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## THE NORTHERN TERRITORY'S OVERSEAS BORN POPULATION

### KEY FINDINGS

- Mix of principal migration streams (family, skill, humanitarian) in permanent (settler) flows for the NT is different from the national mix
- Slow convergence towards the national trends may have recently begun in the contribution made by the skill stream in the NT but the remaining streams continue to differentiate us from Australia as a whole
- Humanitarian stream immigrants from selected African countries and immigrants from some Asian countries represent higher shares of settler arrivals in the NT than they do nationally
- Understanding international migration flows is essential when developing policies to promote workforce participation and effective settlement. The NT may need a different set of policies and services than other places in Australia

### RESEARCH AIM

To determine how the composition of permanent (settler) flows of overseas migrants to the NT differs from Australia as a whole.

This research brief is based on exploratory analysis undertaken in preparation for a larger-scale project investigating trends in and impacts of international migration on the NT.

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This research brief was prepared by Dr Kate Golebiowska.



## Background

Exploratory research strongly suggests that overseas migration trends in the Northern Territory (NT) have some unusual features. One of the key differences which has been suggested but is yet to be substantiated is a different composition of the permanent (settler) migration flows than in Australia as a whole. The relatively little work that has been done on overseas migration in the NT is now also quite dated (Taylor 1991, Skinner et al. 1994). The Population Studies Group intends to fill this knowledge gap, advance understanding of the impact of this migration on the Territory and provide research-based evidence, which may be used by the NT Government to review its relevant strategies and policies. This brief commences the process by examining the readily available quantitative data on overseas migration to the NT and to Australia as a whole (2001-2007). This is the first stage in a more comprehensive project for which we have sought external funding and which will run through 2009/10.

## Data and methods

The analysis includes not only a comparison of the percentage share of different migration streams in the annual flows but also a comparison of the countries of origin of immigrants. Data is drawn from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's (DIAC) publicly available statistics.

The Australian permanent migration program has four major components. The first three are numerically the most significant and they are the focus of this brief.

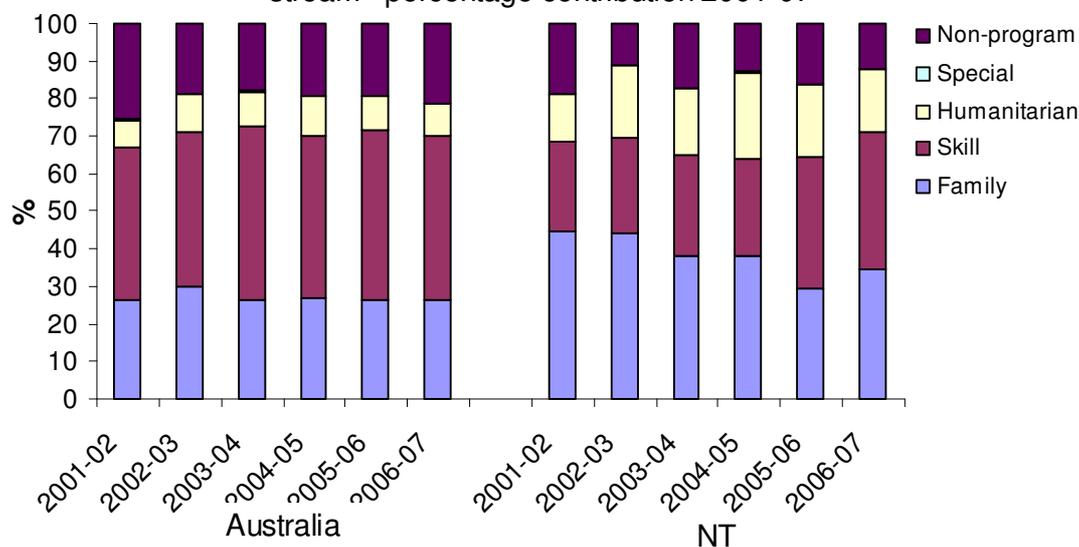
1. The Skill stream enables settlement of individuals who possess skills which can contribute to Australia's economy.
2. The Family stream recognises the importance of family migration to Australia's social and economic objectives.
3. The Humanitarian Program (Special Humanitarian Program, Refugee category) provides permanent resettlement to persons overseas who are in need of this durable solution.
4. A small Special Eligibility stream serves the needs of groups such as former residents who have maintained ties with Australia.
5. New Zealand citizens who settle permanently in Australia do not fall under the permanent migration program but their numbers are reflected in the figure of permanent additions to Australia's resident population through immigration. The concept of permanent additions incorporates also permanent (settler) arrivals from overseas as well as the onshore permanent visa grants (for example made to those who obtain permanent humanitarian protection after having arrived in Australia on a temporary visa) (DIAC 2008).

