

A Changing Diaspora: Recent Trends in Migration between China and Australia

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Abstract: This article analyses the increasing flow of recent Chinese migration to Australia from a demographic perspective. It discusses the changes in scale and composition of the movement to Australia, and also considers the opposite flow. It ends with some comments on the likely implications of evolving migration trends.

Introduction¹

Of the myriad changes which have swept across China since the Reform period started in the 1980s, none have been so striking or as important for social, economic, political, and environmental change as the increase in personal mobility. While much of the increased population movement has occurred within China there has been an exponential increase in the numbers of Chinese moving overseas on both temporary and permanent bases. At a time of unprecedented population mobility globally, China is of a particular importance not only because it includes a fifth of the world's population but also because migration is a critical element in the social and economic development of the world's largest country. The understanding of the patterns, causes and consequences of this movement and its two way relationship with economic and social change is crucial. As Roberts (2003) points out, "Nowhere is the task of understanding the dynamics of a migration system more urgent than in contemporary China, which is experiencing the largest migration in human history and which faces hard choices regarding labour market integration, urbanization and rural poverty that are impacted by migration policy."

One of the major destinations of the flow out of China has been Australia, and this article seeks to analyse this increased flow from a demographic perspective. While China-born in 2005–06 became the third largest origin of permanent settlers to Australia, they also have been an important element among non-permanent flows. Moreover, these increased flows have occurred at a time when the Australian immigration policy has become more focused on skill, so the China-born in Australia are a high skill, highly educated group. This article discusses the changes occurring in the scale and composition of population flows from China to Australia but also considers the significant flow in the opposite direction. It ends with some comments on likely implications of evolving migration trends.

Data Sources

Australia has some of the most comprehensive data on international migration of any country (Hugo 2004). First, the Australian population census has a set of questions relating to international migrant *stocks* and these are used here to show the changes in the stock of China-born population in Australia. Australia has excellent data on migrant flows to and from China. All persons entering or leaving Australia are required to complete a card, so there is excellent data on all arrivals and departures. These are divided into three categories:

- Permanent Movements

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- *Immigrants* are persons arriving with the intention of settling permanently in Australia.
- *Emigrants* are Australian residents (including former settlers) departing with the stated intention of staying abroad permanently.²
- Long Term Movements
 - Overseas arrivals of visitors with the intended or actual length of stay in Australia of one year or more.
 - Departures of Australian residents with intended or actual length of stay abroad of one year or more.
- Short Term Movements
 - Travellers whose intended or actual stay in Australia or abroad is less than one year.

These data allow detailed analysis by age, birthplace, sex, occupation, origin and destination to be undertaken.

It should be pointed out that the Chinese population dealt with here are mainly people who were born in Mainland China and hence do not include all Australian ethnic Chinese. The ethnic Chinese population is considerably larger, including substantial numbers born in Australia but also many from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and their Australia-born descendents. Hence, at the 2006 Australian census there were 206,589 China-born persons enumerated but some 669,890 persons indicated they had Chinese ancestry. This includes all first and second generation migrants who identify themselves as having Chinese ancestry, including the Australia-born children of parents born in China.

Increasing Chinese Population Mobility

As the world's largest country (2006 population of 1.311 billion) it is not surprising that China features as one of the major origins of global migrants. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that high levels of mobility are a relatively recent feature in China, where formerly policies tended to suppress, rather than facilitate, mobility. Up to two decades ago an important element of the centralised controlled economy was the *hukou* system which divided the population into agricultural and non-agricultural groups and effectively prevented people from moving from one sector to the other (Zhu 1999, 102-104). Yet with the liberalisation of the economy there has been a massive increase in mobility within the nation, especially toward the industrialised eastern coastal area which has been at the forefront of China's rapid economic growth (Roberts 2005). Accordingly in China the number of rural to urban migrants identified in the population census increased from 21 million in 1990 to 121 million in 2000 (Zhou and Cai 2005). Moreover, at the 2000 population census it was estimated that the "floating population"³ of China was 79 million in 2000 (Liang and Ma 2004), the bulk of whom had rural origins but were living in urban areas.

Restrictions have also been lifted with respect to international movement. Figure 1⁴ shows that there has been an exponential increase in the numbers of Chinese travelling overseas in recent years. While the majority of these are short term moves made for business and tourism, it is a striking illustration of increased international movement among the Chinese. It is clear that much of this is directed to More Developed Countries. The OECD (Dumont and Lemaitre 2005) has recently

² However, before 1974 former settlers were not classified as emigrants unless they had been in Australia for at least 12 months.

³ Individuals who had resided at their place of destination more than 6 months without local registration status (*hukou*).

⁴ Figures appear in a separate annex located immediately after this article.

brought together census and, where there are no census data, registration information on the overseas-born populations in those countries (Dumont and Lemaitre 2005, 31) which found that the stock of Asia-born was 16.83 million at the turn of the century, with 2,038,072 of them from China. Figure 2 shows that the largest concentrations were in the USA, Japan, Canada and Australia, although there are substantial numbers in European countries too. The very rapid growth in the post-2000 period is demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Growth of the China-born Population in New Migration Countries, 2000/2001 to 2005/2006

Source: US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March Supplement, 2001 and 2006; Statistics Canada, Census of Canada 2001 and 2006; ABS Censuses of 2001 and 2006; OECD 2006 and 2007

Country	2000/2001 Population	2005/06 Population	Percent p.a. Growth
USA	1,105,000	1,341,000	3.9
Canada	345,520	466,940	6.2
Australia	142,780	206,589	7.7
New Zealand	38,949	78,117	14.9
Czech Republic	3,600	3,400*	-1.1
Denmark	2,700	5,800*	16.5
Finland	2,100	4,100	14.3
Hungary	3,500	4,500	5.2
Italy	60,100	105,000**	11.8
Japan	335,600	487,800*	7.8
Korea	59,000	80,000*	6.3
Netherlands	22,700	34,800	8.9
Portugal	3,300	9,200*	22.8
Spain	28,700	71,900	20.2

*2004
 ** 2003

Chinese Migration to Australia

Figure 3 shows the growth of Australia's China-born population. There was significant Chinese migration to Australia in the nineteenth century associated with the discovery of gold (Lyng 1935; Choi 1975; Price 1974), but with the introduction of the White Australia Policy in the early twentieth century there was a halt to immigration and this, together with significant return migration, saw a decline in the China-born population from 38,142 in 1861 to 6,404 in 1947. The Chinese were the dominant Asia-born group in Australia in the late nineteenth century, but Figure 4 shows that the Chinese share of the Australian Asian population fell from over 90 percent in 1881 to two-thirds around the turn of the century, half in 1921 and less than 40 percent by 1947.

