

# The Cruncher: They still call Australia home.... we just won't let them in

I am not sure what is more embarrassing, Queensland's Deputy Premier demanding cuts to international arrivals or the federal government agreeing to it, writes Dan Petrie.

**Dan Petrie**

**3 min read**

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## **Overseas flight prices soar ahead of new arrival caps**

“Queensland or (insert your place of Covid distress here), you've got this!”

That moronic phrase popularised by Disney teen movies and now adorning the social media accounts of our dear leaders relates to everything and anything ... except of course those citizens (gulp) who hold an Australian passport in overseas lands.

‘Expats? sorry, we don't have this!’

The decision by national cabinet to halve international arrivals earlier this month was met with deafening silence by business leaders and the community more broadly, fuelling a commonly held perception that no one cares about our people abroad.

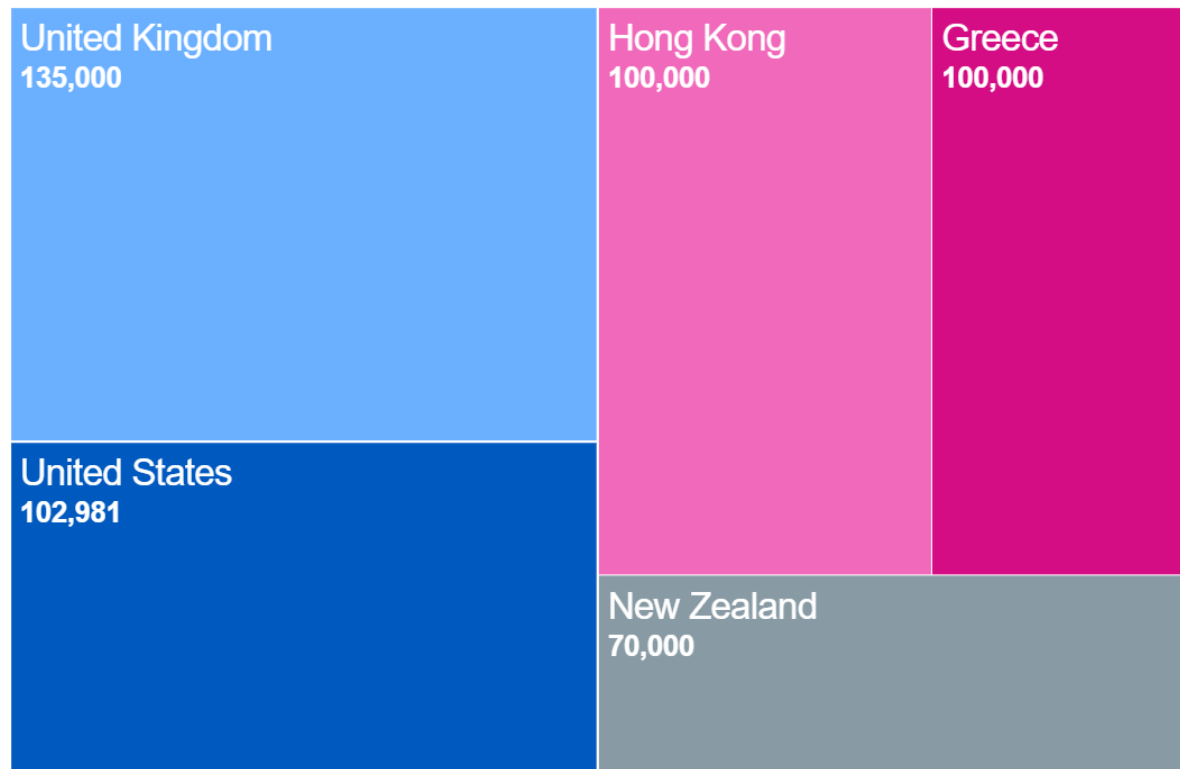
I am not sure what is more embarrassing, Queensland's potty-mouth Deputy Premier, Steven Miles demanding cuts to international arrivals or the federal government agreeing to it. What a contrast.

