

Today at the National Press Club, Director General of the International Organization for Migration, Amy Pope, after years advising on migration at the White House, she'll discuss how to attract global talent and prevent the exploitation of migrants. Amy Pope with today's National Press Club address.

Hello, and welcome to the National Press Club of Australia for today's Westpac address. My name is David Crowe. I'm the chief political correspondent at the City Morning Herald and The Age, and a director here at the club. Our guest today is Amy Pope, the Director General of the International Organization for Migration, the global agency that is part of the United Nations system and has worked on migration issues since 1951. Ms. Pope leads the organisation with 175 member states and a presence in 171 countries. The timing is especially important, given this week's big debate in Parliament House on questions of migration, the response to asylum seekers, and the power to deport individuals or refuse entry to people from specific countries—a huge debate this week. Amy Pope became the Director General of the IOM last October after a long career in migration and government. She was previously the agency's Deputy Director General for Management Reform, and before joining the IOM, she was a senior advisor on migration to US President Joe Biden. She also served as Deputy Homeland Security Advisor to President Barack Obama, so we're very fortunate in having her speak to us today. For those of you watching at home, you can join the conversation on X, where our handle is @PressClubAust, or you can use the hashtag #NPC to track this important debate today. Please join me in welcoming Amy Pope to the podium.

**Amy Pope:**

Good afternoon. So thank you, first to the National Press Club of Australia, for the honor and the opportunity to be here with all of you today. And let me start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, on whose land we sit, and I pay my respects to their elders past, present, and emerging. Now, I want to pause here for a moment, because even in recognizing the First Nations people, we are recognizing that for most of you here in the room, you have your own history of migration—you are migrants. Australia is a country of migrants. And I'm going to talk straight to you today because when I say the word "migration," I know that most of you are not thinking about your families, even though half of all Australians are either born in another country or have a parent who was born in another country. You might not even think of your ancestors, your grandparents, your great-grandparents who migrated to Australia, many who fled conflict or persecution, many who were just poor and looking for a better life. And instead, if you read the papers—and many of you are writing the papers—when I say the word "migration," you think of the housing crisis, you think of crime, you think of death at sea, border control, national security. You, in this room—media, politicians, our friends in the diplomatic core—you're familiar with a word that dominates the discussion on migration: negative, doom-laden, fear-inspiring words of migration. And ladies and gentlemen, this is because far too often, we get stuck discussing one narrow slice of the migration journey: what happens when people get stuck at borders, what happens when people can't get returned, what happens when lives are tragically lost at sea, what happens when a host community feels overwhelmed, or when migration feels like a threat. But that's not the whole picture. In fact, that's a tiny piece of the picture, and the polarizing themes that we are hearing in the media today often misrepresent

what is happening around the world. So, because the consequences of this discourse are actually harmful to the prosperity of Australians and of this country, I want to reframe the discussion for you. I want to take you up 30,000 feet. I want to enable us to look at the bigger picture, to look at the data, to look at the evidence, and to connect the dots between what's happening around the world today and the policies that are playing out in this country. Now to do this, we need to start first with the communities where migrants are coming from. We need to understand their decisions to move. We need to focus not just on what we perceive they will take from us but what they will give to us. Not on how migration diminishes this country but how it contributes to the country. And we need to ask, why are people moving? What is happening? What are the ways in which they are moving, and what can we do better, or what can we do differently? And fundamentally, when we're focusing only on fear or on protection and protectionism, we are neglecting the bigger picture on the modern, complex reasons why people move.

So, at this moment in time, and right here in Australia, we are seeing play out a significant crossroads on the narrative of human movement, and it's not just here in Australia, right? We're seeing this narrative play out on every continent in the world, impacting every nation in the world. Whether it's on the bustling streets of Europe, in Finland, where I was just a few days ago, to the vibrant communities in Africa, to the rapidly evolving societies in Asia and in the Americas. And this year, the conversation is really at a fever pitch because of the unprecedented number of global elections. Migration is on the ballot of nearly every single country around the world; it is a central theme influencing political agendas and shaping the future of nations. And in many—I'd say, even most—of these elections, the narrative about migration is dividing electorates and polarising societies.

Now, I'm an American, you've heard that. I've worked for two presidents in the White House, and I feel very deeply how this debate is playing out every single day in the United States of America, where the debate is about how migrants are stealing jobs or invading the country when the facts show that migration actually helped to drive the strongest post-COVID recovery of any economy in the world, and that wasn't just regular migration; it was also irregular migration. Now, it's not to minimise the very real debate about what's happening on the border of the United States and Mexico, but when we focus only on the border, we lose the wider perspective.

In Australia, I've been here for maybe 48 hours, and during just those 48 hours, one of your politicians described it to me as a "rich debate." I prefer to say politically hot. Why then, you might ask, would any sane person want to spend their life working on the issue of migration? Now, I do this work, I love this work because I see the tremendous potential that migration brings, and I believe we have fallen into a terrible trap where we are actually killing a constructive and sensible debate about migration because of the negative discourse. Instead of understanding and leveraging the political and economic benefits of migration, we are killing opportunities to use migration in a way that enables better political and economic opportunities for the people of Australia. And this reductionist view completely overlooks the broader, richer story of migration that all of you in this room know to be true: the stories of aspiration, of resilience, of the potential for migration to contribute to societal advancement and global prosperity. And our focus on these borders, on the lines that divide us, misses the opportunity to explore how migration can actually serve as a bridge to understanding, cooperation, and mutual benefit.

