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TRANS-TASMAN MIGRATION IN CONTEXT: RECENT FLOWS OF NEW ZEALANDERS REVISITED

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This article examines the impact of the Australian Government's decision to restrict access to social security benefits for New Zealand citizens locating in Australia. It does so in the context of all movements of New Zealand citizens whether to Australia or elsewhere. The Australian restrictions came into force on 1 July 2001. There has been a fall in the volume of out-migration from New Zealand to Australia since 1 July 2001, especially of New Zealand citizens born in Asia. However the authors argue that other factors, including an improvement in demand for labour in New Zealand, have contributed to this fall.

In the March 2001 issue of *People and Place* Birrell and Rapson¹ suggested that changes to the Australia/New Zealand Social Security Arrangements, announced on 26 February in that year, 'herald a new era in the relationship between the two countries'. A significant asymmetry in the privileged relationships that citizens of both countries had when resident in the other was introduced by these changes. New Zealanders who chose to reside in Australia are no longer eligible for many of Australia's social security benefits, even after a two year stand-down period, unless they apply for permanent residence status under Australia's migration program. Australians who move to New Zealand remain entitled to all the benefits that New Zealand citizens enjoy. Australians in New Zealand are not required to apply for residence status in order to qualify for these benefits.

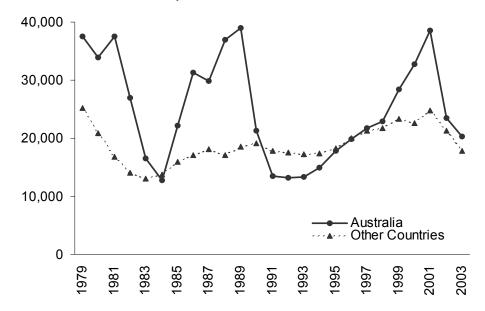
The reasons for the Australian Government's decision to depart from the long-established reciprocal arrangements with regard to social security benefits for New Zealand citizens are detailed clearly by Birrell and Rapson² and they will not be restated here. It is sufficient to note that in 1999 and 2000 a sharp increase in the share of New Zealand citizen trans-Tasman migrants who had been born in other countries was attracting increasingly negative comment in Australia

about 'back door' entry of immigrants who might not have qualified for residence under the immigration programme.3 The Australian Government's concern was not so much with the volume of immigration of New Zealanders per se. In 1999 and 2000 the number of New Zealand citizens departing for periods of 12 months or more who cited Australia as their country of next permanent residence was lower than it had been in the late 1970s and the late 1980s, according to New Zealand's departure records (Figure 1). Rather than the volume of immigration, it was with the mix of people who were entering as New Zealand citizens that was of concern — especially Pacific Islanders, people from countries in Asia, and refugees accepted by New Zealand from Africa and the Middle East.

AN APPROACH

In this paper we examine the trans-Tasman migration of New Zealanders between October 2000 and June 2003 in the wider context of the overseas movements of New Zealand citizens generally. The analysis presented by Birrell and Rapson in 2001, and Hugo's⁴ preliminary assessments of New Zealanders in Australia in 2001, utilize the Australian arrival and departure data. Their discussions only include

Figure 1: Permanent and long-term departures of New Zealand citizens to Australia and other countries, 1 July 1978 to 30 June 2003



reference to New Zealanders moving to and from Australia. In order to assess what impact the Australian policy changes have had on the permanent and long-term (PLT) movements of New Zealand citizens into and out of Australia, the movements of New Zealand citizens to and from other countries also have to be examined. This is necessary to take account of any generic changes in patterns of movement. To do this, we need to use data from New Zealand's arrival and departure cards. These data have only been available by birthplace of migrant since October 2000 when the birthplace question was re-instated on New Zealand's arrival and departure cards after a very short-sighted bureaucratic decision in 1987 to remove this question from the cards.⁵

On the basis of the New Zealand data for permanent and long-term migration of citizens to Australia and to other countries (which have been grouped as

'other overseas' for this analysis), it is argued that the most significant impact that the Australian policy changes in 2001 have had to date on trans-Tasman migration of New Zealand citizens was to stimulate a substantial spike in emigration between October 2000 and June 2001. It was around October 2000 that the Australian Government announced that a change in the social security regime was likely from early 2001. The policy changes introduced in February 2001 were accompanied by a transition period through until May 2001. By the end of the June 2001 year the new policy was fully operational. Data for the subsequent two June years thus enable us to trace what has happened under the new social security regime.

