

Contemporary Japanese Migration to Australia

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This paper proposes to highlight key characteristics of current Japanese migration. Unlike the *en masse* outflow of Japanese labour to North and Central American from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries, who were mainly unskilled agrarian labourers, contemporary Japanese migration to Australia is diverse and individualised. Japanese residents (excluding short-term travellers) may be defined as one of many ethnic groups in Australian society, even though they constitute a smaller percentage, numerically speaking, than some other groups in the population. Still they are quite visible as wealthy urbanities/suburbanites in major Australian cities, as they include numbers of expatriates who are resulted from global expansion of Japan's business. From the 1960s to the mid-1990s, these sojourning corporate families have been the major Japanese population in Australia. But recently, other types of migrant have increased and the proportion of business-related settlement has gradually declined to less than half of the entire (long-term and permanent) Japanese population.

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing interest in international exchange programmes between Australia and Japan, which also serve to foster the expansion of municipal affiliations. On the other hands, Australia has become a popular destination for Japanese emigration since the 1980s and thus the proportion of permanent *settlers* has increased. However, as we well know, migration is a complex phenomenon: Even though expatriate communities are constituted as *sojourners* who return to their homeland, with newcomers replacing them, and even for those who are classified as permanent *settlers*, a high proportion of return movements can be detected. Japanese emigration in past periods was induced by socio-economic elements, but contemporary emigratory movements are more likely to be diverse individual acts which give prominence to various socio-cultural elements. Consequently, current Japanese migration is produced by the development of a range of choices that present themselves to any individual migrant, and this is also part of the picture when we consider return movements as well as any sojourner's choice to become a permanent *settler*.