

GLOBALISATION AND TEMPORARY ENTRY

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Beginning on 1 August 1996, the Australian Government implemented a radical deregulation of temporary entry provisions governing foreign persons working in Australia on contracts of three months to four years. The result has been a significant increase in the numbers visaed, particularly on-shore, plus evidence that the program is being exploited in ways inconsistent with the Government's objectives.

For most of the post-war era, migration was about permanent settlement. This priority still affects the ethos of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). It is manifested, for example, in the vast amount of information available about permanent movers. Yet, temporary movers now greatly exceed permanent flows. One might think that, since temporary movement is by definition short term, there is no cumulative impact. But, the rapidity of growth in the size of temporary flows has meant that at any point in time the numbers present in Australia may have a harmful impact on the opportunities for Australian workers in certain labour markets.

DIMA has been subject to immense pressure to remove restrictions on visits from students, working holiday-makers, business visitors, and skilled workers sponsored by Australian enterprises, all of whom have work rights while in Australia. The Australian Government has been responsive to these pressures because it is now deeply committed to an economic strategy which forces Australian businesses into the global market-place by progressively removing external protection. The Government expects that this will encourage the emergence of globally-competitive Australian-based enterprises (including those owned by overseas interests), particularly in new high-tech manufacturing and service fields. The hope is that these industries will reduce the nation's dependency on the low-value-added, commodity-based industries which currently dominate Australia's export activities.

The underside of the increase in temporary residents has been evident in tens of thousands of on-shore asylum claims (from Chinese students) and a significant increase in other applications for change-of-status to permanent resident (particularly via marriage). The competitive impact on labour markets too, especially in low-skill service areas where temporary entrants tend to concentrate, such as Sydney and the Gold Coast, has also become contentious.

Any liberalisation of temporary-entry regulations must be evaluated in the context of the interest prospective migrants from places like China have in exploiting new migration opportunities and the army of migration agents keen to help them. The Chinese Academy of

Sciences has estimated that market ‘reforms’ in China have contributed to the movement of some 80 million persons from country to city in search of work and improved living standards.¹ Given the ‘push’ pressures from such countries, any new openings to emigrate, even if only on a temporary basis, are likely to be seized upon in the hope of eventual permanent residence.

Australian-based enterprises seeking to compete internationally have argued that there should be no impediments on their access to overseas skills. This demand has been particularly vociferous from overseas corporations wishing to bring home-office staff into their Australian operations on a temporary basis. The policy dilemma is that these claims clash with entry rules deriving from an older legacy of controls aimed at protecting Australian workers.

THE ‘ROACH’ INQUIRY AND LONG-STAY VISA CATEGORY 457

The deregulators are currently in the ascendancy. Their success came as a result of the inquiry into the temporary entry of highly-skilled business personnel chaired by Mr Neville Roach. Roach is managing director of the Japanese multinational Fujitsu Australia. He was appointed by Labor’s then Minister for Immigration, Senator Bolkus, and the inquiry was conducted by DIMA during the years 1994 and 1995. Japanese corporations in Australia and North America have a long record of heavy reliance upon home-office staff and of advocating greater access for them. Given Labor’s past commitment to the defence of Australian workers’ interests, the appointment of Roach signalled a major change of direction.

In the course of the inquiry business interests supported deregulation. But so too did the federal bureaucracy. The strongest advocacy came from the Department of Industry, Science and Technology (DIST), closely followed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). DIST urged that there be no controls at all where a company had invested in Australia. DFAT recommended that ‘there should be minimal regulation in relation to personnel falling into the executive/managerial, professional and specialist categories’.² It asserted that globalisation of production in both goods and services was both good for Australia and inevitable. This led to pressures (which DFAT thought should be facilitated) ‘for the relaxation of obsolete or unnecessary national-level restrictions on the short-term movement of specialised and skilled labour as a factor of production’.³

This is exactly what the Roach Committee recommended.⁴ The Committee’s report was accepted by the Labor Government in November 1995. Senator Bolkus’s comment was that the Report ‘highlights the need for faster access to managerial, executive and specialist personnel if Australia is to be able to participate in the rapid growth of international economic activity.’⁵ The Report was subsequently implemented by the Coalition Government with minimal changes on 1 August 1996. The spirit of Coalition support is indicated in the Government’s announcement. Mr Ruddock, the current Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, said:

