THE PEOPLE AND
THE POPULATION: IMMIGRATION AND
SOCIAL COHESION
Katharine Betts

Immigration imports people from one political community, people with their own allegiances and their own way of doing things, and puts them into another. It inevitably means growing diversity, even if the cultural backgrounds of the migrants are similar to that of the host community. As many British migrants could attest, this can promote problems. And if the migrants come from very different backgrounds we might expect the problems to be greater. Australia has a long experience in settling people from diverse circumstances and we know that it is not always easy for them or for us. But the question here is: does this process threaten social cohesion?

Members of a cohesive group feel that they have special ties with other members and, if the group is a nation, social cohesion usually enhances mutual trust, builds social capital and provides a basis for collective action. Examples of collective action include the provision of public goods such as the maintenance of political institutions and the law, socialisation of new members, and environmental protection. They also include redistributive social policies. Most public goods and redistributive policies cannot be provided by private markets; indeed individuals have no personal self-interest in providing welfare for strangers or working to avert environmental disasters which may occur only after they are dead, but collective action often extends beyond any one member’s personal self-interest or even an individual’s life span. If we want to care for the weak and protect the future of our grandchildren we have to work as a group for some purposes, which means we have to want to work as a group. If people stop wanting to do this, perhaps because they believe their attempts at altruism are being exploited by shysters and freeloaders, we will slip back into a Hobbsian world where long-term goals vanish and even most short-term goals are unachievable.
Social cohesion has had a bad press from critics who insist on seeing it as uniformity and conformity\(^1\) but members of cohesive groups do not have to think of other members as carbon copies of themselves. Voluntary cohesion flows from commitment and identification not obedience and subjection. This means that it is not threatened by the mere fact of diverse origins; just as members of a family prize each other for their unique qualities, so may members of larger groups provided that all of them feel they belong to the same group.

Social cohesion could be threatened by diverse origins if these meant that migrants never felt an attachment to the Australian community and that they retained, or cultivated, fervent loyalties to other national or quasi-national groups. But this is not the situation that we currently face. Survey data show that migrants have been almost as likely to identify with the Australian nation as the Australian born\(^2\) and that most feel little interest in structural multiculturalism or ethnic separatism.\(^3\)

But the position in which we stand is not necessarily good. We are continuing to import large numbers of migrants and our public culture is beginning to fray. I do not assert that these two facts represent cause and effect but simply that they are both happening. I will, however, argue that continuing with high immigration does not help.\(^4\)

**Immigration**

Let's start with immigration. Data for 2000 show a net intake close to 100,000,\(^5\) and the program has just been increased by between 10 and 20 per cent (depending on whether the new contingency reserve places are taken up).\(^6\) If we stay at around net 90,000 per year (and with current settings the net intake could well be higher) then the population of Australia will grow by 34 per cent by the year 2051. This means that there will be another six and half million people to house, feed, educate and employ. Over the next 50 years we will have to export more, generate more energy, absorb more waste, and build the equivalent of an extra Sydney, Adelaide and Perth, just to stay in the same place. Indeed Sydney itself is projected to grow from four million to nearly six million, with most of this extra growth occurring over the next 20 years.\(^7\)

We know that, other things being equal, more people means more environmental stress and that the economic effects of population growth are uncertain (even when they are confined to the narrow limits of the national accounts).\(^8\) We also know that immigration has very little effect on the population’s age structure: \(^9\) if we really cared about a more even age distribution we would help Australian parents have the number of children they say they want (about two), rather than bringing in more migrants.

But I am not going to spend time going over the body of work on the environmental, demographic and economic effects of immigration.
The research is in the public arena, serious participants in the debate know about it and the findings are not in dispute. (Groups with vested interests in immigration-fuelled growth may chose to ignore it, but that is another matter.)

I want to talk about the cultural and political risks that we are taking. Two problem areas stand out, and high immigration makes both of them worse. The first is the growing distrust that the majority of Australians feel for their political representatives, and the second is the effects of diversity on the way in which cultural elites represent the nation to us. If we no longer trust each other, and if we can no longer imagine that we are part of an Australian people, it would be fair to say that the ties which used to bind us into a national community are dissolving.

