This Bureau was abolished by the Howard Government in 1996. However one aspect of immigration research was maintained within DIMA and the DIMIA: the *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia*. This valuable research instrument began in the early 1990s. It is based on regular interviews with successive cohorts of immigrants, and is designed to assess the success of immigration policy by examining the employment and social outcomes of immigrants coming in different visa classes.

The legal framework

The main legislative basis for Australian immigration is the *Migration Act* of 1958. All foreigners who wish to enter Australia have to apply for visas in advance. The only exception is citizens of New Zealand, as the 1973 Trans-Tasman Agreement lays down reciprocal rights of free entry for Australians and New Zealanders. The procedure for obtaining tourist and short-stay business visas was simplified in the late 1990s, so that in most cases these can now be obtained through travel agents when purchasing tickets. Due to Australia's geographical position, immigration control is fairly easy to enforce, and there are few illegal entrants. However, in 1999 there were estimated to be 53,000 *overstayers* – people who entered legally but remained after the expiry of their entry visas. About three-quarters had been in Australia over 1 year, and many worked illegally. DIMIA seems to make little effort to detect and remove overstayers – an interesting contrast with reactions to boat people (Crock and Saul 2002, 23). This may be due to the fact that many overstayers are from the UK, the USA and other developed countries.

In the past, Australian immigration policy discriminated on the basis of race and national origins. Under the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 (the White Australia Policy) non-Europeans were generally not admitted at all, while certain Europeans were seen as less desirable than others. The White Australia Policy was watered down in the 1960s and finally abolished in 1972. Since then Australia's immigration policy has been non-discriminatory in that persons from any country can apply to come, whatever their ethnic origin, sex, color or religion. The only explicit discrimination is the positive one in favor of New Zealanders.

In most legal areas the differences between the rights of citizens and of lawful permanent residents are quite small (Rubinstein 1995). Once accepted for entry as permanent settlers, immigrants enjoy a range of rights that are denied in many other countries of immigration. Permanent settlers have access to all employment-related, social security and medical benefits. However, in January 1993, the ALP Government decided to deny unemployment and sickness benefits to immigrants for the first six months after arrival. Fees were introduced for English-language courses for adult migrants (although refugees were exempted). People sponsoring relatives as immigrants had to promise to support them if they were unemployed or in need. Since 1996, the Liberal-National Party Government has made further changes. Fees for visas and compulsory English language courses for new immigrants have been sharply increased. The waiting period for most welfare benefits has been increased to two years for new entrants (Zappala and Castles 2000).

The centre-piece of Australia's approach to incorporating immigrants is easy access to citizenship. Historically, citizenship was closely linked to British identity. Australia has been considered an independent nation since 1901, but did not have its own citizenship until 1949 – before that all persons born, registered or naturalized in Australia were British subjects (Cronin 2001). The *Nationality and Citizenship Act* of 1948 still defined Australians as British subjects. Naturalization required five years of residence, an oath of loyalty to the British monarch and evidence of cultural assimilation. Such conditions deterred many immigrants. As ethnic diversity increased, the pressure grew for a more inclusive notion of citizenship. By 1984, the law had been renamed the *Australian Citizenship Act,* the waiting period had been reduced to two years, the English language requirements were relaxed, dual citizenship was permitted for immigrants seeking naturalization and the oath of allegiance was to 'Australia and its people' rather than the British Queen (Castles and Davidson 2000, 165-8; Davidson 1997). In 2002, the law was further amended to allow Australians living abroad to take another citizenship without losing their Australian one – recognising the emergence of a global Australian diaspora. This change in the meaning of citizenship can be

seen as one of the most important impacts of migration on Australian society. It is closely bound up with the rise of multiculturalism.

Public Discourses on Immigration

Interest groups

A number of groups have a special stake in immigration: trade unions, business and industry groups have tended to form a 'growth lobby', while the environmental movement has been opposed to immigration (Warhurst 1993). Immigrant associations have lobbied for increased family reunion, and have often made special representations for favorable policies towards specific groups (Jupp 1993). International bodies have little influence on Australia's policies, although the UNHCR does make representations on the Humanitarian Program. Sending countries have had some influence when economic or financial issues are at stake. For example, when the One Nation Party unveiled an anti-Asian immigration platform, the Asian media carried numerous reports and debates that influenced potential student decisions as well as investments. We will discuss the main domestic interest groups in turn.

Trade unions have influenced immigration policy significantly over the years. From the 1860s to the 1960s, the unions largely supported the White Australia policy. After the Second World War, the unions only accepted the migration program after receiving assurances that migrants would not take jobs from Australian workers. In the 1960s and 1970s, trade union leaders also emphasized the importance of family reunion to their overseas-born members, and supported the intake of refugees. Yet a certain ambivalence remained: trade unionists feared that immigration could increase unemployment, and argued for improvements in vocational training arrangements within Australia as a substitute for skilled immigration. After the 2002 national elections, a group called 'Labor for Refugees' was formed. It includes trade union and ALP members and aims to change ALP policy regarding asylum seekers and detention centres.

