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Editorial

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Editorial

Abstract

In May 2016 refugees were, once again, brought to the forefront of an Australian federal election campaign. This has been a regular occurrence since 2001, when Prime Minister John Howard's allegations that asylum seekers had thrown their children overboard helped to justify his government's increasingly restrictive border protection measures. In 2016, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton raised a different set of concerns about humanitarian arrivals to Australia in response to the Australian Greens' proposal that the annual refugee intake be increased to 50 000 people. Dutton's assertions were two-pronged. First, many refugees are not 'numerate or literate in their own language, let alone English', and would 'languish in unemployment queues and on Medicare ... there's no sense in sugar-coating that, that's the scenario' (Bourke 2016). Second, Dutton warned, 'These people would be taking Australian jobs, there's no question about that' (Bourke 2016). The fact that the two prongs of Dutton's argument (unemployment and job stealing) directly contradicted each other is perhaps neither here nor there-both sought to emphasise (in the minister's own words) the 'huge cost' of resettling refugees (Bourke 2016). As the media seized on these comments, The Guardian's Ben Doherty and Helen Davidson decided to run a fact check. They brought a voice of reason into the debate-it was the voice of geographer Graeme Hugo AO.

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TITLE OF SPECIAL ISSUE

Population, migration and settlement in Australia: in memory of Graeme Hugo

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Editorial

In May 2016 refugees were, once again, brought to the forefront of an Australian federal election campaign. This has been a regular occurrence since 2001, when Prime Minister John Howard's allegations that asylum seekers had thrown their children overboardⁱ helped to justify his government's increasingly restrictive border protection measures. In 2016, Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton, raised a different set of concerns about humanitarian arrivals to Australia in response to the Australian Greens' proposal that the annual refugee intake be increased to 50,000 people. Dutton's assertions were two-pronged. First – many refugees are not 'numerate or literate in their own language, let alone English', and would 'languish in unemployment queues and on Medicare...there's no sense in sugar-coating that, that's the scenario' (Bourke 2016). Second – Dutton warned, 'These people would be taking Australian jobs, there's no question about that' (Bourke 2016). The fact that the two prongs of Dutton's argument (unemployment and job stealing) directly contradicted each other is perhaps neither here nor there – both sought to emphasise (in the Minister's own words) the 'huge cost' of resettling refugees (Bourke 2016). As the media seized on these comments, *The Guardian's* Ben Doherty and Helen Davidson decided to run a fact check. They brought a voice of reason into the debate – it was the voice of geographer, Graeme Hugo, AOⁱⁱ.

Doherty and Davidson (2016) found the arguments needed to refute Dutton in a 2011 report authored by Graeme and his colleaguesⁱⁱⁱ. This report, *Economic, Social and Civic Contributions of First and Second Generation Humanitarian Entrants* (Hugo 2011), had been commissioned by the then Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). The overarching message of the report, as summarised by the Department itself, provides a stark counter-point to the typically negative assertions that have come to frame refugees and asylum seekers in public debate:

The research found the overwhelming picture, when one takes the longer term perspective of changes over the working lifetime of Humanitarian Program entrants and their children, is one of *considerable achievement and contribution* (Policy Innovation, Research and Evaluation Unit, DIAC, 2011, emphasis added).

The report carefully demonstrated – using solid empirical evidence – the long-term convergence of refugee employment rates with those of Australian-born persons; high levels of labour force engagement and tertiary education amongst second-generation humanitarian arrivals; the contributions of refugees to regional development; their entrepreneurialism, civic engagement, volunteering and their connections with the communities in which they have settled (Hugo 2011).

Our purpose here is not to enter into a detailed discussion of that particular report, or to reflect on the latest political manoeuvres surrounding asylum seekers and refugees in Australia. Rather, we open with this example because it raises an important point about the legacy of Graeme Hugo, who passed away on 20 January 2015, only a few months after being diagnosed with cancer, at the age of 68. The example underscores the ongoing influence of Graeme's extraordinary and vast body of work. Hugo's scholarship was careful and evidence-based; his voice offered a measured, reliable and insightful contribution to Australian population and immigration debates over many decades. Such contributions are recounted ably and poignantly in the three Thinking Space pieces that begin this Special Issue (by Ruth Fincher, Marie McAuliffe and Stephen Castles), so too in an obituary prepared by John Connell (2015) in this journal. A detailed overview of Hugo's publications has also

been made available on the website of the Australian Population and Migration Research Centre^{iv}.

Graeme's legacy raises a valuable provocation for Australian geographers regarding the important role of the 'geographer' in public debate. An Editorial published in *The Guardian (UK)* in 2015 described geography as a 'subject for our times' – because 'it is inherently multidisciplinary in a world that increasingly values' (and we would add *needs*) 'people who have the skills...to work across the physical and social sciences'. Hugo's research exemplified and made the most of the diverse and valuable skill set of the geographer.

