



Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

### **Multicultural debate a distraction from population sustainability**

Australia is an open and tolerant country with a rich history of migration. In fact, a recent study by the University of Western Sydney noted that 87 per cent of Australians agree that "It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures".<sup>1</sup> However, we have now reached a critical juncture in Australian history. Although many Australians see diversity as a 'nice to have', it is a distraction from the 'must have' of sustainability.

True sustainability involves a pattern of resource use that aims to meet present human needs while preserving the environment so that these needs can also be met for generations.

If we ignore sustainability and wreck our quality of life through population growth, how is more (or less) diversity helpful? The reality is that the racial, religious, or cultural make-up of Australia is largely irrelevant to our predicament.

In 1994 the Australian Academy of Science published its findings on population. In considering the resource needs of our cities, and Australia's supply of water, minerals and arable land it concluded: "In our view, the quality of all aspects of our children's lives will be maximised if the population of Australia by the mid-21st Century is kept to the low, stable end of the achievable range, i.e. to approximately 23 million."<sup>2</sup> Former Treasury Secretary Ken Henry went further in his recent farewell speech. Based on our current behaviour and impact on biodiversity, he said that 15 million is a sustainable population for Australia.<sup>3</sup>

We are already at around 22.5 million. Growing a bigger population based on the depletion of Australia's finite resources is a recipe for economic, environmental and social disaster. Given population growth, the increasing prevalence of 'quarry Australia' and the shutting down of our manufacturing base, imports will continue to surge. Conversely, the per capita value of our mineral wealth will continue to fall.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.uws.edu.au/social\\_sciences/soss/research/challenging\\_racism/findings\\_by\\_region](http://www.uws.edu.au/social_sciences/soss/research/challenging_racism/findings_by_region) (**Download the national level findings [pdf, 50K] - P2**)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.science.org.au/news/media/pop2040.html> (media release on [www.science.org.au/events/sats/sats1994/Population2040-section8.pdf](http://www.science.org.au/events/sats/sats1994/Population2040-section8.pdf) (**see point 8**)).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2011/s3155979.htm>



The most populous states starkly demonstrate the economic problem. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in the 2008-09 financial year Victoria imported \$69.7 billion in goods and services but produced only \$33.1 billion in exports. In the same year New South Wales imported \$100.8 billion in goods and services and produced only \$60.4 billion in exports. By contrast, Western Australia produced \$92.1 billion in exports and imported \$42.5 billion in goods and services.<sup>4</sup> This demonstrates Australia's economic reliance on minerals and energy reserves. Once they have been exhausted, what will our children (including the children of migrant Australians) export to keep Australia in the first world?

Australia has recently run very high net overseas migration (NOM) of up to around 300,000 per annum. NOM is the major factor in Australia's current unsustainable population growth. Australia should rapidly implement a balanced (or zero net) migration program – with immigration roughly equalling emigration. This, along with Australia's near replacement rate fertility will allow Australia to stabilise its population at between 23-26 million through until 2050 (and beyond).

The Stable Population Party supports the continuation of Australia's high per capita refugee intake of 13,750 per annum, within the immigration quota. We also reject selection of immigrants based on race or religion.

Population stabilisation is completely consistent with Australia's diversity, multiracialism and multiculturalism. Only a sustainable approach to population can allow Australia to retain its quality of life. This must be the first priority of a responsible Federal Government.

The Stable Population Party's proposal for a balanced migration will better allow Australia to continue its rich history in migration (and free choice on family size) into the long term. It will also allow us to focus on higher quality assistance programs for new migrants and refugees. This will in turn help to maximise social inclusion, settlement and participation, and national productive capacity as per your terms of reference.

Kind regards

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<sup>4</sup> <http://dfat.gov.au/publications/stats-pubs/downloads/australia-trade-by-state-and-territory-2008-09.pdf>  
(see **State and Territory trade overview - P3**)