Business and employer groups take an active interest in immigration policy, seeing immigration as a way of strengthening the economy and expanding the domestic market. Throughout the 1990s, business has supported the government's emphasis on skilled migration. A leading business organization, the Business Council of Australia (BCA), has over the years supported large intakes and advocated an expansionist population policy. In its submission on the 2000-2001 Migration Program, the BCA strongly urged the Federal Government to develop a long-term population policy to guide the future of Australia's population, stating that 'an economy is built on families and on children, not just by computer programmers, chefs and scientists' (BCA 1999, 5). Similarly, the Housing Industry Association (HIA), which includes both large and small construction companies, has consistently called for larger intakes of both workers and families. It stresses that more people mean a demand for more houses, which is beneficial to their industry and, they claim, the whole economy.

The environmental movement, by contrast, is for the most part opposed to immigration. There is considerable controversy on this within the movement. One of the major environmental groups, the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) adopted a policy of 'population stabilization' in 1978, but then shifted to a more positive policy on immigration in the late 1980s. The policy shifted to cautious opposition to large-scale immigration by the early 1990s (Warhurst 1993). Other environmental groups, such as Australians for an

Ecologically Sustainable Population (AESP), seem to have been specifically set up to campaign against immigration. This organization has strong links with Australians Against Further Immigration (AAFI), and with right-wing groups including the One Nation Party. Environmentalists opposed to immigration claim that Australia has a limited 'carrying capacity' due to lack of water and thin and nutrient-poor soils. Problems of waste assimilation, loss of bio-diversity and degradation of natural resources and amenities are also put forward (Jones 2001, 50-51). There is considerable scientific dispute on all these matters. For instance some scientists argue that Australia's 'carrying capacity is as high as 50-100 million, while others assert that the current 19 million is already unsustainable (Castles et al. 1998, Chapter 4.)

Ethnic rights and anti-racism

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the beginning of major social transformations in Australia. This was a time when new social movements began to challenge the social and political fabric of many western democracies. The expansion of the welfare state was linked to the emergence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community activists – often grouped together as the 'community sector'. They called for greater social equity and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups into the society and polity. Ethnic community groups pointed out that they were denied access to many educational and social services due to lack of information and culturally inappropriate modes of delivery. Despite formal rights to government services, they were excluded in practice. Such demands were articulated in the language of both *rights* and of *participation*. Both first and second-generation immigrants became involved in the development and delivery of services at the community level. Immigrant associations had been initially established in response to the cultural and social concerns of specific ethnic communities. The introduction of social policies aimed specifically at immigrants, first by the ALP and then by the Coalition Government, put a premium on ethnic mobilization and formation of associations to speak in the name of immigrants (Vasta 1993). There was a link between the emergence of multicultural policies and services, and the development of formalized ethnic lobby groups, of which the most important were (and still are, though with diminished significance) the state Ethnic Communities Councils (ECCs) and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA).

The development of ethnic associations helped end assimilationism and bring in multiculturalism. This caused some observers to imply that there was some sort of sinister 'ethnic lobby' which was having an illegitimate influence on politics as well as on family intakes (Betts 1993; Blainey 1984). Most Australian political scientists, on the other hand argue that there is no monolithic 'ethnic vote' which can be controlled by ethnic leaders to secure specific political outcomes (McAllister 1988). Immigrants have not constituted a united political force, mainly because the differences among them in terms of social position, interests and values are as great as among the Anglo-Australian population. According to Jupp:

> Although its presence cannot be ignored, the ethnic lobby since 1988 has seemed peripheral to some of the major debates on immigration…The greatest weakness of the 'lobby' has probably been the absence of a sympathetic base in parliament comparable to those that exist for major ethnic groups in the USA or Canada. There are very few NESB immigrant politicians in Canberra (Jupp 1993, 220).

The period from 1972 to the early 1990s was one of political contestation on immigration and multiculturalism. Ethnic communities, community sector associations, the trade unions, and sections of the ALP called for full participation of immigrants in society, and argued that it was the duty of the state to provide the conditions needed to achieve this. They were concerned that political forces opposed to immigration and multiculturalism wanted to return to a racist past, epitomized by the White Australia Policy and discrimination against immigrants and Aboriginal people. The liberal and expansionary atmosphere of the period created a broad basis of public support for diversity and equity. However, the very success of multiculturalism led to a decline in ethnic mobilization by the early 1990s. At the same time, the concern of many Australians about the impact of globalization on their economic and social situation opened up the cultural and political space for a resurgence of anti-immigration sentiments. This was the background to the emergence of the nationalistic One-Nation Party and new exclusionism of the mainstream parties in the mid-1990s (Vasta 1999).