One of our findings is that it is difficult to detect a clear impact of the policy changes on the magnitude of flows into Australia or back to New Zealand when the trans-Tasman flows are placed in comparative context with the flows of New Zealand citizens to and from other overseas destinations. The PLT movement of New Zealand citizens to all overseas destinations has fallen quite sharply since the record 'high' of 63,200 in the year ended June 2001 (see Figure 1). In the year ended June 2003 it was 38,200, the lowest level for eight years. This was the case in both the trans-Tasman PLT flow and the flow of New Zealanders to other countries for periods of 12 months or more. New Zealand has enjoyed a period of quite solid economic growth over the past two years, with domestic unemployment falling to the lowest levels (under five per cent of the labour force in September 2003) since the early 1990s. This has affected both emigration as well as return migration of New Zealanders, with the latter running at the highest levels since the early 1990s.

A key objective underpinning the Australian Government's policy changes has been achieved, however. The share of New Zealand citizens born in countries other than New Zealand in the trans-Tasman flow has fallen quite significantly. It needs to be acknowledged, though, that this share had been pushed to artificially high levels by the lengthy period of advance warning of the impending policy changes. As our data show, the share of people born in Asian countries, especially in the trans-Tasman PLT flow, was much higher between October 2000 and June 2001 than it was in the subsequent two years.

To this point in time, few New Zealand citizens, especially those born in New Zealand, have sought to gain permanent residence through meeting Australia's official entry requirements. Most of those who have applied are New Zealanders born in other countries. Per-

haps this simply reinforces a view held widely on the New Zealand side of the Tasman that New Zealanders do NOT go to Australia to become a burden on the welfare system — most move to Australia to find work and to make a the sort of positive contribution to the host country's economy which immigrants traditionally are recognized as making.

The data

Aside from the re-instatement of the birthplace question, New Zealand's arrival and departure cards during the period under review have not been affected by any significant changes in the information collected on New Zealand citizens. The problems that McDonald. Khoo and Kippen⁶ have identified with Australia's arrival and departure data for long-term migrants since changes were made to cards in 1998 do not apply in New Zealand. The data presented in this paper are not adjusted for category jumping: they represent the self-declared intentions of New Zealanders leaving for 12 months or more, and the self-declared experiences of New Zealanders returning after 12 months or more overseas.

The trans-Tasman data relate to New Zealanders who declared that Australia was their country of next permanent residence (the country those leaving New Zealand would live in for 12 months or more) and to New Zealanders who stated on their return to New Zealand that their country of last permanent residence (defined as 12 months or more) was Australia. We are interested in establishing whether there has been any obvious decline in emigration to Australia as a result of the new policy changes, as well as any rise in the return of New Zealand citizens

from Australia, also as a result of the policy changes, especially the inability of New Zealanders to get access to unemployment or family support benefits. Hence the need to examine both flows of New Zealanders to Australia, as well as the movements of New Zealanders living in Australia back to New Zealand.

The data for other countries includes all New Zealand citizens departing for, or arriving after 12 months or more residence in, countries other than Australia. Also included in this category are people who did not state a country of last/next residence for 12 months or more. Some of the latter could have moved to/back from Australia, so there may be a small amount of under-reporting of trans-Tasman migration in these statistics.

The birthplaces for New Zealand citizens are grouped for analysis either into two summary groups (New Zealand, other countries) or into five categories: New Zealand, Pacific Islands, Asia, Unit-Kingdom/Europe/North America, Africa/Middle East. Between October 2000 and December 2000 there was quite a high incidence of 'birthplace not stated' in both the PLT arrival and departure data. The response rate to this question improved significantly during the first six months of 2001. The 'birthplace not stated' data are included in the 'other countries' group where this is cited.

