IMMIGRATION AND THE PARADOX OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY
Katharine Betts


What are the implications for a liberal democracy if political elites continue to allow (and pursue) high migrant intakes which many, perhaps most, voters do not want? To explore an answer to this question we need first to pause to consider the nature of liberal democracy, a polity based on the principles of freedom and universalistic rights for all citizens. But paradoxically it is based on largely illiberal principles of membership. Would it be possible to maintain a liberal polity with different membership rules, with or without the consent of the voters? And how is it that the consent of the votes can be so readily evaded when immigration-fuelled population growth is concerned?

The idea of open borders and the idea that growth can be imposed on citizens by subterfuge both offer challenges to democracy. This essay explores these ideas and the way in which they can help us understand the current politics of population growth in Australia.

Liberal democracy: Can it exist? Should it?
Liberal democracy is a system of government characterised not just by majority voting but rule of law and separation of powers. The executive rules within limits set by a constitution and with ultimate accountability to the people in regular and fair elections.

Can a true democracy in which the rule people themselves exist in complex societies? Can the kinds of conflicts over goals and resources that such societies face ever be settled by consensus alone? Perhaps not. Elite theories see the idea of democracy as a façade. The state is not run by the people in any sense but by the men and women who occupy the commanding heights of firms, departments and executive governments. But these theorists distinguish between the type of ruling elite according to the way in which its members relate to one another and argue that the distinction is crucial. They describe three main types: consensually unified elites, disunified elites, and ideologically unified elites (such as occurred under communism and fascism)—a type not further considered here.

Consensually unified elites behave in an accommodating way towards each other. They compromise and, unlike members of the other two types of elites, trust each other in the sense that they do not fear that loss of power will lead to prison or execution. While they may have supporters among mass publics they do not mobilise these supporters in all-out struggles against other elite factions, as happens in countries governed by disunified elites. In contrast, disunified elites are highly distrustful of each other. They form cliques and factions and mobilise non-elite groupings for support. Disunified elites produce authoritarian regimes and illiberal democracies and are the most numerous type. They ‘have been the rule historically …[and] are likely to remain so’. If a person had a choice they would opt to be ruled by a consensually unified elite, not because such a regime is truly democratic but because it means the rule of law, peace and predictability.

Indeed elite theorists claim that the ‘sine qua non of a liberal democracy is a … consensually united elite’. While this is not the real democracy of rule by the people for the people, it offers our best hope of a peaceful, law-abiding society, where individuals can care for their families and do their best to live the kinds of lives they want to live.

We can call the men and women who fill the roles in the kinds of elites described above the power elite. This distinguishes them from cultural elites. The latter are more broadly dispersed, run cultural institutions and play a significant role in no-government organisations and the legal system.

While theorists who focus on the power elite say real democracy cannot exist (‘all politics, whether autocratic or democratic are elitist in character’), some members of the cultural elite think it does exist but should not. Ordinary voters are too easily manipulated: it’s the experts and judges who know best. In particular they know how to protect minorities from electoral majorities. Michael Kirby, a former High Court judge, says that:
The modern notion of democracy is more subtle than the primitive idea of according full power to the transient majorities of Parliament by a transient vote in a periodic election, accompanied by media jingles and superficial electoral slogans. Democracy now requires respect for minorities and protection of basic constitutional principles; such as the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, and regard for fundamental human rights. Of course democracy means more than voting, but is voting so marginal to it? One Australian judge described democracy to the American scholar, Jason Pierce, as a ‘majoritarian autocracy’ and ‘a form of dictatorship as far as minorities and individuals are concerned’. A High Court judge described it as ‘an elected dictatorship softened by spin doctors and alienated from the people’. And as for voters who did not agree with some of the High Court’s decisions on land rights, as in the Mabo and Wik cases, this judge went on to say that a lot of the criticism ‘comes for those elements in the community who have no sympathy for liberalism. A lot of these people are vociferous red-neck people’.

Other cultural elites do not condemn democracy as an elected dictatorship, though when it produces outcomes contrary to their own values they do decry it as populism. For example, how could it be that the electorate turned against the Hawke/Keating Governments’ policies of active multiculturalism? ‘There are a number of answers to this question, one of which is the politics of populism’. Populism is hard to define. Is it too much democracy exercised by the wrong sort of people, the vociferous red-neck sort? Voting for John Howard can be evidence enough: ‘populism has come to define the heart of Australian conservatism under the leadership of John Howard’. An American academic says that: ‘running against the political elite is, of course, the essence of populism everywhere’. This may be a bad thing or good thing depending on which side of the elite/non-elite divide you stand. For Christopher Lasch ‘populism is the authentic voice of democracy’. But the real foundations of liberal democracy may be less important than voters’ expectations. Whether or not a real democracy can or should exist, most voters in countries such as Australia expect it to exist. They are disappointed if they see evidence that it does not, or that it does, but its foundations are being eroded. They may not know much about the separation of powers and its role in supporting the rule of law but they expect fair and equal treatment and that governments will put the interests of the people first. They become enraged if they are exploited — by corrupt police, lawyers, judges or politicians. Government is meant to be by the people for the people, not by and for vested interests or shysters on the take.

