

# Are Peripheral Regions Benefiting from National Policies Aimed at Attracting Skilled Migrants? Case Study of the Northern Territory of Australia

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**Abstract** Complex and interrelated trends in population and labour market dynamics in peripheral regions of developed countries have compelled them to use international skilled migration to address their skill shortages and facilitate economic development. Using the Northern Territory (NT) of Australia as a case study, this paper examines if and how these regions can benefit from a national policy for skilled migration, including the regional migration policy, which Australia has been operating since 1996–1997. The paper situates the regional migration policy in a context of the global competition for skills, explains how it came about and outlines the key characteristics of the NT as a peripheral region. An innovative approach to immigration data analysis permits formulating four propositions about the nature of international migration to peripheral regions. The analysis consists of tracking over a period of 17 years, the dynamics between all components of Australia's and the Northern Territory's permanent additions and comparing changes in the composition of their respective skilled migration streams. The paper proposes that peripheral regions benefit from skilled migration with a lagged effect as compared to Australia as a whole. It suggests that in order to better address skill shortages, they should also develop the capacity of the locally resident immigrant groups.

**Keywords** Australia · Skilled migration · Skills shortages · Peripheral · Regional

## Introduction

This paper discusses if peripheral regions in developed countries, exemplified by the Northern Territory (NT) of Australia, benefit from national policies aimed at attracting

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international skilled migrants. For purposes of this paper, peripheral regions are those which are distant from the well-populated areas in their countries and characterised by unique spatial, demographic and economic features. This paper describes such key features using the NT as an example. As a result of complex and interrelated trends in population dynamics and uneven regional economic development, regions such as the NT nowadays seek international skilled migrants to supplement their existing skill bases and facilitate economic development. In the context of skills, they compete with other regions and the largest cities in Australia and abroad. While global competition for skilled immigrant workers is not a new phenomenon, regions have become active players in this space just short of two decades ago. To assist them, national policy strategies such as the State-Specific Regional Migration (SSRM) initiatives in Australia have been instituted in 1996–1997 with a view to attract some international skilled migrants away from the largest cities and to regional areas. These initiatives are interchangeably referred to in this paper as regional migration policy.

Visas issued under these initiatives fall under the skilled migration stream and nowadays represent around one third of this stream (Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) 2012:20). They carry minimum performance and residency requirements to improve chances of their host areas obtaining economic and demographic benefits from the migrants' presence. To balance these obligations, migrants can avail themselves to lower entry criteria than the independent skilled migrants.

In recognition of demographic and economic variations across Australia at the time when the regional migration policy was being instituted (many of which have persisted until today), this policy has been used to increase skilled migration to two types of areas: those having fewer than 200,000 residents and metropolitan areas with low population growth, for example, Adelaide or Hobart. Since the inception of the policy, the entire NT including Darwin has been considered an area eligible for regional migration. In addition to skill shortages, this has been motivated by the peripheral location of the Territory in Australia, its smallest population base of all jurisdictions and the small size of its capital city Darwin. As this paper focuses on peripheral regions and the NT in particular, a detailed discussion of the governance of the SSRM initiatives and reasons for including selected metropolitan areas (Golebiowska 2012; Hugo 2008b) is not pursued.

Similar objectives of supplementing the skill bases and supporting population growth have been set for strategies of skilled immigrant dispersal in other developed countries such as Canada, which, much like Australia, has been experiencing variations in the pace and nature of population growth and regional economic development. While the Australian and Canadian regional migration policies are domestic in nature, they have a global dimension, which can be seen in the Australian and Canadian regions competing for similar sets of skills, use of well-developed, often multi-lingual websites with information for prospective immigrants about life and work in regions and sending representatives of regions such as State and Provincial Governments to immigration fairs around the world.

This paper adopts an innovative approach and asks if and how soon the national efforts to increase skilled migration to Australia can be observed in peripheral regions. Examining how long it may take for these efforts to bear fruit is important for understanding their effectiveness in the past and based on this, informing future strategies under the immigration policy to address skill shortages in geographically

isolated regions. This paper adopts a time frame of 17 years, which spans the period between 1996–1997 and 2012–2013. This period was chosen because it aligns with the start of SSRMs in Australia and because it is sufficiently long to formulate four propositions about international migration to peripheral regions. The first proposition is that concerted, long-term efforts at a national level to increase the proportion of skilled immigrants in permanent additions<sup>1</sup> bring effects in peripheral regions. Second, peripheral regions benefit from national policies to increase skilled migration albeit with a delay. Third, the proportionate growth of skilled migration in permanent additions nationally and in peripheral regions has been driven by different visas. And finally, peripheral regions become important destinations for settlement of humanitarian stream entrants, and over time, they may end up receiving slightly higher shares of these immigrants in permanent additions than is the case nationally.

The paper examines previously unpublished and published data from the Department of Immigration. The department has recently changed its name several times and is referred to by the name current at a time of the release of the relevant data. The focus of this paper is on permanent migration; data pertinent to temporary migration of working holiday makers or temporary skilled workers (457 visa holders) are not analysed.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature on regional immigration. Section 3 looks at the drivers of the global competition for skilled migrants and situates the Australian SSRM initiatives in a broader context of recent global developments in migration. It also outlines the recent evolution of the Australian skilled migration including responses to the economic downturn and their impact on the SSRM initiatives. Section 4 examines the demographic and economic trends in Australia that have given the impetus to institute them. This section also introduces two concepts from economic geography: ‘creative class’ and ‘global cities’. They aid in interpreting the results in the Discussion section. In section 5, the NT is used as an example to characterise a peripheral region. Section 6 first outlines the key regional skilled visas (unless specified otherwise, this term refers to regional skilled *and* business visas). It then analyses the statistical data, which are discussed in section 7. Conclusions in section 8 reiterate the main findings and suggest avenues for future research.

