



## Population Review needs to be balanced and sensitive to community cohesion says Settlement Services International

Settlement Services International (SSI) welcomes NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian's appointment of an expert panel to develop a population policy for NSW, especially if it brings balance, fact and data on Australia's migration program and ensures Australia's successful multicultural social fabric and community cohesion are not undermined. The panel will consider "the current rate of population growth and infrastructure pipeline" and "how long is needed for infrastructure to catch up with population growth rates". In her announcement (link:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/your-government/the-premier/media-releases-from-the-premier/nsw-launches-first-population-review/>), the Premier renewed her call for net overseas migration levels to return to more sustainable Howard-era rates until a proper population policy is put in place. She said, "It is becoming increasingly clear that the current high rates of population growth are putting even more pressure on our infrastructure." A "Howard era" benchmark — when NSW's net migration averaged at 45,000 people per year under the Howard government — would require halving the current levels, which have averaged above 100,000 for the past two years. SSI CEO Violet Roumeliotis said, "Discussions about levels of immigration are essential in an inclusive and democratic country like Australia, however we do not want to compromise our successful multicultural cohesion by focusing only on impacts to planning and infrastructure." Ms Roumeliotis said while Ms Berejiklian believed, "NSW's economic success is attracting a far greater share of total immigrant numbers than it has in the past" she also needed to acknowledge that much of that economic success could be attributed to the migrant population. She said, "Migration has clear economic and social benefits for Australia. Australia's migration levels prevented our economy going into a technical recession after the World Financial Crisis. "The Productivity Commission Inquiry Report Migrant Intake into Australia (2016) found that with net migration at the historic average rate, GDP per person is projected to increase by some 7% relative to zero net overseas migration by 2060." Ms Roumeliotis said there were planning pressures in any big city but "we must remember that migrants come to Australia with high levels of social and economic capital and a strong willingness to contribute and, further, have shaped modern Australia since World War II." She said SSI supported the Productivity Commission's recommendation that, in determining migrant intake, the Australian government should give greater consideration to the implications for planning and investment and that State and Territory governments should develop detailed infrastructure plans that are consistent with population growth. She said SSI also agreed with the Productivity Commission's recommendations that the Australian government: develop and articulate a population policy, and calibrate the size of the annual migrant intake according to that population policy; and in determining the migration intake, give greater consideration to planning and investment in infrastructure. However, Ms Roumeliotis said, "Planning of population levels and infrastructure should involve all levels of government and other stakeholders, including industry and employer bodies, education and training providers, other service providers, academia, planners and representatives of relevant migrant and other community groups." Settlement Services International have co-hosted the International Metropolis Conference held this week in Sydney.

[www.metropolis2018.org.au](http://www.metropolis2018.org.au) [www.ssi.org.au](http://www.ssi.org.au) NOTES TO EDITORS For more information and interviews with Violet Roumeliotis, please contact: Stephen Webb | [swebb@ssi.org.au](mailto:swebb@ssi.org.au) | 0488 684 163

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