This paper will argue that immigration which is unwanted by a large segment of the electorate may erode democracy in two different ways. It can do so by demonstrating all too clearly that power elites rule (and that cultural elites, in this instance, are often there to help them do so), and it can undermine the sense of shared peoplehood on which the peaceful society that we now enjoy depends. A consensually unified elite may be essential for the rule of law but such an institution requires a people who feel that they belong together. It cannot be imposed on societies divided by intensely felt ethnic, religious or tribal differences. Even in nations blessed by consensually unified elites, mass publics set limits to what those elites can do.

**Liberal democracy and the paradox of membership**

The liberal democratic nation state is a paradox. Many of its laws and values were shaped by enlightenment principles of universalism. Accidents of birth or upbringing such as lineage, wealth, and, later, religion, sex and race, should not detract from the rights of citizens, rights which expanded from the civil to the political to the social. Some privileged groups objected to this expansion but, for many, it seemed reasonable, especially to the ever expanding circles of subjects who were being transformed into citizens, people who enjoyed equal dignity with one another. Proponents of social justice used the language of universalism to support the extension of rights to their fellow citizens. But at some point such reformers are faced with the paradox of membership. Why should rights and social justice stop at the national borders?

The paradox of citizenship is clear when we look at citizenship, not just as a set of evolving and expanding rights for people who are already members of a nation state, but as the principle of membership itself. People born in Australia with at least one parent who is either a citizen or a legal
permanent resident are Australian citizens. People who, by the accident of parentage or birth, do not fit this rule are not. Citizenship by birth is an ascriptive status. If people who do not fit the rule want to become residents and citizens they face an arduous process of application in which they may easily fail (especially as far as gaining permanent residence is concerned—once this hurdle is passed citizenship can follow relatively easily).

The representatives of those who are already Australians make the rules governing this process and these rules can and do change from time to time. The rules have acquired aspects of universalism; ethnicity and religion are no longer legitimate grounds for denying applications for residence. But other ascriptive statuses, such as age and family relations are applied, as are skills and education. Universalistic rights do not include a right to immigrate; national boundaries are based on particularism.

Why should an accident of birth entitle one person to the opportunity of a secure and healthy life and deny it to another? To restrict an individual’s access to economic opportunity, physical security, and freedom on the grounds of such an accident runs against the grain of universalism, especially in a world where the initial distribution of these goods is so unequal. Once citizenship is attained universalism applies. But gaining it is another matter. An older, more particularistic order manages the borderline.

Citizens of liberal, national, democracies think that their nations are founded on universalistic principles but the problem of membership forces us to confront the paradox behind these principles. Is it unavoidable? Could we have a nation that at least seemed democratic and liberal to its citizens but which was not based particularistic criteria of membership?

Peopoplehood, liberal democracy and proceduralism

Here the work of a British political scientist, Margaret Canovan, is relevant. She argues that a sense of being part of a national people is crucial for any nation, but especially for a liberal democratic one. She begins from the premise that in a democracy the people rule. That is what popular sovereignty means. (So she side steps the elite theorists’ problem and moves on to her key question.) If the people are meant to rule then the question of who are the people and who they should care about in managing their political affairs becomes crucial.

Nations combine a sense of community with political power; they are communities which fuse the political and familial to produce a sense of trust and quasi kinship between members. Members of a nation need not share a common ethnic origin in any biological sense, but most of them have a sense of being the product of a common history and almost all have a sense of having a common future.

Members feel themselves to be part of a people, a sense which allows them to use the pronouns we and us in talking of their collective hopes and plans (and duties and obligations). It is this feeling which allows Australians to say ‘We should intervene in East Timor’ or ‘We should help the bush fire victims’ or ‘We should reform the mental health system’ or ‘we should support the sick and destitute’. As Canovan puts it:

A polity that seems like the family inheritance of an entire population is actually a very unlikely artifact, but where nationhood exists, it looks ‘natural’, and as a result we fail to notice what a remarkable political phenomenon it is. The fusion of the political and the familial creates an enduring ‘we’ that can form the basis of a strong and stable body politic and give the state unity, legitimacy and permanence because it is ‘our’ state.