Implementing the reform is part of the commitment to work closely with business to ensure that the Australian economy maintains a competitive edge internationally ... Australian companies have told me that quick and smooth transfer of key skills is a fundamental international market reality.⁶

As described in previous issues of *People and Place*, the Roach reforms abolished most of the previous restrictions on the rights of employers to sponsor managers and specialists to work in Australia on short-term employment contracts.⁷ As long as the employer assures DIMA that the sponsored person possesses ‘specialist’ skills which relate to ‘key activities’ of the enterprise, a visa will be granted for up to four years. Under previous rules, the sponsor first had to satisfy the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) that it had tested the Australian labour market for the skills in question before the sponsorship was pursued. The new rules for visa category 457 cover the three previous main temporary entry work categories: ‘independent executives’, executives and specialists. They will subsequently be referred to as 457 or Roach-category visas.

By contrast, in the USA, protests from skilled-worker interest groups prompted Congress to tighten entry regulations on skilled temporary workers. Since 1990, employers have had to put on the public record via the Department of Labor (DOL) the details of the jobs to be filled by foreign temporary workers, including wages, and DOL is required to hear any protests from interested parties.⁸ Apparently administration is lax and few sponsorships are rejected. But, in Australia, as a result of the Roach reforms, neither the DEETYA officers nor other interested parties have access to the applications describing the jobs employers seek to fill on a temporary basis.

It is now over 12 months since the inception of the Roach reforms and thus an opportune time to review the initial outcome. An official review is about to begin under DIMA’s auspices. It will involve two private enterprise executives, Ms Pauline Mathews, a partner in Coopers Lybrand (and member of the original Roach Committee) and Mr Maurice Newman of Deutsche Bank. We await its outcome with interest, but in the meantime offer our independent review.

SHORT-STAY BUSINESS VISITORS

The regulations covering business persons temporarily visiting Australia to transact or explore business opportunities were not greatly affected by the Roach inquiry. However, the recent escalation in the number of such visitors is important to our analysis because there are some labour-market implications and because of the linkages between these visitors and the numbers and characteristics of persons receiving category 457 visas.

The current Business Visitor category (visa number 456) allows visitors to stay in Australia for continuous periods of three months or less. As the ostensible purpose of the visa is to allow business persons to conduct or explore business opportunities in Australia, Business Visitor visas are issued on the proviso that ‘the applicant does not intend to engage in work

which otherwise might be carried out by an Australian citizen or an Australian permanent resident'. Though on the face of it this is a significant restriction, the current provision nevertheless represents a significant liberalisation on work rights relative to the situation in the 1980s. The Labor government removed the previous restriction which stipulated that Business Visitors could only engage in commercial transactions and had to received their income from overseas.

Table 1: Visas issued for Business Visitors (category 456) or equivalent, offshore and onshore, 1990-91 to 1996-97

| | |
|---------|---------|
| 1990-91 | 125,818 |
| 1991-92 | 130,540 |
| 1992-93 | 157,177 |
| 1993-94 | 202,178 |
| 1994-95 | 236,785 |
| 1995-96 | 272,271 |
| 1996-97 | 288,288 |

Source: DIMA, unpublished

This means that Business Visitors are now allowed to take paid employment (albeit no employment that a local could do). However, between 1990-91 and 1996-97 the number of Business Visitors increased from 126,000 to 289,000 (see Table 1). Their numbers are now so high that DIMA officials have no realistic prospect of controlling their behaviour in Australia and have little knowledge of what work, if any, they are doing.

We begin with some further comment on Business Visitors and then explores the Roach category outcomes. This sequence reflects the judgement that the Business Visitor movement is an important factor in explaining the outcomes of the Roach initiatives.

LABOUR-MARKET IMPLICATIONS OF BUSINESS VISITORS

Why has the number of Business Visitors increased so dramatically between 1990-91 and 1996-97? One factor may be the increased ease of access to such visas. Since late 1996, at least for the European, American, Singapore and Japanese posts, visas for Business Visitors have been issued automatically through travel agencies in the form of an electronic travel authority (ETA) without any requirement that the applicant prove a legitimate business interest in Australia. However, because the escalation in numbers occurred well before the advent of the ETA facility and because the biggest recent source of growth in Business Visitors is from China, where there is no ETA authority, it is obvious that other factors are involved.

