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Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Feng Xu
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The Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives
University of Victoria
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Unsettling the Settler State: The State and Social Outcomes of Temporary Migration in Australia¹

Elsa Koleth

Abstract. *The exponential growth of temporary migration to Australia since the late 1990s has unsettled the model of permanent migration, state supported settlement and multicultural citizenship on which Australia has been built. This article draws attention to the emergence of a gulf between Australia's immigration policies and social policy frameworks for migrant integration in the course of Australia's transition from a permanent to a temporary migration paradigm. It does so through an analysis of interviews with migrants, government officials at federal and local levels, and migrant service providers. It argues that the system by which temporary migration has been governed in Australia has enabled the Australian state to strategically divest itself of responsibility for the social welfare of temporary migrants and the long-term outcomes of temporary migration policies. Specifically, this has been achieved through the construction of temporary migrants as disposable, risk-bearing subjects, the exclusion of temporary migrants from social policy frameworks for migrant integration, and the elision of long-term social outcomes of migration policies through a focus on short-term economic outcomes. It concludes by pointing to changes required for instituting a temporal re-orientation of government policies from short-term economic outcomes towards the long-term social outcomes of migration.*

Introduction

In the latter twentieth century Australian immigration was a nation-building endeavour founded on a paradigm of permanent settlement and the state-supported integration of migrants (Jupp 2007, 38, 40). However, the exponential growth of temporary migration to Australia from the late 1990s has instituted a shift to a temporary migration paradigm that has unsettled Australia's settlement model (Hugo 2006, 107, 110; Collins 2013, 162). It has altered the pathways by which people migrate to Australia and introduced a new class of differentially included, precarious migrants into the polity who are excluded from national social policy frameworks, such as settlement and multicultural policies, which have since the late 1970s addressed the integration and belonging of migrants in Australia (Mares 2012; Bertone 2013).

¹ The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewers of the article for their feedback.

Temporary migration has been central to the Australian government's strategy to respond to the demands of a globalised Australian economy by building a flexible and efficient migration system (Ruddock 2000; Pezzullo 2014). This article examines how the Australian state has organised its relationship to the social outcomes of temporary migration policies, specifically the creation of temporary migrants as precarious subjects in the nation, in the context of evolving connections between temporary and permanent migration. It argues that the disarticulation of Australia's temporary migration policies from national social policy frameworks for multiculturalism and settlement over the last two decades has enabled the Australian state to divest itself of responsibility for the social outcomes of the immigration policies it has enacted.

Methods

This article draws on data from a research project on the impact of temporary migration on national belonging in Australia, involving 60 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted from April 2012 to May 2014.² Interviews were conducted with 35 Indian migrants living in Sydney, including long-term settlers who arrived in Australia prior to the year 2000, primarily as permanent skilled migrants, as well as those arriving on temporary student visas or temporary skilled work visas after the year 2000. Temporary migration has been central to facilitating a dramatic increase in India-born residents in Australia over the past two decades and recent Indian migration has in turn been central in driving the growth of temporary migration to Australia, primarily in the international student and 457 skilled temporary work visa categories (Productivity Commission 2016, 121; Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016). Interviews were also conducted with government officials (including ten interviews with federal policy officials, as well as two interviews with local government officials in two local government areas in Sydney with the highest number of India-born residents at the 2011 census, referred to here as LGA 1 and LGA 2), four local service providers in LGA 1 and LGA 2 and eight key informants.³

Background

Temporary migration to Australia grew dramatically from the late 1990s to exceed permanent migration as the main contributor to net overseas migration, with the largest growth occurring in the international student, temporary skilled worker (subclass 457) and working holiday visa streams (Productivity Commission 2016, 27-28, 68). The vast majority of temporary migrants are conferred with work rights, resulting in the entrenchment of temporary migrants across the entire skills spectrum of Australia's labour market spectrum

² The findings from this project are more fully discussed in the author's PhD dissertation. This project involved an empirical case study on Indian migrants living in Sydney.

³ To protect the anonymity of participants the names of government departments and specific roles of policy officers have been kept confidential. To protect the anonymity of participating organisations and to conform with ethics requirements the two Local Government Areas are not named.

(Senate Education and Employment References Committee 2016, 15, 29). Of the 1, 960, 380 temporary entrants in Australia on 30 September 2016, the largest groups (excluding New Zealanders, visitors and bridging visa holders) were international students, temporary skilled workers on a subclass 457 visa, and working holiday makers (Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) 2016, 3).