Where this sense is lacking, collective action may not be possible, potential volunteers will stay at home and support for taxation to fund national projects may evaporate.

Canovan argues that some theorists do not value or even see this sense of common peoplehood. This gap in their vision is dangerous. For example, it is common today to find reformers arguing about what society should do to protect the rights of minorities, or about what the rights of this or that sub-group might be. When advocates do this they can take the national community which ought to act, which ought to protect the rights concerned, for granted.
Some may even see the national community as the source of minority oppression and argue that it should be eroded, even erased. But our rights to protection, freedom, and welfare do not come from Father Christmas. They come from the commitment of our fellow citizens to protect them, by supporting the law, paying their taxes and not assaulting us in the street — and by unpaid work visiting hospitals, protecting others from fires and other emergencies, and by donating blood.

Canovan argues that it is hard to run even a nightwatchman state. It requires honest officials and the absence of organised gangs. Why should officials play by the rules? The sad history of illiberal polities shows that many officials do not; they enrich themselves at the expense of those whom they are meant to protect. A sense of public service and the extension of the norms of honesty from private to public life requires a sense of peoplehood. This is one way in which a person’s sense of honour comes to include behaving decently in public life among strangers.

Members of a national community who think of themselves as a people belong to a group that includes the long dead and the unborn; their conception of the bonds between each other is founded on the sense of a common home and a trans-generational society. This means they have encumbered selves. Most are born into the national group and accept the obligations (and privileges) which flow from this without much question. For example, Australians agree that we have an obligation to support war veterans even though most of us personally ask them to go to war; and some of us weren’t even here when they left.

The sense of peoplehood that Canovan describes is a kind of hybrid between the ethnic and civic ideas of the nation, though she would claim that all nation states which are democracies, and which work, are characterised by it. She’s being descriptive not normative. Peoplehood is not an option: it’s essential.

Is she right? The term *procedural democracy* denotes a different model. If Canovan thinks it dangerous to overlook the concept of the people, advocates of proceduralism think it dangerous to emphasise it. The quasi-ethnic elements of peoplehood (the elements of identification, belonging and commitment) could become too strong; a national democracy could become simply an ethnic nation and people of different ethnicities could be marginalised or excluded. (Hence the concern about minorities expressed by some critics of popular democracy.) Best to keep the emotional temperature low, concentrate on the rules we agree to share, and make the overriding value not one of belonging and commitment but one of tolerance.

In a procedural democracy citizens have unencumbered selves; they have no obligations that they have not freely agreed to undertake themselves. Unencumbered selves do not enter the world burdened with duties to family and compatriots. They may choose to undertake these duties if they wish, but they cannot be held to any obligations that they have not chosen. They have no pre-existing duties to the East Timorese or to veterans of previous wars or, indeed, to disabled siblings or any other pre-existing relatives.

The polity to which unencumbered citizens belong is sometimes called a *procedural democracy*, one where citizens are loyal to a set of rules rather than a set of people. This polity does not offer any particular concept of the virtuous life to its members and says nothing about the idea that bonds of history and commitment might in some sense tie citizens to their fellows.

The core values are tolerance and abstract justice. Proceduralists do recognise that rights depend on an institutional structure which guarantees that obligations will be met, but they hold fast to the principle that the state should not express a preference for any particular set of cultural values and the do not seem to worry about why some people should commit themselves to establishing and enforcing the rules, nor why citizens should obey the rules even when these are not to their own advantage.

Proceduralists do not necessarily advocate open borders (though some do) but they tend to be much more accommodating to the rights of would-be immigrants than are the less numerous, *active* proponents of a sense of peoplehood. Their position on national politics also accords well with a penchant for cosmopolitanism, as opposed to the more parochial patriotism of Canovan’s model.

The virtue of procedural democracy is that it looks as if it is compatible with liberal universalism; its fatal drawback, I believe, is it that it cannot work. Along with Canovan, I find the idea of an enduring liberal
democratic polity devoid of emotional ties and commitment impossible. Who would devote themselves to the task of establishing this state and to running it for the common good, rather than for private gain? How could we motivate people to consent to political settlements which advance the common good but leave them personally less well off, or to care about others in a huge society of strangers? How could we do this without a sense that there is something special in our membership of a shared nation? Most important of all, how can we keep a sense of being a people who should care for each other’s welfare if any stranger has the right to enter the charmed circle and, possibly, take advantage of our concern?

