

The Australian Federation of Islamic
Councils

Submission

on:

**Planning Australia's 2021-22
Migration Program
10 February 2021**

By email: submissions to migration.policy@homeaffairs.gov.au

Introduction

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) understands that “Australia’s permanent Migration Program aims to maximise the economic and social benefits to Australia.” Being an Australian registered body, the AFIC supports all ethical programs that will maximise the economic and social benefits to Australia. A large part of the AFIC’s mission is to contribute to Australia’s prosperity and social cohesion.

One quarter of Australia’s population consists of non-Australian citizens.¹ Immigration has been one of the greatest highlights in relation to culture, language and economy in Australian society. There are very few countries that can match Australia’s cultural richness.

The AFIC understands that “permanent migration” has and will more than likely continue to benefit Australia’s economy. We note that the focus is now shifted to “skilled migrants.” The aim is to admit migrants who are more likely to contribute to higher workforce participation rates and are less likely to draw on government welfare. The Migration Council Australia predicts that by 2050, each individual migrant will on average be contributing approximately 10 per cent more to Australia’s economy than its existing residents.²

The AFIC submits that the program must also look beyond the adult migrant and explore the second generation of migrants, that is, given the right educational and economic conditions, the children of migrants as children of migrants all over Australia continue to contribute to Australia’s innovation in numerous fields and Australia’s economic prosperity.

¹ Abhinav, Partnering Life Changing Decisions; <https://www.abhinav.com/australia-immigration/know-about-benefits-of-immigration-to-australia.aspx>.

² Migration Council Australia, The Economic Impact of Migration 27th submission; file:///C:/Users/saran/Downloads/MCA_additional2.pdf.

The AFIC contends that migration levels should be increased to guarantee Australia's long-term prosperity, viability and sovereignty. A small population will leave Australia exposed and will reduce its regional power and efficacy.

The Growth of China and India and their influence are already issues of concern for Australia economically and may soon pose a more perturbing threat Australia's security. This is only one of the many reasons that Australia should create a balance and look to diversify its migration program in 2021-22 and beyond.

Acknowledgment

The AFIC acknowledges that migration has and will continue to drive employment growth in Australia in the coming years. Further, skilled migration will ensure that Australia remains a highly skilled nation. Statistics forecast that skilled migration will have led to a 60.4 per cent increase in the population with a university education.³

The AFIC also recognises the need to establish regional Australian communities and agrees that one of the more efficient and effective ways in doing so is to broaden the criteria for permanent residency. History has taught us that the effective way to develop a country is by increasing its population.

The AFIC will support The Department of Home Affairs efforts towards a more prosperous Australia and looks forward to being a partner in developing a fair and balanced long-term migration program.

Submissions

How can the Migration Program settings facilitate economic growth while promoting Australian jobs, and enhance social cohesion, in the context of the challenges posed by the global pandemic?

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013), "Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia", 6250.0, November 2013; Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015), "Labour Force, Australia", 6202.0, January 2015.

The global pandemic will pass, its context has shown us that we are on the one hand effected by global events and on the other, we must look for self-sufficiency and security in manufacturing of essentials, agriculture, information technology, finance and especially defence and intelligence. This means that we must, as a nation, review our policies towards our transport industry and resurrect the manufacture of essential motor vehicles in Australia and the manufacture of other essentials. These industries will need both skilled and general or semi-skilled labour. Australia will need to increase its migrant intake to resurrect lost industries. We must change our views to migrants and change public perceptions in this area. Migrants adjust and contribute to society proportionately to their level of comfort, freedom from harassment, educational and economic opportunities and safety and security. The immigration program will not succeed if isolated from the other needs of migrants and society in general. It must come hand in hand with countering right-wing-extremism, xenophobia and religiophobia. Migrants must be empowered to overcome planning obstacles that deny them from their places of worship or specialised private schools. They must be given greater access and greater opportunities.

The AFIC believes that enhancing or increasing visas for family reunion applicants will further boost Australia's economy and enhance migrant attachment to and affiliation with Australia. Family are what keep a migrant's connection to their country of origin strong. Family affinity makes a migrant want to continue to support the welfare of parents or siblings overseas. Increasing the family reunion intake will ensure a quicker settling-in for migrants and a greater contribution to Australia's economy.

AFIC also submits that our humanitarian intake must be enhanced with more adept settlement services and training programs to ensure a quick transition into the workforce. We submit that the humanitarian numbers be increased and the requisite facilities and services be enhanced to ensure appropriate outcomes.

Answering the three specific questions:

To what extent can Australia's Migration Program's settings influence Australia's attractiveness as a destination for migrants with critical skills to

assist Australia's economic recovery? What approach to these settings should the Government take?

There is no doubt that Australia is already an attractive destination for migrants from many countries. It will always be difficult to attract highly skilled migrants without a considerable incentives.

Some of Australia's greatest features are:

- Multiculturalism
- Multifaith
- Friendly and respectful coexistence
- Safety and Security
- Employment opportunities
- Quality Education
- Abundance of life's essential
- Medicare
- Aged pension and aged care
- Employee protections (FWC).
- Parliamentary democracy
- Beaches and vast lands
- Freedom of conscience and freedom of expression
- Relatively equal access
- Reasonably adequate anti-corruption mechanisms
- Accessibility of political leaders and decision-makers
- Relative egalitarianism

Detractions:

Occasional xenophobia and Islamophobia

Rising Right Wing Extremism

The government should follow the simple formula of enhancing its strengths and overcoming its weaknesses. It must build its public service to protect its institutions and revenue sources.

How do we best support regional migration in order to meet the needs of Australia's regions?

Regional Australia has many strengths, for example, it lacks the congestion of urban areas, people can have good sized homestead with a good size block of land. Regional Australia needs more access to services, more educational facilities, better equipped healthcare facilities and better access to all other services that attract people. For migrants specifically, the most important pegs that will keep them in regional areas relate to access to specific religious, dietary and cultural needs. Meaning, that the local shops will need to stock some of their preferred foods, they need the local community to be more tolerant of their need to develop their own places of worship and they must be given equal access to recreational infrastructure. Migrants can also be enticed to remain in regional Australia if they are given a greater access to family reunion migration.

Conclusion

The AFIC is grateful for this opportunity to make submissions and looks forward to working together with The Department of Home Affairs to better Australia's long-term migration program.

We recognise that Australia has achieved marked success through the migration program. This success can be multiplied by strengthening the skilled framework that has and will continue to accommodate families and humanitarian migration while still maintaining significant overall gains for the country.

AFIC will support a more balanced increased migration intake with added focus on family reunion and humanitarian visas.

**Authorised by Dr Rateb Jneid
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