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Submission to  
Joint Standing Committee on Migration  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Review of Australia's migration and temporary entry program for skilled labour**

The purpose of this submission from the Australian Centre for Population Research at the Australian National University is to bring to the Committee's attention a number of research projects on permanent and temporary skilled migrants conducted by the Centre's staff and members that are of relevance to the Terms of Reference of the Review.

- International competition for skilled labour and
- The degree to which Australia's migration and temporary entry programs are competitive

The Centre is collaborating with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) in a two-year research project on temporary overseas migration to Australia that will focus on migrants in the temporary business and skilled entry category (457 visa holders). The project has received funding from the Australian Research Council to conduct two surveys in 2002-03 of a sample of 457 visa holders and employer sponsors to examine the factors motivating temporary skilled migration to Australia and the labour market experiences and residential intentions of temporary skilled migrants. Findings from the research project will be available towards the end of 2003.

- The degree to which quality permanent skilled migrants are being attracted to Australia and settling well.

We have been conducting research to examine what factors attract migrants to and retain them in Australia. DIMIA's Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) has shown that many skilled migrants move to Australia for "a better future for the family" or are attracted to Australia because of lifestyle reasons. Our research based on LSIA data also show that those migrants who indicate that they have migrated because they want "a better future for the family" are more likely to intend to settle permanently than those who migrate for other reasons. Employment status and job satisfaction are not as important as family reasons in influencing the permanent settlement intentions of skilled and business migrants<sup>1</sup>. Further studies are currently being conducted based on LSIA data on the motivations and settlement intentions of skilled migrants who work in the information technology sector and on examining

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<sup>1</sup> S.E. Khoo and A. Mak, Permanent settlement or return migration: the role of career and family factors, Paper presented at the Australian Population Association Conference, Melbourne, 2000.

whether migrants who have sponsored close family members are more likely to settle permanently than those who have not sponsored.

A recent study<sup>2</sup> by Centre members on the demographic impact of temporary migration to Australia shows that currently only a small proportion (8%) of temporary long-term entrants become permanent residents, although this is likely to change with the new policy allowing overseas students completing degrees at Australian universities to apply onshore for permanent residence. The conversion rate to permanent residence peaks in the family ages (children aged less than 15 years and adults aged between 30 and 50). This again suggests the importance of family factors in motivating settlement in Australia.

The study also suggests that it is risky to rely on temporary migration to keep annual net overseas migration at a level above 70,000. It is preferable to maintain or increase the number of settler arrivals rather than rely on an increase in temporary arrivals.

- Whether there are policy and/or procedural mechanisms that might be developed to improve competitiveness

The research project on temporary skilled migration mentioned above will also address this issue. The study will survey temporary business entrants and employer sponsors on their views about Australia's temporary business entry program and application procedures in relation to those of other countries.

Yours sincerely

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<sup>2</sup> P. McDonald and R. Kippen, The impact of long-term visitors on projections of Australia's population, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2002.