The historical reality that rights have expanded within the nation can blind us to the fact that they expand much less readily beyond the nation. This is because rights depend on rights providers. People who feel put upon by waves of new applicants for rights, applicants who have not yet demonstrated a commitment to becoming rights providers, may start to withdraw; they may “‘hunker-down”—pull in like a turtle” to use Putnam’s phrase. Tax revolts will grow, and society become less civil.

If the rights-provider, the nation state, ceases to have any coherence because its boundaries have dissolved, the obligations to rights-holders will probably not be met and, if this happens, the rights will go the same way as the borders.

There is a body of evidence showing that support for social welfare decreases as immigration increases. Some promoters of neo-liberalism know this and promote high immigration as a means of shutting down the welfare state:

One reason for advocating more relaxed immigration policies — more openness to people who what to move to wherever there are opportunities — is that it is impossible to sustain a wealth redistribution welfare state with open immigration. So, if one wants to get rid of the welfare state, one ought to be promoting an open immigration policy.

Or as Chris Berg puts it:

...immigration puts pressure on governments to reduce their redistributionist goals …[and] migration pushes back against the welfare state.

Proceduralists do not necessarily argue for selfish individualism but their beliefs offer few challenges to those who do. A stable and civilised society depends on a safety net of care for those who need it. Overload the net and it will break.

At base, the nation, even a liberal democratic one, is a particularistic institution. It may not be possible for such an institution to co-exist with ideals shaped by liberal universalism when these ideals spread to the sphere of immigration policy. And it may be impossible for liberal democracy to survive within a nation if it cannot practice particularistic principles when it comes to membership. This is because the greatest enemy of altruism is not selfishness but fear of exploitation.

The example of immigration: client politics—vested interests and the power elite
Gary Freeman, an American immigration scholar, has developed a general theory of high immigration in liberal democracies. He argues that immigration policies in liberal democracies tend to be more expansionist than the majority of the people would prefer. This is generally true in Australia. (See Figure 1 on attitudes to immigration from 1954 to 2010 in the appendix. Attitudes to population growth have been less consistently tracked but these show even more strongly that a large majority do not think that the country needs more people and that only 20 per cent want growth that involves immigration. See Table 1. Yet Figure 4 shows that current trends and policy settings — total fertility rate close to 2.0 and net overseas migration well over 220,000 per year — are on track to produce considerable growth.)

Australia is a democracy and a large segment of the electorate does not want immigration-fuelled population growth. So why and how do these expansionary policies happen? Freeman says that this is partly because citizens know very little about immigration and its demographic implications. This ignorance is understandable. Debate is constrained, information is not readily available and the cost,
time and effort, of seeking it out is high. Also politicians do not voluntarily consult the public about immigration policy, so Governments usually come to office with no binding commitments.

Australians saw this all too well after the election of the Rudd Government in November 2007. One of its first acts was to increase the formal immigration program for 2008-09 to a record 203,800 (though this number was reduced in March 2009, to 185,230 as the economy weakened). See Figure 2 in the appendix. But even so it was still a record high for the official program. The Rudd Government also, as Figure 3 shows, presided over the increasing numbers of net overseas migrants: the total topped 300,000 in 2008 and 278,000 in 2009. Nothing was said about this during the election campaign. Indeed Rudd was careful not to mention immigration and reputedly told his shadow minister to do likewise.

But the core of Freeman’s argument concerns what he terms ‘client politics’. Immigration is a public policy which produces concentrated benefits and diffuse costs. There are groups which benefit from immigration-fuelled population growth and they lobby politicians behind the scenes to make sure that migrant intakes stay high and to thwart attempts to reduce them. The number of people in these groups is small and as most of the benefits of immigration flow to them, time and money spent lobbying for growth pays off. (Benefits? Cheap labour; more customers for housing and other goods; more members of one’s own ethnic or religious group.)

In contrast, the costs of immigration are diffuse. As the population grows, the majority experience greater crowding, rising housing costs, lower wages, increased pressure on the infrastructure of their cities, more competition for education, health and welfare services, and reduced environmental amenity. But these costs are thinly spread. For each individual they are relatively low and usually accumulate slowly. Consequently, any one individual’s motivation to devote resources to trying to reduce immigration is less than the motivation of members of the organised groups who want to keep the numbers coming.

However under the recent Australian Labor government led by Kevin Rudd the pace of growth quickened and its immediate costs in traffic congestion and strained infrastructure in the major cities became more obvious. So one of the premises of Freeman’s argument — that the majority do not actually know what is happening — started to break down. Certainly ever since Treasury’s projection of a population growing from 22.2 million in 2010 to 35.9 million in 2050 was released in September 2009, public opposition to growth became quite vocal.