The White Australia policy was gradually dismantled over the post-war years, with its final dissolution in 1973. However, the increase in Asian immigration which followed was unlike earlier Asian migration as it was not dominated by the Chinese

(Hugo 2003). It was not until the opening up of China in the late 1970s and early 1980s that immigration to Australia picked up. The China-born was only the fourth largest Asian-born group in 1981, behind the Malaysian, Philippines and Vietnam-born populations. However by 2006 it had become the largest Asian-born group in Australia, numbering 203,143 (or 1.0 percent of the total population).

What has been the contemporary pattern of migration between China and Australia? Considering firstly permanent settlement, Figure 5 shows the year by year numbers of permanent arrivals from China. The diagram shows a small in-movement in the 1950s, followed by two decades of virtually no settlement. There was steadily increasing, but still small, immigration in the next fifteen years followed by spectacular gains in the mid 1990s. This was largely due to some 29,500 Chinese students and their dependents in Australia at the time of the 1989 Tiananmen massacre being granted temporary protection visas which were later converted to permanent residency following the intervention of the Australian prime minister (Shu and Hawthorne 1996). However, it is apparent that there has been a particularly sharp increase in the number of settlers in recent years. This has seen China-born immigrants move from being the tenth largest birthplace group among settlers to Australia in 1991 to third largest in 2005–06.

The settler flows in Figure 5, however, only represent part of the contribution of Chinese migration to Australian population growth in recent years. It is shown later that there has also been a substantial increase in non-permanent migration from China to Australia over the last decade. One of the impacts of this has been an increasing number of persons who enter Australia initially as temporary residents but subsequently apply for, and gain, permanent residency. Indeed, in 2005–06, 26.8 percent of the total net immigrant gain in the Australian population was due to “onshore” migration. Table 2 shows that “onshore” arrivals for China doubled between 2002–03 and 2005–06. In 2005–06, while China was the third largest origin nation for settler arrivals (after United Kingdom, New Zealand and India) it was the largest origin nation for onshore arrivals. This means Chinese are taking advantage of new immigration regulations that facilitate temporary residents changing to permanent residence status more than any other single group.

Table 2: Australia: Permanent Additions to Australian Population of China-born, 2001–2007

Source: DIAC *Immigration Update*, various volumes

Year	Onshore		Offshore Arrivals		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2001-02	3,180	13.4	6,708	6.2	9,888	7.5
2002-03	3,369	10.5	6,664	7.1	10,033	8.0
2003-04	4,532	11.8	8,784	7.9	13,316	8.9
2004-05	4,903	11.2	11,095	9.0	15,997	9.6
2005-06	7,403	15.4	10,581	8.0	18,084	10.1
2006-07	9,811	19.0	12,009	8.6	21,820	11.4

Immigration to Australia is a highly planned and controlled process. In the first three post-war decades the imperatives of Australian immigration policy were both economic and demographic. On the one hand, there were huge labour shortages in the post-war boom period and labour—skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled—was

needed for the massive growth in manufacturing. Also, there was a 'populate or perish' argument in the aftermath of near invasion by Japan during the war. With the end of the 'long boom' in the 1970s, the reduction in manufacturing employment and increases in unemployment, immigration policy was redefined to involve a planned numerical intake made up of a number of policy components:

- Refugee and Humanitarian Movement—designed to resettle refugees and other forced migrants.
- Family Migration—enabling family members to join earlier generations of immigrants.
- Economic Migration—involving recruitment of people with skills in short supply in the economy.
- Special Categories—involving mainly New Zealanders but also people with special talents.

Over the years there has been a fluctuation in the significance of the various components of immigration. In the most recent period there has been a deliberate policy to increase the proportion of skilled workers in the immigration intake. Australian immigration selection policy has become more focused on economic and workforce criteria since the mid-1990s so that, if New Zealand citizens⁵ are excluded, the proportion of skilled migrants in the settler intake increased from 24.1 percent in 1995–96 to 58.5 percent in 2004–05. But skilled migrants are outnumbered by family migrants among Chinese immigrants in 2006–07 (see Table 3 over the page).

Non-Permanent Migration

In post-war Australia there has been bi-partisan agreement that permanent settlement of a significant number of overseas migrants is desirable and, accordingly, each post-war government has had an active immigration program, while the non-permanent labour migration encouraged by some other OECD nations at this time was strongly opposed. There was no challenging the notion that the permanent settlement paradigm dominated Australian thinking and policy regarding international migration. However, there has been a change (Hugo 1999). In response to restructuring of the Australian economy, internationalisation of labour markets and globalisation forces more generally, a major shift in policy has allowed entry of large numbers of people who have the right to work in Australia on a non-permanent basis. This represented a parametric change in Australian immigration policy (Hugo 1999). Nevertheless, this type of visa entry has not been extended to unskilled and low skilled workers,⁶ and has been strictly confined to people with skills in short supply in the Australian labour market and to entrepreneurs.