Public opinion toward immigration and refugee policy

The first public opinion poll on immigration occurred in 1951. According to Goot, the most politically sensitive issues examined in the polls included the number and sources of migrants, Asian immigration, refugees and multiculturalism (Goot 2001, 824). Through the 1950s and 1960s, Australia's immigration program met with considerable support. Since then, the annual intake has only occasionally achieved majority support. Most of the polls taken in the late 1980s and early 1990s registered majority opposition, while in 1998 and 1999, majority support returned. Goot suggests that one implication of this is that attitudes to immigration cannot be directly correlated to the size of the migrant intake, for during the 1990s when the intake had been reduced, support was low. However, a second implication is that lack of support is directly related to higher levels of unemployment, which was the case in the early 1990s. Support increased as employment levels rose in the late 1990s.

During the late 1960s and much of the 1970s, polls indicated that Asian immigration was at an acceptable (low) level. From the early 1980s as unemployment rose, and as people such as Blainey (an academic historian), Howard (then the leader of the Opposition) and in the mid 1990s, Hanson (an extreme right politician) called for reductions in the Asian intake, most of the polls showed that respondents thought too many Asians were settling in Australia. On the other hand, many polls reported widespread support for a non-discriminatory policy. Goot suggests that there are two possible explanations for this contradiction. First, that the respondents are hypocrites for 'they may find it easy to affirm non-discriminatory principles, but difficult to let them influence their judgement'. Secondly, that they may think that 'too many Asians are coming simply because they believe that too many migrants of *any* kind are coming or that they think the system of selection itself is weighted in favor of Asians'. (Goot 2001, 825).

On the whole, the poll figures indicate that a majority of respondents supports the numbers of refugees allowed in each year. From 1978 and 1993, between 28 per cent and 44 per cent of respondents wanted to 'send back' asylum seekers. Polls in the late 1970s at the time of the first intakes of Indo-Chinese refugees indicated that the public felt that the proportion was about right or too low (Goot 2001, 825). In a recent poll reported by Betts, the opinion that asylum seekers should be detained in camps until their application was heard received support from 71 per cent of respondents, while 21 per cent thought they should be allowed to live in the community pending a decision (Betts 2001, 42). One possible explanation for this is that public opinion has been shaped by the statements of political leaders and opinion

makers like Howard and Hanson. There is a stark contrast to the positive leadership of the late 1970s, which helped stimulate support for the Indo-Chinese boat people at that time.

Social policy: from assimilation to multiculturalism

Australia's post-war immigration policy was not intended to create a multicultural society. Rather it was driven by strategic and economic considerations. Not cultural diversity but the maintenance of homogeneity was the aim. But as it became apparent that not enough British immigrants wanted to come, recruitment was broadened to other parts of Europe, and the policy of assimilation was introduced to turn Dutch, Polish, Italian and Greek immigrants into 'New Australians'. On one level, this approach was a success: immigrants did find work, settle and become citizens. On another level, it was a failure: labor market segmentation and residential segregation, together with inadequate schooling and experiences of racism, provided the conditions for community formation and cultural maintenance. As a policy of integration, assimilation did not work.

This was the context for the introduction of a new model of integration – the policy of multiculturalism – by the ALP Government of 1972-75. The aim was to redress class and ethnic minority disadvantages by improving educational facilities and social services, and ensuring that immigrants could gain access to these. Recognition of cultural difference and working with ethnic community associations was vital to the reform of social policy. Successive governments continued with multicultural policies, although each one tended to give these a new character, emphasising different aspects to fit wider political agendas.

Australian multiculturalism has had two main aspects. The first is concerned with national identity: it involves recognising the cultural diversity of the population resulting from recent immigration and accepting that there is no longer a single, dominant culture and set of values, though Australia's identity remains essentially white and British (Hage 1998). The second aspect is concerned with policy and social equality. From this has derived the duty of government to ensure 'access and equity' – in other words that government services should be accessible and provide equal standards to everyone. Migrant services include English language classes, labor market programs, interpreter and translation services. A further corollary has been the need for anti-discrimination legislation and measures to combat both attitudinal and institutional racism (Vasta 1996). A number of multicultural institutions were established, such as the Special Broadcasting Service (which provides radio and television broadcasts targeted at ethnic communities), and the Federal Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) and similar state bodies to ensure that government services met the needs of the various ethnic groups (Castles 2001; Castles et al. 1988).

The current Liberal-National Coalition Government has strong reservations about multiculturalism. During and after the March 1996 Election it declared that the needs of 'ordinary Australians' (by implication a sort of Anglo-white mainstream) should be put above minority needs. When the Coalition came into office, it seemed initially that it would completely abandon multiculturalism, and move back to the assimilationist approaches of the 1950s. However, the realities of Australia's culturally diverse society made this step impossible. The Coalition Government decided to water down multiculturalism, and redefine it yet again. It dismantled Federal Government institutions such as OMA and the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research. Many special services which targeted immigrants and ethnic communities were also abolished or reduced. The move away from multiculturalism went even further in November 2001 with the absorption of the Department

of Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Affairs within a new Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have always rejected such a relationship with immigrant affairs as their needs are very different. It also means that multicultural policies will have even less weight within government.