**Trust**

We know about the decline of trust in our major institutions, the perception that politicians and other public figures are out for themselves, the feeling that if we do put any more faith in them they will just exploit this for their own ends. Current surveys show that only nine per cent of the public trust politicians, and 52 per cent of respondents to the 1998 Australian Election Study felt that government was mostly or entirely run by a few big interests looking out for themselves — only one per cent believed that it was entirely run for the benefit of all.

These perceptions are, for the most part, unfair. They are probably driven by a number of factors: economic rationalism, with its look-after-yourself-first values; globalisation and the erosion of sovereignty which mean that there is less that political leaders can in fact do for the people they represent; and the growing gap between the culture of the political and intellectual elite and the beliefs and values of the majority.

But the politics of immigration do not help. Here the vested interests which profit from immigration-fuelled population growth put relentless pressure on governments of which ever stripe to boost immigration until they yield, while the majority who must bear the costs of growth are ill-informed, sidelined and neglected. This is client politics. But it is the nature of such politics that the majority do not really know what is going on, so the effects of the growth lobby’s activity probably just add to the general sense that politicians don’t care about the national interest, that they look after themselves and their mates, and that Australians are being taken for a ride once again.

This feeling of vague betrayal will smoulder on as population growth adds to the stresses on the major cities and their under-funded infrastructure, and as people’s awareness of particular aspects of the intake which hurt their interests grows. An example of such an aspect is
the preference being given to overseas students in the provision of new university places. These overseas students are then given a fast track to permanent visas and good jobs in the new economy, at the expense of investment in local training to help young Australians fill these vacancies.\textsuperscript{16}

**Conceptions of the nation**

What of the second risk to social cohesion posed by immigration? This has to do with the way in which we perceive ourselves as a nation. Broadly speaking there are two main approaches to this question: for convenience I will call them proceduralism and peoplehood.

*Proceduralism*

The procedural vision of the liberal, democratic, nation state emphasises due process and formal rules. Citizens have no obligations to others which they have not freely undertaken (they have “unencumbered selves”) and the polity to which they belong is sometimes referred to as a “procedural democracy” or it is described as representing “constitutional patriotism”. Here we have loyalty to a set of rules rather than a set of people.\textsuperscript{17} The core values of a procedural democracy are tolerance and abstract justice. In good times citizens can be like lodgers politely sharing the same boarding house, or like townhouse dwellers who try to avoid tiresome contact with their neighbours and employ a body corporate to manage their collective affairs.

The procedural model also emphasises the metaphor of contracts and self-interest. While contemporary political philosophers such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas\textsuperscript{18} have made a strong contribution to the development of the procedural model, its origins lie further back in time with Locke’s Two Treatises on Government.\textsuperscript{19} The argument is that enlightened self-interest will ensure that most will co-operate to promote the common good. It’s in our interests to obey the rules that we have agreed on and to tolerate one another. (Kant asserted more than two centuries ago that a liberal society does not need virtue; it can be run by “rational devils”.)\textsuperscript{20}

The procedural model is attractive to many of its adherents because of its absence of emotion. Procedural citizenship envisages a dispassionate collectivity of rational individuals unlikely to be stirred by any sentiment or feeling; consequently they should be immune to aggressive nationalism and imperialism. Indeed, proceduralists tend to portray most ideas about the nation which emphasise warmth and commitment as dangerously exclusionary and fanatical, if not racist.\textsuperscript{21}

But why should we want to live by the rules, want to be tolerant and just, and what would hold us together if things got tough and self-interest ceased to make it rational to stay and help? Why shouldn’t anyone with options just move out and move on? What would motivate us to put effort into the common project of caring for those who may
never be able to reciprocate, or of investing in a future we may not see? The only answer that the procedural model can provide is self interest and an abstract enthusiasm for justice.