Of the main types of temporary movement there has been a significant involvement of the China-born in all but the Working Holiday Maker Program⁷. One movement of particular significance is that of fee paying students who come to study in Australian educational institutions. Australia has become one of the major global destinations of students from South nations (Abella 2005; Tremblay 2004) and Table 4 (over page) shows there has been a sharp increase in the numbers of overseas student arrivals from China, both in numerical terms and as a percentage of all student arrivals during the last decade, especially in the last few years. Indeed the number of students in Australia increased six times between 2001 and 2005 and the proportion that they made up of the burgeoning Australian student population

⁵ New Zealand citizens can freely enter Australia under a special Trans Tasman agreement.

⁶ However, an exception may be made shortly in regard to Pacific Island labour for harvesting.

⁷ This is a program open only to nationals of countries with which Australia has a special bilateral agreement and China is not currently among those countries.

increased from 6.1 to 20.3 percent. The number of students more than trebled between 2001 and 2005.

Table 3: Australia: Visa Categories of Settler Arrivals from China and Total, 2006-07

Source: DIAC unpublished data

Migration Stream	Migration Sub Stream	Settler Arrivals from China		Total Settler Arrivals	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
FAMILY MIGRATION	Spouse & Fianceses	3416	44.4	29421	21.0
	Parent	958	12.5	3657	2.6
	Other Family	754	9.8	4060	2.9
FAMILY MIGRATION Total		5128	66.7	37138	26.5
SKILL MIGRATION	Skilled Australian Linked/Skilled Australian Sponsored (SAL/SAS)	79	1.0	5039	3.6
	Designated Area Sponsored	45	0.6	7480	5.3
	Employer Nomination Scheme	18	0.2	3469	2.5
	Business Skills	2166	28.2	4881	3.5
	Distinguished Talent	14	0.2	89	0.1
	Independent	180	2.3	36191	25.8
	Skilled Independent Regional	21	0.3	3606	2.6
SKILL MIGRATION Total		2523	32.8	60755	43.4
SPECIAL ELIGIBILITY HUMANITARIAN	Special Eligibility			109	0.1
	Refugee			6231	4.4
	Special Humanitarian	30	0.4	6016	4.3
HUMANITARIAN Total				12247	8.7
NON-PROGRAM MIGRATION	New Zealand Citizens	4	0.1	28307	20.2
	Other Non-program	5	0.1	1592	1.1
	NON-PROGRAM MIGRATION Total		9	0.1	29899
Total		7690	100.0	140148	100.0

Table 4: Australia: Chinese Students Present 1999-2007 (as at 31 March)

Source: DIAC *Immigration Update*, various issues

Date	China	Total	Percent China
1999	7411	120,555	6.1
2000	7415	130,801	5.7
2001	7420	102,331	8.4
2002	13,565	110,572	12.3
2003	23,991	186,102	12.9
2004	35,576	204,794	17.8
2005	43,367	213,892	20.3
2006	49,831	234,844	21.2
2007	55,550	265,999	20.9

Table 5: Nationality of Overseas Students, by Top 10 Source Countries, in Higher Education in Australia, 1999-2006

Source: Australian Education International,
<http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/MIP/Statistics/Default.htm>

Country	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Singapore	8109	8647	8852	10442	10186	9254	8349	7862
Malaysia	9545	9866	9761	13595	15426	15909	15375	14932
Hong Kong	5922	6502	7053	8376	10182	11000	10703	9948
Indonesia	7799	9283	9907	11440	11405	10587	9543	8772
China	2870	3712	6353	16311	22394	30041	40054	46075
India	3143	4374	5923	8884	12340	17870	22279	25431
Thailand	2398	2716	3197	4967	5681	5731	5252	4891
Taiwan	2232	2440	2812	3883	4115	4185	3964	3854
Korea, South	1883	2174	-	3694	4518	5012	5380	5590
Norway	-	-	2802	4118	4046	3536	-	-
Bangladesh	-	-	-	-	-	-	3657	3501
USA	2105	2846	3737	-	-	3371	-	-
Sub-Total	46006	52560	60397	85710	100293	116496	124556	125266
Other Countries	14908	20157	25874	31224	35959	35302	39374	47031
Total	60914	72717	86271	116934	136252	151798	163930	172297

*Countries with [-] indicates that they were not in the top 10 for that year

In 2006, 172,297 students were studying in Australian tertiary education institutions. Table 5 (above) shows the main origin countries of these students in recent years. In 2006 there were 46,075 tertiary students with Chinese nationality in Australia, by far the largest single birthplace group among foreign students. The numbers have increased fourteen-fold since 1999, and over that time China has gone from being the sixth largest to the largest provider of foreign students. Chinese students currently make up 26.7 percent of all foreign university students in Australia.

This pattern of massive growth is repeated in other sources of data on overseas students in Australia that are presented in Table 6 (over page). The first set of data are from Australia Education International (AEI)⁸ and are not a stock figure, but all enrolments during the calendar years capturing short course participants as well as enrolling and departing students. The second set refers only to students in higher education institutions.

⁸ At the time that the data were generated, AEI was part of the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), which has since been reorganised into the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). AEI uniquely integrates the development of international government relations with support for the commercial activities of Australia's education community. To do this, AEI liaises with all sectors of the education and training industry and all levels of government.

Table 6: Australia: Overseas Students from China

Source: Australia Education International
<http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/MIP/Statistics/StudentEnvironmentAndVisaStatistics/Default.htm>;
 DEST *Selected Higher Education Student Statistics*, various issues

Overseas Student Enrolments				Students in Higher Education Institutions			
Year	Enrolments from China	Total Enrolments	Percent from China	Year	Students from China	Total Overseas Students	Percent from China
1994	5,637	102,153	5.5	1993	1,823	42,571	4.3
1995	3,951	122,306	3.2	1994	1,649	46,441	3.6
1996	3,615	147,789	2.4	1995	1,272	51,994	2.4
1997	3,828	154,728	2.5	1996	1,702	53,188	3.2
1998	5,273	151,444	3.5	1997	2,575	62,974	4.1
1999	8,859	162,865	5.4	1998	3,375	72,183	4.7
2000	14,948	188,277	7.9	1999	3,292	83,111	4.0
2001	26,824	233,408	11.5	2000	4,387	95,607	4.6
2002	48,236	274,887	17.5	2001	8,018	112,342	7.1
2003	60,301	307,988	19.6	2002	19,596	185,058	10.6
2004	70,741	325,369	21.7	2003	27,020	210,397	12.8
2005	81,834	345,972	23.7	2004	37,106	228,555	16.2
2006	90,048	382,480	23.5	2005	46,271	239,495	19.3
2007	107,071	455,185	23.5	2006	51,301	250,794	20.5