Freeman’s client-politics explanation for high migration was published in 1995 and has attracted widespread support. Christian Joppke argues that it should be supplemented by an understanding of the role of the courts and the judiciary. Democracies have constitutional and legal rules which protect individual rights. These rules are interpreted and enforced by the courts and they limit the sovereignty of parliaments and executives. He argues that once nation states develop these judicial restrictions, it is hard for them to expel those foreigners who make their way into the national territory and then appeal to the courts for the right to stay.

Joppke has a point. For example, in Australia the role of the courts in affecting immigration decisions has grown more important over the last thirty years. This is partly because there are more foreigners onshore who want to gain permanent residence and can access the courts, and partly because the laws have changed in ways that make this access easier for them. The values of the judiciary have also changed. Judges and lawyers (along with other members of the cultural elite) are now more favourably disposed to the needs of foreigners anxious to claim residence in Australia than they were in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Of course push factors also make a difference. Once Australia had to work hard to recruit migrants. Now there is an embarrassment of applications, with many applicants onshore, on temporary or bridging visas, trying to obtain permanent residence through what ever avenue they can find.

Nevertheless, Freeman’s client politics sets the stage. The courts are an increasingly important detail, but they may still be only a detail. This qualification probably depends on which country and which system you are looking at. As Jason Pierce’s book on the Australian judiciary makes clear, because Australia does not have the equivalent of a bill of rights, judges here are much more influenced by prevailing values among their colleagues and less empowered by the institutional setting. Australian courts became key
players in immigration policy after the passage of the new administrative law in the late 1970s and early 1980s.\textsuperscript{51} And from 1989 to the early 2000s much of the drama of immigration policy and law making was played out in the context of a battle for supremacy between the executive and the legislature on the one hand and the courts on the other.\textsuperscript{52} [add smh piece 3/9/10?]

But Freeman’s model of concentrated benefits and diffused costs suggests that Governments might not want to try very hard to control immigration. The executive does not want the judiciary to manage the process. However, provided the electoral politics do not get too difficult, it may well be happy to oblige its clients by accepting as many migrants as possible, and the clients will oblige in return by contributing to election campaign funds.\textsuperscript{53}

A prominent Australian business man with a strong record of community service, Dick Smith, has taken up the cause of population stability.\textsuperscript{54} The Liberal/National Party Coalition voted down a recent proposition for a senate inquiry into population growth put forward by the Greens. All of these parties are in opposition but, if they had voted together, they would have had the numbers to set up the inquiry. Smith dismissed the Coalition’s ostensible reason (that such an inquiry would have had too great a focus on global population growth) and accused them of bending to developers and businesses. ‘It was not saying what the Coalition was trying to make out, which was just rubbish …Big business (and) developers, which are their primary donors, would have objected’.\textsuperscript{55} Elsewhere he writes:

The ones in favour [of population growth] are property developers and the people who work for them, including most of our politicians. Little wonder. I’ve made more money out of Sydney real estate in the past 20 years than I ever did from electronics and publishing. Why grow a real business that employs people when you can sit back and let population growth make profits for you?\textsuperscript{56}

In Australia the private-sector growth lobby consists of property developers, and now some employers who are experiencing a genuine skills shortage and are not keen on investing in local training. But it also includes media organisations which, like other merchants selling to a domestic market, profit from the growth of that market.\textsuperscript{57} However, private sector interests do have allies in the public sector. Treasury, for example, also supports population growth, probably because it boosts GDP (though not necessarily per capita GDP)\textsuperscript{58} and state governments, even though they bear the infrastructure costs, appear to support it for similar reasons,\textsuperscript{59} and of course they too have close relations with the growth lobby.\textsuperscript{60}

The federal election held on 21 August 2010 saw both major parties say that they would try to moderate growth (though offering little detail about how they would achieve this).\textsuperscript{61} After an election with no clear winner, the Labor Party, led by Julia Gillard, eventually managed to form a government. It remains to be seen whether this government will be able to withstand the pressure for growth from those who benefit from it.

For the most part we are looking at focused concentrated, selfish vested interests. Crispin Hull, a senior journalist and former editor of The Canberra Times has written on the growth lobby. He puts it bluntly:

What can be done? It would be good to ban large donations to political parties, so they don't get driven by minority interests that benefit from higher population. But the major parties have long showed themselves to be prisoners of what amounts to little better than bribery.\textsuperscript{62}

If the people come to see the situation this way, that their future has been eroded because their politicians have effectively been taking bribes, then our belief in the story about Australian democracy will take a knock.