## Earlier Studies

Interest in international skilled migration to regions has grown over time. As a broad brush, early studies have often been commissioned by and motivated by the interest of the national and sub-national Governments in assessing performance of their regional migration policies and ascertaining the need to refine the criteria. As official statistics were only a couple of years’ old, a survey was a common research method adopted, for example, in the studies of immigrants who arrived in Australia under the Skilled Designated Area Sponsored (SDAS) Scheme and Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) 2005a, b). In Canada, Provincial Governments were conducting or

<sup>1</sup> This term is explained at the beginning of section “Data analysis”.

commissioning similar surveys (for example, ProLogica Research 2001). As the numbers of regional migrants began climbing, annual reports of the State (Australia) and Provincial (Canada) Governments became a richer source of data documenting immigrant numbers, countries of origin, occupations, sometimes specific urban areas of settlement, average numbers of created jobs and the level of investment (for entrepreneurs), as well as promotional activities. In most jurisdictions, there has been no stable format and a set of reportable variables that would permit a full and chronological interjurisdictional comparison of immigrant inflows and performance of these programs. In Canada, the 2000s saw a great deal of reports published assessing how well the Provinces were prepared to settle and retain immigrants (for example, Goss Gilroy Incorporated 2005; Lorjé 2003), stocktaking the successes of programs already operating (for example, Yukon 2010; SOGERI Incorporated 2002), regional city visions and strategies to attract immigrants (Pontikes and Garcea 2006; Greater Halifax Partnership 2005a; 2005b) and various analyses of patterns of past and future immigrant dispersal from pan-Canadian (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) 2001) and regional perspectives (Pan-Atlantic Repopulation Committee not dated; Azmier 2005). As Provinces, cities and towns competed for immigrants, there was plenty of lesson drawing between the jurisdictions.

Academic papers published on regional migration policies have focused on their governance, the demographic, economic and, to a lesser degree, social contributions of these migrants; they have considered their retention rates and made policy recommendations for improvements (Garcea and Golebiowska 2012; Carter et al. 2010; Vatz-Laaroussi and Bezzi 2010; Golebiowska 2008; Hugo 2008a, b; Spoonley and Bedford 2008; Wulff and Dharmalingam 2008; Huynh 2004). Other studies have analysed mobility motivations of migrants who have moved to regions, their experience of living and working there, and have considered how to entice more to move to and stay in regional areas (Institute for Social Science Research 2010; Derwing and Krahn 2008; Silvius 2005a; Hugo et al. 2006). These and other similar studies have often been based on surveys of one of more regional visa holder groups (some such studies were commissioned by the interested Governments) and/or were case studies of selected regional areas and/or locations. Collectively, this diverse and rich body of work has helped develop an understanding of immigrant mobility motivations in regional contexts, conditions assisting their integration, and it has quantified the demographic and economic impacts of the regional migration policies. But, it has predominantly focused on populous jurisdictions and medium and smaller size cities within them.

Case studies of recipient smaller towns and rural localities were also located in those generally well-populated areas and were themselves within a reasonable driving distance to the nearest largest city (for example, Piper and Associates 2009; Piper and Associates 2008; Piper and Associates 2007 and Flanagan 2007 in Australia; Flint 2007; Sherrell et al. 2005; Silvius 2005b; and Walton-Roberts 2005 in Canada). Although there is literature on immigrant professionals moving to and working in peripheral regions, for example, in the health care industry (Dywili et al. 2012; Garnett et al. 2008; Gilles et al. 2008; Simard and van Schendel 2004), within the general body of work on immigrant settlement in regions, there appears to have been relatively little written on their settlement in peripheral regions. Some exceptions are Taylor et al. (2014), Golebiowska (2012), Aure et al. (2011), Nolin et al. (2011, 2009), McCallum

(2009), Hyndman et al. (2006) and Krahn et al. (2003). This paper contributes to this emerging stream of research.

## Skilled Migration to Australia and Global Competitions for Skills

The components of Australia's migration program are skilled, family and special eligibility (primarily made up of visas for former Australian citizens and residents) streams. Australia has been gradually increasing the volume and proportion of the skilled stream. Since 1997–1998, this stream has been contributing over 50 % to the migration program annually, and in recent years, this contribution has grown to almost 70 % (DIMIA 2005c:21; DIAC 2013a:24). Increasing the annual quotas for the skilled stream, introducing and growing the SSRM schemes and extending to more categories of immigrants the opportunity to apply for a skilled visa without leaving Australia have all contributed to this outcome.

This increase in skilled migration has been a deliberate strategy underpinned by economic development and growth in Australia in the late 1980s and during the 1990s (though the recession of the early 1990s resulted in a temporary cut to the skilled intake), the onset of the knowledge economy and Australia's ambition to be internationally competitive in knowledge-based industries. The knowledge economy, which relies on high-quality human capital stock to drive the research and innovation particularly in science and technology, has become the policy framework for workforce and broader economic development in Australia and other advanced economies in the 1990s. The key implications for their immigration policies have been the adjustment of entry criteria and setting up new immigration schemes to entice highly skilled immigrants, those with tertiary level qualifications or their equivalent (Koser and Salt 1997:287), to settle or stay long term and work in these countries. Key professional groups targeted for immigration have been engineers, individuals with specific IT skills, various managers, doctors, nurses, other health professionals, teachers and selected trades people.

The new schemes have contributed to an intensified and expanded global competition for skilled migrants. Coming off small bases, the SSRM initiatives in Australia or the Provincial and Territorial Nominee Programs (PNPs) in Canada (Golebiowska et al. 2011; Hugo 2008a) have opened up new employment and settlement opportunities to them. These schemes can be seen as part of the raft of responses to address the demand for high-quality human capital stock indispensable for continued economic development in these countries. Other examples can be the UK's point-based Highly Skilled Migrant Programme established in 2002 and replaced by Tier 1 in 2008 (Salt 2009:104; Findlay 2006:78) and the European Union's Blue Card established in 2009 (van Riemsdijk 2012:353). An indication that the competition is truly global is the skilled immigration schemes in developing countries. For example, the Czech Republic had operated schemes to attract skilled immigrants before switching to the EU Blue Card (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2012):222), and Brazil is currently considering simplifying its immigration laws to encourage and increase skilled immigration (Secretaria de Assuntos Estratégicos Brasil 2014).

