

# Productivity Commission releases draft report – ‘Migrant Intake into Australia’

The Productivity Commission released its draft report on Australia’s Migrant Intake on Friday. The draft report details the economic, social and environmental implications of immigration.

The draft report recommends that the Government should not use price as the principal mechanism for allocating permanent visas. The Commission found that the adoption of a price-based immigration system is not supported by evidence. Such a system could attract less desirable immigrants compared to the current system and favour immigrants with an existing capacity to pay over those who would make the greatest economic contribution to Australia. FECCA fundamentally opposes the imposition of a fee for immigration to Australia and welcomes the Commission’s recommendation in this regard.

FECCA’s submission to the inquiry emphasised the social and cultural benefits of migration and is pleased to see the Commission’s draft report acknowledges that Australia has built a highly successful multicultural society. The report highlights that multicultural attitudes support acceptance of the immigration program, the importance that respecting the value of ethnic diversity has on migrant integration and the vital impact that settlement policies have on immigrant outcomes.

The Commission found that without further net migration, the age dependency ratio (the ratio of those aged 65 years and above to those aged 15 to 64 years) would increase from around 23 older persons to every 100 working-age individuals in 2014, to around 59 older persons by 2060. In its submission, FECCA highlighted the role immigration policy can play to counteract the negative social and economic effects of Australia’s ageing population.

Key recommendations in the draft report include:

- The Australian Government should seek opportunities to improve the recognition of overseas qualifications obtained at high quality institutions, including through bridging courses;
- The Government should review the mix and extent of settlement services for immigrants (including humanitarian immigrants) with the aim of improving their labour market and social engagement outcomes. This should include consideration of the adequacy of the English-language training hours and access to employment services;
- The Government should abolish the Significant Investor Visa and Premium Investor Visa streams.

The draft report includes a chapter on managing temporary immigration programs which recommends:

- The Australian Government should commission a public inquiry into the labour market and broader economy-wide effects of work rights for international students, temporary graduate visa holders and working holiday makers;
- The Government should assess the effectiveness of changes implemented as a result of the recommendations made by the Independent Review into Integrity in the Subclass 457 Programme after sufficient time for those changes to take effect;
- The Fair Work Ombudsman should commission the development of a smart phone app that would provide temporary immigrant workers with information on their work rights and responsibility, and with links for lodging complaints about abuses or exploitation.

FECCA will be making a further submission to the inquiry by 18 December. The Commission’s final report is expected to be finalised in March 2016.

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