While ease of entry has undoubtedly facilitated Business Visitor movement the question remains as to why so many are prepared to take up the option of coming to Australia. One reason is the increased openness of the Australian economy to external transactions and thus increased opportunities for overseas business people to do business here. The majority of Business Visitors appear to be genuine and complete their visit here quickly and within the terms of their visa conditions; this suggests that greater economic openness does indeed explain much of the growth in their numbers. The rapidity of their movement in and out of Australia is reflected in the data presented in Table 3 below which shows that as of September 1997 only 11,174 Business Visitors were present at that date. Similarly, data on visitor overstay rates show that only a tiny proportion of Business Visitors violate their visa conditions (though the highest overstay rates are found amongst the Chinese).

Another, more problematic, factor in Business Visitor growth which stems from the ease of gaining the visa, appears to be its attractions to persons interested in working in Australia rather than in conducting business transactions. As noted, the limited right to work is in reality open-ended, since enforcement of the visa conditions is virtually impossible. DIMA officers concede that it is common practice for firms anxious to move staff quickly to Australia to do so by bringing them in as Business Visitors. This practice avoids the form filling and delays associated with application for a 457 visa. But once here, in violation of the letter of their visa conditions (that is, that they do not take work which could be done by an Australian citizen or permanent resident), they actually work for their firm or organisation. Later they may be sponsored under the 457 category. One supporting piece of evidence for this hypothesis is there are currently more on-shore than off-shore visas issued under the Roach categories.

Table 2: Visas issued off-shore for Business Visitors (Category 456) by major post, 1995-96 to 1996-97

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| USA | 53,657 | 50,299 |
| China | 24,640 | 34,183 |
| London | 24,151 | 24,467 |
| Japan | 27,106 | 22,939 |
| Indonesia | 11,386 | 14,136 |
| Hong Kong | 10,301 | 9,859 |
| Singapore | 11,765 | 9,603 |
| Others | 109,053 | 113,325 |
| Total | 272,062 | 278,813 |

Source: DIMA, unpublished

Many Business Visitors, however, come to Australia on their own account, without the tacit sponsorship of an established firm in Australia. For some of these persons the attraction appears to be the possibility of entering the Australian labour market. This motive is strongly suggested by the data (in Table 2) showing the large and increasing numbers of Business Visitors issued from China. There seems to be little business rationale for the fact that more Business Visitor visas were issued from Chinese posts in 1996-97 than for any country except the USA. The business presence of Chinese firms in Australia is minor relative to that of Japanese, British and Hong Kong interests (among others). There does seem to be a genuine interest in setting up small businesses, particularly in import-export activities, but many Chinese 'Business Visitors' are also interested in income-generating work while in Australia.

On 31 October 1997 the Government acknowledged the point. Mr Ruddock's announcement tactfully does not mention Chinese Business Visitors, but he does state that a significant number of Business Visitors have violated their visa conditions by:

working for extended periods in relatively unskilled professions — such as factory hands, butchers, door-to-door salespersons and in massage parlours.⁹

Business Visitor visas are issued on a five-year multiple-entry basis (with successive stays of up to three months permitted) or on a single-entry basis (as is usually the case from posts like China) where there are concerns about visa compliance. DIMA posts around Australia have experienced a rush of applications from Chinese 456 visa-holders who have sought to extend their stay in Australia by changing their status to category 457 under the 'Independent Executive' sub-category of this visa. While the Australian posts have usually not granted these requests, the number of applications has alerted them to the scale of the problem. The Chinese have targeted this category because, unlike the requirements for the executive and specialist sub-categories of the 457 visa, no local sponsor is required with the 'Independent Executive' category. Rather, it is a self-sponsored category.

The Minister declared in his 31 October statement that no further on-shore 'Independent Executive' visas will be accepted, no matter what the country of origin of the applicant. The rationale is that it is only at the off-shore post that DIMA officers can interpret the business bona fides of applicants. In addition, DIMA will no longer issue 456 visas, or extensions to these visas, to on-shore applicants (such as to people here as tourists or visitors).

While a sensible set of reforms, they do not address the major problem, which is the ease of obtaining Business-Visitor visas overseas from posts where many recipients may well be motivated to use this category in order to take up unauthorised work in Australia.

SPECIALIST AND BUSINESS EXECUTIVES SPONSORED UNDER MORE THAN THREE-MONTH WORK CONTRACTS

There are many reasons for expecting an increase in the movement to Australia of temporary

workers in the wake of the Roach reforms.

