
Country Reports

This section contains country reports, statistics, chronologies of significant events, analyses, responses, photos and box stories on labor migration in Asia. *AMY 2005* includes reports from 19 Asian countries/territories plus the GCC countries, covering the period from July 2004 – December 2005.



AUSTRALIA



AMV Map by Boyet Rivera III

A. Total Stock (Number) of Migrants, as of 2005

MIGRANTS ABROAD		
ESTIMATED STOCK: MIGRANTS OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY		
TOTAL		-
a. By visa status	Documented migrant workers*	n.a.
	Emigrants/residents	n.a.
	Undocumented migrants**	n.a.
	Refugees	n.a.
b. By sex	Male	n.a.
	Female	n.a.
c. Top destination countries	1. -	6. -
	2. -	7. -
(thousands)	3. -	8. -
	4. -	9. -
	5. -	10. -

* Non-resident, temporary, or contract workers.

** Includes illegal entrants, overstayed or "jumped" visas, trafficked/smuggled people

*** Includes people who were resettled, granted protection/temporary/temporary safe

MIGRANTS IN AUSTRALIA		
ESTIMATED STOCK: MIGRANTS IN THE COUNTRY		
TOTAL		-
a. By visa status	Documented migrant workers	-
	Emigrants/residents	-
	Undocumented migrants	-
	Refugees***	14,140
b. By sex	Male	-
	Female	-
c. Top countries of origin	1. United Kingdom (17.7%)	6. Malaysia (2.3%)
	2. New Zealand (14.5%)	7. Singapore (2%)
(%):****	3. China (8%)	8. Vietnam (2%)
	4. Philippines (3.7%)	9.
	5. Sudan (2.9%)	

haven visas, plus asylum seekers.

****includes people accepted under the Migration Program and the Humanitarian Program

B. Annual Socio-Economic Data and Migration Flow

Annual indicators	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
Population (million; mid-year estimate)	2.0090	19.93	19.80	19.55	19.36	19.20
% population living in rural areas					8.90	
Economic growth: real GDP (%)	2.70	2.30	2.75	3.60		4.70
Per capita GDP (US\$)		28,900			19,019	
Per capita GDP: purchasing power parity (US\$)	32,000	29,200		27,000	25,370	23,200
Inflation rate: CPI (%; annual ave.)	2.7	2.7	1.3	2.8		1.4
Exchange rate: (AUD per US\$; annual ave.)	1.3100	1.5400		1.9354	1.9320	1.7173
International reserves (US\$ billion; yearend)						
Foreign direct investments: actual (US\$ million; yearend)					394.14	
Trade balance (US\$ billion; yearend)		(14.2)				11.0
Foreign (total external) debt (US\$ billion; fiscal yearend)	509.6	193.0			176.8	220.6
Foreign (total external) debt as % of GNP						
Budget balance (AU\$ billion; fiscal yearend)			2.1		(1.3)	
Budget deficit as % of GDP					0.20	
Labor force (million)	10.42	9.2			9.2	
Women as % of labor force			44			
Number unemployed (000)			624.4		664.5	
Unemployment rate (% of labor force)	5.2	5.8	5.9	6.3	6.7	6.4
Underemployment rate (% labor force)			5.6			
Women unemployment rate (% of labor force)			6.0%			
Average income: urban (A\$/month)					3,350	
Average income: women (A\$/month)						
Adult literacy rate (% of age 15 & above who can read/write)			-		99.0	
Net migration rate (net # of migrants per 1,000 popn)	(3.91)	3.98	4.05	4.12	4.19	4.26
Annual outflow/deployment of MWs						
% women in the annual outflow						
Annual inflow of MWs						
% women in the annual inflow						
Annual migrants' remittance (US\$ billion/yr)						
Reported # of migrant deaths during the year						
Estimated # deported during the year						
Jailed/detained during the year						
HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate (adult PLHA as % of adult popn)		0.10		0.07		
# People living with HIV/AIDS (thousand)			14.0			
# AIDS deaths during the year (adults+children)			<200			

Sources: CIA World Factbook, UN/LO/UNDP statistical yearbooks/websites.

AMC Information Bank

AUSTRALIA

*This report was contributed by Jiselle Hanna,
Australia Asia Worker Links (AAWL).*

Political and Economic Update

Australia's conservative government was re-elected for a fourth successive term in late 2004. Immigration issues hardly figured in the election campaign, however, unlike that in 2001 which was dominated by scare campaigns about asylum seekers. The conservatives won control of the Senate in addition to the House of Representatives, leaving little to stop the government from passing whatever legislation the ruling party proposes. This power has been used to push through legislation instituting far-reaching industrial relations changes: individual work contracts are heavily favoured, the safety net has been reduced to the barest safeguards, protections against unfair dismissal have been abolished for millions of workers, and some routine union activities have been criminalized.