Recent temporary migration in Australia has resulted in the emergence of two-step and multi-step migration entailing transitions between temporary and permanent visas, and between various temporary visas (Productivity Commission 2016, 414-418). By 2013-14 over half of Australia's permanent migration intake was drawn from the ranks of temporary visa holders who were already in Australia, with permanent skilled migration visas granted to temporary visa holders increasing from 37 percent in 2004-05 to about 59 percent in 2013-14 (Productivity Commission 2015, 329). While international students were the primary source of permanent skilled migrants until the mid-2000s, from 2007-08 the 457 visa became the most common pathway to permanent residence.⁴ At the same time over half of 457 visas were granted to student visa holders, working holiday makers and other 457 visa holders (Migration Council Australia (MCA) 2014, 12; see also DIBP 2014, 49, 54).

On average, migrants who transition through multiple temporary visas before obtaining permanent residency are granted just over three visas and spend roughly six years in temporary status, but international students are likely to transition through more temporary visas and spend longer in temporary status than 457 visa holders, who have had a more direct pathway to permanent residency (Productivity Commission 2016, 417, 419). The proliferation of heterogeneous migration pathways has been a defining feature of Australia's temporary migration paradigm. The Australian Government's April 2017 decision to replace the 457 temporary skilled work visa with two new temporary skilled work visa streams under the Temporary Skill Shortage Visa program, one with access to permanent residency and one without, further complicates pathways between temporary and permanent status (Turnbull and Dutton 2017). The nature of migration pathways, including the conditionalities that attach to particular visa streams, number of temporary visas held by migrants and access to permanent residency, all impact upon social outcomes for migrants.

Critics have argued that links between temporary and permanent migration have been poorly managed, particularly with regards to growing disparities between the numbers of temporary migrants who have entered through largely uncapped temporary migration streams and the number of places available in the annual, capped permanent Migration Program, and the attendant prospects of migrants remaining indefinitely in temporary status (Mares 2013; MCA 2015b, 12).

A key social outcome of Australia's immigration policies is that temporary migrants have been rendered precarious by lack of security of presence, lack of access to benefits and services that are available to permanent residents or citizens, and heightened vulnerability to abuse and exploitation resulting

⁴ Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) working paper, unpublished.

from their status as non-permanent, non-citizens in the country (Goldring and Landolt 2013, 3). Vulnerability to exploitation by employers, intermediary agents, education providers and other actors has emerged as a common issue across most temporary visa categories in Australia (see, for example, Biao 2007; Nyland et al. 2009; Bertone 2013, 179; Velayutham 2013; Boese et al. 2013; Robertson 2015; Berg 2016; Tham et al. 2016). Immigration policy settings, such as the increased emphasis on employer-sponsorship in the permanent skilled migration program, can condition pathways between visas in ways that exacerbate migrant precarity by increasing dependence on employers (Productivity Commission 2015, 382-3).

At the same time, with limited exceptions, temporary migrants are largely excluded from receiving settlement assistance, government services or social security benefits that are available to permanent visa holders (Deumert et al. 2005, 330; MCA 2013, 27, 30; Boucher and Carney 2014, 200-201; Productivity Commission 2016, 79).⁵ As a result, Bertone has argued that “[w]ith no security of employment or access to democratic institutions or safety nets, temporary immigrants can at best only be spectators of the Australian multicultural project” (Bertone 2013, 179).

“Temporary’ is a word which makes them insecure...”: impacts on migrants

Interviews conducted with Indian migrants revealed that for long-term settlers who arrived in Australia as skilled permanent residents in the early 1990s having permanent status allowed them time to find employment, adapt and settle, and enabled them to access state support, such as, job-seeking assistance, welfare assistance, public healthcare, and English classes. The multicultural and settlement support infrastructure developed in Australia from the late 1970s was crucial in providing these new migrants with a degree of stability in dealing with the early challenges of settlement and integration, particularly prior to securing employment. In contrast, the migration experience of recent temporary migrants was temporally fraught and marked by pronounced instability. As a migrant resource centre worker explained, the uncertainty attaching to temporary status had a deleterious psychosocial impact on migrants:

“Temporary” is a word which makes them insecure, because they don’t know if it will come through. They live for so many years and still they have to go back... it puts a lot of pressure and stress...⁶

The degree of precarity faced by temporary migrants is strongly conditioned by a range of factors including, the visa they hold and the conditions

⁵ Examples of exceptions include: the inclusion of “dependents of some temporary skilled settlers with low English proficiency living in rural/regional locations” as target groups in the Settlement Grants Program (Department of Social Services (DSS) 2014, 3); and the extension of the Adult Migration English Program to select skilled temporary visa holders in regional areas (Department of Education and Training (DET) 2016).

