

SUSTAINABILITY & IMMIGRATION

Submission By Tomas Nilsson

Although immigration has become largely a taboo subject in the Australian media, if the Australian Government and Parliament really want to address the issue of sustainable cities, they must consider the level of immigration. Most immigrants to Australia settle in the cities because that is where jobs are, as well as the best access to services and amenities.

The rate of immigration has increased significantly over the last five years. According to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs Immigration net migration to Australia was 67,900 in 1998–99, 70,200 in 1999–00 and 93,080 in 2001–02. For 2002–03 the planned level was 100,000–110,000. This information can be found on the Department of Immigration website at:

<http://www.immi.gov.au/facts/02key.htm#5>

This amounts an average increase in immigration of nearly 10,000 a year over the last four years. Newspaper reports have suggested that the current rate of immigration is actually over 110,000 per year. In my opinion, an immigration level of over 110,000 a year to Australia is unsustainable. 110,000 is a very large number of people to be housed *each year*. That amount is more than half of the population of Hobart (the city in which I live).

It is obvious that such a large number of immigrants each year is going to lead to an increase in urban sprawl, pollution, traffic congestion and other environmental problems. This has a negative impact on the lifestyle of the people living in Australia's cities.

SIMON CREAN'S PLAN TO COMPEL IMMIGRANTS TO SETTLE IN RURAL AREAS

Simon Crean, Leader of the Opposition recently announced a plan to force 45% of recently arrived immigrants to Australia to live in regional areas. Of course, the idea of doing this is ridiculous and unworkable. It would be unreasonable to force anyone to live in a certain place. And although on the face of it, such a plan would solve some the problems being faced by Australia's growing cities, the plan ignores the fact that there is generally a high level of unemployment in regional Australia – that is why immigrants move to the cities in the first place!

CONCLUSION

A sensible, practical and easy-to-implement way of making the development of Australia's cities more sustainable is to reduce the rate of immigration to Australia by a substantial amount. The current net rate of immigration of over 110,000 people per year is unsustainable. A maximum net immigration level should be set at 70,000 per year.

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