**Conclusion**

Australia’s immigration policies conform all too closely to Freeman’s model of client politics. They demonstrate not just that power elites rule but that some of them may be taking national decisions for corrupt reasons. The paradox of liberalism means that policy makers cannot maintain a liberal state and manage its borders according to liberal principles, that is they cannot support a right it immigrate. But they can respond to vested interests and keep the borders half open. And in so doing they by-pass the principle of democracy. It may well be true that the elite theorists are right when they say that real
democracy is not possible, but history shows that they are right to claim that consensually unified elites can only flourish in societies favoured by a sense of unity and belonging. The façade can come with an orderly society and a degree of social welfare, so it is in our interests not to make it too clear that elites are indifferent to the interests of the majority.

Many citizens would probably be happy to live with the paradox of liberalism. Yes, illiberal restrictions on membership aren’t fair, but borders are not fair and cannot be made to be so. But clear breaches of democracy which pander to selfish interests at the expense of the common good are another matter. This is a tangible problem, once it becomes evident (whereas the paradox of liberalism exists at a more esoteric level). A continuing influx of large numbers of immigrants accompanied by high levels of population growth, in the face of a clear public preference for stability, could have disagreeable political consequences. It would fuel popular distrust of political elites could have unfortunate consequences for the Australian sense of being a people. The neo-liberals’ dream of the end of welfare could come true, and we could also see a Hansonite revolt re-emerge. But what is most likely is that Australians will become more individualistic and withdrawn, not flying to the barricades but retreating to the shelter of their turtle shells. Fear of exploitation can have this effect.
Appendix

Figure 1: Attitudes to immigration, July 1954 to July 2010

Question format: ‘Last year X number of migrants came. In your opinion is this number about right, too many or too few?’

Notes: From 1984 to June 1996, and in 2010 (except for April) the data refer to voters only; the other polls are based on all adults. Up to 1973 ‘adult’ normally meant aged 21 plus; from 1974 on it means aged 18 plus. Where respondents had the option of choosing ‘far too many’ or ‘somewhat too many’ or ‘somewhat too few’ or ‘far too few’ these responses have been collapsed into ‘too many’ and ‘too few’. The ‘about right’ response category is not shown; neither is ‘don’t know’.
Table 1: Voters, Attitudes to population growth, 1977, 2001, and Dec. 2009 to Feb. 2010, per cent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Do you think that over the next few years we should—</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not be concerned if growth slows down</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>50</td>
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2001 Should Australia increase, maintain or reduce its population?

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maintain or reduce</th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining</td>
<td>65 (58%)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reducing</td>
<td>'maintain', 7%</td>
<td>'reduce'</td>
<td></td>
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2009-2010 Do you think Australia needs more people? (Yes or no) If yes how would you like the population to grow?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage people to have more children</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage more migrants to come</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage both migrants and larger families</td>
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Note: The questions asked were as set out in above. Method: 1977, face-to-face interviews (not clearly stated in the records but one of the questions asked was whether the respondent was on the telephone — 27% were not) (N=2000); 2001, telephone interviews (N=1000); December 2009 to February 2010 mailout questionnaire (N=3052). For further details see K. Betts, 'Population growth: what do Australian voters want?' People and Place, vol. 18, no. 1, 2010, pp. 49-64; K. Betts, 'A bigger Australia: opinions for and against', People and Place, vol. 18, no. 2, 2010, pp.

Figure 2: The permanent immigration program, 1990-91 to 2010-11

Sources: Population Flows, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA)/Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), various issues. Data for 2009-2010 and 2010-11 are planning figures only and come from media releases.
Figure 3: Net migration to Australia, 1947 to 2009, calendar years

Sources: Demography Bulletin, Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra, for immigration figures 1946-1958 (various years); Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Canberra, Catalogue no. 3404.0 (various years); Australian Demographic Statistics, ABS, Canberra, Catalogue no. 3101.0, (various years).
Note: From 1947 to 1981 the data are net total migration figures. These include all movement in and out of the country: permanent, long-term (trips of 12 months or more) and short-term. From 1982 to 2009 the data are what the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) terms net overseas migration (NOM). This represents the net permanent and long-term data adjusted for category jumping (for example, people arriving short-term—for less than 12 months—but in fact staying longer). In September 2006 they changed the way in which they calculated NOM; this change inflated the recorded figures by around 22,000. See B. Birrell and E. Healy, ‘Net overseas migration: why is it so high?’ People and Place, vol. 18, no. 2, 2010, Table 1, p. 58.

