

Inquiry into the departure of settlers from Australia

Immigration Advisory Council, Committee on Social Patterns, Inquiry into the Departure of Settlers from Australia - Final Report, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1973, pp.vii, ix, 13-15.

Final report - July 1973.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of the Committee for this Inquiry were:

- (a) To investigate and report upon the departure of settlers from Australia, taking into consideration such aspects as:
- i) The rate of departure;
 - ii) the pattern and seasonal characteristics of the departure movement (including type of selection, occupation in which selected and employment history);
 - iii) the causes of return migration; and
- (b) to relate this information to the experience of other countries accepting migrants or 'guest-workers'; and
- (c) to suggest any further measures which might be taken to remove or ameliorate the situation revealed by the Inquiry as contributing materially to the departure of settlers.

The Committee on Social Patterns of The Immigration Advisory Council

Chairman

- Professor J. Zubrzycki, MBE, Head of Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, Australian National University

Members

- Miss J. Green, Australian Council of Social Service
- Mr R.J. Hawke, Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Sir Arthur Lee, KBE, MC, Returned Services League
- Mr W. M. Lippmann, MBE
- Air Marshall Sir John McCauley, KBE, CB, Good Neighbour Councils
- Mr I. R. McRae, National Youth Council of Australia
- Mr W. P. Nicholas, Australian Woolgrowers and Graziers' Council
- Mrs R. J. Reader, OBE, National Council of Women
- Dr A. Richardson, Reader in Psychology, University of Western Australia

Consultant to the Committee

- Dr C. A. Price, Professorial Fellow, Department of Demography, Australian National University

Department of Immigration Representatives

- Mr G. C. Watson, First Assistant Secretary, Migrant Services Division
- Mr E. L. Charles, Assistant Secretary, Integration Branch
- Mr K. Kern, Chief Psychologist, Integration Branch
- Mr A. Fortey, Principal Research Officer, Demography Sub-Section, Research and Co-ordination Branch
- Mr N. C. J. Hoffmann, Executive Officer, Immigration Advisory Council.

Summary of Recommendations

The Committee believes that:

1. **Surveys of passenger cards** of the type carried out by the Department for this Inquiry are of such value that they should continue.
2. **Remedial action** should concentrate on migrants whose departure could be averted by government or community action rather than on the large proportion whose primary reason for leaving has nothing to do with dissatisfaction with Australia.
3. In employment immediate action is needed to:
 - (a) Improve the **information about job vacancies** supplied overseas to applicants;
 - (b) persuade more professional bodies and State registration boards to co-operate in enabling the **qualifications of professional applicants** to be accepted;
 - (c) introduce, through the Department of Labour, a job '**placement**' instead of the job 'referral' service now offered and for more personal attention to be given;
 - (d) make available acceptable **training and re-training schemes for migrants**.
4. A program of **community education** for better understanding of social and cultural differences is required.
5. More emphasis should be placed on counselling migrants about the need for **health insurance** (in addition to the new measures announced recently).
6. Students in the field of medicine and allied health and welfare services should have an opportunity to **study the cultural backgrounds**
- of migrants.
7. **More qualified interpreters and translators** should be provided in the community, particularly in hospitals and the law enforcement system. Standards of professional qualification in various specialist fields should be established.
8. Official **forms** frequently used by migrants should be available in principal **foreign languages**.
9. Improved selection and counselling should examine **motivation** and assist migrants realistically to assess their prospects of achieving their expectations. The results of new selection procedures should be reviewed from time to time.
10. Non-English speaking migrants should be encouraged at all points of contact to learn English. **Migrant education** should be further extended through greater use of intensive and accelerated forms of instruction and more specialised migrant education in schools as recommended by the Council's Committee on Migrant Education. Employers should be asked to co-operate in language training.
11. The recent decision to appoint **educational welfare officers** to develop relationships between student, parent and teacher will assist but more appointments may be required.
12. In relation to accommodation and housing:
 - (a) **initial transitory accommodation** provided by the Government (in both flats and hostels) should be available to all migrants who require it - assisted or unassisted;
 - (b) because of the scarcity of rental accommodation, **rental subsidies** should be available to migrants in the early stage of settlement;
 - (c) **lease-purchase arrangements** involving less initial outlay and other low deposit

schemes involving loans of up to 90 per cent should be available to migrants;

- (d) the **differing ideas** of migrants about their **housing needs** in terms of size, type, design and location of accommodation should be taken into account by builders and housing authorities;
- (e) newly-arrived migrants seeking housing loans should not be required to have the same **credit rating** as Australians;
- (f) money brought by migrants with them should be included in assessments for the **Home Savings Grant Scheme**, which requires funds to be held in Australia in 'an approved form' for three years;
- (g) **migrant co-operative housing schemes** should be extended and new schemes fostered.

13. **Social services** in Australia should be greatly improved. In relation to payments, new provisions for general portability of pensions should take into consideration cases of hardship involving migrants who for personal or family reasons are forced to leave Australia in advance of qualifying for portability.

14. **Community information centres** which would benefit all Australians and be fully equipped to deal with the special needs of migrants should be established by government and the community with priority given to areas with a high density of migrants.

15. **More multi-lingual welfare officers** are needed. The additional appointments now being made appear to be too few to satisfy the urgent needs and those appointed should be available to local government, ethnic agencies and the community at large.

16. **Ethnic groups** should be encouraged, through the provision of resources and facilities,

to become involved in **helping to bridge cultural gaps** in the community. Measures should be devised to help migrants understand Australian customs which their children adopt and which may result in the whole family's departure.

17. Because of the high departure rate for **aged migrants**, sponsorship arrangements should be carefully checked. Sponsors should be made aware of their responsibilities not only to guarantee maintenance of their nominees, but also to inform them fully of the conditions they may expect to find here. No criticism, implied or actual, should be made of aged migrants who decide to return to their homelands in the belief that the environment there will be more congenial. In this context, the Committee welcomes the decision by the Minister for Immigration in ordering a special inquiry into the problems of aged migrants.

18. The Committee supports the considerable re-assessment and extension of the activities of **Good Neighbour Councils**.

Conclusion

Australia's immigration program was conceived and carried on with the agreement of all political parties as a vigorous policy of nation-building which later took into account the humanitarian needs of a war-torn Europe. The introduction of new skills and the expansion of Australia's manpower resources have resulted in the development of our industrial base and potential, whilst the cultural variety and diverse social traditions of migrants have helped to build a new, stronger and culturally richer society. It has been an historic achievement, resulting from one of the greatest planned movements of population in modern times. Its benefits to Australia have been incalculable.

Inevitably such a movement also produces problems, some of which have been referred to in this report. This Committee recognises that no country can be developed without facing and overcoming difficulties.

Reducing migration has been suggested as a means of minimising such difficulties. It is no longer fashionable to anyone that population should rise, but in the Committee's view the world's population problems are not aggravated by Australia's immigration program.

The need to attract migrants to Australia continues for, by any standards, this country is still under-populated. Furthermore, a rate of migrant departure of the size experienced by Australia cannot be considered to be excessive in measuring the success of the immigration program. Australia needs more people, not just to augment the consumer market and develop expanding industries, but to develop a more diverse and viable society and to sustain cultural and social minorities whose contribution is needed to enrich any community, especially one as remote as ours from the world's great centres of civilisation.

In this report the Committee has drawn attention to areas in which the experience of migrants has indicated shortcomings and in which Australia, by comparison with other countries, appears to lag behind. The Committee hopes that the report and the recommendations which form part of it will serve to encourage all Australians to join in programs designed to upgrade services for the benefit of those who choose to join us in a constantly developing and expanding Australian society.