The Chinese have been sending “students and scholars abroad to earn degrees and conduct research ... [as] an integral part of China’s policy of upgrading its educational systems and obtaining the professional manpower necessary to meet the goals of urbanization” (Pang and Appleton 2004, 500) since the end of the cultural revolution in the late 1970s. However, until recently, Australia has been only a very minor destination compared with the United States, Western Europe and Japan, especially the first.

What are the causes of the steep increase in the numbers of students coming to Australia after 2001? A number of hypotheses could be put forward and all undoubtedly have played a part. Firstly, the 9/11 incident in 2000 may have had an influence, both in encouraging students to avoid the United States as a destination and with the subsequent tightening of entry criteria for studying there also deterring students.⁹ Secondly, it may have been in response to initiatives taken by the Australian Government to facilitate foreign students in Australia on temporary visas applying for, and getting, permanent residence in Australia (Birrell 2005). Since 1999 a series of reforms have made it possible for completing overseas students to apply for permanent residence without returning to their home country (Birrell 2005). Then in 2005 overseas students who studied at a “regional”¹⁰ university were given an extra five points in the Points Assessment Test taken by applicants for permanent residence as skilled migrants, in addition to the extra points they received for having an Australian qualification. The extent to which Chinese

⁹ The number of United States educational institutions authorized to admit foreign students fell from 77,000 before 9/11 to 7,000 after (*Migration News*, January 2005).

¹⁰ Defined as any place with fewer than 200,000 residents or a population growth rate less than half that of Australia as a whole over the last decade.

students see student migration as an initial preliminary stage in permanent migration to Australia is unknown at present, although it undoubtedly operates to some extent.

Another explanation of the upswing in Chinese student migration to Australia is that it forms part of an overall substantial increase in the numbers of Chinese students going overseas to study since 2000. Yao (2004, 10) explains that there were “big jumps in 2000 and 2001 and 2002 by an increase of 65 percent, 118 percent and 47 percent respectively, with a historic high of 125,000 starting their overseas studying life in 2002.” This was seen as being a function of several factors: the massive expansion in higher education within China (Migration News, January 2006); their improved economic status enabling people to fund their children to go abroad to study and thus avoid the drastic competition in domestic universities; the increased competitiveness in labour markets; the traditional value placed on education; increased Government support; and improved education promotion. It may also have been a mode of transferring illegal money for some. Yao (2004, 12) also points out that the numbers of Chinese students choosing to study in Japan fell because of the decline in the Japanese economy while the increasing teaching of English as a second language in China favoured students seeking to study in that medium.

A further factor, which undoubtedly explains the upturn in Chinese student migration to Australia, is the rise in recruitment activity of individual Australian educational institutions, as well as by the Australian government in China (Yao 2004, 15). Other factors may include a network effect—of students following relatives and friends who moved earlier—and an increased awareness that study in Australia is significantly cheaper than in the United States and several other OECD nations.

Turning to other temporary migration visa categories, the Temporary Business Visa category was introduced in 1996 and as the Department of Immigration and Migrant Affairs (2000, 48) points out:

The employer sponsored temporary business visas allow employers to fill skill shortages from overseas and assess new ideas, skills and technology. The visa holders tend to be highly skilled and have relatively high income levels and are therefore able to contribute to economic growth through improved productivity and increased demand for goods and services. The entry of managers and skilled specialists under these categories can also enhance Australia's ability to compete in international markets.

China is not as important an element among temporary business visitors as among students. Chinese are the seventh largest national group among long term temporary business visitors with visas allowing them to stay for up to four years. They accounted for 4 percent of the total such arrivals in 2003–04. On the other hand, Chinese were the largest group among short term temporary business visitors, accounting for 21 percent of the 298,839 business visas granted in 2003–04. This reflects the fact that there is very active and increasing interaction between China and Australia in trade. However the largest group of Chinese coming to Australia on visitor visas are predominantly tourists, although they also include short stay business people. In 2003–04 some 185,079 visitors came to Australia from China, making it the fifth largest source country.

The high level of skill among permanent and long term migrants from China is apparent in Table 7 (next page). Some 78.1 percent of permanent arrivals and 79.5 percent of long term arrivals were drawn from the top three occupational categories. One of the major developments of recent years has been the nexus between Chinese non-permanent migration, especially that of students, and eventual permanent settlement in Australia. In 2004–05, a total of 16,485 persons transferred

from student visas to permanent residency and the largest single group were those from China (3258 persons). It is apparent that many overseas students see their period of study in Australia as the first step in a process of eventual settlement in Australia.

Table 7: Australia: Occupation of Permanent and Long Term Arrivals of China-Born, 1997-98 to 2006-07

Source: DIAC unpublished data

Major Occupation Group	Settler Arrival		Long Term Arrival	
	No.	%	No.	%
Managers/Administrators	7,813	17.0	10,581	20.0
Professionals	24,552	53.3	22,873	43.3
Associate Professionals	4,408	9.6	7,168	13.6
Tradespersons & Related Workers	1,616	3.5	3,876	7.3
Advanced Clerical & Service Workers	856	1.9	911	1.7
Intermediate Clerical, Sales & Service Workers	3,956	8.6	4,018	7.6
Intermediate Production & Transport Workers	424	0.9	289	0.5
Elementary Clerical, Sales & Service Workers	2,135	4.6	2,869	5.4
Labourers & Related Workers	312	0.7	189	0.4
Total	46,072	100.0	52,774	100.0

With the recent massive increase in student migration from China to Australia, if the pattern of recent years is continued there will be a substantial increase in the numbers of Chinese students applying for permanent settlement in Australia. There are clear advantages to Australia in such a pattern, as the applicants for migration have an Australian qualification, familiarity with the Australian labour market, good English language, and experience of living in Australia. In an era of immigration policy being increasingly dominated by selection on the basis of skill and potential contribution to the Australian economy, there are strong indications that an increasing proportion of settlers to Australia will be drawn from successful temporary residents already in the country.