The procedural model finds favour with the intelligentsia, especially those who advise governments on citizenship and who comment publicly on such matters. It was popular with the republican movement (and is probably one of the key reasons why the referendum was lost). It appeals to the head, is compatible with economic rationalism, can fit in with globalisation, and seems to suit structural multiculturalism. But it offers nothing to the heart. It cannot tell us that we belong to a community of feeling, of memory, and of commitment. It is as if we have just signed up with a useful association — a bit like being an ordinary member of the RACV (or the NRMA). We pay our dues and receive roadside service, but there is no reason for us to care about the entity that we have joined, or for our fellow members to care about us. It has also been described as the service-station state: pull in, fill up with services, pay up, and move on.

**Peoplehood**

Proceduralism is a term with some currency but the other main way of perceiving the national community does not have a clear label. It is popular with a majority of Australians but less popular with the intelligentsia and this may explain its lack of a well accepted, non-pejorative name (and the ease with which it can be dismissed as being conformist, hostile to minorities, ethnocentric, bigoted and so on). Margaret Canovan talks about it under the heading of peoplehood and nationhood; others use different words. (Sandel calls it the civic republic, a label that doesn’t work in Australia, while Etzioni talks of communitarianism.) Its essence is social cohesion, a sense of belonging, commitment, and feelings of mutual concern for fellow members. For want of a more familiar word I will use Canovan’s term and call it peoplehood.

This perspective allows us to think of ourselves as being part of a community, an entity, that existed before we joined (either by birth or migration) and that will endure after us. It allows us to use the pronouns we, us and our when we talk about our collective achievements and responsibilities. For example, it means that we can say that we should help the East Timorese people because they helped us in the last war, when in fact hardly any of us now alive were personally assisted by anyone from East Timor. But if a nation is to act with a sense of responsibility for its past, and for its future, this way of thinking about membership is essential.

The sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves provides motivation to contribute to our common future, even if there is no direct pay-off for us as individuals, and to want to be involved in the welfare of others. It motivates men and women to make sacrifices
to defend each other, not just in time of war but from other threats such as poverty and environmental decay. Why, for example, should members of the service-station state waste time and take personal risks for such causes? In contrast, members of a cohesive national people can be motivated to work for a common future by an intuitive sense that this is morally right. It’s not a rational response (they stand to lose far more in forgone income and leisure than they will gain) but if none of us should feel moved to work for our common future that future will be bleak indeed.

Men and women who belong to a people do not think of their government as hired managers but as representatives of their community. This is, after all, what popular sovereignty means; the government represents the people. This is why we feel morally affronted if we think that our representatives have let us down. It’s not just a matter of moving on from an inefficient accountant or lawyer and engaging a better one: we are upset in the way that we might be if friend or family failed us in time of need.

**Peoplehood and immigration**

Some members of the cultural elite do not trust us with the concept of being a people. They do not want us to believe that there is a special sense in which we are committed to each other. This is because they think that, if we were given an ounce of encouragement, we would start to make distinctions and to say that only some of us are real Australians and that others, no matter how long they have been here, are not and must be pushed to the margins. This is the essence of the argument that a nation of immigrants cannot be a people.

This lack of trust is not based on any evidence. We do have real problems with the condition of many Aborigines which we, as a people (non-indigenous and indigenous together) must solve, but migrants who want to integrate are accepted and appreciated. Most old Australians are not racists and most new ones do want to join the team.