In Australia, until 2007–2008, the selection criteria for skilled migration were thought to be well-serving the labour market needs; thus, they had been subject to

relatively small changes. The major avenues for skilled migration included independent, employer and family linked categories and corresponding categories available under the SSRMs. The first significant tightening of the criteria occurred in 2007–2008 and was triggered by concerns that the foreign-born graduates who were becoming permanent residents in large numbers were inadequately prepared to participate in the Australian labour market (Golebiowska 2011).<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of the global financial crisis and rising unemployment, many OECD countries have reduced immigration intakes in order to better protect their native workers (OECD 2009:19–27). Australia has responded by revising down the previously planned levels of skilled migration for 2008–2009 and 2009–2010, prioritised employer and State/Territory-nominated visas (both are demand-driven and available for immigration to regions) over skilled independent visas, improved targeting of occupations in demand and tightened requirements for employers of temporary skilled workers on 457 visas (Phillips and Spinks 2012:4–5;11–12, 29; DIAC 2013a:24). These adjustments were both in response to the worsening economic situation and a continuation of reforms to permanent and temporary skilled migration programs initiated before the economic downturn. The overarching principle was to enable Australia to select immigrants with skills best matching the needs of regions and industry sectors and move away from accepting ‘skills that applicants present with’ (Minister of Immigration and Citizenship 2010). The most recent reform (2012) is SkillsSelect—an electronic system, which prospective immigrants use to submit an expression of interest and then wait to be invited to make a visa application. Employed-linked applications have the highest priority for processing (Phillips and Spinks 2012:5–6).

Canada, a country with a similar immigration policy to Australia, responded to the economic downturn with a number of comparable immigration policy-tightening measures (OECD 2009; CIC 2009; 2012; 2013). The motivation was almost identical to that of Australia to select ‘the best applicants, not the first’ (CIC 2012:6). In 2015, inspired by New Zealand and Australia, Canada introduced an electronic expression of interest system for skilled foreign workers called Express Entry (Bedford and Spoonley 2014; CIC 2014).

## **Demographic and Economic Trends in Australia as Rationale for Regional Migration Policy**

Spatial distribution of the Australian population has been influenced by the settlement choices of immigrants, who have long been attracted to large urban areas. Censuses in 2001, 2006 and 2011 have shown that between 79 and 75 % of immigrants who arrived in the 5 years prior to each of these Censuses have settled in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2013); Golebiowska 2012). Immigrant settlement has contributed to the economic growth in these cities, increased their attractiveness to new immigrants and contributed to a greater cultural diversity as

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<sup>2</sup> There is ample literature on the topic of permanent student migration in Australia and the impact of the policy changes which started in 2007–2008 (Baas 2010; Hawthorne 2010; Koleth 2010; Birrell et al. 2009; Birrell 2006).



compared to other areas, which have not been receiving as many immigrants (Golebiowska 2012). Immigrant concentration in Australia's largest cities is illustrative of trends observed in other developed countries such as Canada, in Scandinavia and the USA (Golebiowska and Boyle 2014; Schellenberg 2004; Waldinger 2001). Recently, international migration has revived growth of some large British cities (Champion et al. 2007).

While regional areas largely miss out on the benefits associated with international migration, they share with the largest cities shortages of skilled workers. These shortages have been felt more acutely outside the largest Australian cities due to smaller skilled labour supply bases and availability of narrower skill sets. These conditions have partly arisen due to combined effects of sustained population losses from regional and rural Australia concentrated in the younger age groups, low fertility and population ageing (Golebiowska 2012; Hugo 2008b). In the 1990s, the momentum to assist the Australian regions in expanding their skilled supply bases was growing. On one hand, economic restructuring in regions was underway, and governments were keen to find effective ways of strengthening and diversifying their economies (Verdich 2010). On the other hand, economic and employment growth during this period made it difficult for employers, including outside the largest cities, to recruit and retain skilled trades workers, health professionals, engineers, accountants and other specialists (Department for Victorian Communities 2006:2). These wide-ranged skill shortages were perceived to be acting as a brake on regional economic development, and as a result of consultations between the Federal and State/Territory governments, the SSRM initiatives have been introduced.

There is an argument that concentration of the highly skilled immigrants in the 'global' and large cities can disadvantage other regions that could have otherwise obtained some of these immigrants (Perrons 2009:220). For the highly skilled migrants, economic opportunities available in global cities have transformed them into a global marketplace. Intracompany transferees, independent professionals including self-employed, entrepreneurs, former international students, as well as artists, to name just a few, have taken advantage of these opportunities (Beaverstock and Hall 2012; Ho 2011; Koser and Salt 1997; Findlay et al. 1996; Hannerz 1996). Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide, which have been receiving the highest numbers of new settlers in Australia, are considered part of the global economy and are listed in the global city rankings (Benton-Short et al. 2005; Beaverstock et al. 1999). They would receive many of these types of migrants.

Regional cities and in fact all cities that wish to grow and thrive have been advised to attract and retain the so-called creative class people (Florida 2003). They are valuable because they generate innovation, high-tech start-ups and new jobs (2003:249, 263) and will be attracted to places that have the right mix of built and natural environment, community diversity and tolerance and attractive lifestyle options (2003:223–234, 293–4). From this follows, Florida argues that cities and regions need to put in place strategies to create and bolster tolerant and vibrant environments that these people prefer (2003:263, 283, 293–5). He also advises small and medium-size cities to *use immigration* as a means to *create* the community diversity and to achieve population growth (2003:263–4).

Although Florida's ideas have informed economic and population revival policies for urban and regional areas in the USA and Europe (Creative Metropolises 2010; Bontje and Musterd 2009; Zimmerman 2008), academics have treated them sceptically (Hoyman and Faricy 2009; Zimmerman 2008; Markusen 2006; Glaeser 2005; Peck 2005; Maliszewski 2003). In Australia, they failed to fully account for mobility motivations of creative class to regional cities such as Launceston in Tasmania (Verdich 2010) and within the city of Wollongong (Waitt and Gibson 2009). A paper on transferability of creative city thinking, which used Darwin as a case study (Luckman et al. 2009), argued that the city's remoteness, unique built environment and its demographic and social characteristics would not respond to an automatic transfer of often prescriptive creative city policies and would require more place-sensitive strategies.

### The NT as a Peripheral Region

In large countries like Australia, Canada and the USA, regional areas range from those situated within driving distances of large cities to areas that are far away from them and are sparsely inhabited. Terms 'peripheral' and 'remote' can be used interchangeably or be assigned specific meanings, but both commonly refer to spatial distance that separates the areas which they describe from another area, usually a core, or a centre.<sup>3</sup> The term peripheral region is used in this paper. In the context of NT, many northern parts of Canada and in Alaska, peripheral area characteristics include small population bases, higher proportions of Indigenous residents than in more populated areas, generally young and mobile populations, and narrower economic bases (Schultz et al. 2014:4; State of Alaska 2012:7,11,12,15; Carson et al. 2011:6; Bone 2009:4,9,15,106–7, 110–11, 125; Beer et al. 2003:50,173,183). Such areas also have lower levels of infrastructure than the more populated ones.

