



10 September 2015

WA Migration and Mobilities Update Conference Report



Loretta Baldassar, Donella Caspersz, Farida Fozdar

Update Overview

The inaugural WA Migration and Mobilities Update Conference, held 10 September 2015, was a key event in the University of Western Australia's Research Week. Opened by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Robyn Owens and the WA Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, the Honourable Dr Mike Nahan, the event brought together 110 participants to share research, knowledge, and policy initiatives on migration, settlement, diversity and social cohesion in WA and beyond.

Organised by a steering group of community, industry, academic and government representatives, the Update included speakers from universities, Federal and State Government, key agencies and community.

Key themes to emerge from the Update include:

- The importance of the economy in determining the size and makeup of migration intakes and the increasing complexity of migration flows among and between developed and developing nations.
- Challenges in understanding trends and directions in immigration policy and planning, in particular settlement issues for migrants and their dependents.
- Tensions around identity and social cohesion between migrants and mainstream, newly arrived and established communities. Stigma and disadvantage remain issues for many migrants, particularly humanitarian entrants.
- The relationship between where migrants travel temporarily for employment versus where they permanently settle.
- The importance of Asia, and of Africa, in WA's migration and development future.
- The potential and challenges of temporary labour migration and growing concerns about the significant hidden exploitation of workers and international students, job security and lack of services.

The ongoing significance of temporary and permanent migrant workers was identified as a key issue for WA, wherein temporary visa holders are becoming the norm, and skilled employer sponsored visa holders are growing, while skilled independent numbers are decreasing. WA government nominated programs are working well, and a new working holiday visa program will increase workers to northern WA. WA is highly urbanised, and migrants tend to concentrate in urban centres. West Australians attitudes to diversity reflect Australia's where these are generally positive. WA has the highest proportion of overseas-born of all states and territories. This has changed the face of Perth, and its community life including food and celebrations. State government initiatives include a popular diversity training program available to government departments, employers and community, and a new referral service hub in the city centre, available for migrants and dependents.

The discussion canvassed questions of access to services for different visa categories, community attitudes, and challenges in the areas of employment and work rights. Identified gaps included the need for more longitudinal research and collaboration among stakeholders. The recent amalgamation of Customs with Immigration, and the move of settlement services from Immigration to Social Services generated debate about roles and responsibilities in Australian immigration policy and planning.

Message from the WA Minister...

Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests the Hon Dr Mike Nahan MLA commended UWA for hosting the conference.

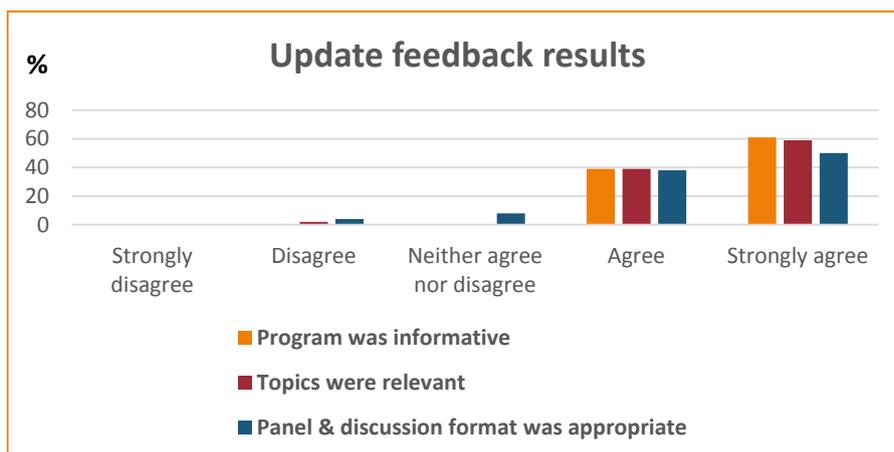
Dr Nahan said effective communication between researchers, government and organisations representing the interests of migrants was critical to ensure strong community engagement and good governance. The WA Migration and Mobilities Update played a valuable role in facilitating that communication by bringing all relevant stakeholders together. Dr Nahan also noted a void had been left by the closure of the Bureau for Immigration and Population Research and underlined the importance of establishing an annual Update of this kind.



