Korean Immigrants in Australia: the Characteristics of Recent Korea-Born Immigrants to Australia and a Socio-Demographic and Economic Profile of the Korean-Born Community from the 1991 Census

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I. Introduction

The rise in prominence of South Korea in Australia's international trade has heralded an increased interest in Korean studies in Australian tertiary institutions and cultural exchanges between the two countries, as well as in the area of immigration. The level of immigration from Korea to Australia has never been enormous. Most of the emigration from Korea to Australia has historically originated from South Korea and in mid-1991 of Australia's 20

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892 Korea-born population, only 52 were born in North Korea, with the remainder coming from South Korea.\(^1\) Immigration data indicate that most of those born in North Korea who have emigrated to Australia during the past decade actually emigrated from South Korea, and thus virtually all contemporary emigration from Korea to Australia originates from South Korea.

This article has four main sections: the following section commences with a brief historical note on emigration from Korea to Australia; the second section renders a consideration of the changing nature and composition of this emigration since the early 1980s. The third section commences with a discussion of the demographic characteristics of the Korea-born community, families and households in Australia, then the social characteristics of the Korea-born community are briefly addressed, and finally various economic variables, such as labour force status, occupational distribution and individual income, receive attention. The final section of the article concludes with a general discussion of the data presented and suggests future possible developments in the nature and composition of the Korea-born community in Australia.

In general, this article seeks to provide a more descriptive rather than analytical discussion of the nature of Korean immigration to Australia and the characteristics of the Korea-born community in Australia. Such a position is adopted primarily due to paucity of published material on Korean-Australians.

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1. Most statistical collections in Australia, unlike historical and political commentaries, do not differentiate between North and South Korea. In this article the term Korea will be used to refer to people born in either North and South Korea. Part of the reason for this is that less than a quarter of one per cent of the Korea-born community in Australia came from North Korea, and thus any specific consideration of the North Korea-born community is unwarranted as this group is largely inconsequentially when compared to the more numerous south Korea-born community.