Figure 5: Australia’s population from 1901 to 2006, with five different ABS projections to 2101 (life expectancy medium)

Notes: TFR stands for total fertility rate; Nom stands for net overseas migration; Medium life expectancy stands for the expectation that life expectancy at birth will rise from the 2007 levels of 79 years for males and 83.7 years for females to 85 for males and 88 for females.
References


2. Field and Higley, 1980, op. cit., p. 35


5. Higley and Burton want to restrict the term ‘elite’ to ‘persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organisations and movements, to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially’; they do not accept broader definitions such as ‘all those in a society who enjoy high occupational, educational, or cultural status’. Higley and Burton, 2006, op. cit. pp. 7-8

6. Given their roles in the media and higher education they are also partly able to define what may and may not be discussed, and how it should be discussed in the media, publishing, the arts, and the education system.


11. M. McKenna, ‘No mandate to silence dissent’. *The Age*, 18 April 2002; *Mark McKenna is a research fellow in history at the Australian National University in Canberra*.


14. Higley and Burton make this point forcefully when they analyse the insuperable difficulties of creating a liberal democracy in Iraq. See Higley and Burton, 2006, op. cit.,1-2, 201

15. Field and Higley, 1980, op. cit., pp. 19, 21-32; Higley et al., 1979, p. 15


17. Shuck writes that in the United States ‘Prior to the 1980s the courts had been content to accept the decisions of Congress and the bureaucracy. The Constitution stopped at “the water’s edge”’ or, as one Supreme Court judgment put it, ‘“Whatever the procedure authorized by Congress is, it is due process as far as an alien denied entry is concerned”’. P. H. Schuck, ‘Immigration law and the problem of community’. N. Glazer (Ed.), *Clamor at the Gates: The New American Immigration*, Institute for Contemporary Studies Press, San Francisco, 1985, p. 293


21. This has been challenged. ‘The notion of sovereignty, and the right of a country to decide who it lets in to its border, is premised on a belief in that country’s right to determine its own membership. The relevance of this nation is arguably outdated’. K. Rubenstein, ‘Citizenship in Australia: unscrambling its meaning’, *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol. 20, 1995, p. 522.

22. For an analyst who concludes that it is, and that because of this liberal theory is incoherent, see P. Cole, *Philosophies of Exclusion: Liberal Political Theory and Immigration*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, pp. 5, 202-3


24. Canovan argues that the prior existence of the nation state is a tacit premise in almost all contemporary political thinking about democracy, social justice, rights and the rule of law. But theories, and advocacy, about these concepts usually do not acknowledge this premise. See Canovan, op. cit., pp. 1, 11, 13-14, 29-34, 44, 68. See also D. Miller, *On Nationality*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1995, p. 93. Smith argues that, once the power of the monarch was eroded and transferred to the sovereign people, the question of who are the people became unstoppable. He says that nations are a way of answering this question and that, at the moment we have no other. National identity is

25 See Canovan, 1996, op. cit., pp. 59, 69, 70, 109. There are of course other ways of defining a nation. Anderson, for example famously described a nation as an ‘imagined community’ albeit one that is ‘imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.’ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (second edition), Verso, London, 1991, p. 6. Miller defines nations as ‘communities of obligation, in the sense that their members recognize duties to meet the basic needs and protect the basic interests of other members’, D. Miller, *On Nationality*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1995, p. 92. Smith says nations have become ‘what ethno-religious communities were in the past: communities of history and destiny that confer on mortals a sense of immortality through the judgment of posterity, rather than through divine judgment in an afterlife’. Smith, 1995, op. cit., pp. 158-9. None of these definitions depend on biological kinship and all draw on the notions of community, boundaries, feeling, and continuity through time. Most draw analogies between nations and ethnic groups. For example a national identity may feel very like an ethnic identity and nations do often grow out of ethnic groups. But point out that nations are different from ethnic groups: they have a history, a territory, and they do not necessarily depend on the myth or reality of biological relatedness. Many incorporate ethnic minorities or accept immigrants from various backgrounds; nevertheless successful nations generate a sense of community and identity while failed nations (such as the former Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union) do not.

26 Canovan, 1996, op. cit., p. 71


34 These ideas are explored further in K. Betts and B. Birrell, ‘Making Australian citizenship mean more’, *People and Place*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2007, pp. 45-61.