In December 1999, the Howard Government launched *A New Agenda for Multicultural Australia* {DIMA, 1999 #1819 which largely endorses the principles of the ALP's 1989 *National Agenda*. However, the core values have been re-worked as 'civic duty, cultural respect, social equity and productive diversity'. It argues that multiculturalism must be an inclusive concept in terms of nationhood and identity 'for all Australians'. This new document also stresses the importance of the links between multiculturalism and citizenship as a set of rights and obligations by citizens towards the state. The *New Agenda's* attempt to support cultural respect through the notion of 'inclusiveness', without coming to grips with the increasing social inequality and exclusion in Australian society, is unlikely to have much effect. As Hage points out, this new version of Australian multiculturalism corresponds with Howard's underlying belief in the essentially European nature of Australian society, as stated in a speech to the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in 1998: 'We are, as all of you know, a projection of Western civilization in this part of the world. We have inherited the great European values of liberal democracy' (Hage 2001). This new version of multiculturalism is quite compatible with a return to the insular values of the 1950s, and with exclusionary immigration policies.

The new immigration panic

Over the past 50 years, Australia's immigration policy has been carefully planned. Due to its inaccessibility, Australia has had few problems with illegal immigrants. Immigration has always been a political issue, but the level of conflict and political mobilization on the topic has been limited. This situation has changed dramatically since about 1996 due to two factors: the rise of the One Nation Party and the increase in arrivals of boat people on Australia's northern shores. Matters came to a head in 2001 with the 'Tampa Affair' and a Federal Election fought largely on immigration.

During the March 1996 Federal Election, several Liberal and National candidates criticized provision of special services for immigrants and Aboriginal people. In one Queensland electorate, the Liberal Party Candidate, Pauline Hanson, attacked services for Aboriginal people in such an extreme way that she was dis-endorsed as a candidate by her own party. Despite this, she won the seat as an Independent, with one of the biggest anti-Labor swings in the country. This was widely taken as a signal that anti-minority discourses were now seen as acceptable by a large share of the population. Hanson quickly set up the One Nation party, which sought to build on such feelings. In her inaugural speech in Federal Parliament, Hanson attacked Aboriginal people, called for the stopping of immigration and the abolition of multiculturalism, and warned of 'the Asianization' of Australia.

Brett has suggested that such racist sentiments had grown during the period of ALP government from 1983-96, developing into a 'politics of grievance and resentment'. Such feelings grew amongst lower middle class people (self-employed and small business) who believed that their hard work had not been adequately rewarded and who felt insecure. They perceived minority groups such as Aborigines and migrants as not helping themselves yet

being rewarded by the state. Hanson, a small shop keeper, became a conduit for this view. Equally, working class people saw a decline in manufacturing industries, job losses, and a decline in wages and standard of living. This was the old Labor base who felt they had been betrayed (Brett 1997, 10–12). Such issues became 'racialized' so that immigrants (especially Asians) and Aboriginal People suffered an increase in personal abuse and attacks after Hanson's speech (Vasta 1999).

Both the Liberal-National Coalition and the ALP were slow to condemn Hanson's politics. Prime Minister Howard's initial silence seemed to signify to the nation that he condoned Hanson's views – which was consistent with his own past stance against Asian immigration.[4] It was not until October 1996, that Parliament passed a bi-partisan resolution condemning racism. This resolution seemed to be motivated primarily by fears of losing Asian export orders, and reports from universities that Asian students were failing to enrol for courses. There was no clear moral or political rejection of bigotry. The trend towards racialization of politics had immediate effects on policy. Howard could not deliver a cut in Asian immigration because that is where many of the skilled and business migrants, as well as full-fee paying Asian students were coming from. Rather the tightening of immigration policy was targeted at categories that were claimed to be hurting national interests: family reunion and asylum seekers. The result was a much more hostile climate towards immigration and multiculturalism.

The situation was exacerbated by the increase in boat-people arrivals in northern Australia from the mid-1990s. These fell into two main groups: Chinese people being smuggled in mainly for purposes of undocumented work; and asylum seekers from the Middle East and South Asia (Iraqis, Afghans and others) being brought in from Indonesia, usually by fishing boats chartered by people smugglers. Numbers were not high by international standards, never going much above 4000 in a year, but provoked media campaigns and popular outrage. The reaction of the Government has been to modify Australia's refugee and asylum policy to such an extent that it has been accused of contravening the 1951 Geneva Convention and of damaging Australia's non-discriminatory policy. Australia has long been proud of its openness to the persecuted. Between 1977-82, refugee policy became expansionist in order to deal with the refugee flow from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Although there was some disquiet, the Liberal-Coalition government chose a careful and considered approach of support for Vietnamese refugees, rather than fuelling fears and hostilities, as the current government has done (McMaster 2001, 54).

