

<http://feeds.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-massey-university-conference-quotpathways-metropolis-21st-century-immigration-issues>. Accessed 24 October 2012

Nathan Guy

24 OCTOBER, 2012

Speech to the Massey University conference "Pathways to Metropolis in the 21st Century: Immigration Issues and Futures"

Good morning and thank you for giving me the opportunity of opening your Conference today.

As you know this conference receives funding from the Labour and Immigration Research Centre at the Ministry of Business, innovation and Employment.

So I want to focus today on some of their research and how it helps shape Government policy and thinking. This research is very important to us as we work to increase the contribution that immigration makes to New Zealand's economy and society.

Immigration creates jobs by encouraging innovation, deepening our links with international markets and providing the capital and skills we need for growth.

In this increasingly competitive world we need to redouble our efforts to attract the skills and investment New Zealand needs by targeting the right people, and by working with employers to identify, attract and retain migrants with the skills we need.

Before I go on it's worth pausing a moment to look at some facts and figures around immigration:

- New migrants contribute an estimated \$1.9 billion a year to New Zealand's economy
- one in four New Zealand workers is a migrant
- one in three Auckland workers are migrants.

Fortunately, most of them seem to be enjoying life here. More than 80 percent of recent migrants are satisfied or very satisfied with life in New Zealand, almost nine in ten recent migrants would recommend New Zealand to friends and family and almost three quarters of recent migrants want to stay permanently in New Zealand.

Of those migrants who were approved for residence between 1998 and 2011, nearly three-quarters have remained in New Zealand since taking up residence.

Most migrants who come to New Zealand tend to settle in the Auckland region. The last census showed that about 60 percent of adult migrants who'd arrived in New Zealand since 1996 lived in central or south Auckland and that the concentration of recent migrants in Auckland and south Auckland was increasing.

We've been interested in why migrants decide to settle in New Zealand and why they choose the regions they do. Last year the Labour and Immigration Research Centre published the results of a study of migrants who decided to move to Auckland.

The results of the *Why Auckland?* Study are not surprising in that the ability to find work emerged as the key determining factor in choosing to settle in Auckland.

As one migrant from the UK noted "In terms of employment ... there's more variety in Auckland than there is in any other centre in New Zealand."

Statistics New Zealand's recent population projections indicate that Auckland will continue to be New Zealand's fastest-growing region, and account for 60 percent of the country's population growth over the next 20 years.

Natural increase (births minus deaths) is projected to account for two-thirds of Auckland's growth, and net migration (arrivals minus departures) the remaining one-third.

Over the coming years we will face challenges in tackling the projected increase in population, not only in Auckland, but in the wider Pacific. The youth populations of Pacific countries, especially those in Melanesia, are expected to grow rapidly over the next two decades and this will pose challenges to policymakers and politicians in New Zealand and Australia.

Attracting high-quality migrants

We need to be innovative and flexible in our policies to attract the people we want to come and live in New Zealand.

The New Zealand Now website has been a crucial part of Immigration New Zealand's marketing activity for several years. This year the site has been redeveloped, making use of videos featuring migrants telling their own stories, and uses technology to send targeted messages to people depending on the part of the world they are viewing the site from.

The New Zealand Now database contains the details of over 175,000 people from around the world, with around 1,000 potential new migrants entering the pool every week.

More migrants are approved for residence in New Zealand under the Skilled Migrant Category than any other immigration category, making up half of all

approvals. So it's worth looking at how migrants in this category fare three years after taking up residence.

Our research found that in the medium term, migrants who were granted residence with a job offer earn at least as much as those who were already employed in New Zealand at the time of application.

The research also showed that migrants with higher qualifications are rewarded with significantly higher earnings, suggesting they've managed to successfully use their skills in their jobs in New Zealand. For instance, those with a degree earned a third more than the few skilled migrants with no post-school qualification.

The research includes a number of recommendations which could simplify the points system for this category. We'll be taking a good look at the recommendations to see what changes need to be made.

Much of our research also shows, perhaps not surprisingly, that English language skills are hugely important when it comes to outcomes for new migrants, both economically and socially.

Christchurch rebuild

Of course the Canterbury rebuild is a major focus for me as Minister of Immigration.

I was a little surprised to see Labour Leader David Shearer calling for Immigration New Zealand to give first priority to local workers in the rebuild of Christchurch.

As I'm sure most of you know, this is exactly what is happening right now.

Our first priority is always jobs for New Zealanders. But at the same time, given the scale of the rebuild, there is no doubt we will need some overseas workers to help as well.

Mr Shearer said he would "raise the threshold" so that businesses need to prove they've engaged with WINZ and Industry Training Organisations before they get approval to bring in migrant workers.