37 Jerry Jordan was then president and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. He is quoted in G. Lindsay and J. Jordan, ‘They Say: Immigration will help dismantle the welfare state’, *The Australian Financial Review*, 7 March 2000, p. 20

38 C. Berg, ‘Open the borders’, *Policy*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2010, p. 4

39 See Joppke, 2005, op. cit., pp. 12, 37, 173


Some argue that ordinary people benefit from per capita economic growth but the benefits are small. In 2006 the Productivity Commission undertook a study of the economic impact of migration and population growth. ‘To assess the effect of skilled migration, modelling was conducted to estimate the economic impact of a simulated increase in skilled migration of about 50 per cent on the level in 2004-05.

‘By 2024-25, the increase in income per capita, on average, is projected to be about $400 (or about 0.7 per cent), compared with a base case scenario’. Economic Impacts of Migration and Population Growth: Media release <www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/migrationandpopulation/docs/finalreport/mediarelease> accessed 25 June 2010

While distances traveled to work have remained relatively stable since the mid 1990s, or have even declined, there is evidence that the time spent commuting has increased for Brisbane, Sydney and Adelaide. See State of Australian Cities 2010, Major Cities Unit, Infrastructure Australia, Canberra, 2010, p. 104. For media reports and commentary see: S. Lunn, ‘The daily commute keeps getting longer’, The Australian, 4 June 2009, p. 3; ‘Crowding out a way of life’, Daily Telegraph, 18 May 2010, p. 20; A. Ferguson, ‘Congestion to cost region $3bn a year’, The Australian, 29 August 2009, p. 7; J. Dowling and C. Lucas, ‘ Bursting at the seams’, The Age, 11 November 2009, p. 15; J. Gordon, ‘Congestion the ultimate cost of people ingestion’, The Sunday Age, 28 February 2010, p. 17.


For interviews with Australian judges on a range of social questions see: Pierce, 2006, op. cit.

See Pierce, 2006, op. cit.


A. Priestley, ‘We’ll have home but no yard, says Smith’, North Shore Times, 29 May 2010

D. Smith, ‘Dick Smith: the people have spoken, halt population growth’, Crikey, 1 April 2010

See Betts and Gilding, 2006, op. cit. Harold Mitchell writes: ‘The debate rages about how big Australia’s population should become. …if we get to the fabled 36 million by 2050, Australia will be a different place, and if we plan it properly, a better place. For marketers, it means more goods and services and more profits. For the media, more people and therefore more profits’ H. Mitchell, ‘Important to get population right’, The Age, 23 April 2010, p. 7. John Stone writes: ‘In short, immigration does not improve average Australians’ living standards, and that long-standing argument for it has no substance. Our corporate chieftains—including importantly those controlling our media—find that conclusion unacceptable. More immigrants mean more demand for their products, whether widgets or newspapers’. See J. Stone, Immigration policy: our self-inflicted wounds’, Quadrant, vol. LIV, no. 9, 2010, September, p. 32. (Stone is a former head of the Department of Treasury.)

58 See S. Parnell, ‘Treasury push for big migration boost’, The Australian, 3 June 2010, p. 5. In 2006 the Australian Productivity Commission found that a simulated increase in skilled immigration of 50 per cent would increase annual per capita income in 2024-25 by a mere A$383 (around 0.71 per cent), and that most of this increase would go to the migrants themselves. See Economic Impacts of Migration and Population Growth, Position Paper, January, Productivity Commission, Melbourne, 2006, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

59 Wells writes that ‘The Victorian economy is increasingly reliant on population growth to drive growth and prosperity. … Without population growth Victoria’s economic performance would be substantially less healthy. Population growth has been described by Access Economics in its September Quarter 2009 report as “underpinning” the State’s growth. It does this by basically fuelling demand in the construction industry and the housing industry in particular, as well as household demand’. K. Wells, Victorian Budget 2010: The legacy of John Brumby after 11 years: failure of basic services and infrastructure, Pre-Budget Summary Edition, Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition, Melbourne, 2010 (April), p. 14


62 C. Hull, ‘Watch this space of ours, or we may just populate and perish’, The Canberra Times, 30 January 2010, p. 19. This supported by Kelvin Thomson, labor MHR for Wills (Victoria) who is reported as saying that ‘governments support the idea of a big Australia because they have been lobbied by self-interested big business’. [He says] “Some business entities, and property developers in particular, are in the ears of politicians, day in, day out, seeking high population … They regard population growth as the yellow brick road to easy profit”. See J. Drape, ‘PM's support for “big Australia” confusing: Labor MP’, Australian Associated Press General News, 29 November 2009. See also K. Betts and M. Gilding, ‘The growth lobby and Australia’s immigration policy’, People and Place, vol. 14, no. 4, 2006, pp. 40-52.