Except Darwin, the smallest capital city in the country with 129,000 inhabitants (2011) (Northern Territory Treasury (NTT) 2013:41), the rest of NT is sparsely populated, settlements are small and there are great distances between them. Darwin itself is isolated from the nearest capital city Adelaide by 2600 km of outback. The NT has the lowest population density (0.16 persons/km<sup>2</sup>) (NTT 2009:27) and the smallest population size (235,000) of all jurisdictions. But, it has the highest proportion of Indigenous residents (29.8 %) of all States and Territories. This proportion is also substantially higher than the 3 % in Australia as a whole (NTT 2013:37). With a median age of 31.6 in 2011–2012 (NTT 2013:37), it is the youngest Australian jurisdiction.

The NT experiences high and unpredictable volumes of annual net interstate migration, which contribute to volatility in its annual population growth (Golebiowska and Carson 2009; Taylor and Carson 2009). They are driven by short-term, employment-motivated moves (ABS 1998:35; 2003b:41). Intercensal population turnovers (a measure of gross moves in relation to the size of the population) with interstate can nearly equal the size of

<sup>3</sup> The Australian Bureau of Statistics uses the Remoteness Structure, developed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and the National Key Centre For Social Applications of GIS (GISCA), to group areas sharing characteristics of remoteness into six broad types of regions (Remoteness Areas). The remoteness of a point is calculated by measuring its distance by road to the nearest urban centre. See ABS 2003a; 2008 for more details.



its total population. These turnovers largely owe to mobility of non-Indigenous residents, the Indigenous Territorians are less mobile (NTT 2013:37–38). For example, at the 1996 Census, the turnover reached 98 and 89 % at the 2001 census (ABS 1998:35; 2003b:41).

The NT economic structure, like that of the northern Canadian peripheres, Alaska and the European North, is underpinned by extractive industries and government services (Schultz et al. 2014:4; NTT 2009:5; Duhaime et al. 2004: 69–71,74). Contributions from tourism, which is another important industry, are vulnerable to external economic conditions, for example, changes in airline connections to the Territory and the value of the Australian dollar, in case of international tourists (NTT 2013:162–163). The resource development integrates the NT and other peripheres in the global economy (Eikeland 2014; NTT 2013:10–11,30; Bone 2009:14–16,124,160), but as this fits the core-periphery model, the benefits flow largely to the former.

The resources sector, health care, education and childcare and most trade occupations have long been experiencing skill shortages in the NT. Access to skilled workforce is critically important not only for major infrastructure projects but also for small and medium-size business and the provision of government services across the NT. But, as the NT illustrates, skill shortages in peripheral regions are very difficult to address. The relatively small size of the Territory resident workforce, the highest participation rate nationally (73.1 % in 2012–2013) and low unemployment rate (4.1 % in 2012–2013) mean that there is a tight labour market, which offers employers few opportunities to fill vacancies and find additional skilled workers locally (NTT 2013:53,54,56,57). Neville (2013:23) reports that in 2013, Darwin had the highest proportion of unfilled vacancies of all capital cities in Australia (12.5 %) and the highest level of recruitment and/or retention difficulty (71 %). The proportion of employers in Darwin reporting difficulties in recruiting for highly skilled occupations was also the highest. In 2012, it stood at 73 % and minimally decreased to 70 % in 2013 (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2012:7; Neville 2013:24). In circumstances like these, the demand for both specialist and general skills needs is being met by sourcing workers from interstate and overseas (NTT 2013:54). But, this can only partially address the skill shortages because interstate workers have a tendency to come for the duration of their contract and leave at the end of it (Garnett et al. 2008; NTT 2009:48). Some immigrant-born recruits also relocate interstate after having initially worked in skilled positions in the NT (Golebiowska and Carson 2009). Although interstate and international skilled workers support functioning of the NT economy while they are living in the Territory, as a broader phenomenon, the workforce turnover has been detrimental to the stability and ability of many businesses in the NT to continue to provide their services.

Finally, in areas like the NT, the Indigenous residents represent a possible source of labour to address skill shortages. A short digression is therefore warranted. Their current economic participation is low (2011), illustrated by a 43.8 % labour market participation rate and a 13.5 % unemployment rate (NTT 2013:58). Such outcomes result from a combination of lower living standards, poorer education and health outcomes and limited employment opportunities in remote areas (NTT 2012:56). Lifting the economic participation requires not only training and genuine employment opportunities but also addressing the underlying causes of the disadvantage.

## Data Analysis

### The Concept of Permanent Additions and Approach to Data Presentation

In order to see if and how peripheral regions benefit from the national policies for skilled migration, this section tracks changes in permanent additions nationally and in the NT between 1996–1997 and 2012–2013. ‘Permanent additions’ to Australia’s resident population are the sum of:

1. Permanent settler arrivals from overseas in the migration (family, skilled, special eligibility streams) and humanitarian programs;
2. Permanent onshore visa grants in the migration and humanitarian programs and;
3. Arrivals of non-program migrants, mostly New Zealand citizens (DIMIA 2005c:6,7).

Permanent migration is typically a two-stage process. A provisional visa issued first leads to a permanent visa. Once primary visa applicants have met the provisional visa conditions, they can apply for a permanent visa; the same permanent visa will be granted to secondary visa applicants, that is, their family members. Permanent addition figures are sums of provisional and permanent visas for primary and secondary (family members) migrants.

The first part of this section deals with the dynamics between the family, skilled, humanitarian and non-program components of permanent additions and focuses on the changing importance of the skilled migration (Table 1). The second part concentrates on changes *within* the skilled stream. Historically, the NT has been attracting some of the lowest numbers of immigrants, including in the skilled stream, of all Australian jurisdictions (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) 2006b; DIAC 2008b; Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) 2013). Considering that the ultimate expected benefits from skilled migration to regions are filling skill shortages and supplementing their skills bases, for the NT, every skilled immigrant counts regardless of the visa they hold. Consequently, in order to fully appreciate the impact of skilled migration on peripheral regions like the NT, the SSRM visas and all other skilled visas are considered.