The impact of these changes on workers is currently being offset by record low unemployment, chronic skills shortages and a booming resources sector, particularly in the states of WA and Queensland. Parts of the manufacturing sector, however, have already seen aggressive condition-cutting under strong competitive pressure from low wage manufacturing countries. Recent research has also shown that female workers, particularly in the retail and hospitality sectors, have seen wages and conditions decline even though both employment and company profits are at record levels.

New federal elections are expected in late 2007. At the present it appears that the environment and the war in Iraq will be important election issues. In terms of economic



Photo courtesy of AAWL

Conditions endured by asylum seekers in detention has become a contentious issue. Port Hedland detention centre (now closed).



Photo courtesy of AAWL

Australia Significant Events July 2004 - December 2005

2004

September

(9) A car bomb attack outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, for which Jemaah Islamiah claimed responsibility, kills nine people, wounding over 150 more.

October

(9) John Howard wins fourth term as prime minister, with his Coalition government gaining 52.74% of the popular vote.

November

(26) Riots cause destruction on Palm Island, as the local courthouse, police station and barracks were burned down. The riots were sparked off by the death of Aboriginal man, Mulrunji, while in police custody.

2005

January

(11) The “Black Tuesday” bushfires, the worst since 1983, kill nine people in South Australia.

June

Deficiencies in the Immigration Department were brought to public attention following the release of a report into the wrongful detention of Cornelia Rau

and the wrongful deportation of Vivian Solon.

July

(1) Prime Minister John Howard’s Government takes control of both houses, as the new Senate comes into effect. This is the first government majority in the Senate since 1981.

September

The visa of American anti war activist Scott Parkin was cancelled after the Australian Security Intelligence Organization made an adverse security assessment against him. Mr Parkin was arrested and deported back to the US.

October

(1) Suicide bombers killed twenty-three people, among them four Australians, in Bali.

December

Melbourne man Van Nguyen was executed in Singapore for drug smuggling.

Government passes industrial relations legislation and bans compulsory student union fees.

(11) In Sydney, race-based gang riots erupt at Cronulla beach.