The flow of Chinese students to Australia may be dampened, however, by the changes in the General Skills Migration criteria in relation to overseas students applying onshore for permanent residence that were announced by the government in late 2007. Undoubtedly, the changes that made it easier to transition from a student visa to permanent residence were a major factor in the growth of Chinese student migration from 2000. However, it turned out (Birrell, Hawthorne and Richardson 2006) that students making this transition were experiencing difficulty successfully entering the labour market. In particular, poor English language facility was identified as a major issue, especially for Chinese students (Birrell 2006). Accordingly, students cannot now automatically move to permanent residence without having a high level of English ability and labour market experience.

The expansion of temporary migration is reflected in Figure 6 which shows that there has been an increase in the short term and long term movements between China and Australia. Figure 6 shows a rapid increase both in the numbers of Chinese residents making short term (duration less than one year) visits to Australia as well as in Australians moving in the other direction. Clearly, business and tourism

travel between the nations has increased, although the inflow of Chinese to Australia is somewhat greater than the outflow of Australians visiting China. The massive increase in short term movement between China and Australia is evident. The numbers of Chinese visitors to Australia have increased almost five times in the last decade. In 2005–06 Chinese were the fourth largest number of visitors to Australia (after the UK, USA and Japan). The numbers increased by over 5 percent in 2005–06. The rapid rise in the number of resident departures evident reflects not only the increased numbers of Australians travelling to China for tourism and business but also includes the rising number of China-born residents in Australia who travel frequently to their homeland. This is evident in Table 8, which shows the proportion of short term visitors to China that are made of Australian residents who are China-born. Over the last decade China-born residents of Australia have accounted for more than one-third of all short term (less than one year) visits of Australians to China. This is a clear demonstration of the way in which a diaspora can produce increased interaction between origin and destination country.

Table 8: Australia: Short Term Departures to China, 1994-95 to 2006-07

Source: DIAC unpublished data

	Short Term Resident Departures		
	Total	China-born	Percent
1994-95	47,979	19,455	40.5
1995-96	54,376	21,588	39.7
1996-97	58,837	22,772	38.7
1997-98	81,557	29,974	36.8
1998-99	81,818	33,948	41.5
1999-2000	86,344	33,558	38.9
2000-01	100,569	42,181	41.9
2001-02	NA	NA	NA
2002-03	117,911	46,266	39.2
2003-04	150,162	59,854	39.9
2004-05	214,165	75,237	35.1
2005-06	239,915	81,313	33.9
2006-07	268,524	90,266	33.6

As was discussed earlier, there has also been a substantial increase in the numbers of long term arrivals from China, with Figure 7 showing that the number has tripled since 2000. It is noteworthy that the number of long term visitor arrivals is significantly larger than the number of long term visitor departures. This is due to a number of things. First, the large increase in recent years means that many long term visitors are still in Australia since, by definition, they planned to stay longer than a year. Second, there is significant 'category jumping', because a significant number of long term visitors change status to permanent residency while in Australia, while there are others who may have left after spending less than twelve months there. Finally, some long term visitors leaving the country may wrongly be classified as short term visitors. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there has been an especially large uptake of temporary migration visas since 2000.

The numbers of Australian residents travelling on a long term basis to China has also increased although the numbers are only around 10 percent of those for long term visitors coming from China. They include Australians working in China but also China-born Australian residents who maintain strong relationships with both China and Australia.

Movement from Australia to China

There is a tendency for Australia to be categorised as purely a country of immigration but, in fact, it also sustains significant emigration. Figure 8 shows that, in recent years, departures on a long term or permanent basis have been very substantial in relation to the intake of immigrants. Former settlers, many of them returning migrants, have formed a major part of the outflow from Australia (Hugo et al. 2001). In 2005–06 permanent and long term departures (258,141) reached unprecedented levels, while the proportion which was Australia-born among the permanent departures reached its highest ever levels (55 percent).

Migration from Australia to China has also increased in recent years, as Figure 8 shows. The outflows were very small in the early 1990s, shortly after the Tiananmen Square incident, but doubled between 1998–99 and 2001–02, and again by 2005–06. The overseas-born dominate among the permanent departures, making up two-thirds of all departures. It is apparent that “settler loss” is an important part of this movement—that is, former settlers who have decided to return to their home county. Moreover, a significant number of Australia-born permanent departures would be the Australia-born dependent children of those settlers.

Settler loss has been an important feature of the post-war Australian migration scene, with around one-fifth of all post-war settlers subsequently emigrating from Australia, most of them returning to their home nation. There has been concern about this settler loss among policy makers (Hugo 1994), but it contains a number of components, including migrants who never intended to settle permanently in Australia as well as people who are influenced by family changes, are unable to adjust to life in Australia, etc. While the pattern of settler loss varies between birthplace groups (for instance, it is high among New Zealanders but low among Vietnamese), it has been a consistent feature of the post-war migration scene in Australia and the fluctuations in its numbers are very much related to earlier levels of immigration. With an increase in the skill profile in immigration we can expect an increase in settler loss, since skilled migrants have a greater chance of remigrating than Family migrants.

An indication of contemporary patterns of settler loss from Asian countries can be derived by comparing the birthplaces of permanent arrivals and departures to and from Australia. These data are presented in Table 9 (on next page). This table indicates that there are relatively high rates of return among settlers from more developed countries in Northeast Asia, especially from Japan (ABS 2001), and that there is a low rate of settler return among South Asian arrivals. The table shows that over the last decade permanent departures were equivalent to one-third of the settler arrivals. However, this exaggerates the return migration element since there also have been many China-born temporary residents who have gained permanent residency in Australia but are not included in the settler arrivals.