Valuing our people living overseas and the shabby treatment many have received by having the temerity to try and come home is obvious.

Australia's leaders talk about this virus as though we are fighting a war, yet no time in our country's history have we ever sent our soldiers into combat not bothering to bring them back.

Advance.org, the organisation that partners with the Federal Government to connect Australians globally, estimates that the numbers of Australians living abroad is one million and interestingly, Australian born citizens are leaving and staying away longer.

## Where do expats live?

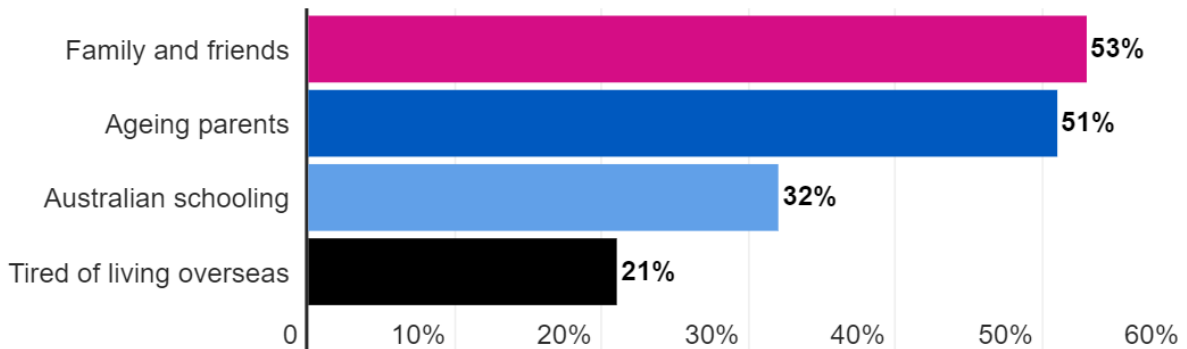


Source: OECD

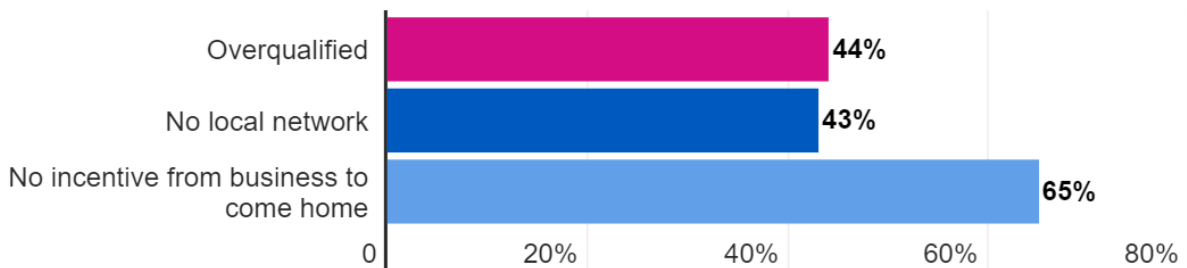
The majority of people who leave Australia head to Europe or North America, while Hong Kong is the Asian destination of choice for Australian. Closer to home net migration into Australia reveals a healthy intake of people born overseas while Australian born citizens are the ones leaving.

The last year was the exception to that rule and reversed a decade long brain drain. The pull of home does eventually lure many professionals back as family considerations and lifestyle dominate but career prospects remain somewhat limited as an overtly parochial business class do little to entice professionals abroad home. According to Advance.org's annual, 'They still call Australia home' survey for 2019, 44 per cent of respondents were told they were over-qualified for local jobs and 65 per cent believe that Australian businesses are creating an environment that discourages people from returning home.

