

Immigration and Foreign Aid

From its inception Australia was and remains a nation of immigrants who have greatly benefited this nation economically and culturally. But immigration in itself is not an immediate panacea for a failing economy or a vibrant, thriving nation unless there are earlier underlying dynamics that help augment immigration. This is witnessed by the paradox that the wealthiest nations have historically had smaller populations while the reverse is true of poorer nations.

Both culture and economy are two sides of the same coin. Particularly in the 20th century, the prosperity of Western nations can be traced to a legal, social, economic and cultural system that embraced equality of rights and individual advancement based on merit. These societies thrived because they celebrated entrepreneurship, scientific inquiry, innovation and private benevolence.

Therefore we believe an immigration strategy should focus on how it can simultaneously produce not only greater economic mobility but strengthen the common western values for freedom of speech, religion, trade and property while retaining an equitable rule of law for all.

Australian Christians immigration strategies are formed on the detailed research and analysis.

Australian Christians recognizes that those who have already had their refugee status determined by UNHCR and fall within Australia's refuge intake quota should be resettled as soon as possible. We also recognise our obligation to provide temporary refuge (asylum) to those needing it.

Australian Christians notes that all things being equal, most people would prefer to remain in their homeland. We therefore support policies that provide relief and intervention in foreign countries to avert refugee movements, loss of life and family upheavals. We recommend providing Temporary Protection Visa's (TPV's) for those in need of them with the right to work in and contribute to Australia until it is safe to return and rebuild their homeland. We shouldn't aim to deprive other nations of the human resource they need to rebuild post conflict.

We are concerned about spiralling and extreme persecution and religious cleansing in many nations. In Iraq and Syria for example, Christians, Yazidis and Shia Muslims seek refuge from the terror of ISIS and we should do all we can to extend TPV's and increase our Special Humanitarian Program to include internally displaced peoples who fear for their very existence. We in principle support the adoption of a similar policy to the 1999 response to the Kosovo crisis which enabled 4,000 Kosovo Albanians to find temporary refuge in Australia.

Daily life in Pakistan also continues to deteriorate for Christians and other minorities suffering systematic discrimination and living in fear of the state's Blasphemy Law.

Australian Christians would seek a Special Assistance Visa Category for Pakistani Christians in the same way Australia extended a Special Assistance Visa to Pakistan's persecuted Ahmadis during the period 1974-2003.

Australian Christians aims to address both the symptoms and causes with the following recommendations.

Addressing the symptom:

We believe our first response should be humanitarian and recommend:

Special Assistance Visa category for persecuted Christian and other minorities (World Watch List identifies 50 countries where Christians face intense persecution because of their faith. The recent 2015 list notes that Islamic extremism is the source of persecution in 40 out of 50 of those countries).

Improving the determination process for those seeking asylum to remove people from detention immediately when identity, health and security checks are completed

Introduction of a Pilot Homestay Transition Program for asylum seekers who have completed identity, health and security checks and for refugees wishing to take advantage of this transition option into Australian life. This is designed to offer a safe, humane, cost effective and personal introduction to Australian life that will engage individual community members and break down barriers for a better Australia. It is also intended to reduce time spent in detention, offer affordable housing and supplement the income of Australian families while giving genuine refugees a fair go and a softer introduction to Australia.

Addressing the source:

Increase Foreign Aid to 0.5% to assist those most in need through investment in health, education, business, microfinance projects.

'Radical change in developing countries towards the rule of law, liberty, democracy and economic openness is the only long-term solution, for this will ultimately raise living standards to the point where no-one will be forced by poverty to leave their home country.'

Greg Lindsay, Executive Director, The Centre for Independent Studies

Strengthen diplomatic relationships and programs to advance political and economic stability, promote religious freedom and human rights for all. To this end Australian Christians recommends the reinstatement of an Australian Envoy to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to lobby for equal opportunity and human rights for minorities in all OIC nations. We must see some action from this international umbrella organisation.

Increase intelligence through operatives/workers in source countries to assist with fast-tracking refugee determinations.

1) Demands for near-instant parity for immigrants should be resisted. In particular, the government should not be subsidising immigration through welfare (apart from genuine refugees). This merely increases the need for higher taxes and more welfare redistribution

2) Australia should continue being a welcoming country to all people but citizenship should be based on the mutual agreement that in exchange for the privilege of living and working in this nation, our common core values should also be embraced. This needs to be clearly understood, valued and preserved, as immigration should never undermine our democracy and social cohesiveness.

Therefore, citizenship should not be granted rashly. Applicants for citizenship should have resided in Australia for at least 10 years, passed a basic citizenship test (including standard English proficiency), provide evidence of likely continued employment or economic support, links to the Australian community and no criminal record. However, the application process should straightforward and efficient.