⁶ Interview with migrant resource centre staff, LGA 2, 30 April 2013.

that attach to it, their occupational background, their human capital credentials, the nature of their migration pathway (in terms of number of visas held and nature of visas held), as well as the point on their migration pathway at which they are situated. Recent temporary migrants who faced the greatest precarity were those for whom the insecurity of temporary status was combined with a lack of employment or engagement in low-skilled, casual labour, lack of strong English language proficiency, and dependent family members to support. As one former international student explained, such migrants faced the prospect of ongoing precarity, even after transitioning to permanent status (see also Hawthorne and To 2014):

...working in a student life, while you're working in a gas station, then definitely, you're going through the wages exploitation and all. [...] Because you have to pay your rent, you have to pay your expenses... to keep that circle going you have to take that exploitation. But I think that will be stupidity once you get your PR ... You have to come out from circle. Then you can be a successful person, but some people they become stuck... if you've done study for 2 years, in IT or medicine or science, and after finishing study you're working 2 years in the gas station, the whole education is *gone*, because you don't have any experience [...] they have a lack of English, or have a lack of experience, or they got distracted from careers and they're stuck, those who got married, had kids. They're stuck.⁷

“Unintended consequences”: immigration policies and social outcomes

Interviews with federal government officials and key informants suggested some of the major policy and social outcomes related to temporary migration, such as the development of a large pool of international students seeking to attain permanent residency from the mid-2000s, or a crisis in international education following protests by Indian international students in 2009 highlighting a range of issues facing international students, were “unintended,” “underestimated,” or unanticipated consequences of Australia’s immigration policies.⁸ At a time when ample evidence exists globally about the consequences of temporary migration programs the claim that social outcomes of Australia’s immigration policies are ‘unanticipated’ or ‘unintended consequences’ warrants closer scrutiny. For example, as far back as 1987 a report to the Committee to Advise on Australia’s Immigration Policies outlined potential social and economic outcomes of temporary labour migration that continue to be highly relevant today (Castles 1987). Issues raised in this report included: “That [temporary migration] would create a dual migration system, with a division between first and second class migrants, whose rights vary considerably”; “In the long run, it would be very difficult to keep workers on a temporary footing...”; and, it

⁷ Transitioned migrant, former international student, male, age 30, IT project manager, 21 May 2014.

⁸ Interviews with federal government officials: 28 March, 3 April, 4 April 2014, 8 April 2014.

“...is likely to lead to permanent settlement of an unplanned and uncontrolled kind, leading to high social costs in the long run...”.

In keeping with the “migration management” paradigm that has dominated the governance of migration since the 1990s the discourse of ‘unintended’ or ‘unanticipated’ consequences serves to depoliticise the policy conditions under which such social outcomes have transpired (Geiger 2013, 27-28). Sharma takes the idea of depoliticisation further in her analysis of the ‘temporary foreign worker’ category in Canada, arguing that rendering “unpolitical” the conditions and outcomes of temporary migration policies serves an *ideological* nationalist function of naturalising and legitimising the differential inclusion of temporary migrants in the national space (2006, 38, 54). The discourse of ‘unintended consequences’ obfuscates the system of governmentality that enables the Australian state to render temporary migration unpolitical by divesting itself of responsibility for the social outcomes of its immigration policies.

Governmentality is understood here in a Foucaultian sense as the “science of government” in which an “ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections... calculations and tactics...” is deployed in governing the population to serve the biopolitical aims of the state (Foucault 1991, 100, 102). The concept of governmentality enables an analysis of “governance as a *practice*” that “pays attention to the *social* organisation of a certain way of thinking and acting directed at variously making, regulating, or concealing the rule of some over others” (Sharma 2006, 54).