A timely reminder: why networks matter

The timing of the Update was significant as the Syrian refugee crisis and its impact on Europe was unfolding as delegates met. Just prior to the Update the Australian government announced it would take an extra 12,000 refugees fleeing the region. It was a timely demonstration of the importance of government, industry and community organisations working together to ensure refugees receive assistance and resources effectively and efficiently. Attendance by delegates working at the heart of Australia's emergency response effort highlights the value of the Update as a forum for establishing meaningful collaborations.

What YOU said about the Update ...



I'll be back!

Great diversity of speakers and views!

I hope this will be an annual event!

What the keynotes had to say ...

Professor LesleyAnne Hawthorne, School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne:

- Australia's professional labour force is highly reliant on migration, in an increasingly competitive market internationally. Regional migration is accelerating. Net growth of 40,000 is expected in WA by 2017, primarily in Perth.
- Temporary entry is now dominant, constituting 7% of the skilled category intake. Two step migration is common - temporary migrants become permanent. It would therefore be appropriate to provide settlement services to temporary migrants and their families.
- Multiple migrations of professionals is standard - skilled workers lead mobile lives.
- Smoother pathways to skilled migration can be achieved through: global collaborative assessment partnerships; assessment and accreditation pre-migration; conditional registration; and restricting practice time-frames.
- The best policy is driven by research - Australia has a good track record in this area.



Professor Andrew Markus, Head, Scanlon Foundation Social Cohesion Research; Monash University:

- The level of social cohesion in Australia is one of the highest of Western societies.
- There continues to be majority support for immigration in Australia – this contrasts with negative attitudes throughout Europe.
- There continues to be a high level of support for current border protection and asylum policies.
- A large majority of Australians (close to 85%) agree that multiculturalism has been good for Australia.
- There is a relatively high level of concern over domestic security issues and a large majority of the population agree with proposed changes to the citizenship laws affecting dual nationals.
- Positivity to immigration is linked to economic trends, but despite the economic downturn, Australians remain positive.



Chloe Bird, Assistant Secretary, Economic Policy Branch, Immigration and Citizenship Policy Division, Department of Immigration and Border Protection (representing the Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senator The Honourable Michaelia Cash) emphasised the success of Australia's migration and settlement program.



Evan Lewis, Group Manager, Multicultural Settlement Services & Communities Group, Department of Social Services, who is overseeing the finding of homes and placements for 12,000 displaced people fleeing the crisis in Syria and Iraq, discussed settlement services and needs.



Spotlight on UWA MoB

Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Dawn Freshwater chaired a panel featuring UWA staff in the new Mobilities and Belonging Network including work with new and emerging WA migrant communities, and intersections between mobility and employment, education, aging and new media, as well as questions of belonging and social cohesion.

An overview of the program and videos of the presentations can be found at:
www.arts.uwa.edu.au/research/clusters/MoB

Tribute

A tribute to the University of Adelaide's Professor Graeme Hugo, Australia's best known migration demographer, was delivered by UWA Deputy Vice Chancellor (Community and Engagement) Professor Kent Anderson. Professor Hugo's generosity, the impact of his work, his networks beyond Australia and beyond academia, and his intellectually rigorous commitment to evidence-lead policy were highlighted. The UWA Update is modelled on Professor Hugo's South Australian event.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

Future Updates

The UWA Mobilities and Belonging research group will host an annual migration update to continue the conversation about policy and service delivery, informed by high quality research. Please contact us if you would like to be involved:

Loretta.Baldassar@uwa.edu.au

Donella.Caspersz@uwa.edu.au

Farida.Fozdar@uwa.edu.au

Supported by:



Australian Government
Department of Immigration
and Border Protection



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Government of Western Australia
Department of Training
and Workforce Development



Government of Western Australia
Department of Local Government and Communities
Office of Multicultural Interests



AFRICAN PROFESSIONALS
OF AUSTRALIA LTD.



Chung Wah Association



UNIONSWA
www.unionswa.com.au

Mobilities and Belonging
Research Group

The University of Western Australia

Tel: +61 8 6488 3997

Email: mob-arts@uwa.edu.au

arts.uwa.edu.au/research/

clusters/MoB