Table 9: Australia: Asian Country of Origin, Permanent Arrivals and Permanent Departures (Overseas and Australia-Born), 1994-95 to 2006-07

Source: DIAC unpublished data

Country of Origin	Settler Arrivals	Permanent Departures Overseas born	Permanent Departures Australia born	Permanent Departures	Permanent Departures as % of Arrivals
South East Asia					
Mainland					
Burma (Myanmar)	2,195	48	71	119	5.4
Cambodia	6,106	396	260	656	10.7
Laos	572	184	160	344	60.1
Thailand	17,814	3,809	3,976	7,785	43.7
Viet Nam	29,753	5,483	1,843	7,326	24.6
Maritime SE Asia					
Brunei	1,418	581	1,060	1,641	115.7
East Timor	116	102	112	214	184.5
Indonesia	29,848	6,232	5,037	11,269	37.8
Malaysia	30,602	3,467	3,571	7,038	23.0
Philippines	41,537	1,987	1,343	3,330	8.0
Singapore	45,062	10,725	16,071	26,796	59.5
Total South East Asia	205,023	33,014	33,504	66,518	32.4
North East Asia					
Chinese Asia					
China	83,253	19,156	6,222	25,378	30.5
Hong Kong	38,565	30,047	15,015	45,062	116.8
Macau	700	270	391	661	94.4
Mongolia	37	21	43	64	173.0
Taiwan	14,642	7,435	942	8,377	57.2
Japan & the Koreans					
Japan	9,272	4,202	5,253	9,455	102.0
Korea, Dem People' Rep	12	1	0	1	8.3
Korea, Rep of	10,640	3,446	913	4,359	41.0
Total North East Asia	157,121	64,578	28,779	93,357	59.4
Southern Asia					
Bangladesh	5,226	90	52	142	2.7
Bhutan	5	2	4	6	120.0
India	47,724	1,065	718	1,783	3.7
Maldives	35	31	99	130	371.4
Nepal	1,111	12	24	36	3.2
Pakistan	16,519	233	109	342	2.1
Sri Lanka	14,851	344	153	497	3.3
Afghanistan	1,420	44	36	80	5.6
Total Southern Asia	86,891	1,821	1,195	3,016	3.5
TOTAL ASIA	449,035	99,413	63,478	162,891	36.3

It is important to differentiate between emigration from Australia to China, on the one hand, and the emigration of the China-born on the other. Table 9 shows that in fact the number of China-born leaving Australia permanently is significantly larger than the number of overseas-born leaving Australia for China. This indicates that there is a significant flow of third country remigration among China-born settlers to Australia as well as return migration to the home country. This reflects an interesting pattern in some Asian migration to Australia, namely the onward migration to a third country following a “transit” stay in Australia. This was found to exist in a very interesting study of Indian Information Technology workers in Australia (Biao 2004). This study found a pattern of IT workers from India migrating to Australia, gaining permanent residency there but then seeking to move to the United States. However, Australia was seen as more than a means of getting to the United States. It was seen also as a form of insurance whereby workers who were not successful in the US, or who were victims of the collapse of the IT industry, could return to Australia rather than go back to India.

Table 9: Permanent Migration from Australia to China and of the China-Born, 2000-07

Source: DIAC unpublished data

Year	Total Permanent Departures to China		All China-born Permanent Departures
	Australia-born	Overseas-born	
2000-01	432	1,445	2,430
2001-02	527	1,506	2,424
2002-03	602	1,448	2,129
2003-04	723	1,166	3,126
2004-05	798	2,699	3,736
2005-06	1,031	2,921	3,893
2006-07	1,092	3,012	3,962

Part of the emigration flow from Australia to China is that of long term migrants. This includes both Chinese who came to Australia under a temporary residence visa and then returned home, but also an increasing number of Australians who gain work in the burgeoning Chinese economy as expatriate skilled workers.

Despite settler loss and remigration, the majority of Chinese permanent arrivals settle down in Australia. It is however still relatively early, in terms of high levels of migration to Australia, and return migration can be expected to increase in the future. Moreover, it is likely too that many of those involved will be “bi-national” to the extent that they maintain property, relationships, businesses, and connections both in China and in Australia. Furthermore, it is clear that a considerable amount of travel back to China on a temporary basis has been generated by the settlement of Chinese in Australia (Figure 6). This connection between settlers maintaining strong linkages with their home country is an important dimension in Australia’s future economic, social and political relationship with China.

Age Composition of China Migrants

Australia’s international migration program has increased the selectivity of

immigration over recent decades. For a long time, immigrants have been disproportionately concentrated in the young adult age groups and among the more skilled. The Points Assessment System, which most immigrants have to undergo before acceptance as settlers, ensures that this selectivity has been enhanced. As a result, Figure 9 shows that permanent arrivals from China are strongly concentrated in the young adult age groups. It is interesting to note, however, that women outnumber men in those age groups—a common pattern in much Asian migration to Australia. There are 101 female Chinese migrants to every 100 males. The dominance of young adults is even more pronounced among long term arrivals from China. This is to be expected, given the predominance of students in this group. There are 108 female long term arrivals from China for every 100 males. In addition, the long term arrivals are somewhat younger. While 75.1 percent of permanent arrivals from China are less than forty years of age, 85 percent of long term arrivals are older than this.

Turning to departures, different age–sex patterns are in evidence. Figure 10 shows that China-born departures are considerably older than their arrival counterparts. While 24.9 percent of permanent arrivals are aged over forty, some 56.8 percent of permanent departures are equally in this age group. The departures are also different in that males outnumber females, with only 92 females leaving for every 100 China-born males departing. The long term departures of the China-born are considerably older than the long term arrivals. Moreover there is a slight predominance of males with 97.9 females leaving for every 100 males.

