

Study Guide for the Australian Collaboration Fact and Issue Sheet

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES

FOR REVIEW

1. Migration in Australia's History Since World War II

- 1a. What was Australia's population in 1947?
- 1b. How many people have been added to that population since then?
- 1b. How many people have migrated to Australia since 1945?
- 1c. What proportion of those people arrived as refugees under the Humanitarian Program?
- 1d. At what point during this period did migrants from non-European backgrounds begin to be accepted into Australia?

2. The Current Migration Program

- 2a. To what kinds of discrimination can current applicants for migration into Australia be subjected?
- 2b. Can people apply to migrate to Australia on any basis whatsoever? If not, then what are the different grounds upon which an application can be made?
- 2c. What category did the most number of migrants to Australia fall into, and how does this figure compare with that for people arriving under the family stream, and under the humanitarian stream?
- 2d. What current proportion of people qualifying under the Humanitarian Program are 'onshore refugees'—that is, refugees arriving either by boat or by plane, with or without visas, and not as part of either the Offshore Refugee Program or the Offshore Special Humanitarian Program?
- 2e. What is the difference between a 'refugee' and an 'asylum seeker'?
- 2f. To what category of asylum seekers does the policy of mandatory detention apply?
- 2g. Is it appropriate to describe these asylum seekers as 'illegal immigrants'? Why or why not?

3. Australian Immigration Trends

- 3a. Is Australia experiencing a net increase or decrease in overseas migration, and how is this figure determined?
- 3b. What is meant by a 'long-term arrival'?
- 3c. What percentage of *permanent*, as opposed to long-term, arrivals to Australia is accounted for by people arriving as:
 - (i) skilled migrants
 - (ii) family stream migrants
 - (iii) Humanitarian Program migrants
 - (iiii) Non-Program Migration migrants
- 3d. What is the total number of people in each category?

4. Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- 4a.** Is Australia's current intake of refugees and asylum seekers large or small by international standards? What if the comparative size of Australia's population is taken into account?
- 4b.** List three major policy changes affecting refugees that have been made in Australia since 1992. At which category of refugees or asylum seekers have these policies specifically been targeted?
- 4c.** Under the current system, is it possible for someone arriving unauthorised (by boat, for instance, and without a visa) to receive permanent protection in Australia—that is, to be accepted as a refugee and allowed to stay in Australia indefinitely?

FOR DISCUSSION

For each of the statements below, work in pairs to decide whether you agree or disagree and explain why. Alternatively, use each of the statements below as a starting point for a class debate.

1. 'Australia has a relatively small intake of asylum seekers because, being an island nation, it is a less accessible place than are many countries in Western Europe, for example. Nevertheless, Australia needs to be tough on asylum seekers because they could still become a really big problem.'
2. 'Asylum seekers pose a greater threat to Australia's national interests than do other categories of immigrants, including, for example, the relatively quite large numbers of visa "overstayers". That is why there has been such a big focus on limiting their numbers.'
3. 'The tough measures that have been taken in relation to asylum seekers have been effective in keeping the numbers low.'
4. 'The tough measures that have been taken in relation to asylum seekers are needed, even if implementing the policies costs a great deal of money, and if some innocent people end up suffering as a result.'

FOR RESEARCH

1. Use the internet and/or the list of 'Useful Sources' provided to investigate the history of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the other international standards and conventions applying to the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees that have been signed by Australia. Why have they been adopted and endorsed by Australia in the past, and who are the other countries that have followed along a similar path? Are there any good reasons for upholding our obligations under these conventions both now and in the future?
2. Use any available sources (including, for instance, old newspaper columns and stories) to investigate further the nature of the controversy surrounding the policies pertaining to refugees and asylum seekers since 1992 (mandatory detention, temporary protection visas, the 'Pacific Solution' and so forth). Consider the political and historical context within which these policies have been developed, the various outcomes or consequences and intentions of the policies, and the kinds of issues that have been raised in/by the debate (whether political, social, cultural, ethical or economic) and come up with list of carefully considered arguments both for and against.
3. In a similar vein, investigate the controversy surrounding the Citizenship Test. Are there any international precedents for such a test? What is it intended to do? What are its potential benefits and/or downsides?