The data used in this section come from different sources. Consistent in format, unpublished statistics at a visa category level for the period 1996–1997 to 2007–2008 were purchased as part of a larger study ‘International migration in the NT’ in 2008–2009.<sup>4</sup> Policy reforms which commenced in 2007–2008 have resulted in modifications to the way the publicly available data have been presented. It was impossible to completely disentangle the recent numbers so that they would ideally correspond to the previous visa categories and present coherent in style, no-missing-value statistics for the whole period under review here. Under such circumstances, in order to meet the objectives of the paper, it was decided to present the data (Tables 2 and 3) at a more aggregated level where correspondence between the

<sup>4</sup> The larger study involved empirical data collection and therefore required an ethical clearance, which was duly obtained (H08084/2008). The unpublished immigration statistics analysed in this paper were provided in an un-identified format; therefore, there are no privacy issues.

old and new visa categories was able to be established or approximated and show percentage shares.

Prior to the 2007–2008 reforms, the key regional skilled visas were:

1. RSMS—available to those with employment offers from nominating employers.
2. SDAS—available to those with family nomination from a Designated Area (a region), but no employment offer was required. SDAS visa holders needed to settle in a Designated Area.
3. State/Territory Nominated Independent (STNI) and Skilled Independent Regional (SIR)—available to independent migrants with occupations from the State/Territory Skill Shortage Lists and nominated by a State/Territory Government. SIR was introduced in 2004–2005.
4. State/Territory Sponsored Business visas—available to those with State/Territory Government nomination and either (a) possessing business ownership (most popular), (b) senior executive or (c) investor experience.

In addition, skilled migrants could settle in regions on other visas such as Skilled Independent or Labour Agreement (LA) visas. The latter have been and remain available to employers requesting large numbers of places for skilled workers over a longer period of time. In 2007–2008, SDAS and SIR were collapsed into a new Skilled-Regional Sponsored (SRS) category, while STNI and Skilled-Australian Sponsored (SAS) visa formed a new skilled-sponsored category. SAS was a visa requiring family support but was not limited to Designated Areas (regions). In 2012–2013, the SRS became renamed Skilled-Regional Provisional and the Skilled-Sponsored became renamed Skilled-Nominated. The RSMS and LA have remained separate categories throughout. In the business stream, the business owner and investor visas were retained in 2007–2008, but in 2012–2013, the business skills program became replaced by a business innovation and investment program, which has put greater emphasis on innovation for business owners.

## Data

Table 1 reveals a shift in contributions, which the family and skilled streams have made to permanent additions in Australia and the NT. At the outset of the period under review, the family stream had been making the greatest proportionate contribution nationally and in the NT. By 2012–2013, both in Australia and the NT, this top role has been taken by the skilled stream. In fact, on comparing the proportionate shares of the family and skilled streams in Australia and the NT at the beginning and the end of the period discussed here, it can be observed that they have become almost ideally reversed. This gradual change has occurred at a different speed nationally and in the NT. Contributions from the family stream in Australia became reduced to around one third in 1997–1998; in the NT, this was delayed by 8 years, until 2004–2005. It can be also observed that in Australia, the skilled stream has commenced contributing annually over 50 % to permanent additions since 2003–2004 (except 2004–2005), and in the NT, this level of contributions from the skilled stream was achieved 5 years later, in 2007–2008. Once this happened, its proportionate contributions have remained higher every year in the NT than nationally.

**Table 1** Percentage breakdown of permanent additions. Australia and the NT, 1996–2013

Year/Stream	Family		Skilled <sup>a</sup>		Humanitarian <sup>b</sup>		Non-program <sup>c</sup>		Total <sup>d</sup>	
	AUS	NT	AUS	NT	AUS	NT	AUS	NT	AUS	NT
1996–1997	46.2	55.4	25.3	22.9	9.7	8.7	18.9	13.0	100.0	100.0
1997–1998	33.5	45.4	34.1	32.7	9.5	8.0	22.9	13.9	100.0	100.0
1998–1999	31.3	46.0	33.9	30.3	8.9	6.3	26.0	17.4	100.0	100.0
1999–2000	27.1	40.0	36.5	31.3	6.6	7.5	29.7	21.2	100.0	100.0
2000–2001	25.1	39.5	34.9	30.9	6.7	11.1	33.3	18.5	100.0	100.0
2001–2002	31.3	51.3	43.8	28.1	6.2	8.3	18.7	12.3	100.0	100.0
2002–2003	31.9	42.2	46.1	36.6	8.1	13.3	14.0	7.9	100.0	100.0
2003–2004	28.1	35.6	50.5	40.2	8.0	12.4	13.3	11.8	100.0	100.0
2004–2005	26.1	34.1	49.2	42.5	10.5	15.1	14.2	8.4	100.0	100.0
2005–2006	25.6	28.3	51.1	46.2	9.4	14.0	14.0	11.5	100.0	100.0
2006–2007	25.4	31.0	51.6	48.1	7.4	12.2	15.6	8.7	100.0	100.0
2007–2008	24.6	31.7	52.3	50.5	5.7	7.1	17.4	10.8	100.0	100.0
2008–2009	25.1	23.4	52.8	61.9	6.6	5.3	15.4	9.4	100.0	100.0
2009–2010	28.5	25.0	52.2	65.0	7.0	4.2	12.4	5.9	100.0	100.0
2010–2011	25.6	20.0	50.8	59.7	6.5	12.7	17.1	7.5	100.0	100.0
2011–2012 <sup>e</sup>	NA	19.5	NA	58.3	NA	10.6	NA	11.5	NA	100.0
2012–2013 <sup>f</sup>	25.7	24.9	51.0	57.3	6.2	4.6	17.1	13.2	100.0	100.0
Average all years <sup>g</sup>	28.8	34.9	44.8	43.7	7.7	9.5	18.7	11.9	100.0	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Includes skilled and business visas and minor categories of Distinguished Talent (issued, for example, to outstanding professionals and athletes) and Special Eligibility visas

<sup>b</sup> Contributions made by the humanitarian stream between 1996–1997 and 1999–2000 in Australia and between 1996–1997 and 2005–2006 in the NT are calculated from settler arrivals because onshore statistics were unavailable. These became available from 2000 to 2001 in Australia and 2006–2007 in the NT. From these periods onwards, contributions made by the humanitarian stream nationally and in the NT reflect both settler arrivals and onshore visa grants