Finally, it should be noted that all arrival and departure cards for PLT migrants are coded by Statistics New Zealand staff. There is no sampling of PLT arrivals and departures as there is for short-term movements. It is therefore appropriate to cite the raw numbers of movements; they are not subject to sampling error.

MIGRATION OF NEW ZEALAND CITIZENS OVERSEAS

Between 1 October 2000 and 30 June 2003, 133,098 citizens left New Zealand with the intention of spending 12 months or more overseas (Table 1). Just over half (74, 857 or 56 per cent) of these PLT departures cited Australia as their country of next permanent residence. Almost three quarters (54,619 or 73 per cent) of those leaving for Australia cited New Zealand as their country of birth. In the case of the balance of the New Zealand citizen (58,241) PLT departures, 80 per cent (46,640) gave New Zealand as their birthplace. Over the period under consideration, New Zealand citizens born in countries other than New Zealand were more likely to move to Australia than to other countries. This was especially the case in the nine months between October 2000 and June 2001 (Table 1).

Table 1: Permanent and long-term departures of New Zealand citizens for Australia and other countries by birthplace, 1 October 2000 — 30 June 2003

	Birthplace		
Destination:	New	Other	
Period	Zealand	countries	Total
Australia			
Oct 00 - June 01	19,635	11,427	31,062
July 01- June 02	18,645	4,843	23,488
July 02 - June 03	16,339	3,968	20,307
Oct 00 — June 03	54,619	20,238	74,857
Other Countries			
Oct 00 - June 01	14,533	4,388	18,921
July 01- June 02	17,399	3,993	21,392
July 02 - June 03	14,708	3,220	17,928
Oct 00 — June 03	46,640	11,601	58,241
Total			
Oct 00 - June 01	34,168	15,815	49,983
July 01- June 02	36,044	8,836	44,880
July 02 - June 03	31,047	7,188	38,235
Oct 00 — June 03	101,259	31,839	133,098

Source: Statistics New Zealand, unpublished tables provided by Customer Services, Christchurch

More New Zealand citizens born overseas (11,427) left for Australia between October 2000 and June 2001 than in the subsequent two years combined (8,811). In the case of New Zealand-born citizens, the 'spike' in departures at the time the policy changes were being introduced was not so prominent. The outflow for Australia of 19,635 New Zealand-born citizens between October 2000 and June 2001 was not significantly greater than the outflow for that country in the June 2002 year (18,645). However, a larger proportion (57 per cent) of New Zealand-born citizens went to Australia than to other countries during the period the policy changes were being debated and introduced than in the subsequent two years (52 per cent in each year).

Within a year of the policy changes being introduced, migration of New Zealanders overseas was falling to both Australia and other countries. The total number of departures in the year ended

June 2003 (38,235) was just under 15 per cent below that for the year ended June 2002 (44,880) and 24 per cent fewer than in the nine months to June 2001 (49,983). The trans-Tasman flow had fallen slightly less in the June 2003 year (13.5 per cent) than the flow to other countries (16 per cent), especially for citizens born in New Zealand. As already noted, the number of overseas-born New Zealand citizens leaving for Australia fell sharply after June 2001 and, by the year ended June 2003, totalled only 3,968 by comparison with 11,427 in the period between October 2000 and June 2001.