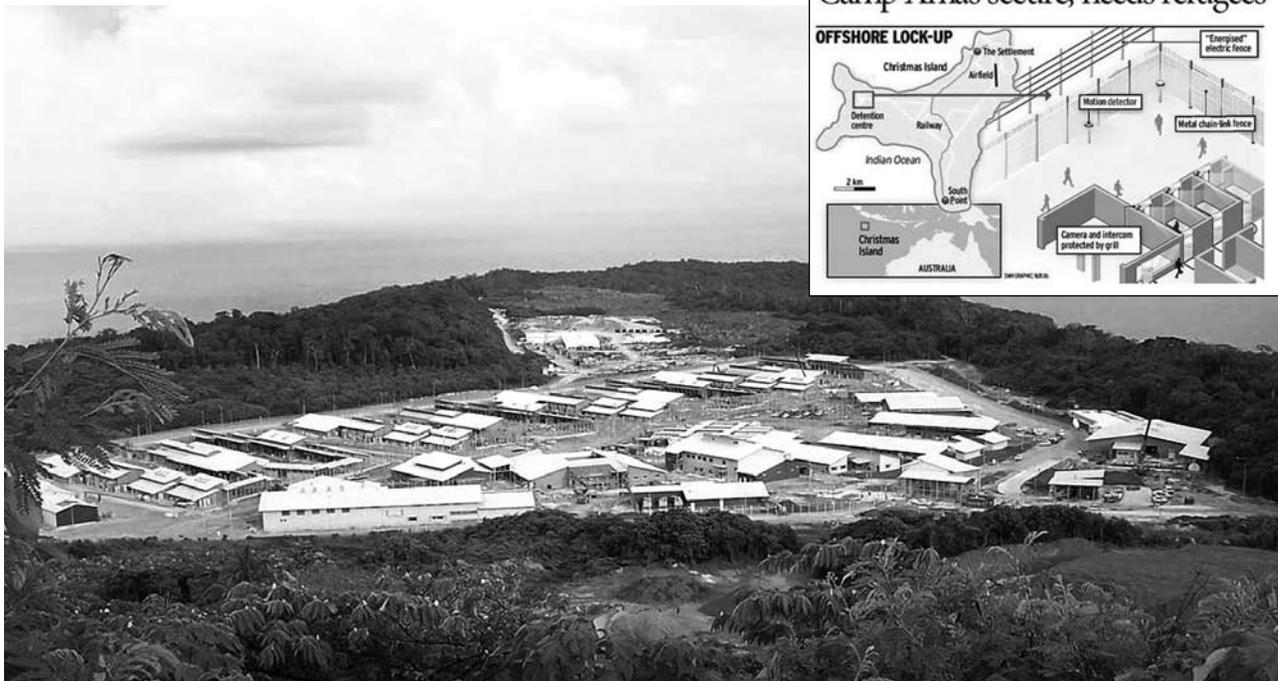


Photo courtesy of AAWL



Photo courtesy of AAWL

Children in detention suffered numerous human rights violations; as of July 2005, they will now be held only “as a measure of last resort”. Christmas Island detention centre.

The expensive Christmas Island detention centre, is one of six immigration detention facilities in use by the Australian government.

that nearly 10% of Australian children live in a household without an adult in paid employment, one of the highest rates in the OECD.

Migration Update

Migration figures

The number of migrants arriving annually has been increasing in recent years, with the number totalling 120,060 in 2004-05 and 142,930 in 2005-06 – the largest intake for almost 20 years.¹ The majority were born in the United Kingdom (17.7%), with another large group from New Zealand (14.5%). Migrants also came from India (8.6%), China - excluding Hong Kong and Macau SARs and Taiwan - (8%), the Philippines (3.7%), Sudan (2.9%), Malaysia (2.3%), Singapore (2%) and Vietnam (2%). The target migrant intake for 2006-07 was set between 134,000 and 144,000 people.

Of the 142,930 new arrivals in 2005-06,

indicators, the Australian economy continues to grow strongly but is expected to slow due to the drought conditions being experienced across large parts of Australia. Wage growth is moderate and union density is continuing to decline (at 22.4% of the workforce in August 2005). Even though the unemployment rate has fallen to a 30-year low, a recent study found

97,340 were in the skilled migration category, 45,290 were family reunion migrants and 14,140 were refugees and humanitarian migrants. Of the refugees and humanitarian migrants, 12,760 people (6,020 refugees and 6,740 in the Special Humanitarian Program category) were resettled from Africa (56%) as well as the Middle East and South West Asia (34%). An additional 1,390 people were granted protection visas after having been assessed as refugees or in need of humanitarian protection subsequent to arrival in Australia.

Within the skilled migration category in 2006-07, around 40,000 people are expected to be granted section 457 visas which allow workers into Australia for up to 4 years. This category is expanding significantly (up 43% from 2005-06) as the government has relaxed regulations to allow workers with a broader range of skills to be brought into the country to fill jobs such as truck drivers, factory workers and kitchen hands.

This visa requires employers to pay wages at the safety net level, rather than at market rates, so the rapid increase in numbers has led to concerns that the visas are being used to push down local wages. At its worst the visa system is providing a form of indentured labour, with workers vulnerable to exploitation. Unions in the manufacturing and construction sectors have run strong campaigns to expose cases such as that of Jack Zhang, a printer from China whose employer grossly underpaid him, overcharged rent and forced him to pay other bogus charges such as “lawyer fees”.

Mandatory detention

Under Australia’s controversial immigration detention policy, all persons entering or remaining in the country without a valid visa

are subject to compulsory detention. The policy was introduced in 1992 but tightened in 2001 when the government cracked down on asylum seekers arriving by boat and fought an election campaign largely on “border security”.

From this time, asylum seekers have been held behind razor wire fences, often for years, before their claims are determined.

There are currently six immigration detention facilities (IDFs) in Australia (at Villawood, Maribyrnong, Perth, Baxter, Christmas Island and Darwin). The IDFs mainly detain people in breach of visa conditions or who have been refused entry at Australia’s entry ports but at times they have also been used to detain large numbers of asylum seekers. Facilities at Woomera in South Australia and at Singleton in New South Wales are no longer used.

