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**LIBERALS AND NATIONALS' AUSTRALIA-FIRST MIGRATION PLAN: CUT
THE NUMBERS, RAISE THE STANDARDS**

The Liberals and Nationals will deliver the largest cut to immigration in Australian history to deliver more homes for Australians, take pressure off frontline services, and protect our way of life.

We will take back control of our migration system to make it work for Australia by bringing in the right people in the right numbers, with a laser focus on the skills Australia needs.

A Taylor-Canavan Government will cut net overseas migration to 100,000, reduce the stock of temporary visa holders by around 650,000 over four years, and deliver a budgetneutral outcome.

Since Anthony Albanese was elected, Labor has brought around 1.5 million additional people to Australia, roughly the population of Adelaide. Every year Anthony Albanese has been in power, net overseas migration has been higher than Labor said it would be.

Now, one in ten people living in Australia is on a temporary visa. This is unsustainable.

The scale and speed of Labor's migration surge has changed our way of life. It is putting enormous pressure on housing, infrastructure, roads, schools and hospitals, and is making it harder for Australians to buy their own home.

Labor has lost control of our borders and broken the integrity of our migration system. On their watch, people smugglers are back in business, convicted criminals are being released into our communities, and Australians are facing the ongoing threat of Islamist extremism.

Under Labor, the numbers have been too high and the standards have been too low. We will change both.

The Liberals and Nationals have fixed Labor's migration mess before, and will fix it again.

The Liberals and Nationals' Plan will reduce net overseas migration to 100,000 a year for the first two years, before levelling out at around 160,000 in year four. It will reduce the stock of temporary visa holders by around 650,000 over four years, while keeping the permanent skilled migration program capped at 185,000 places a year.

In the longer term, the cap on the permanent program could be reduced if necessary to keep migration below housing completions according to the Coalition's Migration and Housing Pledge.

The result will be a much smaller migration program that is better aligned with Australia's capacity to house and support new arrivals, while bringing in the skills Australia needs.

Cut the numbers

As stated in the Budget-in-Reply, our Housing and Migration Pledge caps immigration below the number of homes constructed each year – but immigration will need to be significantly lower than this initially to make rapid progress in closing Labor's housing and infrastructure shortfalls.

At 100,000 per year, net overseas migration would be the lowest outside the pandemic since 2004, and around the sustained level of the late 1990s. After four years, the Plan would maintain the migration rate as a share of the population below the average under the Howard Government.

A Liberal and Nationals government will reduce the stock of temporary migrants by around 650,000 over four years – around a third of “core” temporaries (a measure excluding visitors and New Zealanders).

We will abolish Temporary Graduate Visas and reduce international student migration by restricting most secondary applicants, which are expected to reduce the share of foreign students in higher education to below 25 per cent. Students completing PhDs, studying health or education, or studying at regional universities will have access to post-study transitional visas.

Australia welcomes students from overseas to study for a period of time, not to stay permanently. But around half of international students are still living in Australia ten years after starting their studies. This will end under a Liberal and Nationals government.

We will cut international student commencements to 240,000.

The plan will also halve the humanitarian intake to 10,000 places a year, with the flexibility to respond to emerging needs as under previous Coalition governments.

A Taylor-Canavan Government will reverse Labor’s ballot system and caps for second- and third-year Working Holiday Maker visa extensions.

We will instead differentiate between Working Holiday Makers in regional and nonregional areas by raising visa fees with an exemption for regional areas.

There will be no changes to family reunion visas under the Plan.

Raise the standards

Labor has driven an explosion in temporary migration, with almost a million additional temporary migrants brought to Australia on its watch. We will end this “guest worker” model.

We will bring in higher-skilled migrants who better meet Australia’s needs. This means prioritising skilled migration, including skilled partners and employer-sponsored applicants who meet high-quality criteria for income, age, English and full-time work.

We will open up the Specialist stream of the Skills in Demand Visa, helping bring in up to 5,000 more highly skilled workers each year, and create 15,000 Skilled Project Visas each year for major projects, with workers tied to a defined project and period to plug workforce shortages.

We will also protect regional migration programs supporting agriculture, health, tourism and hospitality, ensuring migration is targeted where Australia has genuine workforce needs.

Take back control

A temporary visa should mean temporary. Australia is a home, not a hotel. We will strengthen the rules governing who can stay in Australia and for how long.

We will require second and subsequent temporary visa applications to be made offshore, reducing visa hopping and helping ensure temporary visas remain genuinely temporary. Second- and third-year Working Holiday Makers will continue to be able to reapply onshore.

This will virtually eliminate bridging visas.

Onshore protection visa applicants will be required to apply within 30 days, while merits review will be removed for adverse character decisions, temporary visa refusals and offshore applicants.

The Department of Home Affairs will also be tasked to identify and curtail where international students are currently violating visa restrictions on their permitted work hours (e.g. via work in the gig economy, or via registering for ABNs to enable them to disguise additional work hours).

These measures are designed to strengthen the integrity of the migration system, and reduce opportunities to move repeatedly between temporary visas.

Fix the economy

The Plan is designed to reduce migration while improving the skills mix, rather than simply cutting numbers without regard to the economic consequences.