The governmentality of temporary migration in Australia is structured by transnational assemblages of state, non-state, private and corporate actors that reflect the commercialisation of migration globally (Goldring and Landolt 2013, 14-20; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 195; Ong 2003, xix; Berg and Tamagno 2013, 196).⁹ Non-state actors include employers, education providers and functionaries of the global migration industry, namely, private intermediaries such as labour recruitment, education and migration agents who have become central to facilitating migrant flows. Within this governmental system temporary migrants are constructed under a contractualist logic as transient, non-citizen, consumer-worker subjects who voluntarily bear the costs and risks involved in the migration process and have no claims on the state (Boucher and Carney 2014, 210-211; Robertson 2015, 940-941, 943-944). The temporary migrant epitomises the commodified, instrumentalised and de-personified subject of “‘post-social’ government” (Walsh 2011, 867, 872, 875). Indeed, interviews revealed that recent Indian migrants who found themselves thus interpellated largely internalised this risk-bearing subjectivity, and relied on transnational and local family, peer or religious community networks for support. However, as Sharma notes, “...in the process, nation states and capital are given a free pass” (Sharma 2012b). That is, the construction of temporary migrants as entirely risk-bearing subjects allows the Australian state to divest

⁹ The conceptualisation of ‘assemblage’ draws from Goldring and Landolt’s “assemblages of non-citizenship” (2013), as well as on Ong’s “transnational assemblages of capitalism” and “assemblages of human need” (2003), and Mezzadra and Neilson’s “assemblages of power” (2013).

itself of responsibility for the welfare of temporary migrants by rationalising their exclusion from national social policy frameworks.

At the same time limited welfare and settlement, as well as migrant selection and monitoring functions have been devolved to non-state actors such as education providers, employers and intermediary agents under a model of “graduated sovereignty” (Ong 2006, 95-96). For example, the transfer of functions related to the assessment of student visa applicants “away from the Immigration Department and into the hands of the education providers themselves” under streamlined student visa processing arrangements operationalises a notion of “shared responsibility” that shifts emphasis to employers, industry and education providers to help manage and maintain the “integrity” of temporary migration programs.¹⁰ With respect to social services, education providers have legislative obligations to provide limited care to international students under the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth).¹¹ Among recent migrant participants who held a 457 temporary work visa some nurses had purchased services associated with relocation and settlement from labour and migration agents, while some who worked in the IT industry received limited initial assistance from employers. However, such non-state actors cannot replace the social welfare functions of the state because they are engaged in commercial transactions with migrants rather than social or civic relationships.¹² As such, services provided to temporary migrants are limited by the commercial interests of non-state actors, who may have little or no incentive to cater to the ongoing social welfare of migrants.¹³

“A historic change...”: social policy and temporary migration

In interviews conducted in 2014 federal government officials indicated that government ministers were yet to consider temporary migration in the context of multicultural policy. Unsurprisingly, then, Australia’s 2011 national multicultural policy statement failed to reference temporary migrants, while the present national multicultural policy, released in March 2017, fails to recognise the challenges facing temporary migrants in Australia (Australian Government 2011; Australian Government 2017). A key informant also indicated that in negotiations over the development of a National Settlement Framework the federal government “was quite adamant that the settlement plan will not include temporary migrants.”¹⁴ A federal parliamentary inquiry into multiculturalism in 2013 fell short of making explicit recommendations about temporary migrants in multicultural and settlement policy frameworks (Joint Stand-

¹⁰ Interviews with federal government official, 31 March, 3 April, 8 April, 2014.

¹¹ Interviews with: manager of international students, TAFE New South Wales (NSW), 15 April, 2013; president of Council of International Students Australia (CISA), 2 May 2013.

¹² Interview with the former chairman of the Committee of Inquiry into the Temporary Entry of Business People and Highly Skilled Specialists, 28 February 2013.

¹³ Interviews with: former international student and student representative, 11 and 26 May, 2012; manager of international students, TAFE NSW, 15 April 2013.

¹⁴ Interview with the chairman of the NSW Community Relations Commission, 7 May 2013.

ing Committee on Migration 2013). An independent inquiry into Australia's Access and Equity framework in 2012 referred to temporary migrants as a growing and significant part of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, but stopped short of "advocating for additional entitlements or financial support" for temporary migrants (Access and Equity Inquiry Panel 2012, 6). The silence of Australia's national multicultural policy statement and settlement framework on the social issues facing temporary migrants suggests that the growth of Australia's temporary migration programs occurred largely without commensurate social policy inputs ensuring that federal migrant integration frameworks have remained largely stuck in a permanent migration paradigm in the face of transformations in the migration system (MCA 2013a, 5, 67).