But in the current circumstances the majority do not trust the political elite and the cultural elite do not trust the majority. Immigration and proceduralism just take us further into this moral mess. The real threat to social cohesion from immigration is in the belief that because we have diverse origins we cannot be a people, that the ties between us must be cool and instrumental, and that the greatest political danger we face is to care about each other. Proceduralism leads to an instrumental world where all we can do together is trade and make money, where tolerance becomes indifference, and where there is no reason at all to do anything that does not advance our own self interest. It is an arid world and one which is inherently unstable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year to 30 June</th>
<th>Program (visas issued)</th>
<th>Net total migration</th>
<th>Net overseas migration</th>
<th>Net permanent and long-term</th>
<th>Net permanent temporary</th>
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<td>62,700</td>
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<td>1978-79</td>
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<td>58,300</td>
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<td>1979-80</td>
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<td>76,900</td>
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<td>99,100</td>
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<td>97,000*</td>
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Note: From 1959 to the early 1980s the Australian Bureau of Statistics relied on net permanent and long-term migration for the measure of the net contribution of overseas movement to the population. It includes all travellers whose trips fell into the permanent category and all temporary arrivals for stays planned to last 12 months of more minus all temporary departures for trips planned to last 12 months or more. These latter trips fall into the category of long term movement. However, people’s stated plans are not always carried out. They may arrive saying they will stay a few weeks and thus be classed in the short-term category but in fact stay permanently. Or they may leave saying it will be for a few weeks and not return for years, if ever. This phenomenon is called category jumping. Consequently the ABS has developed the measure which they call net overseas migration. This is net permanent and long-term movement adjusted for their estimates of category jumping. Unfortunately the estimating process is unreliable and published figures are often revised later. Some demographers prefer to use the net total figures which are simply a head count of everybody coming in (regardless of category) minus everybody going out. This measure is not subject to revision and has the added advantage of going back to 1946.

* Planning figures: may reach 105,000. See note 6.
Sources: Data, apart from program data, are from *Australian Demographic Statistics*, various issues, ABS Catalogue No. 3101.0 (various issues), for the net total migration figures and net permanent figures from 1978-79 on; the 1975-66 to 1977-78 data are from *Australian Immigration, Consolidated Statistics No. 13*, 1982, DIEA, AGPS, Canberra 1984, pp. 9, 18. *Migration*, ABS, Catalogue No. 3412.0 (various issues), is the source for net overseas migration. (The net temporary figures are derived from the data in Table 1.)


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**Figure 1: Migration to Australia, 1975–79 to 2001-02**

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**Endnotes**

1. See note 32 below.

2. In 1988 the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) commissioned a large national survey of immigrants and the general population. There were four sub-samples, the general population (N=1542), first generation non-English-speaking-background (NESB) immigrants (N=986), second generation NESB “immigrants” (N=823), and recently arrived NESB immigrants, that is people who had arrived since 1981 (N=1141). Among many other questions they were asked “How important is Australian in describing who you are?” The alternatives offered were very important, fairly important, not too important and not at all important. Fifty six per cent of the general sample said it was very important, and 27 per cent said it was fairly important. These percentages were almost exactly same for the first-generation sample. The proportions saying very important were a little lower for the second generation (49 per cent) but the proportion saying fairly important was 36 per cent. Among the recent arrivals 40 per cent said “Australian” was very important to them (and 34 per cent that it was fairly important). *Issues in Multicultural Australia, 1988,*
Ten years later the situation had changed. Immigrants were rather less likely to identify with Australia than the native born but this was more a case of the identification of the established native born increasing rather than that of the others decreasing. In 1998 The Australian Election Survey (AES) asked a random sample of voters about the importance to the respondent’s self image of being Australian. Of the 1639 who answer this question and the question on birthplace, 57 per cent said it was very important, almost exactly the same proportion as answered this way in 1988. The Australian-born and those born in English-speaking-background (ESB) countries were not identified separately in the OMA study. But the AES found that 62 per cent of the Australian-born gave this response, compared with 34 per cent of those born in the ESB countries (UK, Ireland and NZ). However 45 per cent of those with born in other countries (mostly NESB) said it was very important, an eleven per cent drop if we compare this study with the 56 per cent of first generation NESB immigrants who said “very important” in the OMA study. But the numbers in the NESB-born subset of the AES were small (n=91) and the observed difference could be due to sampling error. (Clive Bean et al., Australian Election Study [AES], 1998 [computer file], Canberra, Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, 1998. The originators of this data file do not bear any responsibility for my analysis of it.)