The biggest reduction in overseasborn New Zealanders moving to Australia after the policy changes was amongst those born in countries in Asia (Table 2). Between October 2000 and June 2001. 4.524 Asia-born New Zealand citizens moved to Australia for 12 months or more. This was 3.5 times more than the 1,282 who moved over the following 12 months to June 2002 (Table 2). In the year ending June 2003 there had been a further fall to 802. Migration of people born in countries in Asia was both stimulated by the decision to change the policy relating to welfare support (October 2000-June 2001) and then discouraged by the new policy (July 2001-June 2003). The movement of people born in Asian countries to other overseas destinations (including countries in Asia) did not change nearly as much — indeed numbers were surprisingly consistent over the three periods for all of the birthplace regions

Table 2: Permanent and long term departures of New Zealand citizens for Australia and other countries by overseas birthplace region, 1 October 2000 — 30 June 2003

50 June 2005				
	Birthplace Region			
Destination:	Pacific		UK/Europe/	Africa/
Period	Islands	Asia	Nth America	Middle East
Australia				
Oct 00-June 01	1,239	4,524	1,731	913
July 01-June 02	826	1,282	1,392	676
July 02-June 03	752	802	1,141	583
Oct 00-June 03	2,817	6,608	4,264	2,172
Other Countries				
Oct 00-June 01	445	1,046	1,227	264
July 01-June 02	546	1,291	1,350	348
July 02-June 03	456	1,195	1,140	342
Oct 00-June 03	1,447	3,532	3,717	954
Total				
Oct 00-June 01	1,684	5,570	2,958	1,177
July 01-June 02	1,372	2,573	2,742	1,024
July 02-June 03	1,208	1,997	2,281	925
Oct 00-June 03	4,264	10,140	7,981	3,126

Source: Statistics New Zealand, unpublished tables provided by Customer Services, Christchurch

shown in Table 2.

Trans-Tasman migration of people born in Pacific countries also fell quite sharply after the new policy came into effect (Table 2). The 1,239 Pacific Islandborn New Zealand citizens who moved between October 2000 and June 2001 was 1.5 times larger than the 826 Pacific-born New Zealanders who moved in the year ended June 2002. Similar dips occurred in migration to Australia of citizens born in the UK/Europe/North America (1,731 between October 2000 and June 2001; 1,392 year ended June 2002), and those born in Africa and the Middle East (913 between October 2000 and June 2001; 676 in the year ended June 2002), but it was not as marked as that for the Asia-born and Pacific-born (Table 2). As noted above, there was not a great deal of difference in the flows out to other overseas countries during the three periods.

When one compares the years July 2001-June 2002 and July 2002-June 2003, one finds that the patterns of movement of New Zealanders to Australia and to other parts of the world are very similar. There were declines in the outflows of all of the birthplace region groups to Australia and to other countries (Table 2). It is difficult to see in these figures a clear impact of Australia's new policy on the volume of trans-Tasman migration that can be isolated from the general decline in emigration of New Zealand citizens during the two years. Between July 2001 and June 2002, 23,488 New Zealand citizens departed for periods of 12 months or more in Australia (79 per cent born in New Zealand), while 20,307 moved across the Tasman in the July 2002-June 2003 year (80 per cent born in New Zealand) (Table 1). In the case of migration to other countries, the relevant figures are 21,392 departures during the first year (81 per cent New Zealand-born) and 17,928

departures during the second year (82 per cent born in New Zealand) (Table 1).

In summary, the introduction of new policy relating to welfare entitlements of New Zealand citizens who moved to Australia after the end of February 2001 did have the effect initially of stimulating PLT migration to Australia (Figure 1). There was then a fall in the volume of out-migration to Australia, especially of people born in parts of Asia. Clear evidence that this decline in trans-Tasman migration of Asia-born New Zealand citizens is directly related to Australia's welfare policy changes will become more apparent in the next two to three years. There has been a sharp increase in PLT Asian migration to New Zealand in 2001 and 2002.7 It will be interesting to see if there is a corresponding increase in the volume of overseas-born New Zealand citizens heading for Australia from 2005 after the three years of residence required for citizenship (currently being increased to five years through amendments to legislation). If this did occur, it would repeat the pattern associated with the sharp increase in numbers of New Zealand citizens born in Asia moving to Australia between 1998 and 2000 after the immigrant influx to New Zealand in the mid-1990s.

RETURN MIGRATION OF NEW ZEALAND CITIZENS

While the changes in Australia's social security arrangements in February 2001 were directed at New Zealand citizens moving to Australia, Birrell and Rapson⁸ suggest there was also another implicit, if not explicit, agenda, and that was to get those New Zealanders who were not able to find employment in Australia to return to the country where they had access to a social security safety net.