Discussion of Trends

The increased significance of China is one of the most important recent trends in Australian international migration. This section discusses some of the implications of this increased movement. Clearly, the increased population movement is part of the globalisation process which is seeing a proliferation, intensification and diversification of interactions between nations. There are important interactions between migration and other forms of relations, as diasporic communities establish linkages with their home countries that become important conduits for flows of goods, ideas, money, and people. The exponential increase in Chinese migration to Australia has coincided with a spectacular increase in trade, as Figure 11 indicates. China has gone from being Australia’s twelfth largest export market in 1983 to its second largest, taking 12 percent of all Australian exports and especially of natural resources (Thirlwell 2007, 18). It is also now the largest single source of Australia’s imports (14 percent of the total). Of course this is very much associated with the remarkable expansion of the Chinese economy, but undoubtedly the presence of a growing Chinese community in Australia has also played a role.

There are also, as has been indicated earlier, linkages between different types of international movements. Thus Table 10 shows there are very high correlations

Table 10: Australia: Pearson Correlation Co-efficient Between Short Term Travel in and Out of Australia and the Size of Immigrant Communities, 2006

Source: ABS 2006 Census; DIAC unpublished data

Variables	Correlation Co-efficient(r)
Number of Short Term Visitor Arrivals	.555**
Number of Resident Short Term Departures	.556**

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level.

between the origins and destinations of short term visitor movement to and from Australia, on the one hand, and the size of the corresponding expatriate community in Australia, on the other. Obviously, the Chinese visit family and friends and maintain business contacts with their homelands. Moreover, they are in turn visited by family, friends and business colleagues from China. Undoubtedly, too, the increasingly close relationship of Australia with China has produced greater Australian tourist and business travel to China. A 2006 Lowy Institute public opinion poll, for instance, found that Australians view China almost as positively as they do the United States (Thirlwell 2007, 18).

This article has demonstrated the high skill level of permanent and long term migration of Chinese to Australia. This fact raises issues of brain drain and the loss of human capital in China. A distinctive feature of the Chinese policy, since the late 1970s, of encouraging students and scholars to further their professional development in foreign nations has been sustained efforts to ensure and encourage them to return to China (Iredale et al. 2003). The numbers of returned students were very small in the 1980s and early 1990s but, as Zweig (2006, 188) points out, there has been a "reverse tide" in operation since the mid-1990s, with the numbers coming back rising rapidly, although without an increase in the percentage returning. Certainly the Australian data presented here support this contention. Zweig also demonstrates that, despite a large number and levels of Government organisations actively promoting the return of scholars and students, the return wave has actually been associated with "political stability, improved housing, better business opportunities and a more vibrant private sector, more modern equipment and management procedures, higher salaries and special incentives" (Zweig 2006, 212-13). The term *Hai Gui*, meaning the returning sea turtles that were born onshore, grew up at sea but eventually returned to shore again, has been applied to this group (Wattanavitukul 2002). Zweig, Changgui and Rosen (2004) have shown that foreign PhDs are worth more than domestic PhDs, not only in terms of perceptions in China but in their ability to effect technology and capital transfer and bring benefits to China.

From China's perspective, it is important to establish the extent to which skilled Chinese coming to Australia intend to go back. Chinese are the leading birthplace group among temporary residents who apply for, and obtain, permanent residency in Australia. They are particularly prominent among students wishing to stay in Australia, and the nexus between student migration and eventually seeking permanent residence in Australia is a strong one. On the other hand, as this article has demonstrated, Chinese settlers in Australia show a greater propensity than many other Asian birthplace groups (e.g. Indians) to return to their home country.

Little is known about the future intentions of the new generation of Chinese migrants in Australia in regard to returning to China, remaining in Australia, or migrating to a third country. One small survey of 239 Chinese university academics in Australia indicated that there was considerable potential for return. Only 57 percent of the sample said they intend to remain permanently in Australia, although another 23.4 percent were undecided about where they would settle in the future. However, a substantial number have definite plans to move out of Australia at some stage. Moreover, some 29.2 percent of respondents indicated that they would go back to China if they were offered a good position. Hence, the potential for Chinese academics to be lured back to China appears to be significant.

What was also interesting in the study of Chinese academics was that, of those who indicated they would not stay in Australia, half envisaged they might move to another country, especially the United States or United Kingdom. This shows there is some indication of Australia being perceived as a stepping stone toward migration to North America and, to a lesser extent, to Europe. It is interesting that this has also been observed in Canada. DeVoretz (2005) has identified a pattern of "triangular" movement among the Chinese diaspora, which sees that movement as

a complex transnationalist model involving Canada, China and the rest of the world. This model would certainly seem to have relevance to the Australian academic context.

From an Australian perspective, China is a major source of skilled migrants at present; but is it also likely to remain so into the future? China's demography is changing rapidly and this may influence its role as a source country. China's low fertility levels will see fewer students moving into the university age groups, while the demand for skilled people within China's rapidly expanding economy (Altbach 2007) will increase. From an Australian perspective, there are issues at present with educational standards in China, especially the quality of graduates and their ability to speak English. But in the future, as Chinese university places grow, they are also likely to increase in quality: *The Times* Higher Education Supplement's list of the world's top 100 universities already includes two in China and three in Hong Kong (Altbach 2007, 53), suggesting that in future fewer students may have to travel abroad for a quality education.

Another important issue relates to the extent to which the rapid expansion of the Chinese diaspora in Australia is leading to an increase in the strength, diversity and intensity of networks between Australia and China. There has been an increase in interest in the role of diasporas in the development of origin countries (Global Commission on International Migration 2005; United Nations 2006; World Bank 2006), for they act as conduits for the flow of money, innovations, ideas, and goods back to the home country. Diaspora is a very old concept, and migrants have maintained links with their homelands over thousands of years. However, in a globalising world, immigrants can develop and maintain these linkages with a new intensity and immediacy for a number of reasons. First, the revolution in information communication technology has meant that, whereas migrants previously kept in contact with their homeland through letters, they now regularly (daily, weekly) telephone or email family and friends in the homeland. Moreover, the internet means migrants can keep up with events in the homeland through reading newspapers and other media at the same time as their homeland-based counterparts. Second, the reduction of the real cost of and time involved in international travel means that regular visits in both directions are feasible, and at times of family emergency individuals can be readily assembled. Last, because of the foregoing and the rise of globalisation, it is increasingly possible to be genuinely 'bi-national', meaning that individuals can lead active economic and social lives in both origin and destination countries.

