



Policy on Immigration

The free movement of people, within and between countries, generally contributes to greater prosperity than when movement is restricted.

Like the free movement of goods and capital, the free movement of people is not only a basic human right but also contributes to economic growth by allowing the benefits of greater trade in the labour market. This trade benefits both the new immigrant and their new nation. Immigrant nations such as America, Australia, New Zealand and Canada have benefited enormously from high levels of immigration.

For Australia the need for immigration is becoming particularly acute as we face a labour shortage. In Western Australia the unemployment rate has fallen below 3%, with an historically high participation rate, and the number of job vacancies exceeds the number of unemployed.

But immigration can also come at a cost. Given Australia's extensive welfare system it is necessary to place limits on immigration, and new immigrants who do not share our fundamental values of democracy, freedom and responsibility are potentially dangerous when they have access to our open democratic system.

The LDP believes it is possible to combine a more open immigration system with sufficient limits and controls so as to reduce the potential costs of immigration. This can be achieved though:

- Free Immigration Agreements (FIA), modelled on free trade

agreements between compatible countries to allow the easier movement of residents between those countries.

- Replacement of our current points-based quota system with a tariff system where immigrants pay for the right to become a permanent resident (PR) in Australia.
- Removal of some welfare rights for PRs, except where alternative arrangements have been agreed through an FIA.
- Tighter restrictions on becoming a citizen, so that Australia can sustain a high level of immigration and relatively free movement of people without worrying about the impact of recent immigrants on our democracy or social harmony.
- A liberal approach to temporary residency for workers and tourists.
- Maintenance of mandatory detention for unauthorized arrivals for security and health checks, after which they can apply for temporary release (with bail conditions) while their application is being processed.

Free Immigration Agreements

The idea of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) is becoming increasingly popular, with Australia already engaged in agreements with New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and America. These agreements allow for the relatively free flow of good and services between the

two countries in recognition that such an agreement is in their mutual interests.

The same rationale applies for immigration. Indeed, the argument for Free Immigration Agreements (FIAs) is probably stronger than the argument for FTAs as the option of truly multi-lateral free movement of people is not viable and so the most efficient outcome is not available.

FIAs should be negotiated with countries that share our basic values (rule of law, democracy) and only in situations where there is no expectation of a surge of immigration. Migrants between FIA countries would have the rights of a permanent resident and would retain the citizenship of their home country.

Australia currently has an “open door” policy with New Zealand and people move relatively freely between Australia and New Zealand to the benefit of both countries. Good candidate countries for an FIA include Canada, Singapore, Hong Kong, the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands among others.

Immigration tariff

The current approach to immigration is to set a quota of immigrants who can enter the country and then assess applicants according to a complex set of criteria. The LDP supports a shift in our immigration process from this “quota” approach to a “tariff” approach, where immigration is restricted by the charging of an immigration fee (and of course minimum health and safety requirements).

This idea has been championed by the Nobel Prize winning Professor Gary Becker. Becker explains that the tariff approach is always preferable to a quota approach on efficiency grounds. Additional benefits of the immigration fee is that it acts as a form of self-selection as

only people with high expected income will apply, it acts as a form of payment for Australia’s public goods that are already in place, and it adds to the economic benefit that the immigrant is providing Australia. These benefits significantly undermine the arguments against immigration.

The fixed immigration fee will originally be set at a level to ensure that the amount of immigration is roughly the same as the current immigration intake. The first year will set the base level of expected immigration, but the actual amount of immigration will fluctuate around that level depending on the numbers of willing applicants. It is this flexibility that makes the tariff system more efficient and appropriate than the quota approach. The government retains the right to adjust the immigration fee if necessary.

The immigration fee will apply to all non-humanitarian immigrants, whether economic or family migrants. As Australia does not want the immigration fee to discourage the immigration of high-skilled people, a limited number of “immigration scholarships” and “immigration loans” will be available to appropriate candidates.

Organisations that seek to encourage population growth in a particular region may subsidise the fee for immigrants that agree to settle in that location. The same option would be open to State governments that sought to promote settlement of immigrants in particular areas of a State.

Unauthorized arrivals and refugees

It is important that Australia provide a sanctuary for people who are fleeing political oppression and persecution, both on compassionate grounds and to demonstrate to the rest of the world the attractions of a free and democratic society. Such people can also become

fierce advocates of freedom in Australia, having experienced its loss.

It is necessary to do preliminary health and security checks on all people coming to Australia. Unfortunately, it is not possible to do these checks on unauthorized arrivals before they come to Australia. It is therefore necessary to detain unauthorized arrivals temporarily until basic health and security checks can be completed.

Following health and security checks the unauthorized arrival can then apply for PR either by paying the immigration fee, applying for an “immigration scholarship” or “immigration loan” or by applying for humanitarian consideration. The process of determining genuine refugee status will be limited to a tribunal of first instance and a single court of appeal. Both will be open to the public.

While awaiting a decision on humanitarian grounds, unauthorized arrivals can apply for temporary release, with bail conditions. Any individual or organization can offer to post a bail equal to the immigration fee. If the unauthorized arrival is denied entry on humanitarian grounds and they refuse to leave the country, then the bail money will be used to pay the immigration fee.

Restrictions on citizenship

After paying the immigration fee a migrant becomes a Permanent Resident (PR). PRs have the same rights to live and work as citizens except they cannot vote, they do not receive an Australian passport, they are not entitled to regular welfare payments (though they can still use public health, public education and public infrastructure) and they can be deported if they commit crimes of a significant serious nature (e.g. murder, rape, terrorism).

Migrants are free to remain in Australia permanently as PRs without ever applying for citizenship or returning to their home country at any time. The maintenance of a significant non-citizen population is a common approach in many countries, including Singapore, Switzerland, Dubai, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan.

The LDP believes in making Australia a more open country for people to come and live, but not necessarily to vote and receive welfare. Requirements for citizenship should be significantly increased. Applicants for citizenship should have resided in Australia for more than 10 years, passed a basic citizenship test (of standard high school quality), provide evidence of likely continued further employment and links to the Australian community, have a clean criminal record and met various other requirements to be determined later (for example, the attainment of an educational qualification in Australia). The application process will take no less than one year and will involve interviews and assessments.

Children born in Australia to Australian PRs will automatically be Australian citizens.

Temporary residents

Temporary residents (TRs) include tourists, students, business people and temporary workers in Australia. All of these visas should be easily available to people who can show just cause. All TR visas would be time limited.