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Betts, K. (2010, 06 July). Growing old is inevitable. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Available from: http://www.smh.com.au/national/letters/love-of-learning-needs-to-be-handled-with-care-20100705-zxec.html.

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Growing old is inevitable

Your editorial says immigration "helps slow or reverse the ageing of the population" ("Gillard's take on population", June 30). In fact, smaller families and longer lifespans mean demographic ageing is inevitable. The only way to avoid it is to have large families and die young.

The most recent Bureau of Statistics projections show the effects of an average family size of two and nil net migration, compared with an average family of two and net migration of 220,000 a year. By 2050, the higher projection adds 13.9 million people more than the lower one, and reduces the median age by only 4.8 years.

This immigration-induced age reduction would cost us nearly 3 million extra people for every year it shaved off the median age. We would have to build a major city for each year of youthfulness. In 2005 the Productivity Commission made similar findings, as did the Academy of Science in 1994.

Demographic ageing is inevitable. Frantic efforts to make Australia younger by making it bigger are no more rational than a middle-aged person trying to look younger by gaining 40 kilograms.

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