Australian tax revenue, and all those New Zealanders working in Australia who were contributing to that revenue, would not be providing official welfare assistance to the majority of New Zealand citizens who arrived after 1 March 2001 and who did not apply and qualify for permanent residence status under Australia's immigration policy.

There has been an increase in the numbers of New Zealand citizens returning from Australia since the new policies were introduced (Figure 2). However, it can be seen from Figure 2 that the number of New Zealand citizens returning after an absence of 12 months or more has been increasing from other countries as well. The gradual increase in return migration from Australia in the years ended June 2002 and 2003 is minor by comparison with the sharp increases in 1989 and 1999 following the heavy emigration to Australia in 1987 and 1988 (Figure 2). The aggregate figures for the

past two years, when viewed in the context of data for the past 25 years, suggest that the policy changes in 2001 have not had much impact on return migration of New Zealanders yet.

When the figures for returning New Zealanders are disaggregated by country of birth there are suggestions that the changes in Australia's welfare policies have had more of an impact on some groups of New Zealand citizens than others. While the overall increase in the number of New Zealand citizens returning from Australia between the June years of 2002 and 2003 was just over four per cent (from 8,565 to 8,934), the percentage increase in New Zealandborn returnees was only 2.7 per cent (from 7,226 to 7,423) (Table 3). This was significantly smaller that the eight per cent increase in numbers of New Zealand citizens returning from other countries (12,449 to 13,443) over the two year period (Table 3). The policy changes in

Figure 2: Permanent and long-term arrivals of New Zealand citizens in New Zealand from Australia and other countries, 1 July 1978 to 30 June 2003

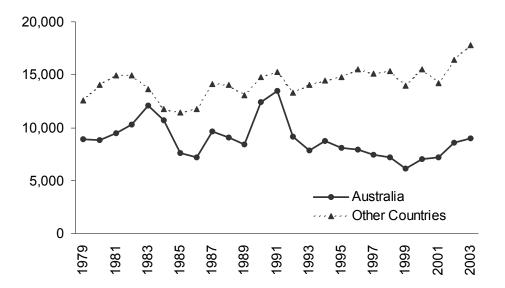


Table 3: Permanent and long-term arrivals of New Zealand citizens in New Zealand from Australia and other countries by birthplace, 1 October 2000 — 30 June 2003

	Birthplace			
Origin:	New	Other		
Period	Zealand	Countries	Total	
Australia				
Oct 00 - June 01	4,859	832	5,691	
July 01- June 02	7,226	1,339	8,565	
July 02 - June 03	7,423	1,511	8,934	
Oct 00 — June 03	19,508	3,682	23,190	
Other Countries				
Oct 00 - June 01	8,318	2,773	11,091	
July 01- June 02	12,449	3,958	16,407	
July 02 - June 03	13,443	4,365	17,808	
Oct 00 — June 03	34,210	11,096	45,306	
Total				
Oct 00 - June 01	13,177	3,605	16,782	
July 01- June 02	19,675	5,297	24,972	
July 02 - June 03	20,866	5,876	26,742	
Oct 00 — June 03	53,718	14,778	68,496	

Source: Statistics New Zealand, unpublished tables provided by Customer Services, Christchurch

Australia had not prompted much additional return migration amongst the New Zealand-born during 2002 and 2003.

For the overseas-born New Zealand citizens a rather different picture emerges from the PLT arrival data in New Zealand (Table 3). The percentage increase in numbers returning from Australia between the June 2002 and the June 2003 years was five times greater than that for the New Zealand-born — 12.8 per cent compared with 2.7 per cent (calculated from Table 3). Overseas-born New Zealand citizens appear to have been impacted much more by the policy changes than their New Zealand-born counterparts.