<sup>c</sup> Non-program stream has a settler arrivals component only

<sup>d</sup> Totals may not add up to 100.0 % due to rounding

<sup>e</sup> Data by stream were only available for the NT. For a visual (but less precise) presentation of their breakdown in Australia, see DIAC 2013b:17

<sup>f</sup> Contributions for Australia and the NT are calculated from provisional data because final data were yet unavailable

<sup>g</sup> Excludes 2011–2012 for Australia

Sources: DIAC unpublished statistics; DIAC 2013b; 2011; 2010; 2009b; 2008a; 2008b; DIMA 2013; 2006a; 2006b; DIMIA 2004

Variations can be also observed in the remaining streams. Nationally, in 15 out of 16 years shown in Table 1, contributions from the humanitarian stream have remained below 10 %; in the NT, this was the case in 9 out of 17 years or about 50 % of the time. While nationally there were three periods of decline of the humanitarian stream's shares (1996–1997 to 2001–2002, 2004–2005 to 2007–2008 and 2009–2010 to 2012–2013), the NT has experienced a period of rather consistent growth in its annual shares between 1999–2000 and 2006–2007, which have generally remained above 10 %

**Table 2** Percentage distribution of family and skilled migrants in permanent additions, Australia 1996–2013<sup>a</sup>

Visa type	1996–1997	1997–1998	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011	2012–2013
Spouse and Fiance(e)s	55.9	79.8	78.6	84.0	85.6	87.0	86.2	79.7	77.5	79.9	80.1	79.0	75.1	76.2	76.7	77.9
Parent, other family and Concessional Family <sup>b</sup>	44.1	20.2	21.4	16.0	14.4	13.0	13.8	20.3	22.5	20.1	19.9	21.0	24.9	23.8	23.3	22.1
Family total	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Employer-Sponsored	21.2	18.9	16.9	13.5	16.0	17.7	16.4	13.8	15.7	16.4	16.6	21.5	32.0	37.9	40.9	36.2
Business skills	22.2	16.8	17.5	15.3	15.4	15.1	12.3	8.9	7.8	6.4	6.7	6.1	6.8	6.5	5.6	5.2
Skilled Independent <sup>c</sup>	46.1	35.9	36.9	41.2	46.6	52.4	55.2	54.7	54.0	49.6	53.5	51.1	41.6	33.0	35.0	33.2
SAL/SAS, SAL-Regional Linked and SAS-Regional (SDAS) <sup>d,e</sup>	0.0	23.7	25.2	22.5	16.6	11.7	13.2	19.6	18.4	19.5	15.2	13.9	13.5	13.9	14.9	NA <sup>6</sup>
Skilled Territory Nominated Independent/Skilled Independent Regional (STNI/SIR) <sup>e</sup>	3.6	1.2	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.9	1.8	3.6	7.7	7.7	7.4	5.9	8.0	3.1	24.5 <sup>f</sup>
Skilled total <sup>g</sup>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Data for 2011–2012 matching the format of this table were unavailable at the time of writing. Data for 2012–2013 are provisional

<sup>b</sup> In 1997–1998, Concessional Family was replaced by Skilled–Australian Linked (SAL) and moved from Family to Skilled stream. In 1999–2000, SAL was renamed Skilled–Australian Sponsored (SAS)

<sup>c</sup> Includes a minor category of Distinguished Talent visas

<sup>d</sup> SAL/SAS—skilled visas where family support was required. SAL Regional-Linked and SAS-Regional were available to skilled migrants going to Designated Areas (regions) and sponsored by family members settled there. SAS-Regional became renamed Skilled Designated Area Sponsored (SDAS) in 2001–2002

<sup>e</sup> Following changes to skilled migration in 2007–2008, publicly available statistics for the period 2008–2009 to 2010–2011 showed data for the new SRS and Skilled-Sponsored categories as well as the residual SDAS, SAS, STNI and SIR categories. Their format permits showing only an approximate distribution of the old visas. Contributions from the residual SDAS, SAS and all contributions from the Skilled-Sponsored category are included in the SAL/SAS, SAL-Regional Linked and SAS-Regional (SDAS) row. Contributions from the residual STNI, SIR and all contributions from the SRS category are included in the STNI/SIR row

<sup>f</sup> Statistics for 2012–2013 treats as one group the former SDAS, STNI and SIR visas and refers to them as State, Territory and Regional Nominated. They cannot be further disentangled. See DIBP 2013:24

<sup>g</sup> Includes a minor category of Special Eligibility visas

Sources: DIAC unpublished statistics; DIAC 2011; DIBP 2013

**Table 3** Percentage distribution of family and skilled migrants in permanent additions, NT 1996–2012<sup>a</sup>

Visa type/year	1996–1997	1997–1998	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001	2001–2002	2002–2003	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2008–2009	2009–2010	2010–2011	2011–2012
Spouse and France(e)s	72.8	83.1	89.6	89.8	90.8	89.8	92.8	81.2	78.4	85.7	82.8	86.7	81.3	85.5	89.0	83.1
Parent, other family and Concessional Family	27.2	16.9	10.4	10.2	9.2	10.2	7.2	18.8	21.6	14.3	17.2	13.3	18.7	14.5	11.0	16.9
Family total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
SAL/SAS, SAL-Regional Linked and SAS-Regional (SDAS)	0.0	23.5	34.2	28.6	16.7	6.7	11.8	11.8	8.5	14.1	10.6	10.8	3.5	11.0	15.2	13.1
Employer-Sponsored	52.9	40.8	30.2	28.2	36.8	35.6	52.0	53.7	64.0	50.9	56.5	53.7	74.5	69.6	71.5	68.8
Business Skills	9.7	9.7	6.4	3.6	15.2	15.5	3.1	6.0	3.4	2.0	1.9	0.9	0.2	0.4	1.0	0.2
Skilled Independent	36.8	26.0	29.2	38.5	31.4	41.2	32.3	28.4	21.8	28.0	21.5	24.1	16.0	13.4	7.4	8.6
Skilled Territory Nominated Independent/Skilled Independent Regional (STNI/SIR)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	5.0	9.5	10.6	5.8	5.2	4.4	9.3
Skilled total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Statistics for 2012–2013 for the NT were unavailable at the time of writing

Notes b-e and g from Table 2 apply here as appropriate

Sources: DIAC unpublished statistics; DIAC 2013b; 2011; 2010; 2009b



annually. The annual proportionate contribution from the non-program stream has been consistently higher nationally than in the NT.