Minister Ruddock attacked the asylum seekers as 'queue jumpers' claiming that they took places from 'genuine' refugees who applied for resettlement through the UNHCR. He declared that boat-people arrivals were a threat to Australian sovereignty, and announced measures to deter arrivals and to limit the right of those who did arrive. Australia has put in place three main deterrents. First, in 1999 the government introduced the 3-year Temporary Protection Visa (TPV). The TPV confers no right to permanent settlement or family reunion. Another more dramatic deterrent has been to stop boat people from landing on Australian shores, and to try to send them back to Indonesia. A third deterrent is to place them in isolated and remote detention camps, where they have been barred from making phone calls, talking to solicitors, the media and supporters. They can languish in mandatory detention for anything up to 3 years. Hunger strikes, riots, self-inflicted injuries and even suicide have become commonplace. The Federal Government has also introduced a series of legal measures to limit the right to judicial review in asylum matters (Crock and Saul 2002, Chapter 5).

Immigration came even more strongly into the spotlight in August 2001, when the Norwegian freighter *MV Tampa* picked up over 400 asylum seekers (mainly originating in Afghanistan and Iraq) from a sinking boat off Northern Australia. The Government refused the captain permission to land the asylum seekers, and the *Tampa* anchored near the Australian territory of Christmas Island. This was the start of a saga involving international diplomacy, heated public debates in Australia, and feverish political activity. A country previously noted for its openness to refugees rapidly adopted a set of draconian laws designed to exclude asylum seekers. Australia tried to export the asylum seekers to its Pacific neighbors, Nauru and New Guinea – and was willing to spend vast sums of money to do so.[5] Asylum became the central issue in the November Election, giving victory to Liberal-National Prime Minister Howard. Before the *Tampa* affair, a Labor victory had been predicted.

The most recent legislation on border control occurred in March 2002. The Border Control Legislation includes:
- No permanent residency for people who leave a safe country and attempt to enter Australia illegally by being transported to one of the outer islands. They will not be permitted to bring in family and cannot return if they leave for any reason.
- Refusal of refugee status for people who conceal their identity by destroying their documents en route.
- Minimum mandatory sentences of 5 years for the first time people smugglers and 8 years for repeat offenders with a maximum sentence of 20 years.

Events since 1996 have tarnished Australia's reputation as an open and tolerant society, and as a 'good international citizen'. However, at the time of writing, a political movement against the new intolerance seems to be emerging. Led by the churches, humanitarian groups like Amnesty International, and elements of the ALP and the trade unions. It gives some hope that the pendulum will once again swing to more open policies in the future. Protests continue and in early 2002, Neville Roach, the Chairman of the government's advisory board, the Council for Multicultural Australia, resigned from his post. Roach, a prominent business leader and former Chief Executive of Fujitsu Australia, stated: 'I think the way in which the government has handled these issues – beginning I think with the *Tampa* – has tended to give comfort to the prejudiced side of human nature' (BBC News 2002).

Conclusion

Australia has had a carefully planned and managed immigration program since 1945. The state has been heavily involved in selection, admission and integration policies. At the same time, it has consulted systematically with a range of interest groups and the public at large. It has been sensitive to public opinion at times, but political leaders have also done much to shape public views on immigration and multiculturalism. In comparison with other immigration countries, Australia has been highly successful at controlling entry levels and preventing unauthorized entry. However, this success has been largely due to geographical remoteness. Australia has also been fairly successful in controlling the skills mix of immigrants: the ambitions of successive governments to import needed qualifications have been largely achieved.

Australian immigration policy has been less successful in controlling ethnic difference. The original objective of the postwar immigration policy was to keep Australia white and British.

Instead, mass immigration gave birth to one of the world's most diverse societies, leading to major changes in culture, national identity and citizenship. Australians seemed to be coming to terms with this shift through the multicultural approaches of the 1970s and 1980s. Policy-makers have also been relatively unsuccessful in limiting family reunion. Even the current government's strong emphasis on skilled migration only appears to have achieved a slight (and possibly temporary) reduction in the family share of entries. This is not surprising in view of the continued emphasis on immigration as the prelude to permanent settlement.

Recent trends to regional and global integration are threatening Australia's ability to maintain tight control over entries. Migratory patterns are become more complex and multi-directional. In this respect Australia is becoming more similar to other immigration countries. However, politicians and the public are finding it hard to come to terms with such changes, as the disproportionate reaction to the growth in asylum seeker arrivals reveals. The fears of loss of sovereignty and identity have also spilled over into the social policy area, leading to a questioning of multiculturalism. Here too Australia is following a similar trajectory to several European countries. However, the result seems to be more a relabelling and redefinition of multiculturalism than its complete abolition.