3. In 1988, 64 per cent of first-generation NESB immigrants disagreed with the statement that “Australia would be a better place if members of ethnic groups kept their own way of life”; 67 per cent agreed that “People who come to Australia should change their behaviour to be more like other Australians”; and 59 per cent agreed that “Having lots of different cultural groups in Australia causes lots of problems”. OMA, op. cit., pp. 146, 149-9. On the first and third of these questions the general population (migrants and Australian-born together), were rather more opposed to multiculturalism than the migrants themselves but nonetheless all three of these questions register a solid majority of NESB immigrants who were opposed. (An Irving Saulwick poll found a similar pattern in 1994. See People and Place, vol. 4, no. 1, 1996, p. 22.) The OMA survey found that, while 52 per cent of the population belonged to at least one club, society or sporting organisation, a mere three per cent belonged to any organisation which had an ethnic affiliation. (Total derived from data in OMA, op. cit., p. 46.)

4. It has been an item of faith with commentators from the growth lobby and the media that the Howard Government has “slashed” immigration. As Table 1 and Figure 1 show there was a dip in the formal program between 1996-7 and 1998-9, but the numbers were never as low as they were in the early 1980s or, for that matter, 1992-93, and high levels of net temporary migration have meant that the overall figures only dropped a little.

5. See Table 1 and Figure 1

6. The 2000-01 program, as published in Population Flows, DIMA, Canberra December 1999, pp. 15, 22, stood at 88,000 (76,000 general plus 12,000 Humanitarian). This in itself was an increase of nearly 10 per cent on 1999-2000. However the 2000-01 figures included an extra “contingency reserve” of 5000 places. In the event 3200 of these were used. The planned figures of 2001-02 (announced May 2001) was 97,000 (85,000 general and 12,000 Humanitarian). But it too includes a contingency reserve, this time of 8000 places. If these are taken up the total will be 105,000 places. See Ministerial Press Releases for May 2001, MPS 045/2001 and 046/2001.

7. If net migration sticks closer to 100,000 p.a. than 90,000, and if fertility stays at 1.75 instead of falling to 1.6, we will add 10 million by 2051 and still be growing at the end of the century. For both projections see Projections of the Populations of Australia,
8. Economic analysts of immigration tend to arrive at conclusions which reflect their starting assumptions. But for an overview see L. S. Williams, *Understanding the Economics of Immigration*, (Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research) Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1995. “At the general or aggregate level, the complexity and balancing of the effects suggest that strong positive or negative views on the economic effects of immigration are hard to justify. At the more specific level, agreement is less clear. Immigration may be either advantageous or disadvantageous for a particular region, industry, occupation, or group of people, depending on a range of demographic, economic, social and region-specific factors” (p. 25).

9. The ABS expresses it like this: “Even large differences in the level of net overseas migration will have a relatively small impact on the age distribution. With net overseas migration of 50,000 per year, the median age of the population in 2051 would be 47.2 years, compared to 44.6 years when 150,000 net overseas migrants are added to the population per year, a difference of 2.6 years”. *Projections*, 2000, op. cit., p. 2. There is a wealth of demographic research on this point. See for example, R. Kippen, “A note on aging, immigration and the birth rate”, *People and Place*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1999, pp. 18-22, and C. Young, “The future population and the future labour force”, *People and Place*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1994, pp. 15-21.

10. A long series of public opinion polls on trust shows that the proportions of people who rate the ethics and honesty of politicians, lawyers, business executives and bank managers as “very high” or “high” declined between 1976 and 1995. In 1976, 19 per cent rated the ethics and honesty of Federal members of Parliament as high or very high; this figure fell to nine per cent in 1995. Ratings for State Members of Parliament fell from 21 per cent to 12 per cent over the same period. In 1995, only newspaper journalists and car salesmen rate lower than Federal politicians. See polls reported in I. McAllister, M. MacKerras and C. B. Boldiston, *Australian Political Facts (Second edition)*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1997, p. 299.

