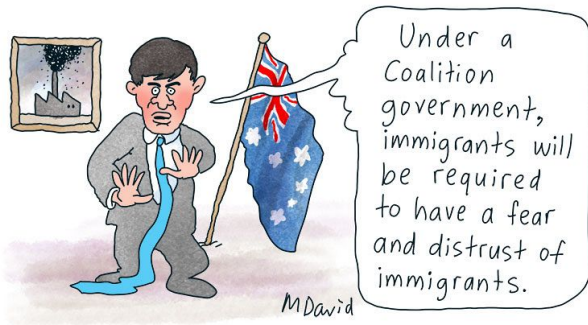


Liberals continue with nonsense immigration policy

By Abul Rizvi

20 July 2026



The Liberal Party proposes to "cap" net migration at a level less than the number of houses completed; that is putting the cart before the horse, writes Dr [Abul Rizvi](#).

THE LIBERAL PARTY has released [its plan](#) for Australia, which includes its position on net migration. It proposes to "cap" net migration at a level less than the number of houses completed.

While it makes complete sense to set a long-term net migration target and for that to take into account forecast housing completions, "capping" net migration based on the number of houses completed in the previous quarter/year is just nonsense.

No nation on the planet has ever adopted a law that enables it to "cap" net migration. There are two simple reasons for that.

First, "capping" movement of people where some may be long-term arrivals and departures, and some are not, is completely impractical.

Second, no government can know the outcome for net migration for a particular period until many months after that period has ended. By that time, it is too late to apply a cap.

Why the Liberal Party continues to use the word "cap" in this context is a mystery. Do they not know it is impractical to "cap" net migration?

Or is it that the political message the word "cap" conveys is more important than the practicality of the policy? That suggests they just think Australian voters are mugs.

There is then the idea of linking net migration to the number of houses completed. That is putting the cart before the horse.

For the building industry to plan for how many houses it might build, it needs to have some idea of the level of net migration.

If the building industry thinks net migration is going to be very small or even negative as proposed by One Nation, builders will be afraid to build many houses for fear that they may not get a price that covers costs (unless the taxpayer is to provide a massive subsidy for each house built such that builders are taking fewer risks).

The building industry also needs to have some idea of the composition of net migration. Net migration dominated by students and working holiday makers will have a very different impact on housing needs than one dominated by family and offshore skilled migrants.

A far better approach would be for the Liberal Party and the Government to set a long-term net migration target (or target range) and explain how they will deliver that target (or as close to that target as they can get).

That would allow the building industry, and indeed all other industries and government agencies, to plan to that target.

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