

RDSA 2022 annual summit

Place based solutions - migration

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The migration program is being increased from 160,000 to 195,000 to help with current and future workforce needs, but with nearly 500,000 job vacancies recorded in May 2022, will this make much of a difference?

When the migration program last increased from 140,000 to 160,000 - a 14% increase, SA's share of the migration program fell by 18.1%.

"The smaller States have tended to miss out on the benefits of skilled migration because the settlement pattern of migrants has been heavily skewed towards Australia's largest metropolitan areas."

"The Government recognised that measures were needed to ensure that the benefits of skilled migration were felt throughout Australia, not just the major metropolitan areas."

Philip Ruddock, Minister for Immigration, 16th of June 1997

The Productivity Commission found that the best way to run Australia's skilled migration program was to look at highly skilled migrants because they typically earn more money, therefore pay more tax and they are unlikely to meet the income and assets tests to get Parenting Payments, or if they lose their job, they are more likely to find another job, meaning they are less likely to get access to Jobseeker payments.

The benefit of demand driven migration is shared. A restaurant in Coober Pedy gets a chef, they live there and contribute to the local community, shop in local stores, eat in local restaurants and most importantly the visa holder gets a visa.

Between March 1993 and January 2007 (14 years) there were 3 immigration Ministers, Bolkus, Ruddock and Vanstone, whilst from January 2007 until today (15 years) there have been 12 Ministers.

Temporary Visa Holders in Australia (pre Covid19)

31 December 2019, total backpacker visa holders **141,142**

September 2019, total student visa holders **633,816**

September 2019, total post graduate visa holders **94,657**

30 September 2019, total primary 482 visa holders **78,330**

(1,900 in SA – 2.4% of total program)

30 June 2022, there was **51,770** primary visa 482 visa holders in Australia
(1,310 in SA – 2.5%)

Training people is of course a high priority, as is the primacy of employing locals first, but what happens when there are more job vacancies than there are people to fill them.

Designing a migration program with clear objectives is very simple and easy, it's a matter of looking at what worked before and what programs work well internationally.

Essentially 10,000 demand driven migrants living and working in regional SA doing jobs that locals choose not to do will create 16,200 additional new employment and training opportunities for local residents in areas that locals do choose to work in across the entire State, including 4,100 in metropolitan Adelaide, plus an additional \$2 billion in GSP.

Recently the Fair Work Ombudsman announced that a record \$532 million in unpaid wages and entitlements was recovered for more than 384,000 workers in 2021-22.

Is there a solution?

Yes, a new regional provisional demand driven employer sponsored migration visa, where the applicant/visa holder must live and work in a regional area for at least 5 years, 3 years on a provisional visa, 2 years on a permanent visa.

In response to the GFC, the Labour Government made changes to the Skilled Migration Program. At that time, A Parliamentary report into Australia's Migration Program, (29 October 2010), stated:

Recent changes to the skilled stream of the Migration Program have been designed to shift the balance of the program away from independent skilled migrants, who do not have employment arranged in Australia prior to migrating here, towards sponsored skilled migrants, who have arranged employment prior to their arrival. These reforms were the result of a review of permanent skilled migration undertaken by the Rudd Government for 2008–09 in the wake of the economic challenges resulting from the GFC. The review identified the need for a shift in focus away from ‘supply driven’ independent skilled migration towards ‘demand driven’ outcomes, in the form of employer and government-sponsored skilled migration. The intention is to enable the program to better target the skills needed in the economy and ensure that skilled migrants are employed in industries that have the highest need.

"Skilled migrants come into our area. They have to live here, they have to spend money to live so they use all the shops and all the facilities that everyone else does...it helps keep businesses viable and our shop doors open."

Mayor Leon Stasinowsky, District Council of Loxton Waikerie

"Kangaroo Island needs migrants like Jacques Lurton because he brings into Kangaroo Island an expertise that doesn't exist here."

Mayor James Clement, Council of Kangaroo Island
(Jacques Lurton is the Owner of Islander Estate Winery)

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