## Reasons for coming home



## Employment reality



Source: *Advance.org*

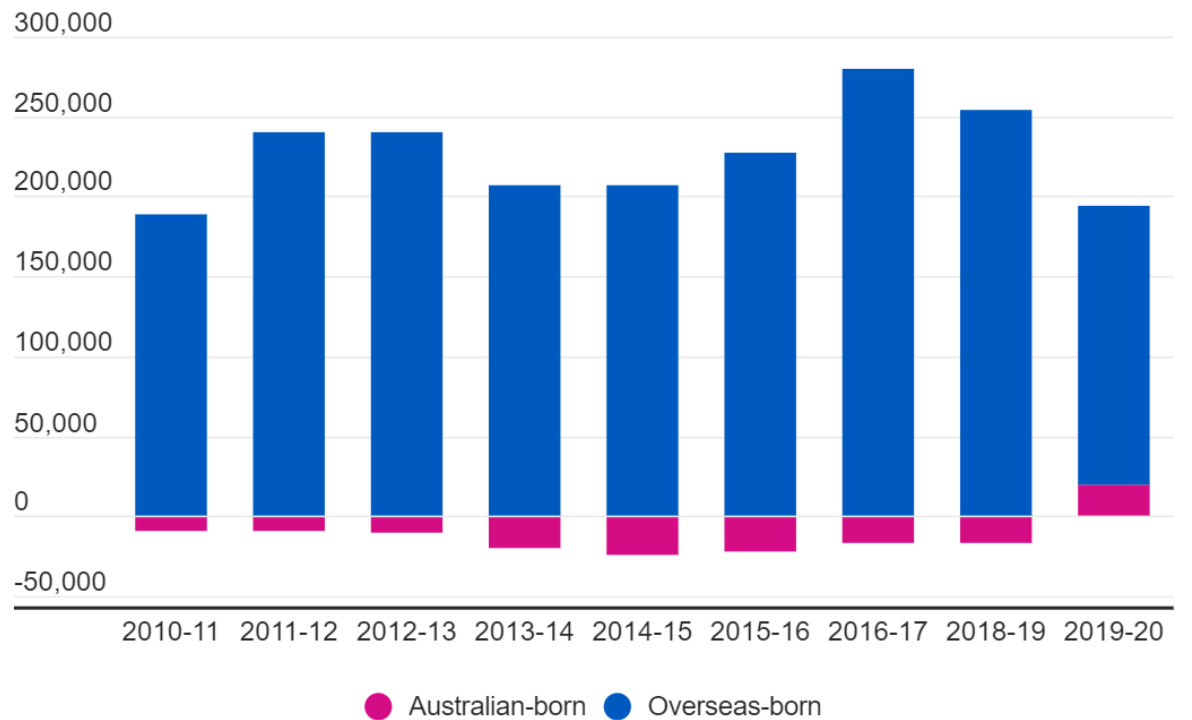
The reasons expatriate Australians have sought to come home varies from ageing parents to job loss from Covid and circumstances that may have changed. Whatever the reason, the general apathy toward our fellow citizens trying to get back has been a mix of political posturing, hostility and an Australia that doesn't care.

There are 35,300 Australians overseas that have registered to come home, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. But many have stayed put, with most staying in Europe and the United States where daily Covid cases dwarf Australia's by several country miles.

That said, vaccine rates in those regions have provided a pathway out of lockdowns and while jobs in arms are great, there has been a pragmatic response to opening up to the world in these regions.

The Fortress Australia mentality has done away with the throwaway line of “if I need to go home, I just jump on a plane and I am there in a day.”

## Net overseas migration



Source: ABS

The Australian diaspora living abroad and the contribution our fellow citizens make in overseas lands should be a source of national pride instead of the ‘you should have come home when the government told you to’ attitude.

While we may beat our chests about Hollywood stars spending some down time here, it is instructive to note that these celebrities can come and go as please.

To all levels of government and to the silent business community, when it comes to hanging our citizens in foreign countries out to dry, you’ve got this!

***Dan Petrie is the Chief Information Officer of data analytics firm, Grafa and a former***

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