The main nationalities of people held since 2000 have been:

- 2000-01: Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Palestine
- 2001-02: Afghanistan, Iraq, Malaysia, Sri Lanka
- 2002-03: Indonesia², China, Malaysia, Korea
- 2003-04: Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Korea
- 2004-05: Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Korea
- 2005-06: Indonesia, China, Malaysia, Korea

The last few years have seen the government attempt to clean up its image in relation to its detention of asylum seekers. In July 2005 children were removed from IDFs and will now only be detained “as a measure of last resort” (i.e. in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). Facilities at detention centres have been improved and some asylum

TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE HELD IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION

Year	No. of people
1997-98	2716
1998-99	3574
1999-00	8205
2000-01	7881
2001-02	7808
2002-03	6602
2003-04	6196
2004-05	7410
2005-06	6490

Source: Department of Immigration and Citizenship



Although the government remains committed to “offshore processing”, the Manus Island detention centre has been empty since June 2004, when the last detainee was granted asylum in Australia.



Photo courtesy of AAMW

seekers have been moved to community based detention.³ The Commonwealth Ombudsman has been provided with powers to review and make recommendations on asylum seekers held in detention for two years or more. Advocates report that processing of applications and granting of visas is now happening in a more timely manner.

These reforms have been prompted by mounting criticism, including that coming from a small number of dissidents within the government, of brutality and incompetence within the system.

A 2004 report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission entitled *A Last Resort?*, found that children in Australian immigration detention facilities had suffered numerous and repeated breaches of their human rights. In particular, HREOC found that Australia’s immigration detention policy had failed to protect the mental health of children, failed to provide adequate health care and education, and failed to protect unaccompanied children and those with disabilities. One child

Shayan Badraie – an Iranian boy held with his family for several years – was awarded AUD400,000 compensation after suing the Immigration Department for psychological damage which resulted from his detention.

The brutality of the detention centre regime can also be seen in recent reports that dozens of former employees at the Woomera IDF have required treatment for illnesses such as post traumatic stress disorder.⁴ The reputations of the privately run IDFs and the Department of Immigration have also been severely tarnished by scandals such as those surrounding the wrongful detention of Cornelia Rau and the wrongful deportation of Vivian Solon.

“Pacific solution”

Since 2001 the government has been seeking to have asylum seekers – particularly those arriving by boat – detained “offshore”, away from the scrutiny of activists and the Australian media. The government paid large sums of money to the Nauruan and PNG governments to establish camps to detain asylum seekers

intercepted by the Australian Navy en route to Australia. This system – the “Pacific solution” – was justified as a deterrent against people smuggling.

In order to prevent asylum seekers from accessing rights available under Australia’s legal system, the Migration Act 1958 was amended to excise thousands of outlying islands from the country’s migration zone. At the height of the “Pacific solution”, over 1,230 asylum seekers were being held on Nauru.

In late 2005 the Immigration Minister acted to allow 25 of the last remaining 27 asylum seekers on Nauru into Australia. After almost four years of detention, the mental health of the detainees was deteriorating rapidly. Of the two remaining asylum seekers, Mohammad Faisal was evacuated to a Brisbane psychiatric hospital in August 2006 and subsequently granted refugee status. The second, fellow Iraqi Mohammed Sagar, will shortly leave Nauru after being granted asylum by an unnamed Scandinavian country.

Manus Island, the detention facility in PNG, has been empty since June 2004 when the last detainee, Aladdin Sisalem was finally granted asylum in Australia.

In January 2006, 42 West Papuans landed on the Australian mainland at Cape York Peninsula. They were subsequently granted refugee protection, a situation that sparked a diplomatic rift with Indonesia. In response the government introduced legislation requiring that all asylum seekers be processed offshore, whether they reached the mainland or not. This legislation was withdrawn, however, after the government faced a rare defeat in Parliament when dissident government backbenchers indicated they would vote against it.

Nonetheless, the treatment of recent “boat people” has shown the government remains committed to “offshore processing”. In fact, the policy has been toughened and it seems likely that newer arrivals may never obtain permission to settle in Australia.

Eight Burmese asylum seekers were picked up on Ashmore Reef off the WA coast in August 2006 and were subsequently transferred to Nauru. It has been reported that these men were informed that they would not be resettled in Australia, even if they were determined to be refugees, and that they faced a long wait on Nauru while waiting for a third country to accept them for resettlement. Their only alternative was to return to Malaysia. A similar fate appears to await 85 Sri Lankan asylum seekers intercepted by the Navy off Christmas Island. The government has indicated that they may be returned to Indonesia.

Endnotes

¹ All immigration statistics are from <www.immi.gov.au>.

² The majority of those in immigration detention from Indonesia are fishermen detained in Australian waters.

³ See “The Forgotten People”, *The Age*, 27 October 2006.

⁴ See “Woomera: Victims of the War Zone”, *The Age*, 25 February 2007.