## Results

Graph 1 and Table 1 illustrate the composition of the permanent (settler) migration flows to the NT and to Australia as a whole.

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Graph 1. Permanent (settler) arrivals in Australia and the NT by stream - percentage contribution 2001-07



Source: DIAC 2007; Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) 2006a; 2006b; Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) 2004; 2005a; 2005b.

Table 1. Permanent (settler) arrivals in Australia and the NT by stream – percentage contribution 2001- 07.

Stream	Family	Skill	Humanitarian	Special	Non-program ie. NZs
<b>Australia</b>					
2001-02	26.3	40.5	7.6	0.2	25.4
2002-03	29.9	41.0	10.2	0.2	18.7
2003-04	26.5	46.2	9.3	0.2	17.9
2004-05	26.9	43.0	10.7	0.1	19.2
2005-06	26.4	45.2	9.2	0.1	19.1
2006-07	26.5	43.4	8.7	0.1	21.3
<b>Northern Territory (NT)</b>					
2001-02	44.7	23.4	12.4	0.4	18.5
2002-03	44.3	25.3	19.0	0.0	11.4
2003-04	38.3	26.7	18.0	0.0	17.1
2004-05	37.8	26.0	23.1	0.2	12.8
2005-06	29.4	35.0	19.5	0.0	16.0
2006-07	34.0	36.5	16.8	0.0	12.2

Source: DIAC 2007; Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) 2006a; 2006b; Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) 2004; 2005a; 2005b.

The composition of international migration in the NT differs from the Australia-wide one in all three principal streams: skill, family and humanitarian.

*Family stream*

A difference can be observed in the percentage contribution of the family stream to the NT and to Australia. Despite making a decreasing contribution to the NT (from about 45% of immigration down to about 34% of immigration over the time period), it has remained fairly consistent at 26% nationally. However, family migration is a larger contributor to NT flows than national flows. In 2006-07, for example, the contribution of family migrants to the NT was 7.5 per cent higher than to Australia as a whole.

#### *Skill stream*

Deliberate Federal Government policy over the last several years has resulted in the skill stream representing the highest share of all annual settler arrivals, followed by the family stream. As illustrated in Table 1, the percentage share of these settlers is markedly higher in Australia as a whole than it is in the NT. In fact, they represent the largest and generally growing proportion of all settlers at the national level. Until 2004-05, in the NT they represented only the second largest contributing group, preceded by the family stream settlers. The 2005-06 levels may mark the beginning of a slow convergence towards the national trends with the skill stream's contribution at 35 per cent (still 10.2 per cent less than in Australia as a whole) and the family stream's contribution decreasing to 30 per cent. The 2006-07 data do not permit us to determine whether this trend will continue or whether we are witnessing yet another fluctuation typical for the Territory.

All in all, the percentage contribution of skill settlers to the NT seems to be slowly moving towards representing the highest share of all NT settlers, hence commencing to resemble the national trend. On the other hand, fluctuations in the family stream's percentage contribution continue to differentiate the NT from Australia as a whole.

#### *Humanitarian stream*

Representation of humanitarian stream entrants also differentiates the NT settler composition from that of Australia as a whole. With the exception of 2001-02, their annual percentage share is nearly always twice as high in the Territory as it is nationally. Specifically, their representation in the NT settler flows tends to hover around 20 per cent annually whereas, nationally, they represent less than 10 per cent of the settler flows, with exception of 2002-03 and 2004-05. Continued monitoring of the settler trends warrants attention as this may indicate that a revision of migrant support services is needed (family, humanitarian streams), or that the Territory needs to attract skilled migrants (professionals, business people) more vigorously.

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Table 2 compares the top 20 countries of origin of settlers in Australia as a whole and in the NT.

Table 2. Top 20 birthplaces of permanent (settler) arrivals in Australia and the NT 2001-07.