In addition, changes to machinery of government arrangements at the federal level saw the removal of multicultural and settlement affairs from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) (referred to in this article as 'Immigration Department') and its relocation to the Department of Social Services (DSS) (DIBP 2014, 10) in April 2014. Federal government officials reflected on the implications of this change for the disarticulation of immigration policies from their social outcomes:

...before we saw [migration] as a whole journey so you have the temps coming to permanent and then settling, and then taking citizenship. By taking out settlement you make this [the immigration] Department more of a processing department and by separating them you really lose that connect between the decisions that are made here and the final outcomes ... Migration is not just granting a visa. It's actually building someone's life and building a nation through them. It just doesn't end when they enter here. So therefore having those responsibilities in *one* portfolio agency was a *fantastic* thing [...] This was a historic change... ever since the Department was established sixty-six years ago... multicultural affairs and citizenship and migration, they were always together. It was seen as one process, one life-cycle-of-migration process... having visa processing and citizenship here but settlement gone is a big move.¹⁵

The fragmentation of immigration policies from social policies that deal with migrant integration suggests a key shift in the governmentality of immigration in Australia. This shift compounds a temporal dissonance between the short-term economic interests that drive temporary migration policies and long term nation-building aims that have driven immigration, multicultural and settlement policies in the past (Collins 2013, 168; Bertone 2013, 180). A federal government official explained that, as the majority of officers in the Immigration Department are "focused on the short to medium term" outcomes concerning "point of entry, managing the program, checking for compliance,

¹⁵ Interview with federal government officials, 4 April 2014.

meeting the program targets each year and fine tuning it so people don't slip through the system," the social welfare of temporary migrants has "been one of those grey areas" wherein "[b]ecause they're temporary no one's really taking notice of their issues, once they're here."¹⁶

A key result of the alienation of temporary migration policies from frameworks that attend to long-term social outcomes was that during the decade or more of rapid growth in temporary migration, apart from data on migrant stocks, flows and visa grants, there was little publicly available statistical data on temporary migrant trajectories, including, histories of visa transitions, time spent in temporary status, and medium to long-term socio-economic outcomes for temporary migrants (MCA 2015a, 2). Key obstacles to the production of such data cited in interviews with federal government officials included, the challenges of obtaining locational data for temporary migrants, the complexity of arriving at accurate data on visa histories, and the Immigration Department's unsuccessful attempts to lobby the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to insert questions regarding immigration status into the 2006 and 2011 national censuses. More importantly, it was suggested that there had been limited interest within the Immigration Department in collating such data due to a lack of high level leadership in drawing connections between temporary migration and broader social outcomes, despite the necessity of such data "for strategic thinking", "anticipating future trends" and developing and evaluating immigration policies.¹⁷

Statistics comprise a deeply political technology of governmentality in the exercise of biopower (Foucault 1978, 140; Foucault 1991, 99). In the Canadian context, Sharma has argued that the exclusion of temporary foreign workers from annual migration statistics and failure to make data on temporary migrants workers publicly available ideologically cast them as existing outside of Canadian society and precluded "comprehensive demographic and socio-economic analysis of their impact on Canadian society" (Sharma 2006, 135; see also Sharma 2012a, 40). Similarly, it could be argued that the absence of statistics on the trajectories of temporary migrants has in biopolitical terms externalised them from Australia's national social policy frameworks, and enabled the Australian government to limit its concern with the longer-term social outcomes of its temporary migration policies. While the Immigration Department has more recently undertaken to collate data on visa pathways of temporary migrants, much of this data is yet to be made public.¹⁸

"A missing piece of the puzzle": local level impacts

Interviews with local government officials and service providers in the two local government areas considered in this study revealed that the externalisation of temporary migrants from social policy frameworks at the federal level materialised at the local level by constraining the capacity of local agencies

¹⁶ Interview with federal government official, 28 March 2014.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Correspondence with federal government officials, August 2015 and July 2016.