Moreover, he brought those skills to bear for the public good. There has perhaps never been a time when the skills *and voices* of geographers are more urgently needed – in response to a whole host of contemporary environmental and social challenges. Hugo's passing offers a prompt for all of us to reflect on the role that we would like to see academic geography play in public debate. How can we, as Australian geographers, enhance our discipline's position – such that politicians, journalists and other opinion-makers turn to geographers for evidence, insights and advice at times when measured and informed interjections are urgently needed?

When we issued our call for papers for a Special Issue of *Australian Geographer* in memory of Graeme Hugo, we received an overwhelming response. There were many who wanted to pay tribute. In the interests of inclusivity (one of Graeme's often-expressed personal values), there are two issues of collected papers, organised into thematic threads. This first special issue, 'Population, migration and settlement in Australia', will be accompanied by a second one in early 2017, 'Labour and environmental migration in the Asia-Pacific'. Together, these two issues of *Australian Geographer* provide broad coverage of many of Graeme Hugo's key areas of research focus.

This first special issue commences with three Thinking Spaces: Ruth Fincher remembers Graeme Hugo ‘the population geographer’, Marie McAuliffe reflects on Hugo’s contributions in the area of migration policy; and Stephen Castles prompts us to rethink Australian migration through a piece that was originally prepared, at Graeme’s invitation, for an international symposium in 2014. In addition, this special issue contains eight papers, many of which have been prepared by Hugo’s close colleagues, friends and students. The first two papers provide detailed overviews of his contributions to two key areas of research: population ageing in Australia (Debbie Faulkner, Helen Barrie Feist and Judith Lewis), and social applications of Geographical Information Systems (Danielle Taylor and Jarrod Lange). The authors of the remaining six papers opted to pay tribute to Hugo by presenting their own empirical work. Many of the research projects discussed were undertaken collaboratively with Graeme, or were supervised by him. Others were inspired by his research. Kate Golebiowska, Amani Elnasri and Glenn Withers present empirical evidence of the impacts of Australian immigration policy on regional population growth, and tackle the oft-made and nefarious contention that immigration contributes to unemployment amongst the Australian-born. Next, Karen Agutter and Rachel Ankeny consider the role of migrant hostels in the residential settlement patterns of immigrants, through careful archival and interview-based data gathered as part of their *Hostel Stories* research project. Janette Young, Lisel O’Dwyer and Richard McGrath’s paper considers the question of what constitutes ‘successful’ migration, through a focus on British migration to Australia in the post-World War II period. Linking their research findings to the present day, they argue that careful consideration ought to be given to the potentially negative outcomes of targeted migrant recruitment schemes. Continuing on this theme, Fidelma Breen outlines the experiences of Irish migrants who came to Australia under the Temporary Work (Skilled) (Subclass 457) visa. For some of

these migrants, misunderstandings about temporary skilled migration to Australia – and a lack of clarity around skill recognition and qualification transferability – had enormous personal and familial consequences.

The final two papers in this issue align with Hugo's research interest in population settlement patterns in Australia. Neil Coffee, Jarrod Lange and Emma Baker build on work that they conducted with Graeme in 2000. They present a novel spatial approach that enables comparison and visualisation of population density change across Australian cities, over time. Finally, Peter Smailes, Trevor Griffin and Neil Argent offer the results of a longitudinal study of population distribution in Hugo's home state: South Australia. Their paper considers how the concentration of population and economic activity into regional cities (in this case, Port Lincoln) impacts the demographic sustainability of their broader regions.

As we have read the contributions made to this special issue, we have been reminded of the overwhelming range, scope and importance of Hugo's work. We have also felt reassured that there are others continuing this work – many of whom worked alongside Graeme Hugo, and made important contributions to his own scholarship over many years. Our sincere thanks go to Janet Wall for her generous assistance throughout this process.

Vale Professor Graeme Hugo, AO.

Natascha Klocker and Olivia Dun (Editors)

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ⁱThe ‘Children Overboard’ Incident, as it has become known, took place over three days between the 6th and 8th of October 2001, one month before the Australian federal election was held on 10th November 2001. The incident involved a group of asylum seekers who were headed towards Australian waters on board a boat labelled Suspected Illegal Entry Vehicle 4 (SIEV 4) by Australian authorities. SIEV 4 was intercepted by the HMAS Adelaide. Photos presented to the media at the time appeared to show the SIEV 4 asylum seekers throwing their children overboard, and Prime Minister Howard stated ‘I don’t want in Australia people who would throw their own children into the sea’ (Bowden 2001). These assertions were proven false; the photos were in fact of asylum seekers abandoning the sinking vessel (SIEV 4) and being rescued by the crew of the HMAS Adelaide (see Odgers 2002 and Senate Select Committee on the Scafton Evidence 2004 for further detail).

ⁱⁱOfficer of the Order of Australia: ‘The Officer of the Order of Australia is awarded for distinguished service of a high degree to Australia or humanity at large’

(https://www.itsanhonour.gov.au/honours/awards/medals/officer_order_australia.cfm)

ⁱⁱⁱThe report was authored by Graeme Hugo with the assistance of: Sanjugta Vas Dev, Janet Wall, Margaret Young, Vigya Sharma and Kelly Parker.

^{iv}<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/apmrc/pubs/>