- More foreign firms have established in Australia, thus there are more head-office and regionally-based staff to draw on when quick additions to local skills are required.
- The dominance of overseas firms in the hi-tech arena, particularly in the computing field where proprietary programming languages are common, puts a premium on staff already familiar with these languages.
- The increasingly competitive business environment prompts enterprises to emphasise a 'just in time' strategy as regards all factors of production, including skills. The corollary may be a de-emphasis on internal training. One manifestation of this is the increasing role of professional skill-procuring, or 'labour hire' firms in the case of tradespersons, in supplying skilled labour. Such firms may well turn to overseas sources if their needs cannot be quickly supplied from within Australia.

This background suggests that an increase of Roach-category temporary workers could prejudice the prospects of Australian workers. If employers do turn to 'off-the-shelf' overseas specialists it may be at the expense of training locals in the skills required. However, Roach and other advocates have argued that skill movement is a two-way process involving the outward movement of Australian personnel as well as movements into Australia. In addition, they claim that the entry of skilled personnel from overseas leads to the transfer of skills from these overseas specialists to locals and that it adds to the viability of local enterprises and thus helps generate jobs in Australia.¹⁰ DIMA officials also argued that the deregulation of the overseas recruitment process is justified because employers tell them that speed of access to skills is important if they are to take advantage of new business opportunities.

It is not easy to put these conflicting ideas to the test because of the virtual non-existence of case studies which examine the skill level of people recruited under the 457 visa and the extent to which skills transfer to locals is occurring. The following comments are thus more in the nature of questions than firm conclusions.

TRENDS IN THE NUMBERS OF 457 VISA HOLDERS

The number of 457 visas (or their pre-Roach equivalent) increased from 22,812 in 1995-96 to some 27,706 in 1996-97. The latter figure reflects the influence of the Roach reforms implemented as from August 1997. When Roach began his inquiry in 1994, the off-shore visa numbers were double those issued on-shore. The inquiry seems to have proceeded on the assumption that the benefits of temporary-entry skill transfer would come primarily from multinational firms transferring their highly-skilled personnel here for short periods. It has not turned out this way. Off-shore recruitment has remained stable, while the on-shore numbers have escalated to the point where they now exceed the number issued off-shore. In the four months July-October 1997 there were 6,017 on-shore 457 visas issued and 5,067 off-shore.

The increasing on-shore factor complicates the task of describing flows of temporary workers, since DIMA was unable to provide statistical data on the characteristics of on-shore

457 visa holders, including their visa status in Australia when applying for the 457 visa or their country of origin.

Table 3: Temporary entrants with work rights in Australia as of 30 September 1997 by large visa category^a

| Visa category | | Principal Applicants ^b | All (including family) ^c |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 412 ^d | Independent Executive | 165 | 515 |
| 413 | Executive | 2,258 | 5,913 |
| 414 | Specialist | 1,674 | 3,147 |
| 457 | Business (long stay) | 10,412 | 20,371 |
| 417 | Working Holiday Maker | 31,953 | 31,967 |
| 422 | Medical Practitioner | 818 | 1,305 |
| 428 | Religious Worker | 1,335 | 1,896 |
| 442 | Occupational trainee | 2,799 | 3,737 |
| 456 | Business Visitor | 10,867 | 11,174 |
| 560 | Student | 104,097 | 112,646 |
| | Others | 9,992 | 12,07 |
| | Total | 176,370 | 204,743 |

Source: Business Branch, DIMA, unpublished

^a Does not include spouses holding two year temporary visas or persons holding bridging visas (such as refugee claimants).

^b In some cases work rights are restricted. Students are limited to no more than 20 hours per week. Working holiday makers cannot work for more than three months with the one employer.

^c In most cases family members have work rights too, though not families of Occupational Trainees.

^d Categories 412, 413 and 414 are categories subsumed under the new 457 category. Those holding such visas would have applied for their visa before 1 August 1996.

About half the 27,706 visas for the category 457 in 1996-97 were for principal applicants; the

rest were for their dependents. Nevertheless, because of their relatively long duration of stay, the potential impact on the labour market is more significant than it is for the far more numerous Business Visitors. As of 30 September 1997 (see Table 3), there were estimated to be 29,946 persons in Australia in the Roach categories (including dependents) of whom 14,509 were the primary applicants and thus most likely to be in the skilled work force. The only similar analysis available for earlier years is that completed by Clive Brooks et al. in 1994.¹¹ Their figure of 10,799 primary visa holders for the classes equivalent to the Roach categories as of July 1993, indicates an increase of about one third in the labour-market impact of long-stay temporary entrants between 1993 and 1997.

