

THE AUSTRALIAN

Populate and perish should be the new mantra

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My generation grew up with the mantra “populate or perish”. A big population would keep us safe from invasion. We did not understand that the world’s resources are limited and we should not pollute our planet faster than it can naturally recover.

Fortunately, we are challenging the populate or perish mantra. Peta Credlin (“We need to talk about immigration policy”, 22/7) correctly points out that high immigration does not necessarily mean economic growth, particularly wage growth. Environmentalists question the wisdom of crowding ever more people on to the planet given we each have an environmental footprint.

The third point worth making is that all the countries in the world that enjoy very high standards of living, as well as being egalitarian (with the less fortunate caught by a safety net), have very low populations. By my count, those countries number about 20, are mostly in Europe, plus Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Once the population gets too big, like in the UK, France or in the US, all sorts of social problems come to the fore. In particular, a substantial class of seriously underprivileged citizens live poorly. In the very large countries by population, such as India, Indonesia, South Africa, and Bangladesh, the masses live in abject poverty.

Ian Morison, Forrest, ACT

Once again, Peta Credlin tells it like it is. We need to cut our immigration numbers and select people who are tradesmen, not university graduates. As Credlin says we need plumbers, carpenters and other trades. We need to teach the young there is no stigma in not being a university graduate. Tradesmen these days are well paid and generally in demand. The snobbery of Treasury and others looking for university graduates is reminiscent of the antics of Sir Humphrey Appleby in Yes Minister, who considered blue collar workers beneath contempt and undeserving. No one should be brought into the country who cannot contribute or has some trade skills to offer.

Lex Neander, Boronia, Vic

Every day is a good day with The Australian, but now Thursday is especially good because we have Peta Credlin. Credlin and Judith Sloan have written comprehensively about the negatives of large immigration, but there is one point Credlin has not touched on and that is, should we be allowing migrants from countries who may not be allies in the future? It's all very well to say that migrants, once here, would help to defend us, but, as history has shown, that's not always the case. The principle of the Trojan Horse may be valid.

We must be able to say who and how many migrants we want in our country, or do we no longer live in a democracy?

Lesley Beckhouse, Queanbeyan, NSW

The trouble with advocating a reduction in immigration numbers is the mental laziness or disingenuousness in some who disagree with that view. The attitude is somewhat akin to many who couldn't argue cogently for same-sex marriage and who resorted to the easy option of calling their opponents names such as "homophobe" and "bigot". In a similar way those who suggest that immigration numbers be decreased have often been called "racist" by those with little arguing skill and who forget that the White Australia policy was largely abolished before Gough Whitlam came to power. It's refreshing that in recent years such humbug has been increasingly called out by some commentators, but the ever-present threat of political correctness and cancel culture requires us to be eternally vigilant.

David Morrison, Springwood, NSW

I'm sure I won't be the only reader dashing to my keyboard to say "hear, hear" in response to Peta Credlin's column calling for a proper debate about future immigration levels. As Credlin says, the present hiatus in immigration flows, caused by our temporary border closures, gives us a timely and golden opportunity to have the public discussion that for too long has been denied us, about what the size and make-up of our future immigration inflow should be. The fact that lower immigration levels would have an upward impact on wages probably counts for less – in public opinion – than the detrimental effect that our soaring immigration numbers since the Howard era are having on public amenity, social cohesion, housing affordability and urban congestion.

Peter Austin, Mount Victoria, NSW