Again, this is exactly what happens now. Work visas are only granted if New Zealanders are not available to fill jobs, and Immigration New Zealand undertake a variety of tests to establish this.

Often there is consultation with relevant unions and guilds as well, and recruitment efforts by the employers are also taken into account.

Earlier this month I announced a new Canterbury Skills and Employment Hub, along with Minister of Social Development Paula Bennett.

This will be a one-stop shop for employers to list vacancies and recruit from Work and Income, the various rebuild training programmes, or where needed - to bring in skilled labour from overseas.

For Labour market tested visas, there is a strict requirement that pay and conditions are at the New Zealand market rate.

As you would expect in a tougher labour market, “approvals in principle” have reduced by 40% in the last few years.

We have a range of other policies to help the Canterbury region get back on its feet. Earlier this year I announced an extension of work rights to English language students who attend quality education providers in Canterbury.

Under this 18 month trial, students in Canterbury will be eligible to work 20 hours per week provided they are studying an English Language programme of at least 14 weeks duration or a Level 4 Foundation Certificate of one academic year’s duration.

The export education sector in Christchurch has taken a major hit because of the effects of the earthquakes, yet this pragmatic move is designed to boost the number of international students attracted to Christchurch. It will also have the potential to boost the economy as a result of the increase in student numbers choosing to call the city home.

I’m confident that the recent changes to the Study to Work policies will enable higher level students who stay in New Zealand to be better positioned to take up skilled employment.

The aim of these changes is to encourage students to study for longer and to a higher level, thereby increasing export education revenue and other benefits to New Zealand. International graduates with New Zealand degrees or higher level qualifications have significantly better labour market outcomes than graduates who received diplomas or certificates here. We need to target these skilled migrants because New Zealand’s long-term prosperity depends on it.

Family policy changes

One of the bigger changes in immigration policy I’ve announced this year is around family policies.

My priority as Minister is to maximise the economic value that immigration delivers to New Zealand, and these changes help achieve that.

They will be an important tool in attracting and retaining skilled migrants, while at the same time eventually saving the taxpayer around \$40 million a year.

We want to ensure that the focus remains on giving priority to migrants who can make a real contribution to New Zealand.

As you know, there will be a new two-tier process for the parents of New Zealand citizens and residents who want to migrate here. Applications from parents who have higher income sponsors, or who bring a guaranteed income or funds, will be processed faster than other applications.

As a result, many skilled migrants who have residence here can sponsor their parents and will receive a quicker decision with less red tape.

You will have got the picture now that we are very focused on attracting migrants who will bring the most economic benefits to New Zealand.

Mass arrivals

Another big issue for me this year has been the potential of illegal mass arrivals in New Zealand.

Recently I've introduced legislation into Parliament as part of a package of measures to deter people smugglers, and make sure that New Zealand is prepared for such arrivals. We want to make it clear that New Zealand is not a soft touch, and discourage the dangerous and cruel business of people smuggling.

Any journey by boat to New Zealand is likely to be extremely dangerous, putting the lives of men, women and children at risk.

New Zealand has been lucky so far in that no boats have reached our shores, despite some indicating they wished to. Distance has protected us, but this is no reason for complacency.

In 2010 a boat carrying nearly 500 asylum seekers reached Canada. If they can make it that far, they can certainly reach New Zealand.

The recent Exercise Barrier on Auckland harbour showed us what a major operation it would be dealing with such an arrival.

All of the legal advice we have indicates that the Bill is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights, and upholds our international obligations in terms of considering refugee and protection claims.

Refugee resettlement

As a Government, we remain strongly committed to supporting new refugees and helping them adapt to life in New Zealand. New Zealand is proud of its contribution over the years. Our commitment began in 1944 with the resettlement of young Polish refugees, and since then around 33,330 refugees have had the chance to build a better life here.

We want better outcome for everyone who moves and settles here and that includes refugees. There are many success stories about refugees who move here and make a major contribution to New Zealand, but we know there is always room for improvement.

Refugees have told us many times that first and foremost they need work so overcoming barriers to employment is a strong focus for us.

The Government's election manifesto contains a commitment to roll out a whole-of-government strategy that will support refugees to become self-sufficient and reduce dependency on state support. I took the strategy to my

Cabinet colleagues earlier in the year, and I will make a further announcement on the plan later this year.

We know that former refugees have a strong sense of identity and belonging to New Zealand and almost all were satisfied with their life in New Zealand. They have a strong desire to seek meaningful employment and contribute to life in New Zealand, but employment is still the main area of challenge.

Conclusion

I want to finish by thanking you again for giving me the opportunity to talk to you and reiterating the importance of quality research in shaping policies which will benefit New Zealand and contribute in a positive way to our economy.