Tables 2 and 3 allow a more detailed insight into the composition of the family and skilled permanent additions in Australia and the NT. They reveal that within the family stream both nationally and in the NT, the dominant contributions have come from the spouse and fiancé(e) visas. In the period under review, their proportional share has consistently been higher in the NT than in Australia as a whole.

Nationally, with the exception of 2009–2010 to 2012–2013, the Skilled Independent immigrants have made annually the single largest contribution to the skilled stream. The Skilled Independent visas are for high calibre applicants who do not require a confirmed job offer in order to immigrate. For most of the period under review, their annual proportionate shares in the skilled stream have been above 40 % and only dipped to the low 30 % in recent years. In those years, the proportionate contributions from the Employer-Sponsored visas have been higher.

By comparison, in the NT, the initial period until 2001–2002 was characterised by a lack of a similarly clear pattern of consistent and sizeable contributions from one particular group of immigrants. This changed in 2002–2003, when the Employer-Sponsored immigrants have begun representing over 50 % annually of the skilled permanent additions in the NT. The ‘Employer-Sponsored’ is a label for RSMS, Employer Nomination Scheme (ENS) available in all Australia except regional areas and LA visas. Detailed contributions made by these visas were available to the author only for the period of 1996–1907 to 2007–2008. They reveal that in most of these years, the RSMS visa has dominated in the skilled permanent additions in the NT, while nationally, the ENS and LA visas have jointly dominated. Since 2008–2009, the Employer-Sponsored visas have grown to represent around three quarters of all skilled additions in the NT, while contributions from the Skilled Independent immigrants have simultaneously decreased.

For most of the period under review, the SAL/SAS and SAS-Regional visas and their successors have contributed less to skilled permanent additions in Australia and the NT. Nationally, the take-up of STNI/SIR visas has initially been minimal, and their joint proportionate shares have been low every year, suggesting that as a whole, regions in Australia have not greatly benefited from them. The much higher outcome in 2012–2013 is a result of an amalgamation of these and the former SDAS visas under a new State/Territory and Regional Nominated category, which does not permit an accurate comparison with the previous years. In the NT, the take-up of the STNI/SIR visas commenced in the early 2000s, and they have made a low contribution to skilled permanent additions until the end of the review period.

Annual contributions made by the business skills visas have not only been low but also in a gradual decline nationally and in the NT. Since March 2003, the criteria for regional business migrants and for those allowed to settle and set up firms anywhere else in Australia have been different. The former could have availed themselves to lower criteria at both temporary and permanent visa stages. This has proven attractive, and in the period between 2003–2004 and 2011–2012, the regional business visas have represented annually between 85 and 97 % of all business skills visas (DIAC 2013a:34, 2009a:44; DIMIA 2005c:43). Poor outcomes for the NT and virtually no business migration in the recent years suggest that peripheral regions may find it particularly difficult to attract immigrant entrepreneurs.

Time-series statistics for the period of 1996–1997 to 2012–2013 showing occupations of skilled immigrants who have permanently settled in Australia under all the discussed visa categories are not freely available. Provisional, aggregated level data for the 2012–2013 permanent primary skilled visa holders reveal that nationally, the highest share of these visas has gone to professionals (58.6 %), followed by technicians and trades workers (28.4 %) and managers (8.1 %) with the remaining occupational groups representing tiny percentage shares. In the NT, the order of these groups was identical though the percentage shares differed. In addition, the community and personal service workers, who generally possess lower levels of qualifications, represented a higher proportionate share in the Territory than nationally: 6.8 vs. 1.4 % (DIBP 2013:17,67). In 2011–2012, the order of these occupational groups was also identical nationally and in the NT and their proportionate shares similar, though the community and personal service workers represented around half of their 2012–2013 proportion in the NT (3.5 %) (DIAC 2013b:18). This suggests that the NT may currently be replicating the national distribution in the first three groups and experiencing fluctuations in the intake of the lower skilled migrants.

## Discussion

The data presented above have revealed variations between immigration trends nationally and in the NT. This permits formulating four propositions about the nature of international migration to peripheral regions. The first proposition is that concerted, long-term efforts at a national level to increase the proportion of skilled immigrants in permanent additions bring effects in peripheral regions. Second, peripheral regions benefit from national policies to increase skilled migration albeit with a delay. The lagged effect was revealed by tracking changes in the family and skilled streams over time. Table 1 has shown that the NT experienced an 8-year lag in comparison to Australia as a whole in achieving a similar representation of the family stream in permanent additions. Nationally, the family stream contributed one third to permanent additions in 1997–1998. In the NT, contributions from the family stream to permanent additions were reduced to one third only in 2004–2005.

The impact of this time lag was twofold. First, from a demographic perspective, for the first part of the period under review, family stream migration was driving population growth through permanent additions in the NT. Second, from an economic perspective, the NT welcomed immigrants who did not require, as conditions of entry, a pre-migration qualification recognition, a recent work experience relevant to the Australian labour market or a high level of proficiency in the English language. It is unclear how soon they have joined the labour market and if they have alleviated any of the skill shortages mentioned in section 5. To date, relatively little research has focused on their economic integration in peripheral regions, their cities and towns in Australia.

For the skilled stream, the delay in the NT in matching up the 50 % annual contribution to permanent additions was 5 years and was achieved in 2007–2008. This delay may reflect the fact that a less internationally known, out-of-the-way jurisdiction needed time to become considered by more applicants as an attractive skilled migration destination. Achieving the 50 % contribution was likely assisted by

the development and maturation of the NT marketing strategies for skilled migration and by a gradual increase in the employers' confidence in the process of nominating and employing overseas-born workers.

