

Quality of Life

It is never linked to immigration

by Denis McCormack

This statistics box was set inside a 500-word article, “Melbourne wins tally of two cities” (Melbourne *Herald Sun*, January 11, 2005, p.15, by Tonya Giles) citing a recent survey comparing “quality of life” between Australia’s two largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne.

The article begins with happy talk about the findings, i.e., Melbourne’s quality of life is better than Sydney’s. The stats box is a lot more informative than the article. Any reader with brain function will dismiss most of the “Australia should become” column as non-quantifiable, subjective, utopian, feel-good, self-indulgent, wish-listing blather.

The “our biggest challenges” column, however, is real-world anxiety and it doesn’t take much grey matter to link most of these “challenges” with the 69 percent concern about “immigration problems.”

In Orwellian tradition, the only items from both columns to get a mention in the 500 words of accompanying text were: “high cost of housing,” “workplace stress,” “long working hours.” All this needs to be understood in the unmentioned context of innumerable articles published over the last few years about population growth stress in both cities, covering all the familiar territory, i.e., urban congestion, water shortages, power generation shortfalls, ethnic ghettos and tensions, pressure on health and hospital infrastructure, etc.

Sydney (New South Wales) has over a million people more than Melbourne (Victoria). NSW Premier Bob Carr (Labor) wants immigration – a federal issue – halved. Victoria Premier Steve Bracks (Labor) wants immigration significantly increased, and his blueprint “Melbourne 2030” seeks to shoehorn one million more people into Melbourne by that year. On the day before the above revelation was published, *The Australian* of

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WHAT AUSTRALIANS THINK

% of people surveyed who agreed with each statement

Australia should become:		Our biggest challenges:	
Less influenced by America	91	Growing gap between rich and poor	85
More caring	90	High cost of housing	78
More inventive	90	Rising obesity	73
Fairer	89	Immigration problems	69
Kinder	86	Workplace stress	69
More friendly and welcoming	85	Unemployment	66
Stronger	81	Racism	62
More determined	80	Personal safety	60
Freer	77	Long working hours	58
More able to defend itself	74	Terrorism	58
More a leader	73	Inequality of the sexes	34
More competitive	68		
More multicultural	67		
More a part of Asia	51		

January 10, 2005, carried a story on page 3 covering immigration numbers, by Patricia Karvelas:

In the past financial year [July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004], more than 111,000 people arrived and settled in Australia – an increase of nearly 20,000 from the previous year’s total of 93,914, the largest number of migrant and refugee entrants in a decade. More than 28,000 of the new immigrants settled in Victoria, an increase of nearly 5,000 from the previous year, and the highest increase in raw numbers... But NSW’s [read Sydney’s] share of the total settler arrivals – 38 percent – was its lowest percentage since 1983-84. Just over 40,000 people arrived... The figures come three years after a state-federal task force was convened to examine ways of reducing migration into NSW to ease population stress on Sydney.

But how reliable are the above numbers? Which to believe? The Melbourne *Age* of January 22, 2005, in “Foreign students settle” by Tim Colebatch (page 9) states:

More than 13,000 were beneficiaries of a little noticed policy introduced in 2001 that allows foreign students permanent residency if they line up a skilled job within six months of completing their course. New Immigration Department figures show the number seizing the opportunity jumped 52 percent last year, as growing numbers of Asian students chose to stay and work in Australia... Demand from foreign students lifted the number of people settling permanently in Australia to almost 149,000 in 2003-4, up from 95,000 six years ago.

Meanwhile, even the comatosed Australian Greens Party has finally noticed the upward drift in immigrant numbers happening since last century. In *The Australian* of January 28, 2005, "Howard's clever manoeuvre on migrants," Greens political advisor Hans van Leeuwen (aka Rip Van Winkle) wakes up to the obvious and couples PM Howard with his big business constituency as the culprits! Good work Sherlock, and let's hear it one more time by all means, but why in 650 words was there no mention of population growth/ stability, urban sprawl/ congestion, environment, sustainability, water/ power shortages, quality of life, etc?

On the issue of our much feared "national water crisis," Mr. Ross Young, Water Services Association executive director, summed up the problem best, and without even mentioning "the 'i' word" in *The Australian*, January 14, 2005, "Water warning: dams no solution" by Bernard Lane:

We shouldn't delude ourselves that what people will put up with in the short term is what people will put up with in the long term. Water conservation is incredibly important but there are two sides to the equation – the demand side and the supply side – and we need to have measures adopted on both sides.

Information abounds on "population stresses" in Perth (Western Australia) and Brisbane (Queensland), as well as the white flight from Sydney and Melbourne to surrounding coastal areas where they create new subsets of the same problems for locals of longer standing.

Who gains? Big government, big business, speculators and builders. Who loses? Everyone else. What do they lose? Quality of life. What *should* be written across 69 percent of ballot papers at all local, state, and federal elections, no matter who the individual might be voting for? IT'S IMMIGRATION, STUPID! •