Temporary Graduate Visa holders pay, on average, less than one-third of the tax of a skilled visa holder. Put simply, for every one higher-skilled migrant we bring in, we can cut three lower-skilled migrants from the numbers without worsening the Budget.

The Coalition has worked closely with the Parliamentary Budget Office to assess the impact of the package on the budget. On this basis, the Coalition estimates that the package will generate a small positive budget impact of around \$260 million over four years.

As per usual practice, the package will be included in the Liberals and Nationals costings released prior to the next election, once any further policy or NOM forecast changes by the Government are known.

These measures form the next tranche of the Liberal and Nationals' migration policy, following the Australian Values Migration Plan, which committed to removing 77,000 unlawful non-citizens, the Migration and Housing Pledge, and reserving welfare and the NDIS for citizens.

Opposition Leader Angus Taylor said Australia needed a migration system that worked for Australians and for the economy.

"Under Labor, the numbers have been too high, and the standards have been too low. This has been a disaster for Australia," Mr Taylor said.

"A Liberals and Nationals Government I lead will deliver a migration program which puts Australians first.

"We need skilled migration, not mass migration. We will prioritise migrants with the skills Australia needs, who share our values and are committed to contributing to our country.

"This is about building the nation we want Australia to be. A fair system that puts our national interest first, that Australians can have confidence in, and that migrants can be proud of.

"Migration should strengthen our economy, fill critical skills gaps and help build a better Australia. It should not put further pressure on housing and essential services or leave Australians worse off."

Senator Matt Canavan said Australia needs a migration system that puts Australian workers first, not one that relies on mass migration.

"Labor has let too many people into our country. Labor's mass migration has pushed down wages, hurt living standards and led to a temporary guest worker class that is eroding our social harmony," Senator Canavan said.

"It is unAustralian to rely on cheap, foreign labour to boost our economic performance like Labor is doing. We will restore the traditional, Australian approach to migration which targets the skills we need without undermining a fair go for Australian workers."

Shadow Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration Senator Jonno Duniam said the plan would restore discipline and integrity to the temporary migration system.

"A temporary visa should mean temporary. The system has become too easy to game, too easy to roll from one visa to another and too hard for the government to control," Senator Duniam said.

“We are restoring discipline to the system so Australia decides who comes, how long they stay and whether they are filling a genuine need. That is how you rebuild confidence in migration.”

Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Senator Jane Hume said Australia’s migration program must deliver the skills the country needs and a stronger economy for Australians.

“Under our Australia-First Migration Plan, we will prioritise skilled migration to ensure it meets our most critical needs.

“This will maximise the quality of applicants and the economic contribution of the migration program to our country.

“Our changes will lift productivity, real wages and living standards by boosting skills, encouraging workforce training and easing pressure on infrastructure, schools and hospitals”, Senator Hume said.

Additional measures:

The Liberals and Nationals will raise the standards by increasing the share of skilled migrants and directing migration towards areas of genuine need. This includes:

- allowing more highly paid people to access the Specialist Skills stream;
- within the permanent program, prioritising high-quality eligibility criteria such as age, income, full-time work, and English language proficiency, as well as skilled partners;
- revising the temporary skilled priority list;
- establishing a strike force to clear the backlog of skilled construction applications to address workforce shortages;
- doubling the Talent and Innovation allocation to 7,000 places, through a new AUKUS and Five Eyes visa;
- linking each student visa to the enrolling institution;
- replacing the regional permanent program with Ministerial Directions prioritising employer-sponsored applications in regional Australia;
- revising the regional definitions for the WHM program’s extension requirements; and
- introducing a new Agriculture Visa from 2030.

Many of the major changes can be implemented quickly using existing ministerial powers, including changes to Temporary Graduate Visas, student secondary applicants, offshore temporary visa applications and the new Skilled Project Visa.

Migration must work for Australia, our economy, our communities and the skills our country needs. Migrants should want to be Australians, not just live here, but share our

aspirations and our way of life. The Liberals and Nationals' Australia-First Migration Plan will cut the numbers, raise the standards and put Australia's national interest first.

The Plan forms part of our broader plan to Fix the Economy and Protect Our Way of Life, with Lower Taxes, Cheaper Power, Less Migration and More Homes, while putting Australians first. Further policies will also be released to lift domestic skills and labour supply.

Background:

Net Overseas Migration under the policy:

2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32
100,000	100,000	130,000	160,000

Change in temporary visa holders under the policy:

	2025-26	2031-32 (f/c)	Change
Student	528,800	456,200	-72,600
Temporary Graduate	271,200	10,000	-261,200
Temporary Resident (Other Employment)	60,700	58,000	-2,700
Temporary Resident (Skilled Employment)	260,600	321,000	60,400
Project visas	-	45,000	45,000
Working Holiday Maker	225,600	202,000	-23,700
Bridging & Temporary Protection	414,700	20,000	-394,700
Other Temporary	4,600	4,400	-200
Temporary visas, core measure	1,766,200	1,116,600	-649,700
NZ	731,600	776,600	45,000
Visitor	296,600	314,900	18,200
Crew and Transit	12,800	13,600	800
Temporary visas, all	2,807,200	2,221,700	-585,700

Note: Around two thirds of the reduction in core temporaries is expected to flow through to net overseas migration over the forecast period; data may not sum to totals due to rounding.

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