Before further comment on these 457 figures it is worth noting the significance of the other data reported in Table 3. The table itself represents a significant new (and previously unpublished) contribution from DIMA to our knowledge about the impact of temporary visa holders on the Australian labour market. With information on all visa holders now held in electronic form by the Australian government, and progressively updated as visitors enter and leave Australia, it is technically possible for DIMA officials to interrogate the data bank to establish how many of each visa category are in Australia at any point in time. This is the basis for the data displayed in Table 3. Though there is not space to address the larger labour-market impact of all the categories of temporary entrants, it is striking that there are currently some 200,000 overseas residents temporarily in Australia with rights to work in Australia.

This broader issue aside, there is no doubt that significant further increases in the movement of persons holding 457 visas are inevitable. Employers have shown their interest in the category by applying in their thousands to become 457 sponsors. Once accepted as a sponsor (very few applicants are turned down) an employer can nominate in any one year virtually as many persons as he or she cares to specify in the original application. This 'right' is subject to the proviso that 'specialist' skills are involved and that these skills are in 'key' areas of the firm's operations. There were 7,351 applications approved for the main sponsorship category, the Standard Business Sponsorship (SBS), in the period August 1996 to June 1997. Over the three months August to October, these applications have been running at 700-800 a month, which is 20 per cent above the period for the same months of 1996-97. By October 1997 some 7,000 had been granted SBS status.

One way to think of the situation is that the Australian Government has already given some 7,000 entities the right to act as small-scale immigration recruitment agencies bringing in people allowed to work in Australia for up to four years. It is therefore a matter of some significance that we know more about who these 'agencies' are and what they are doing with their recruitment 'rights'.

OCCUPATIONS INVOLVED IN CATEGORY 457 TEMPORARY ENTRY

Table 4: Positions nominated by major occupation (Principal Applicants) for visa category 457, 1 August 1996 to 31 August 1997

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Managers | 3,159 |
|-----------------|-------|

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Information Technology Manager | 115 |
| Computing Professionals | 1,574 |
| Engineers (professional) | 953 |
| Building and Engineering Professionals n.e.c. | 220 |
| Accountant | 403 |
| Business Information Professionals n.e.c. | 271 |
| Registered Nurses | 150 |
| Dentists | 38 |
| Medical Diagnostic Radiographers | 58 |
| Graphic Designers | 41 |
| Editors | 37 |
| Chefs | 574 |
| Hotel Manager | 45 |
| Fitters | 17 |
| Metal Machinists | 11 |
| Cooks | 31 |
| Hairdressers | 21 |
| Fitness Instructors | 223 |
| Tourists Information Officers | 41 |
| Tour Guides | 124 |
| Total | 12,237 |
| Source: DIMA, unpublished | |
| n.e.c. not elsewhere classified | |

Since the implementation of the Roach reforms DIMA has kept records of the occupations for the positions the sponsors seek to fill (for both on-shore and off-shore nominations). There is no guarantee that the persons the employer intends to nominate will all arrive in

Australia. But, subject to this proviso, the data presented in Table 4, which cover the period since the beginning of the Roach reforms (1 August 1996 until 31 August 1997), give a good indication of the occupations affected.

Managers are the most numerous single occupational group. Among professionals, computing specialists are the largest category, displacing the once dominant engineering group. There were some 1,574 nominations for computing professionals along with another 116 for information technology managers.

Apart from managers and computing professionals there are few other occupational categories where employers have shown an active interest in using the Roach provisions. These two groupings can be related to the main justification for the reforms, which is that such recruitment will lead to some improvement in the competitiveness of firms, internationally or nationally. The same cannot be said of many of the other occupational categories which feature in Table 4. Chefs and cooks, for example, are more numerous than accountants. Fitness instructors greatly exceed any single category of skilled tradespersons (except chefs). Few tradespersons are being nominated, yet employers often complain that shortages in these fields are harming Australia's international competitiveness in manufacturing and mining operations.

WHY SO MANY ON-SHORE 457 VISAS?

How is it that so many persons capable of fulfilling 'key' activities in Australian-based enterprises are apparently already in Australia? As noted, DIMA could not provide data on the characteristics of these people. Some are undoubtedly drawn from the group of 456 visa holders described earlier whom employers bring here to escape delays in the 457 sponsoring process.