The year 2000 was the Year of the Spectacle – the 'Olympics of Globalization' gave Australia the opportunity to show-case itself to the world as the country of the 21st century and to show the world how wonderful, creative, generous, warm, welcoming and expansive it was. Australia became the darling of the white, multicultural, free, democratic, ex-colonial world. But there is also a dark side to the Australian national identity. It can be selfish, inward looking, anti-intellectual and racist. This is epitomized in the political personae of Pauline Hanson and John Howard. Despite the Olympics and the millions of dollars spent on the spectacle, in Australia there is currently a very weak sense of consciousness about the public good. There is a sense in which people can no longer see broader universal solutions. Recent political responses to immigration and asylum response have grown largely from the rise in popularity of the right-wing and anti-minority views epitomized by One Nation Party.

The results became clear at the 2001 Federal Election, when the Howard Government swept back into office on a tide of anti-immigration feeling, and Pauline Hanson complained bitterly that Howard had stolen her policies – and her voters. Jupp provides an incisive summary of the current Australian situation (Jupp 2002, 3):

> Even if the sky did not fall during 2001-2002, Australia behaved in an authoritarian manner which damaged its international reputation and revealed unhealthy xenophobia. The demise of One Nation and the revelation of the unjustified demonization of asylum seekers, has brought the situation back to normal. But the 'normal situation' still includes having more than 3000 people locked away in the Australian desert…; the abolition of effective national advocacy, monitoring and research to improve and maintain ethnic relations; an immigration policy which makes family reunion very difficult; a volatile public opinion which is potentially susceptible to racist or xenophobic attitudes; and a national political leadership which has exploited all of this.

Today Australia appears fearful and restrictive – a society that fears invasion from the North, and sees difference as a threat. This is, of course, a return to the insularity and patterns of fear that have dominated Australian history since 1788. Such fear continues to this day. Perhaps the more open period since 1945, and especially from 1972 to 1996 will go down in history as the exception. From 1972 until the early 1990s, Australia entered one of its most

enlightened periods. The emergence of the new social movements created a reformist atmosphere of progressive politics concerned with social justice and equality for immigrants and refugees, Indigenous Australians, women and other disempowered groups. For the next 25 years, Australia was often considered a world leader in terms of its multicultural policies for immigrants and minorities. Yet the underlying fear of difference and change was just below the surface.

During the current asylum panic, the Government claimed that 'Afghans were really Pakistanis, that there might be terrorists aboard the Tampa, and that the asylum seekers were probably rich' (Jupp 2002). The stated object of the precipitately adopted new laws was 'to prevent people smuggling, to maintain the integrity of our borders and to prevent access to our asylum system other than on our own terms' (Jupp 2002). The recurrent racism found in the Australian national identity has come to the fore over this issue. The government's rhetoric about queue jumpers, about the type of people who would pay smugglers, about the type of people who put their children at risk when they go on hunger strikes has fuelled prejudice among some parts of the Australian population. Typically, prejudicial sentiments will appeal to the more vulnerable sectors of the population. Furthermore, Howard is well aware that he is exploiting a deep-rooted Australian fear – the fear of invasion by foreigners.

Today the Australian dilemma seems more acute than ever. A small population of mainly European origin inhabiting a huge land mass on the rim of Asia has yet to find a secure identity. Australia's economy is highly integrated into global trade and finance. Economic links with Asia are of paramount importance. Flows of people in both directions are an essential part of these linkages. Australia's society includes people of diverse origins, cultures and religions. A return to isolationism and mono-culturalism is not an option. Yet many Australians feel threatened by this situation. They seem unable to face up to the realities of diversity and openness. Immigration remains the flash-point for this fundamental malaise, and is likely to be a focus of political conflict for the foreseeable future.

Tables

Table 1   Permanent immigrants to Australia: average annual intakes

1945-60	107,000
1960s	130,000
1970s	96,000
1980s	110,000
1990s	90,000

Source: (Castles et al. 1998, 7); (ABS 2002a)

Table 2   Permanent immigrants to Australia

	Permanent arrival numbers	Net permanent migration
1992-93	76,300	48,400
1993-94	69,800	42,500
1994-95	87,400	60,500
1995-96	99,100	70,500
1996-97	85,800	55,900
1997-98	77,300	45,300
1998-99	84,100	49,000
1999-00	92,272	51,000

Source: (DIMIA 2001a)

Table 3   Migration Program Levels

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01 (projected)	2001-02 (projected)
Family	31,310	32,040	32,000	33,600	37,900
Skill	34,670	35,000	35,333	43,000	45,500
Special eligibility	1,110	890	2,850	2,400	1,600
Total Program	**67,100**	**67,900**	**70,200**	**79,000**	**85,000**

Source: DIMIA, 2002 *Australian Immigration – Recent Migration Program Statistics.*
Notes: the 2001-02 Skill Stream has a contingency reserve of 8000 places, not shown in the above figures.
Special eligibility applies to former citizens or residents of Australia, or dependants of New Zealand citizens resident in Australia.