Third, the proportionate growth of skilled migration in permanent additions nationally and in peripheral regions has been driven by different visas. Nationally, this has been the role of Skilled Independent migration (Table 2), with which the NT has had relatively little success, except the initial years when the regional visas were new and just beginning to grow (Table 3). In the NT, the Employer-Sponsored migration led the way, in particular through the RSMS visas, which demonstrates the contribution that the regional migration policy has made to directing more skilled migrants to peripheral regions. The recent increase in the shares of the Employer-Sponsored visas nationally and in the NT can be attributed to the policy reforms outlined in section 3 that have better aligned the skilled migration with the needs of the employers, introduced priority processing for these visas and elevated the criteria for the Skilled Independent category, thus effectively restricting it to the highest calibre applicants.

Fourth, peripheral regions become important destinations for settlement of humanitarian stream entrants, and over time, they may end up receiving slightly higher shares of these immigrants in permanent additions than is the case nationally. As revealed by Table 1, the NT has received often higher annual proportions of such immigrants in its permanent additions than nationally and a slightly higher average proportion in the period of 1996–2013 than the national average. Such outcomes may result either from a government strategy to settle humanitarian entrants outside the largest cities, as has been the case in Australia (Piper and Associates 2009:5, 20), and/or from grassroot-level initiatives, where local authorities or local consortiums set up for these purposes seek humanitarian entrants as new settlers to boost the sizes of their populations. Large regional centres such as Darwin often become the destinations for them. Once they settle, they make an immediate demographic contribution. Recent research in Australia suggests that economic integration of humanitarian entrants is a lengthy process and may require even one generation for the results to be observed (Hugo 2014). This has implications for planning and funding of various settlement support services not only in the NT and Darwin but Australia as a whole.

In light of the above, one might ask what type of migration may best assist the NT in addressing its skill shortages. It would appear sensible that it supports the employer-linked migration, which has performed well and which can immediately alleviate skill shortages. This would involve continued promotion of this opportunity, support of prospective and current nominating employers with information and advice, providing employees and their families with introductions and connections to cultural and general interest community groups and advising those groups about the new arrivals.

As noted in section 4, some argue that skilled migration to 'global' and large cities (Perrons 2009) may disadvantage other regions from an opportunity to attract some of these immigrants. While some independent or business migrants could hesitate between, say Sydney and Darwin, this paper suggests that the NT has not been a strong contestant for the specific groups that the literature reviewed in section 4 has found to be attracted to the global and other major cities. So, while it is true that everyone competes for skilled migrants, it may be a generalisation to suggest that these cities are 'taking away' from regions, because different types of skilled migrants seem to be settling in those cities and in peripheral regions.

Further, it may be inefficient for the NT and Darwin to adopt the concept of creative class as the key means of achieving prosperity (Florida 2003). If they were to compete for a wide mix of creative class immigrants, they would be at a disadvantage in comparison to the more populous regions and global cities in Australia, and the return on investment in any such attraction strategies could be negligible. This corroborates an observation made by Luckman et al. (2009) that policies designed with large American city regions in mind are not seamlessly transferable to other contexts, including peripheral regions and their cities, where policies sensitive to those local contexts have more utility.

The NT-specific context includes workforce turnover, skills shortages and low overall numbers of immigrants, as compared to other jurisdictions. In such circumstances, it appears sensible to focus not only on the new arrivals with recognised skills but also maximise the skills and the potential that other *locally resident* immigrant groups may have, in particular family and humanitarian migrants. They do not need an introduction to the area like the newly settled skilled migrants do. They may also be more likely to stay (Golebiowska and Boyle 2014), thus possibly removing some of the concerns associated with onwards mobility of skilled immigrant workers from the NT (Golebiowska and Carson 2009). In the family stream, there were nearly 5200 partners who have settled in the NT between 1996–1997 and 2011–2012, and just over 12,000 humanitarian migrants of whom perhaps a third (adults) would be available for work and training. One may also add some 3400 partners of the skilled stream migrants<sup>5</sup> (DIAC unpublished statistics; DIAC 2013b, 2011, 2010, 2009b; 2008a, 2008b; DIMA 2006b). This is a total of around 12,600 residents. Some of them may fall into the untapped pool of potential workers who could help alleviate some skills shortages in the NT. Unemployment and underutilisation of skills that these migrants experience are confirmed by informal reports provided by stakeholders who work with and support immigrants.

## Conclusions

This paper has adopted a novel approach to data analysis and enhanced the understanding of skilled migration to peripheral regions. The data analysis involved tracking, over a period of 17 years, the dynamics between the components of permanent additions to Australia's and the NT resident populations, as well as examining changes in the composition of their respective skilled migration streams. As a result, it was possible to formulate four original propositions about the nature of international migration to peripheral regions.

This paper has two key messages. First, peripheral regions benefit from national policies aimed at attracting skilled migrants albeit with a *lagged effect*. The NT experience may represent valuable evidence for other peripheral regions in Australia and elsewhere that have access to skilled migration and are interested in maximising its role in addressing their skills shortages. Such regions seem to receive a less diverse mix

<sup>5</sup> An assumption is made that a typical immigrant family unit is represented by the 2+1 model. Two represents the principal visa holder and the partner. One represents the child. When the total number of skilled migrants (10,269) is divided by 3, the number of partners is approximately 3423.

of skilled visas than nationally, so rather than seeking to match this mix, they may benefit more from supporting the skilled visa category(-ies), which has been delivering immigrants, such as the employer-linked category in the NT. In the NT, this outcome has been achieved thanks to the regional migration policy, in particular the uptake of the RSMS visa, so it would be important for those peripheral regions to be using visas designed specifically for regions.

Second, in the context of low overall levels of skilled and other immigration to peripheral regions as compared to other jurisdictions, the reality of workforce turnover and skill shortages, a complementary strategy would be to harness the capacity to work of all immigrant-born residents. This would extend beyond the immigration policy denoting just the process of bringing in people with skills and would comprise elements of integration policy, specifically encouraging and enabling the available and interested *locally resident* immigrant groups to train and upskill in those occupations where skill shortages have been identified.

The supply of skills is critical to economic development of peripheral regions in Australia and peripheral regions in other countries and calls for more research. Apart from continued research on new skilled settlers in peripheral regions, future research could examine the existing occupations and skills levels of the *resident* family, humanitarian and secondary skilled migrants (e.g. spouses) and investigate what pathways to skilled employment in areas where shortages exist would work best for those who would need them. Further, testing the four propositions offered here in similar regions with an access to international migration would permit establishing if they hold a more universal explanatory power and if and how they may need to be refined.

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