But, another larger and more problematic group appears to be drawn from other Business Visitors. The large number of Chinese Business Visitors has already been mentioned. For such visitors there is a powerful motive to extend their stay in Australia (as already evidenced with the crisis generated by Chinese applying under the 'Independent Executive' sub-category of visa 457). With some 7,000 potential sponsors already in place (at least half in Sydney) and thousands of Business Visitors, as well as tourists, working holiday makers and visitors already in Australia and interested in extending their stay, it would be naive to ignore the possibility that the on-shore 457 system could be being rorted. Inquiries at the coal face of the administrative system indicate that it is.

Many of the 456 Business Visitors changing their status to 457 long-stay workers are Chinese and they are being nominated mainly as managers. Their industry field is designated as some form of trading, often in the 'import-export' field, or perhaps in service areas, such as restaurants. The sponsors are small Australian-based companies or branches of overseas small businesses looking for a commercial niche here. The firms involved are far removed from the internationally-competitive global enterprises Roach had in mind. Their numbers are likely to grow with the current disarray in Asian economies and the desperation of small scale business people there to find alternative activities.

These people may, in a sense, meet the criteria for 'key' activities, in that they can claim business networks and language skills relative to overseas marketing of Australian goods and services. But, do we really want to encourage the proliferation of small-scale import-export business and other low-level businesses? There is also the possibility that many of those sponsored will end up competing in an already overcrowded, and possibly illegal, low-skilled labour market in Sydney and other East Coast locations. If the sponsors are creating labour-intensive firms, it is likely that they will recruit other Chinese 'Business Visitors' on a de facto guest-worker basis to operate the businesses.

COMPUTING PROFESSIONALS

The impact of temporary workers in the computing field raises a quite different set of issues. Studies of the movement of temporary entrants in the United States suggest that the computing area is one of the most problematic from the point of view of resident professionals. The import of programmers (particularly from countries such as India) on terms well below the industry norm in the USA is well documented.¹² This has aroused a stormy debate in which the representatives of American workers have argued that the overseas movement has impacted both on local training and on conditions of work. At this stage in Australia there is no parallel to the USA experience with Third World skilled temporary-entry workers. Our analysis of the country of origin of category 457 visa holders arriving in Australia in 1996-97 showed that the great majority of computer professionals came from the UK, North America and South Africa. Very few came from India or any other similar source country.

The Australian problem rests more with the large numbers of computing professionals entering on a temporary-entry basis. It is this that may deny employment opportunity and training for Australian citizens and permanent residents. Though DIMA will not release details on the sponsoring firms' activities, it did provide aggregate data by industry for persons nominated under the 457 category for 1996-97. The largest industry category was communications. This implies that many of the computing professionals are being employed in the telecommunications area. This is a leading edge industry with many foreign firms active (as with mobile phone networks). It is not surprising that these employers would draft many of their home or regional office staff, people who would have knowledge of their technology and any related proprietary computing languages, rather than look to local training.

Whether such practices mean that Australian professionals will be left behind, dependent on fly-in overseas leadership, is uncertain. The entry of 1,574 computing professionals and another 115 information technology managers may not look high in comparison with the ABS estimate that, as of August 1996, there were 102,000 computing professionals employed in Australia. But the temporary entry numbers look higher when it is remembered we are dealing with leading edge computing professionals located heavily in the communications field. According to David North, a North American authority on the issue, some 13,915 temporary-entry visas with employment rights were issued in the USA in 1995

for computer and maths professionals.¹³ Relative to population size, this number is around half the level entering Australia under the Roach categories. This outcome is to be expected given Australia's foreign-dominated computer industry. But there must be serious questions asked about the current Australian practice of facilitating these flows without any guarantees of local skills transfer.

The Australian Government has before it the recommendations of the Goldsworthy Report on the IT industry. The committee (which included Neville Roach) recommended an increase in local computing training. But simultaneously it also proposed further freeing up of the privileges of 'businesses operating in the information industry' to 'access' their overseas personnel.¹⁴ The Committee did not note that such access would surely remove one potent stimulus to local training.

It is of interest that, in its recent revised draft platform, the Labor Party states (clause 80) that it will review the system of temporary entry visas now in place. This is appropriate, but given that the Roach system of temporary-entry visas now in place is a direct product of Labor initiatives in 1995, it ironic to say the least.

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