There is a growing appreciation in the development literature that "a highly skilled diaspora may play several important roles in promoting development at home" (Lucas 2001). Lucas (2001, 22) has shown how professionals in origin and destination countries have maintained strong linkages, so that ideas flow freely in both directions. In the scientific world, flows of information are of utmost significance and diaspora may play a real role in technology transfers. The potential for such interaction to accelerate diffusion of new ideas, products, processes, etc. is considerable. Undoubtedly, the ethnic linkages between Silicon Valley and Taiwan and India have had a major impact on IT development in the two Asian countries (Saxenian 1999). There has also been increased recognition of the considerable potential for linking expatriate researchers and scientists with colleagues in their home countries to facilitate knowledge transfer and the development of tertiary research and teaching organisation in the home nation (Meyer and Brown 1999).

One of the strongest findings of the survey of Australian Chinese Academics was what strong links they maintained with China (see Table 12 over page). Nearly half the sample (43.1 percent) contacted China several times a week, while 72.3 percent visited China at least once a year. In addition, half of the respondents (51.4 percent) were involved in active joint research projects with colleagues in China, and half of these projects received at least some funding from Chinese sources.

Hence, there are strong professional linkages being maintained by Chinese academics in Australia with their homeland. Indeed, the great majority of respondents (84.7 percent) indicated that they would like to have a joint position between Australia and China.

Table 12 shows the main linkages that were maintained by respondents with their homeland. The most frequent link is visiting with family in China (85.7 percent) but there are also high proportions involved in collaborative research with Chinese colleagues (80.8 percent) and making regular visits to those colleagues (80.6 percent). Other important contacts relate to running courses or seminars in China, training Chinese students, giving academic papers in China and, to a lesser extent, editing books with Chinese scholars or undertaking consulting work in China. Few had commercial relations with companies involved in China, however. Individual respondents had a range of special linkages with China: some hold adjunct positions in Chinese universities; others have set up joint China–Australia programmes; still others serve on advisory committees to the Chinese government in Beijing.

Table 11: Australian Chinese Academic Study: Linkages with Mainland China
Source: 2006 Survey (N=239)

Link	%
Running Seminars and mini courses in China	61.0
Training Chinese students in Australia	51.5
Editing book with Chinese Scholar	19.5
Collaborative research with Chinese scholars	65.6
Give academic paper in China	59.5
Consultancy work in China	24.6
Have regular visits with colleagues in China	69.0
Have regular visits with family in China	84.4
Have commercial interests in China	3.9

It is likely that similar connections are maintained by other skilled Chinese with their homeland. Clearly the potential for them to regularly to interact with colleagues in China—both through temporary visits and virtually through information communications technology—is huge. There has been an increasing recognition in the literature that the existence of a diaspora of researchers, scientists and technologists can provide a “brain gain option” without returning to their home nation, since they can act as avenues for technology transfers, information spread and training of people in their home country (Barre, Hernandez, Meyer and Vinck 2003, Meyer *et al.* 1997, Meyer 2001a and b, Meyer *et al.* 2001). Indeed, China has adopted administrative means in order to encourage such networking (Biao 2006).

The potential of “virtual return”, through the use of modern information and communication technology, has led to a significant change in China’s official policy toward the highly skilled people in its diaspora. Wescott (2005) has noted that the policy has changed from *huiuo fuwu* (“return and serve the motherland”) to *weiguo fuwu* (“serve the motherland”), in recognition of the increasing ability of the diaspora to deliver benefits to the homeland while remaining abroad. Accordingly current policy is based on a ‘dumb bell’ model as depicted in Figure 12.

Conclusion

Australia's immigration has undergone parametric change in the last decade (Hugo 1999). The first sweeping shift was the transformation of the national Immigration Program from being one dominated by permanent settlement to one where each year several hundred thousand people are granted a visa to live and work on a temporary basis in Australia. The second was the increasing workforce/economic orientation of the program, so that skill, education, Australian qualifications, ability to speak English, and local work experience became the dominant criteria in selecting both settlers and temporary migrants. A third and related element has been the increasing share of Australian settlement which has involved "onshore" migration, whereby temporary residents are granted permanent residency. While these changes were occurring, China became Australia's largest provider of immigrants whose main language was not English (meaning that only the United Kingdom and New Zealand are more significant).

Even if Chinese tertiary student numbers might flatten in the medium term, as this article has demonstrated there are several reasons why China is set to become an even more significant source of migrants in the near future. First, Australia is currently expanding its immigration intake in response to a perceived shortage of skilled workers. Second, Chinese use the family reunion component of the immigration program more than most other birthplace groups so that increases in skilled migration will have a significant multiplier effect in family migration. Third, China-born immigrants are now the largest Asia origin group in Australia and one of the most rapidly expanding, so that the various professional, family and other social networks that link Australia and China are developing, as will movement along those linkages. Fourth, the fact that China is now also the largest origin for full fee paying foreign students in Australia in a context where the Australian Government has increased the number of programs whereby foreigners with Australian experience get preference in the immigration programme. For example, extra points in the Points Assessment Scheme are given if people have Australian qualifications. Recently, too, overseas students who study at regional Australian universities have been given additional preference. Finally, other linkages between China and Australia are expanding such as trade, business and tourism so that information flows are also increasing as well as population exchanges.

Taken together, this all suggests that Australia has become an important constituent element of the Chinese southern diaspora, and that it will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

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