In 1997 a poll concentrating on trust for politicians among young people (aged 13 to 19) found similar results. Only nine per cent had “a lot” of trust and respect for politicians. (See D. Hope, “Job scarcity, drugs top teen troubles”, *The Australian*, 4 July 2000, p. 5.) Roy Morgan polls in 1998, 1999 and 2000 asked people to agree or disagree with the statement: “I don’t trust the current Australian Government”. The proportions who agreed were 49 per cent (published February 1998); 46 per cent (published January/February 1999) and 47 per cent (over the 12 months to September 1999, published February 2000). The last set of figures are based on a number of different polls taken from October 1998 to September 1999 and include 24,738 Australians aged 14 and over: 47 per cent agreed with the statement, 27 per cent disagreed and 26 per cent weren’t able to say. (Data from http://roymorgan.com.au/polls/2000/3280/index.html accessed 14/2/01.)

The 1998 Australian Election Study asked people to respond to the statement: “Government is run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or…it is run for the benefit of all the people”. Fifteen per cent said it was “entirely run for a few big interests” and 37 per cent that it was “mostly run for a few big interests”. Thus over half (52 per cent) felt that their Government was in fact run all or mostly for a few big interests. A further 36 per cent said the it was “about half and half”, 11 per cent that it was “mostly run for the benefit of all”, and one per cent that it was run “entirely for the benefit of all”. (Clive Bean et al., AES, op. cit.)

Qualitative work also shows that Australians think that people in authority cannot be trusted. A 1997 report found that a belief that people in positions of authority cannot be trusted was widespread and many respondents felt that the distribution of public money was unfair, that it penalised those who struggled to look after themselves and
rewarded those who exploited the system. (See S. White, S. Cummings and Roy Morgan Research, The Silent Majority III, Clemenger/BBDO Ltd, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 4, 13, 25.) A sense of betrayal of trust and that life has become fundamentally unjust permeate these findings. “The qualitative stage of the research revealed an intense, sometimes bitter, sense that the majority of Australians are getting a raw deal”, p. 31.

On the eve of the vote for the republic referendum Nicolas Rothwell wrote that Australians showed a “mistrust, even a dislike, of their political class unmatched anywhere in the English-speaking world”. N. Rothwell, “Whose republic?”, Prospect, November 1999, pp. 34-38

11. See note 10 above.


15. While this general sense of mistrust is unfair, as far as immigration is concerned the pressure of the growth lobby does appear too strong for Governments to withstand.


19. J. Locke, Two Treatises on Government, Dent (Everyman’s Library), London, 1924 [1690], especially pp. 123, 180, 185, 224, 228-234


21. See note 32 below.

22. It infuses documents such as Australians All: Enhancing Australian Citizenship, Joint Standing Committee on Migration, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994 (especially pp. 63-67), or Australian Citizenship Council, Australian

See also S. Macintyre, Whereas the people... Civics and Citizenship Education: Report of the Civics Expert Group, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994. “One of the challenges of citizenship in the present era arises from the recognition that it is no longer possible to assume the old values that once bound Australians together as a community” p. 14.

Many of the arguments put by the “yes” case in the referendum on the republic tended to emphasise the procedural model. For example, Don Watson, Paul Keating’s speech writer, described his vision of Australia as “the world’s first post-modern republic”, a republic that would be marked not by exalting the nation but by emphasising “difference rather than uniformity”. Quoted in A. Atkinson, The Muddle-Headed Republic, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 100.

While official documents promoting multiculturalism place more emphasis on what can be called “differentiated citizenship” this is usually presented in tandem with a respect for core institutions borrowed from the procedural model. See Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs, Multiculturalism for all Australians: Our Developing Nationhood, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1982 and Office of Multicultural Affairs, National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia... Sharing Our Future, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1989.


26. In 1998 the AES asked this question: “Ideally, Australian society should be: A unified body pursuing a common goal; a collection of people independently pursuing their own goals; neither, undecided”. The first option reflects the peoplehood model and the second the procedural one: 60 per cent chose the first option and 22 per cent the second (18 per cent were undecided). The results were different when we control for education: 63 per cent of people without a university education said that ideally Australia should be a unified body of people pursuing a common goal but only 51 per cent of graduates. (Source, Clive Bean et al., AES, op. cit.)

