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## **Trans-Tasman Migration**

There is a history of people movement across the Tasman Sea since the establishment of Sydney in 1788. Historically the flow has been both ways, and is more a form of shifting than overseas migration. Until the 1960s more people moved from Australia to New Zealand than vice versa. This trend changed from 1967. Since then significantly more people have moved from New Zealand to Australia than have migrated from Australia to New Zealand.

From the late 1960s the traditional pattern became a cycle of peak net outflows to Australia towards the end of every decade, in 1969, 1979, 1989, 2000, and 2009, with a further peak in 2012 contributed by the Christchurch earthquakes. (See Figure 1, page 2.)

Figure 1 suggests that the latest wave of migration across the Tasman is slowing, with falling net permanent and long-term departures to Australia since the peak in 2012. Conversely, the flow from Australia to New Zealand has remained remarkably steady since the late 1970s.

So dramatic has this wave pattern been that New Zealanders have become the second largest migrant group in Australia in the twenty-first century while a significant proportion of New Zealanders now live there. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that for every 100 New Zealanders in New Zealand there are 15 New Zealand-born people living in Australia. This was before the Canterbury earthquakes, which prompted another wave of departures soon after the traditional end-of-decade cycle.

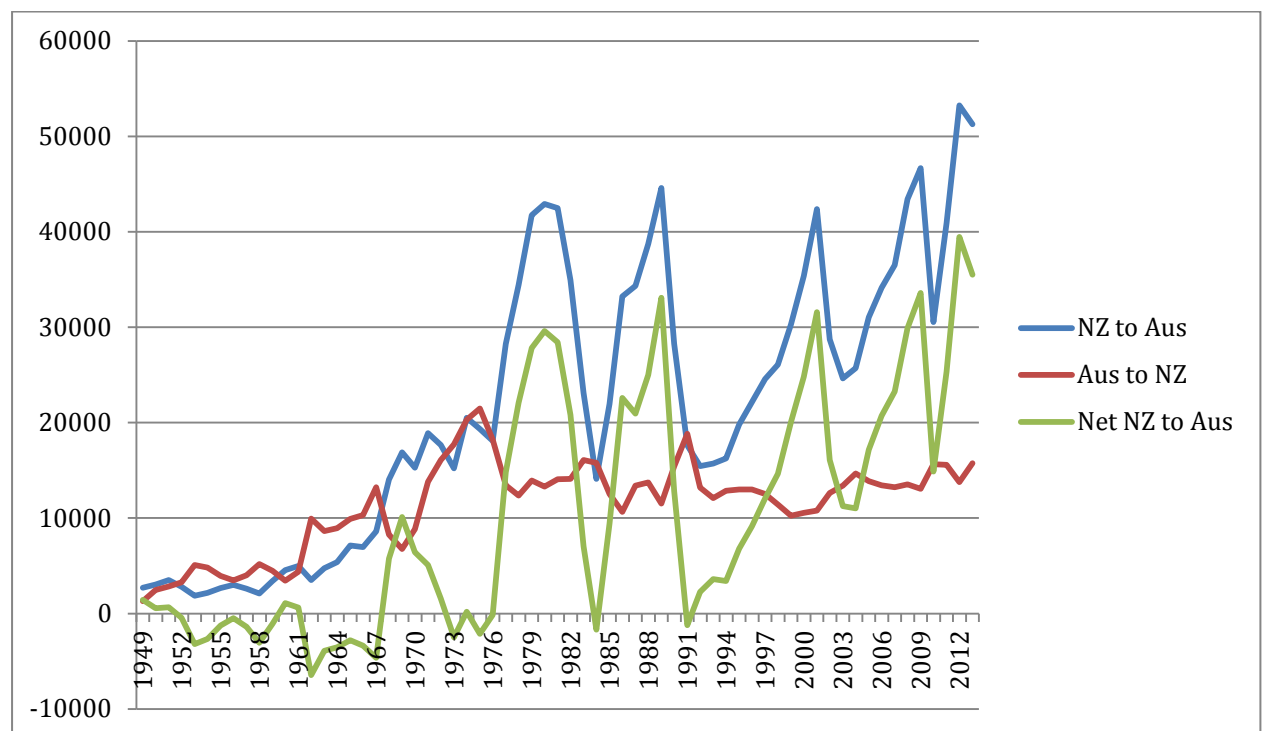
There is considerable churn in the trans-Tasman migration flow. In the past 40 years 1,248,697 people moved from New Zealand to Australia. Conversely, 575,169 people have either migrated or returned to New Zealand, producing a net outflow to Australia of 673,528 since 1973. These numbers are significant for a country with a population of 4.48 million people. They also attest to the strength of trans-Tasman family networks. The more New Zealanders who live in Australia, the greater likelihood of chain migration across the Tasman by other family members. Only a major economic shock or environmental catastrophe that closed borders would be likely to disrupt this trend of ever closer family ties and trans-Tasman visits by grandparents. There is also a pattern of fly in, fly out workers.



