

Press release: For immediate release

11 March 2011

Australia's Opportunity to Avoid the Demographic Chasm

New Skilled Migration Program Threatens Economy Short and Long Term

From 2011, as baby boomers reach retirement age and over the next 40 years, Australia's population will go through a major realignment. Our dependency ratio will increase and there will be a disproportionate number of older people to support and provide services for, and fewer people of working age to provide those services and support. In short Australia is heading over a demographic cliff.

Yet the new Skilled Migration Points Test, scheduled to go into effect 1 July 2011, will both frustrate and deter many highly skilled workers from applying for General Skilled Visas. It is also likely to result in fewer internationals applying to study in Australia – and this will have a major impact on our international education industry.

According to Mark Webster, Director of Acacia Immigration Australia, a Sydney firm specialising in immigration law, beginning now and for the foreseeable future, the new program will have a destructive effect on business across Australia because of the casual labour force international students can provide.

Mr Webster believes that without significant immigration levels, Australia will not have enough workers to provide the necessary services for the population.

"The dependency ratio is going to go through the roof and we will inevitably find our economy slipping backwards," Mr Webster says.

"What we need to do is take advantage of our enormous opportunity. There are many countries, both big and small, in financial trouble as a result of the global financial crisis. We are quite fortunate, if only the government would recognise that fact. Now is our opportunity to build our skilled workforce for the future because the employment market in Australia is strong and the benefits of the Australian lifestyle are self-evident," he says.

By encouraging students and skilled migration, Mr Webster says Australia will continue to create employment, stimulate the economy and create opportunities for businesses in Australia to expand. It will also continue to support and prop up the education sector.

"I am concerned that with the new Points Test significantly restricting the number of eligible applicants we will miss all of these opportunities," Mr Webster says.

"With the government's myopic view of the future, I fear we may find ourselves in a situation we will regret in years to come when other developed countries have the same demographic challenges that we will be facing," he says.

Mark Webster is available for comment

Phone: (02) 9230 0888

Email: Webster@acacia-au.com

Acacia Immigration Australia, Suite 201, Level 2/5 Elizabeth St, Sydney 2000

www.acacia-au.com

About Mark Webster

Mark Webster is the Founder and Director of Acacia Immigration Australia, NSW/ACT State President of the Migration Institute of Australia and Treasurer of the Migration Institute of Australia.