to respond to temporary migrants and changes in local communities related to immigration (Productivity Commission 2015, 35). As a threshold issue, the presence of residents on temporary visas in local areas was “not tracked” in existing data collection frameworks with the result that temporary migrants were, as a local government official explained, “a missing piece of the puzzle” and their issues were “a little lost.”¹⁹ As this local government official explained, lack of data on temporary migrants centrally affected the ability of local communities to respond to changes resulting from immigration: “The problem is, as a social planner if it’s not counted... try and go there and you’re going to fail, because you can’t form an evidence base of need...” The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has also indicated that “local governments face real capacity constraints” that limit their ability to “sustainably manage population mobility”, so that, “where local governments have a larger number of temporary residents... that are not captured in the census statistics, local governments have argued that they are receiving insufficient funding” (ALGA 2014, 3, 4).

At the same time, in interviews, staff from migrant resource centres indicated that they had experienced an increase in requests for assistance from Indian temporary visa holders.²⁰ However, the structural exclusion of most temporary migrants from settlement and other services resulted in temporary migrants falling through the gaps of existing service provision infrastructure.²¹ A migrant resource centre worker who received requests for assistance from many Indian international students during the international student crisis suggested that funding constraints served to conceal the extent of issues faced by temporary migrants:

It’s not being addressed at all I think because it’s not within our funding ... So we can’t work for them and whatever I have worked is very minimal... there is a lot more need there for temporary migration... the Indian lot doesn’t have any choice... they just live in that temporary state with a lot of difficulties. We’re quite tied down, we refer them what we can.²²

Service providers employed various strategies in the face of structural constraints. In the first instance migrant resource centre staff adopted expansive approaches to service delivery that exceeded the limitations of government funding structures by drawing on a conception of “community” that “means any person who knocks at the door should get the help,”²³ or an empathic sense of humanity: “...as a human when somebody’s in distress you don’t

¹⁹ Interview with local government official, LGA 2, 8 May 2013. ⁶ Interview with migrant resource centre staff, LGA 2, 30 April 2013.

²⁰ Interviews with migrant resource centre staff: LGA 1, 10 April 2013; LGA 2, 30 April 2013.

²¹ Interview with local government official, LGA 2, 8 May 2013.

²² Interview with migrant resource centre staff, LGA 2, 30 April 2013.

²³ Interview with migrant resource centre staff, LGA 1, 10 April 2013.

say no to them... you work for them even when you're not supposed to."²⁴ Migrant resource centres also ran programs that did not exclude on the basis of immigration status, such as family support groups and housing information sessions. In some instances temporary migrants were referred to charitable organisations like St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army. Where resource constraints proved insurmountable migrant resource centre staff refused assistance to temporary migrants: "...there is a *big* need there. I know if I start that I won't have time to do what I'm funded for..."²⁵ Frontline workers found themselves in an invidious position in navigating the gap between governmental structures and the needs of temporary migrants: "I feel that time helpless... we have some boundaries under which we have to work. We see the people, I *want* to help... but we are not allowed to make relationships..."²⁶

Local organisations that worked outside the Immigration Department's settlement funding frameworks militated against the externalisation of temporary migrants by subscribing to ethical frameworks of universal access. For a women's health service this meant: "... even if they don't have an immigration status, we will accept them into the centre. We don't believe in discriminating against women at all. If they need a service they need a service."²⁷ A participant from a community legal service stated:

We are there to help human beings! We are not a funded organisation so nobody has placed any restrictions on us, so we are free to do what we want. [...] Both in geography, both in categories and so on... if we are funded I suppose they're going to tell us who we can look after, who we *cannot* look after.²⁸

Local government officials in community development also echoed the importance of freedom from federal government funding structures for ameliorating the effects of social exclusion: "we're not constrained in a sense by someone saying, 'we'll fund you but we won't fund people who are here on a temporary visa' ... So we've got that flexibility, we can work with people who don't fit into any other box."²⁹

The emergence of ideas of universal access and "active citizenship," which was championed by local government officials as a critical counterpoint to exclusive ideas of national citizenship,³⁰ evinces "geographies of conflicting scalar priorities" between local level actors and federal government policies that police the borders of the nation (Varsanyi 2008, 888, 892). Federal government officials indicated that the Immigration Department had a "very

²⁴ Interview with migrant resource centre staff, LGA 2, 30 April 2013.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Interview with local service provider, 15 May 2013.