When the overseas-born are broken down further into birthplace groups, two patterns emerge: one for people born in Pacific, Asian, African and Middle East countries, and the other for people born in the United Kingdom/Europe/North America (Table 4). In the case of New

Zealand citizens from Asia/Pacific/Africa/Middle East birthplaces, return migration was larger in the year ended June 2003 than it was in the previous year. For those born in the other broad birthplace regions, the numbers of returning New Zealand citizens were smaller (Table 4).

Return migration of New Zealand citizens from Australia has been increasing at a slower rate than return migration from other countries (Figure 2 and Table 3). The overall increase between the June years 2002 and 2003 was 8.5 per cent – double the percentage increase in numbers of returnees from Australia. There has been a higher incidence of return migration from other countries throughout the 25 years shown in Figure 2, and the gap has been widening since the early 1990s.

In summary, the data available on return migration of New Zealand citizens over the period that the Australian policy changes were debated and implemented (October 2000-June 2001) and the subsequent two June years suggest that the changes have not generated an obvious migration response yet. There is evidence that New Zealand citizens born in the Pacific, Asia, Africa and the Middle East may have been more affected by the policy changes, and some may have responded by returning to New Zealand. However, the numbers involved are small, and a longer time-series of data is required before clear trends can be established.

A CONCLUDING COMMENT

The new welfare regime facing New Zealanders who move to Australia, and who are not entitled to the benefits that

Table 4: Permanent and long-term arrivals of New Zealand citizens in New Zealand from Australia and other countries by overseas birthplace region, 1 October 2000 — 30 June 2003

	Birthplace Region			
Origin: Period	Pacific Islands	Asia	UK/Europe/ Nth America	Africa/ Middle East
Australia				
Oct 00-June 01	171	93	228	43
July 01-June 02	225	205	415	84
July 02-June 03	264	228	407	87
Oct 00-June 03	660	526	1,050	214
Other Countries				
Oct 00-June 01	674	491	1,269	136
July 01-June 02	695	811	1,930	244
July 02-June 03	707	900	2,283	278
Oct 00-June 03	2,076	2,202	5,482	658
Total				
Oct 00-June 01	845	584	1,497	179
July 01-June 02	920	1016	2,345	328
July 02-June 03	971	1128	2,690	365
Oct 00-June 03	2,736	2,728	6,532	872

Source: Statistics New Zealand, unpublished tables provided by Customer Services, Christchurch

were available before March 2001, will inevitably discourage some in New Zealand from moving across the Tasman while encouraging some others, resident in Australia, to return. However, it is highly unlikely that the policy changes *per se* will have much impact on the long-established movement to Australia of New Zealanders. Australia remains the favoured destination for New Zealanders moving overseas for periods of 12 months or more, and trans-Tasman migration will continue to contribute more people to Australia than New Zealand in the foreseeable future.

That said, the longer-term future of population flows between the two countries should not ever be read as a one-way movement. Migration back to New Zealand has always been an important part of the trans-Tasman migration system. In recent years this has been increasing slowly from Australia and more rapidly

from other countries, as shown in Figure 2. The equivalent of almost 20 per cent of New Zealand's four million residents is living overseas, with more than ten per cent (around 460,000 NZ citizens) living in Australia. In an era of falling natural increase, and increasing competition for skilled immigrants, the New Zealand 'diaspora' must assume greater significance for policies that have a population dimension.

Perhaps it was with this consideration in mind, amongst others, that the Labour

Government in New Zealand considered it was not necessarily an 'emphatic loser'9 in the debate with the Australian Government about trans-Tasman migration in 2000 and 2001. The New Zealand Government does see a benefit in staunching the flow to Australia of its citizens who have skills in demand in the New Zealand labour market. It also sees benefit in encouraging return migration of New Zealanders, especially of those with skills. Australia is an important market for skilled migrants; indeed half of the immigrant executives who have come to New Zealand in 2003 came from Australia according to a recent report by a management consultancy that analysed more than 2,500 executive positions in 156 New Zealand organizations. 10 New Zealand is holding on to, as well as attracting back home, more than just 'those who cannot meet Australian selection standards'.11

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