Table 4   Permanent arrivals by eligibility category

Eligibility category	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-2001
Family	46,458	36,490	21,142	21,501	19,896	21,227
Skill	20,008	19,697	25,985	27,931	32,350	35,607
Humanitarian	13,824	9,886	8,779	8,790	7,267	7,625
New Zealand	16,234	17,501	19,393	24,680	31,610	N/a
Other	2,615	2,178	2,028	1,241	1,149	N/a
Total	**99,139**	**85,752**	**77,327**	**84,143**	**92,272**	

Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), *Immigration Update*, quarterly, and DIMIA, 2002, *Immigration Update*, *Special Edition 2000-1*, Canberra.

Notes: Due to changes in data collection methods, the figures for 2000-2001 are not strictly comparable to earlier ones: the apparent increase is probably slightly exaggerated.

N/a means not available.

Table 5   Australian population, 1947–96

Census Year	Overseas-born	Total population	Overseas-born as % of total
1947	744 187	7 579 385	9.8
1954	1 286 466	8 986 530	14.3
1961	1 778 780	10 508 186	16.9
1971	2 579 318	12 755 638	20.2
1976	2 718 318	13 548 448	20.1
1981	3 003 834	14 576 330	20.6
1986	3 247 301	15 602 163	20.8
1991	3 689 128	16 407 045	22.5
1996	3 908 213	17 892 418	21.8

Source*: Australian Censuses*

TABLE 6   Unemployment by selected birthplace & gender

	Females	Males
Unemployment rates		
Australia total	7.4	7.8
Overseas-born	9.7	9.0
English-speaking countries	6.1	6.4
UK and Ireland	5.8	6.0
New Zealand	7.4	7.6
Non English speaking countries	12.4	10.9
Vietnam	20.4	23.2
Lebanon	30.6	24.0
Aboriginal	28.6	32.2

Source*: 1996 Census*

References

ABS. 2001. "Migration, Australia.": Australian Bureau of Statistics. 8 April, http://www.abs.gov.au/austats.

—. 2002a. "Population: International Migration.": Australian Bureau of Statisics. 23 February, http://www.abs.gov.au/austats/abs@.nsf/.

—. 2002b. "Population Size and Growth.": Australian Bureau of Statistics. 23 February, www.abs.gov.au/austats/abs.

Ackland, Richard, and Lynne Williams. 1992. *Immigrants and the Australian Labour Market: The Experience of Three Recessions*. Canberra: Bureau of Immigration Research.

Australia, UN Association of. 2002. "Refugee budget reflections." Pp. 12 in *Unity*.

BBC News. 2002. "news.BBC.co.uk.english/ world/asia-pacific: 23/1//02).".

BCA. 1999. *Submission to the 2000-2002 Migration and Humanitarian Programs and Associated Settlement Issues*.: Business Council of Australia.

Betts, K atherine. 1993. "Public Discourse,Immigration and the New Class." in *The Politics of Australian Immigration*, edited by James Jupp and Maria Kabala. Canberra: AGPS.

Betts, Katherine. 2001. "Boatpeople and Public Opinion in Australia." *People and Place* 9:34-48.

BIR. 1991. *Australia's Population Trends and Prospects 1990*. Canberra: AGPS.

Birrell, Robert. 2001. "Immigration On The Rise: The 2001-2002 Immigration Program." *People and Place* 9:21-28.

Birrell, Robert, and Siew Ean Khoo. 1995. *The Second Generation in Australia: Educational and Occupational Characteristics, Statistical Report No. 14*. Canberra: AGPS.

Blainey, Geoffrey. 1984. *All for Australia*. Sydney: Methuen Haynes.

Brett, Judith. 1997. "John Howard, Pauline Hanson and the politics of grievance." in *The Resurgence of Racism*, edited by G. Gray and C. Winter. Melbourne: Monash Papers in History.

Cahill, Desmond. 1996. *Immigration and Schooling in the 90s*. Canberra: BIMPR.

Castles, Stephen. 2001. "Multiculturalism in Australia." in *The Australian People: an Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People and their Origins*, edited by James Jupp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Castles, Stephen, Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, and Michael Morrissey. 1988. *Mistaken Identity - Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia*. Sydney: Pluto Press.

Castles, Stephen, and Alastair Davidson. 2000. *Citizenship and Migration: Globalisation and the Politics of Belonging*. London: Macmillan.

Castles, Stephen, William Foster, Robyn Iredale, and Glenn Withers. 1998. *Immigration and Australia: Myths and Realities*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Collins, Jock. 1991. *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land: Australia's Post-war Immigration*. Sydney: Pluto Press.

Collins, Jock, Katherine Gibson, Caroline Alcorso, Stephen Castles, and David Tait. 1995. *A Shop Full of Dreams: Ethnic Small Business in Australia*. Sydney: Pluto Press.