²⁷ Interview with local service provider, 26 March 2013.

²⁸ Interview with director of community legal centre, 23 March 2013.

²⁹ Interview with local government official, LGA 1, 23 April 2013.

³⁰ Interview with local government official, LGA 1, 23 April 2013.

active engagement space” for consultation, including within the Department, across other federal government agencies, state and territory governments, local governments as well as a range of non-government stakeholders, which informed planning and policy development.³¹ However, participants at both the state and local government levels expressed a view that there was a need for more substantive coordination and consultation between the federal government and state and local governments with regards to the impacts of immigration policies and migrant integration.³²

The emergent gaps between Australia’s temporary migration policies, existing social policy frameworks to assist in migrant integration and the social outcomes of policies highlight several key priorities for reform.

Firstly, governmental statistical frameworks need to capture temporary migrant mobilities and trajectories to better inform policy development and planning at all levels of government, as well as to inform much needed research into the short, medium and long-term impacts of temporary migration (Productivity Commission 2015, 13; Senate Education and Employment References Committee 2016, ix, 33; Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) 2016, 5). In light of the heterogeneous nature of temporary migration streams, pathways and experiences in Australia’s migration system there is a need for greater understanding of the specificity of outcomes attaching to specific visa streams and migration pathways.

Secondly, national multicultural, settlement, and welfare policy frameworks are yet to capture the social reality that temporary migration status is a new vector of differentiation in Australia. The differential inclusion of temporary migrants produces new kinds of social stratifications and precarious migrant subjects who are “at risk of being permanently excluded from the community of the nation and denied the benefits and rights of citizenship” (Senate Education and Employment References Committee 2016, 31). There are signs that bureaucrats at the federal level are cognisant of this issue, particularly in light of mooted overhauls of temporary skilled work visas and citizenship policies that further restrict or quarantine access to permanent residency and citizenship (DSS 2016, 19; Massola 2016; FECCA 2017). A range of organisations have advocated the extension of multicultural and settlement services, and benefits, such as access to Medicare, to vulnerable temporary migrants in order to ameliorate the potentially long-term adverse effects of precarity and lack of access to services and benefits, and to improve the integration and participation of temporary migrants in Australian society (Boucher and Carney 2014, 210-212). These organisations include the Settlement Council of Australia (2015, 3), Australian Multicultural Council (2015, 2), NSW Community Relations Commission (2011, 8, 23), Migration Council Australia (2013a, 6) and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (2011, 45).

³¹ Interviews with federal government officials, several, March and April 2014.

Interviews with: local government officials, LGA 1, 23 April 2013, LGA 2, 8 May 2013; chairman of the NSW Community Relations Commission, 7 May 2013.

³² Interview with migrant resource centre staff, LGA 1, 10 April 2013.

Thirdly, there is a need to address scalar tensions and jurisdictional gaps in attending to the social impacts of temporary migration. In particular, more effective consultation and coordination is required between the federal government and local and state governments that are on the coalface of responding to social changes related to migration (Productivity Commission 2015, 226).

Conclusion

Australia's much vaunted 'success' as a multicultural immigrant nation has been built on a settlement model that did not "leave things to chance" but supported migrants to "get to a baseline."³³ In contrast, the recent expansion of temporary migration has been a policy experiment in which social outcomes *have* largely been left to chance. The ideological reduction of temporary migrants to their economic value as transient, disposable subjects, and their externalisation from social policy frameworks for migrant integration was characterised by one key informant as the result of "*absolutely* crass economics" because "it does *completely* ignore the reality that we are dealing with human beings."³⁴ Australia's continued success as an immigrant nation requires a re-articulation of the connections between immigration policies concerning temporary migration, and social outcomes related to integration and settlement, particularly through a re-orientation from the short-term economic outcomes of migration policies to their longer-term social implications for migrants and communities. Prioritising social outcomes assumes greater urgency as immigration policies increasingly differentiate migrants on the basis of visa status and make access to permanent residency and citizenship more restrictive. Responses to the present and future social challenges of Australia's rapidly evolving 'flexible' migration system should be accompanied by an ongoing critical examination of how immigration and social policies operate as ideological instruments to inform the construction of the nation and its borders in the present era of global mobility.

³³ Interview with federal government officials, 31 March 2014.

³⁴ Interview with chairman of the NSW Community Relations Commission, 7 May 2013.

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