Many Kiwis move to Australia on short notice and are able to settle without applying for permanent residence or citizenship because of the trans-Tasman travel arrangement. The social welfare agreement of 2001 has gained media attention for restricting New Zealanders' entitlements to support in Australia. But this has not limited the longer term people flow, as numbers returning have remained steady for the past decade.

Trans-Tasman migration has implications for citizenship, especially for Maori, who are now transnational. New Zealanders, in particular Maori, continue to move to mining areas in large numbers. This trend, however, is likely to slow with the economic downturn in Australia. The question is whether the trend of the past four decades will continue, and this is likely to be the case.

**Figure 1: Trans-Tasman Permanent and Long-term Migration Flows, year ended 31 March 1948-2013.**



**The data is from Statistics NZ, permanent and long-term migration by country of residence, age and sex (Annual - March), arrivals, departures and net Australia.**



## **The Trans-Tasman Relationship**

New Zealand's relationship with Australia is distinctive globally and is more family than foreign. It is New Zealand's closest and most extensive official relationship. The official relationship is a challenge to manage because it comprises so many diverse, trans-Tasman communities of interest. Many of these have been created to achieve economies of scale.

Until 2012 Australia was New Zealand's largest two-way trading partner. In 2012 the relationship passed a turning point when China overtook Australia as New Zealand's largest trading partner in imports. That China is poised to eclipse Australia in trade in the near future is likely to have a long-term impact on the trans-Tasman relationship. The risk is that the relationship will be viewed as less significant or that complacency will set in. But Australia is still New Zealand's largest trading partner in exports and is New Zealand's leading source of investment. Australia is subject to the same global trends and influences, such as the rise of China, although it feels more keenly the tension between 'Asia' and 'Asia Pacific' because of its closer proximity to Asia. Generally trade is the cornerstone of the relationship from the New Zealand perspective while Australia gives priority to strategic and defence issues.

Australia and New Zealand share a history and heritage of British colonisation, although the histories of their indigenous peoples are very different. They also differ in environment and climate. Theirs is a sisterly relationship, born of being Britannia's daughters. While much has been made of New Zealand's 'destiny apart' in choosing not to join the Australian federation in 1901, New Zealand was one of the seven colonies of Australasia in the nineteenth century, and shared patterns of state development with Australian federal and State governments, including a system of compulsory arbitration of industrial disputes and a family wage, and early women's suffrage.

The idea of 'Australasia' differs on each side of the Tasman Sea between the larger and smaller partner. The Australian definition, of the Australian continent and neighbouring islands, includes Papua New Guinea and is centred on Australia, whereas the New Zealand definition comprises New Zealand and Australia. To many New Zealanders 'Australasia' acknowledges the larger partner and the asymmetry in the relationship and renders the smaller country invisible.

Nonetheless there is a working region that crosses the Tasman that we may call the Tasman world. This is built on histories of political and bureaucratic cooperation, and occasional conflict, and on popular culture expressions from music to media to pavlova and Anzac biscuits, and from Phar Lap the race horse



to sport. It is enmeshed in the dialogue about strategic foreign and defence policy in the region, and in the concrete evidence of working together on a string of frontiers, from the Second World War to the present. The everyday history of the relationship is manifested in increasing ties of commerce and trade, migration and growing kinship. Its less visible, but nonetheless real signs lie in the continuing flow of ideas, personnel and institutions in education and government. Living together, working together and playing together, however, do not mean doing everything together.

Given that New Zealanders decided against joining Australia in 1901, the ebb and flow of the trans-Tasman relationship since then suggests there is little likelihood of political union. Yet Australia and New Zealand are more integrated now than at any other time in their history. A quiet form of federalism already exists through New Zealand's participation in the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), where New Zealand behaves much like a seventh State, depending on the issue, and in some areas has voting rights. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand grew out of COAG and the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA) grew from an earlier agreement between the Australian federal, State and territory governments in 1998.

The official relationship has grown closer since 2003, despite the divergence in defence policy during the second Iraq war. There has been considerable investment in the formal relationship with the establishment of the Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum in 2004, which has advanced the agenda of a Single Economic Market. A 'Track Two' diplomatic initiative from the Australian perspective, from the New Zealand viewpoint the Leadership Forum is 'Track One and a Half'. Other developments include single passport queues at airports for holders of Australian and New Zealand passports since 2005; the adoption of SmartGate technology in 2009 that is intended to make trans-Tasman travel as domestic-like as possible; while in 2010 both governments passed Trans-Tasman Proceedings Acts, establishing a coherent civil jurisdiction and judgments scheme. There have been moves towards the coordination of business law and a pattern of policy convergence as a result of efforts to streamline doing business. But there is little enthusiasm to enmesh taxation regimes, and the first attempt to establish a joint Therapeutic Products Agency in 2007 resulted in failure.

Overall, the trans-Tasman relationship is characterised by an easy informality inherited from the British Commonwealth. It is a family relationship that is close, but not that close, and that requires regular maintenance as it grows closer, bound together by kinship and by many communities of interest.

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