Commissioner, Federal Race Relations. 1995. *State of the Nation: A Report on People of non-English Speaking Backgrounds*. Canberra: AGPS.

Crock, Mary, and Ben Saul. 2002. *Future Seekers: Refugees and the Law in Australia*. Sydney: Federation Press.

Cronin, Kathryn. 2001. "The legal status of immigrants and refugees." in *The Australian People: an Encyclopedia of the Nation, the People and their Origins*, edited by James Jupp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davidson, Alastair. 1997. *From Subject to Citizen: Australian Citizenship in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

de Lepervanche, M. 1975. "Australian Immigrants 1788–1940: Desired and Unwanted." in *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, edited by E.L Wheelwright and K. Buckley. Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Co.

DIMIA. 2001a. *Key Facts in Immigration*. Canberra: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs. Fact Sheet, 2,

—. 2001b. *New Zealanders in Australia*. Canberra: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs. Fact Sheet, 17,

—. 2001c. *Over Fifty Years of Post-War Migration*. Canberra: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs. Fact Sheet, 4,

—. 2002. *The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs*.: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs. Fact Sheet, 3,

Foster, Will. 1996. *Immigration and the Australian Economy*. Canberra: DIMA.

Goot, Murray. 2001. "Public Opinion on Immigration." in *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, edited by James Jupp. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hage, Ghassan. 1998. *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*. Sydney and New York: Pluto Press and Routledge.

—. 2001. "The Politics of Australian Fundamentalism." Pp. 27-31 in *Arena Magazine*.

Jones, Alan. 2001. "The Business Council of Australia's Case for Population Growth: An Ecological Critique." *People and Place* 9:49-57.

Jupp, James. 1993. "The Ethnic Lobby and Immigration Policy." in *The Politics of Australian Immigration*, edited by James Jupp and Maria Kabala. Canberra: AGPS.

—. 2002. "Undoing the Damage and Restoring Multiculturalism." in *Beyond Tolerance: National Conference on Racism*. Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC),.

Lever-Tracey, Constance, and Michael Quinlan. 1988. *A Divided Working Class*. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

MacQueen, Humphrey. 1970. *A New Britannia*. Victoria: Penguin.

McAllister, Ian. 1988. "Political Attitudes and Electoral Behaviour." in *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, edited by James Jupp. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

McMaster, Don. 2001. *Asylum Seekers: Australia's Response to Refugees*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Reynolds, Henry. 1987. *Frontier*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Rubinstein, Kim. 1995. "Citizenship in Australia: unscrambling its meaning." *Melbourne University Law Review* 20.

Vasta, Ellie. 1993. "Immigrant women and the politics of resistance." *Australian Feminist Studies* vol. 18:5-23.

—. 1996. "Dialectics of domination: racism and multiculturalism." in *The teeth are smiling: The persistence of racism in multicultural Australia*, edited by Ellie Vasta and Stephen Castles. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

—. 1999. "Multicultural Politics and Resistance: Migrants Unite?" in *The Future of Australian Multiculturalism*, edited by Ghassan Hage and Rowanne Couch. Sydney: RIHSS Sydney University.

Warhurst, John. 1993. "The growth lobby and its opponents: business, unions, environmentalists and other interest groups." in *The Politics of Australian Immigration*, edited by James Jupp and Marie Kabala. Canberra: AGPS.

Wooden, Mark, Robert Holton, Graeme Hugo, and Judith Sloan. 1994. *Australian Immigration: A Survey of the Issues*. Canberra: AGPS.

Zappala, Gianni, and Stephen Castles. 2000. "Citizenship and Immigration in Australia." in *From Migrants to Citizens: Membership in a Changing World*, edited by T. Alexander Aleinikoff and Douglas Klusmeyer. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

---

[1] The authors thank Caroline Alcorso (University of Sydney) for excellent research assistance in preparing this paper. We thank Gary Freeman and Jeannette Money, the discussants of this paper at the conference Controlling Immigration: a Global Perspective (San Diego 17-18 May 2002), for their helpful comments. We also acknowledge the suggestions of participants at this conference, as well as the detailed written comments from Gaku Tsuda.

[2] Australian immigration figures are given for financial years, which go from July to June.

[3] Australian statistics often differentiate between immigrants from English speaking background (ESB) countries (principally UK, Ireland, USA, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa) and non-English speaking (NESB) countries. These categories were highly relevant in the postwar period, but are beginning to lose their usefulness, since both categories include increasingly diverse groups.

[4] Howard had been forced to resign as Leader of the Opposition in 1988, after a speech opposing Asian immigration, which was widely seen as racist.

[5] The 2002-03 Federal Budget included A$2.8 billion for border control measures – an increase of A$1.2 billion over the previous year. A$219 was for construction of an off-shore detention facility on Christmas Island, while A$450 was for off-shore processing on Nauru and Manus Island (Australia 2002).