3) All immigrants arriving in Australia with the aim of remaining should be subject to preliminary health and security checks. Those refused admission on reasonable, objective security grounds should be deported.

4) All temporary residents (TRs) visas including students, business people and temporary workers should remain available but should be time limited and monitored as visa fraud and overstaying remain high.

5) Greater incentives should be provided for private citizens, churches, institutions and businesses to independently sponsor immigrants for a reasonable period before applying for permanent residency. This approach puts less pressure on government welfare and creates community relationships, allowing immigrants to better understand Australian culture and values. It allows the market to determine labour requirements and private citizens to take responsibility rather than merely relying on government quotas.

6) Governments have pursued high immigration quotas due to concerns about an ageing population. Declining western birth rates means the traditional labour pool (15-67) is being replenished at a slower rate and why the 'Big Australia' rhetoric focuses on supplying this gap through higher immigration.

But a high immigration driven solution is only part of the answer. There is a need for greater support in helping existing Australian families through policies that alleviate tax burdens and encourage savings to better plan for retirement and support elderly family members.

Furthermore, immigration alone is not a substitute for productivity and the function of free-markets that allow the type of economic prosperity that immigration helps to strengthen.

7) Authentic free trade agreements (FTA) are likely to assist in better-managed flows of immigration because they encourage competition and development of markets. However, to be 'free' they need to operate without political manipulation and particularly without countries that are committed to undermining western freedoms.

A greater emphasis of trade should be with countries that are emerging as free societies and economies. This allows them to properly understand and implement the principles of western trade and lift themselves out of poverty, while also making immigration flows for both countries less forced and more manageable. It is especially beneficial for poorer nations who need keep their citizens—particularly the young—and develop their country for future generations.

8) Australian Sovereignty means this nation is not just a space on the map where international treaties permit everyone to come. Australia has a legal and moral right to protect its national borders.

9) Large-scale illegal immigration is closely linked with international human trafficking and crime syndicates. These should be actively discouraged. Therefore, priority of processing should always be given to offshore special humanitarian visa applicants over illegal boat arrivals.

10) Immigration can only be successful when subsequent generations continue to appreciate not only their own distinct cultures but also the western liberal values that shaped this nation.

There are good reasons why western countries are attractive places of destination and equally a strong need to articulate the customs and heritage that shaped it. Schools should be a place of learning Australian history, including the Judeo-Christian heritage that profoundly shaped its constitution. From there we derive the fundamental ideas of separation of powers, property and human rights, consensual government, freedom of expression and religion, particularly the idea of separation of church and state which rightly understood means a secular state not without religion but one where no religion is privileged.

Australian Christians recommends that refugees be allowed to seek Permanent Residence and Citizenship in Australia if, after 10 years, a return to the source nation remains hazardous.

This approach would be in the best interests of families, of the source nation, of international relations and global security. And it would allow 10 years for new arrivals to build relationships, develop skills and experience Australian life and culture. Integration is vitally important.

Foreign Aid

Australian Christians acknowledges the historical generosity of Australians in assisting others who are in need, and endorses the provision of Australian foreign aid to improve infrastructure, raise living standards, and mitigate the effects of natural disasters in overseas countries.

We favour a multifaceted effective and efficient foreign aid program that enhances mutual interests, builds inter-generational skills, partners with reputable Australian and overseas organisations, and employs robust accountability systems.

We encourage partnerships that promote life, liberty, and greater opportunity for human development. Australian Christians supports projects that strengthen the efforts of NGOs, assist persecuted minorities to improve their situation, and endeavour to raise the equality of women.

Foreign aid needs to balance Australia's national interests of our poorest citizens with those of foreign countries. Australian Christians supports the new Colombo Plan, which will provide the opportunity for Australian students to gain experience in Asia Pacific countries by being awarded placements in universities in those countries.

A summary of our Foreign Aid Policy includes:

Australia needs to pursue a multifaceted foreign aid program utilising a combination of:

- a) high level civil works by Australia's leading construction companies; and
- b) using infrastructure providers and support to effect economic and educational development

Foreign aid should not be given directly to governments

Foreign aid should be provided to reputable organisations that have a permanent investment in the region, in its health and business, and which have established a transparent track record of fiscal responsibility and effective project completion

Australia must have robust systems in place to ensure accountability for how foreign aid funding is spent

Foreign aid must be provided in such a way that teaches and empowers people to accomplish things for themselves. It must not foster a welfare mentality.

Australian foreign aid must address skills shortages in overseas countries and build intergenerational skills.

Microfinance projects should be encouraged and foreign aid should be utilised to partner with people and/or communities on projects, and a minimum fee for service should be charged.

Australia should provide aid for trade, that is, Australia's interests need to be considered when allocating foreign aid.

Australian Christians will definitely not support funding of politically contentious aid programs such as those that foster abortion, sterilisation, normalising of same sex attraction etc., which are incompatible with our values.