27. See Canovan, op. cit., passim.


30. Canovan argues that the sense of belonging to a cohesive nation constitutes an enduring collective political subject (or actor) and solves the most fundamental of political problems, ensuring a measure of stability of the group in the face of the physical turnover of members. Mortality means that human societies are inherently unstable. How can any political entity have enough unity to generate the power to both act and to maintain itself for any length of time, let alone beyond the lifespan of an individual? She also says that this problem is especially acute with the relatively
non-coercive power associated with civilised politics. Nations provide a reservoir of power, like a battery, which can lie dormant without keeping people in a frenzy of mobilisation. See Canovan op. cit., pp. 72-75.

31. Some members of the growth lobby who dislike this orientation advocate high immigration because they believe it weakens our commitment to social welfare. As an American immigration advocate puts it: “One reason for advocating more relaxed immigration policies — more openness to people who want 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”. Jerry Jordan, CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, in G. Lindsay and J. Jordan, “They Say: Immigration will help dismantle the welfare state”; The Australian Financial Review, 7 March 2000, p. 20.

32. The desire for a sense of peoplehood is often misrepresented as nostalgia for a “monoculture”, a system in which we all share the same beliefs and values. Australian Citizenship for a New Century dismisses the idea of a single national identity: “Why do we have to imagine we have an ‘identity’ in any restricted sense which excludes many Australians? The Council considered it might be better to proclaim core civic values of all Australians to respect as the basis of our citizenship”, Australian Citizenship op. cit., p. 10. Donald Horne deplores any attempt to speak of an Australian mainstream as a device to exclude ethnic minorities, D. Horne, “Celebrating our differences”, The Australian, 9 February 2001, p. 13. John Frow finds a search for the cultural core of Australia to be nothing less than a call for white supremacy: J. Frow, “No room for difference”, Brisbane Courier Mail: Weekend, 2 October 1999, p. 9. Margaret Simons reports that, “The academics are suggesting a radical model for a nation. They are suggesting a country without a core identity, other than the recognition and embracing of difference.” M. Simons, “30 things that still say Australia”, The Weekend Australian (Review section), 27-28 January 1996, pp. 1, 4. Richard Woolcott implies that the existing national identity is characterized by “intolerance, bigotry, latent racism, insularity, self-satisfaction and triumphalism” when he argues that we must accept large-scale immigration and repair our relations with Indonesia. R. Woolcott, “Stop waltzing and advance our nation fairly”, The Australian, 28 January 2000, p. 9. And Wilton and Bosworth interpret Australian attempts to preserve their sense of being a people as racist throughout their work. See for example J. Wilton and R. Bosworth, Old Worlds and New Australia: The Post-War Migrant Experience, Penguin, Melbourne, 1984, pp. 2-6, 17.

Social cohesion depends on assimilation only as far as national commitments and loyalties are concerned but some are quick to see any assimilation at all as racist. See S. Castles, M. Kalantzis, B. Cope and M. Morrissey, Mistaken Identity, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1990, pp. 110-11, 133; J. Hobbs and D. B. Moshe, “No place to play the race card in a fair deal”, The Australian, 18 August 1998, p. 13. Seeing the desire for peoplehood as a search for a “monoculture”, the former Prime Minister Paul Keating stigmatises it as a greater “tragedy” than ignorance, prejudice, fear, or racism. He finds it worse than other attempts to be divisive (and hurtful), and worse than attempts to damage the economy. See speech quoted in M. Steketee, “Hanson view compounds a myth: Keating”, The Australian, 12 November 1996, p. 1, 2. Jon Faine and Howard Nathan would prefer that Australians did not even debate a population policy. In 1998 they said that such a move would be a bad thing because it would provide a platform for racists to go on commercial radio and air their objectional views. J. Faine, 1998, Radio program, 3LO, 20 February 1998.