Birthplace	2001-07	Rank	% Share	Birthplace	2001-07	Rank	% Share
Australia				Northern Territory			
UK & Ireland	109477	1	20.3	UK & Ireland	481	1	16.2
New Zealand	102733	2	19.0	New Zealand	389	2	13.1
China**	55841	3	10.3	Philippines	371	3	12.5
India	53205	4	9.8	Sudan	247	4	8.3
South Africa	28709	5	5.3	Indonesia*	204	5	6.9
Philippines	24809	6	4.6	India, Thailand each	154	6	5.2
Sudan	20394	7	3.8	China**	126	7	4.2
Malaysia	17145	8	3.2	Singapore	95	8	3.2
Indonesia*	15318	9	2.8	Liberia	82	9	2.8
Vietnam	14698	10	2.7	Vietnam	74	10	2.5
Singapore	12847	11	2.4	S.Africa, Malaysia each	70	11	2.4
Sri Lanka	12801	12	2.4	USA	67	12	2.3
Iraq	12668	13	2.3	Germany	64	13	2.2
Fiji	9878	14	1.8	East Timor*	56	14	1.9
Afghanistan	9095	15	1.7	Kenya	51	15	1.7
South Korea	8734	16	1.6	Somalia	49	16	1.6
USA	8673	17	1.6	Zimbabwe	44	17	1.5
Thailand	8262	18	1.5	Ethiopia	43	18	1.4
Lebanon	8129	19	1.5	Pakistan	42	19	1.4
Zimbabwe	7182	20	1.3	Sri Lanka	39	20	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>540598</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2972</b>		<b>100.0</b>

Notes: \*East Timor previously recorded under Indonesia, care should be taken when interpreting data.

\*\* Excludes SARs and Taiwan. Source: DIAC 2007, various tables.

Table 2 indicates that there are more differences than similarities between the countries of origin of permanent immigrants in the NT and in Australia as a whole. The most obvious similarity is the high percentage share of immigrants originating from the UK and Ireland, and from New Zealand. These immigrant groups rank the highest among all listed countries of origin. Furthermore, the percentage shares of settlers originating from Vietnam and Zimbabwe are similar in the NT and nationally.

The following differences are worth emphasising. First, the presence of immigrants originating from some African countries is disproportionately higher in the NT than in Australia as a whole. For example, Sudanese immigrants rank as the fourth highest contributing group in the NT, but they only rank seventh nation-wide. Immigrants from Liberia, Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia are found among the top twenty countries of origin in the NT but not among the top twenty listed for the whole of Australia. These settlers most likely hold humanitarian stream visas.

Second, percentage shares of immigrants originating from the Philippines and Indonesia are more than twice as high in the NT than what they are nationally. This most likely owes to the geographic proximity of the Territory to these two Asian countries. Such linkages can probably also explain why immigrants originating from East Timor are found among the top twenty contributors in the NT but not in Australia as a whole. Third, some countries of origin are underrepresented in the NT. For example, the proportion of Indians nationally almost twice exceeds their proportion in the NT. Chinese and South African settlers are also underrepresented in the

Territory. Finally, it may be worth noticing that the proportion of American settlers is higher in the Territory than in Australia as a whole. Whether this is driven by the presence of the American defence force in Alice Springs, particularly strong personal or business links, and/or other connections cannot be determined at this stage.

### Comments

This Research Brief has reported on the outcomes of preliminary research into the nature of overseas migration in the Territory and in Australia as a whole and has indicated some unusual features in the former. Specifically, it has shown that the proportions of principal migration streams are different in the Territory and that the mix of the countries of origin of settlers in the NT is also quite distinctive, particularly in terms of the humanitarian stream settlers and settlers coming from Asia.

The proposed more detailed analysis of the overseas migration trends in the NT is warranted for several reasons. First, there has not been such a study for over a decade and the knowledge gap is obvious. Second, changes to the Australian immigration program, such as introduction of the State/Territory specific migration schemes, increased number of settler arrivals, and demographic and economic objectives of the NT make such a study particularly timely. Third, apart from interpreting past trends, the proposed more in-depth study will consider broader implications of the composition of immigrant flows to the NT with a view to contributing to relevant NT Government policy agendas. It is intended to enhance the understanding of the services needed to support them and how the economic contribution of current and future settlers may be optimised.

Further research will involve an analysis of the quantitative data from DIAC (back to 1996 and including additional variables such as visa subclass, age, sex, and Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Sub-Major Groups (i.e. health professionals, education professionals, etc.). This project will also compare the length of stay of immigrants in the NT and in Australia as a whole. DIAC and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) quantitative datasets will be used for this purpose. Interviews with a sample of overseas migrants residing in the NT represent an integral part of this project and they will permit an enhanced interpretation of the relationships between the variables in the quantitative datasets. This will serve to establish how the trends in overseas migration to the NT have differed from the national ones in 1996-2007. In turn, this will enable us to consider broader implications of the composition of immigrant flows for the NT.

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