So I'm delighted to be here at this moment in time, at least. I know the issue I'm working on is relevant and timely. But my reason for coming here was because I hope to engage in a meaningful dialogue, jet lag allowing, right, during my time here.

And for those of you who don't know IOM, we're part of the UN system. We were founded in the aftermath of World War II as a way to find homes for the millions of people who had been displaced after the war. Today, we have the third biggest footprint of any UN-affiliated agency in the world, with 175 member states, nearly 30,000 people working in 171 countries, and 520 offices located globally. Australia is one of our founding members, and we have a long and cherished history working with this government. And one of the reasons why is because Australia has its own rich tradition of migration, with tales of resilience and aspiration, and overwhelmingly, a bridge to mutual cooperation and understanding.

And I've seen it, just in the 48 hours that I've been on the ground. Whether it was the border officer who greeted me when I arrived, who was from Greek heritage, to the woman who arrived as a refugee from Africa and is now built a community working with refugees to empower them and get jobs, or a successful business leader who arrived here on a boat from Vietnam as a small child with fear about what would come next. And what really has struck me is that despite what I read in the newspaper today or yesterday, there are a variety of leaders who really are working to tap the full potential of migration for the benefit of all people.

Now, the debate is not new. You probably remember or have heard stories about the tensions around migration of southern and Eastern Europeans after World War II, the Vietnamese in the '70s, Syrians or Africans. And what the story shows us is that time and time again, there's a period of tension, there's a period of resistance, but ultimately there is a period of integration and success and prosperity that delivers better outcomes for more people. And we know that ultimately it creates a richer, more diverse, more multicultural society that will enable more of this country to deliver on the challenges of the future.

We know, we know that this isn't easy,

and it doesn't come without cost. I've heard the conversations about the housing shortage; that is real. I've heard the conversations about the pressure on the support system; that is real. But we also know there are skills gaps here in this country that are going unmet. And what I'm seeing around the world is that those gaps will only become more significant, particularly as we see demographic trends play out around the world. Today, I know when the pandemic hit, Australia was not unlike many other countries in the world, where migrants were actually the ones who were serving on the front lines. Whether they were the ones working in your hospitals, continuing to farm the fields, continuing to provide essential services despite the very real health risks they faced. Now, the pandemic might have receded, but the need for migrants here in this country has not receded, and the need for safe, regular pathways to the jobs that exist here today, those needs have not receded either. This is a global issue, and we are seeing the emergence of global competition for talent.

That's what I want you to hear today because even as the conversation is about how we decrease net migration in Australia, around the rest of the world, there is a growing recognition that there will soon be fierce competition to attract migrants into your economies. In places like Japan and the Republic of Korea, where I visited a few weeks ago, by 2050, people over the age of 65 will account for 40% of their population. Think about that for a minute. And many European countries are not far behind—Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece—their populations are ageing at a rate that they cannot survive without migration. Last year, we saw labour shortages in 30 of the top economies around the world, and according to the Boston Consulting Group, those labour shortages cost \$1.3 trillion in lost opportunities, more than 1% of daily global economic output. And if we're going to address those solutions, the answer is not going to be in AI. There will be technological advances, there will be opportunities to get smarter and more efficient in the way we use labour, but, ladies and gentlemen, migration will be part of that solution. We also know that it's not just about alleviating current labour shortages; it's about driving innovation, revitalising ailing economies, providing companies and countries with future sustainable development strategies, and a strategic advantage in the world. We've seen this right here in Melbourne, and in Australia, my first day here, I spent maybe five hours in Melbourne. I had the great opportunity to engage with our friends and partners at Talent Beyond Boundaries. If you don't know them, you've got to get to know them. They are an organisation that matches refugees with jobs. And in the roundtable they convened with us, I met a woman who told me of a shocking recruitment gap that she's facing in her network of 300 Catholic schools. She said they are facing a labour shortage of 5,000 teachers by next year. She said, "We can't educate our kids; the school needs energetic, expert teachers to inspire the next generation of Australians." What better example of where a smarter, more strategic migration policy will add value?

Now, it has to be smart migration, designed to meet the needs and the talent gaps that exist across the nation. That's where we at IOM hope that we can be part of a solution to connect the dots between people and opportunity. And our goal is to drive solutions that create safer, more orderly, more dignified migration that works for more people. And we see it all over the world; when migration works well, it benefits everyone. Last year, the World Bank released its development report, and it demonstrated that across countries, across economies, migration, particularly when people are matched with job opportunities, leads to a net benefit for more people. It's not just for the migrant herself; it's not just for the community she comes from; it's for the community who's hosting her.

So let me give you three ideas, three components of the work we're doing within IOM, in order to enable better outcomes. Now, we released our strategic plan—I'm only, by the way, at the end of month six of my tenure—but we released our strategic plan on day 101, and we have three key objectives that we think will enable better migration outcomes. Number one, it's to save lives. That's the most straightforward—most simple, I won't say simple—but most straightforward work we do. So, whether it is in response to the situation in Afghanistan, after the earthquake in Turkey, in Ukraine, where we have the biggest footprint of any UN agency working in the country, assisting the Rohingya people in places like Bangladesh, most of our work is humanitarian. Most of our work is about providing vulnerable people on the very worst day of their lives with some support, with some shelter, with some hygiene kits, with some medical support. We're good at that; we do the job well. We're not bureaucratic; we get out there fast, and we support those who are most in need. But that's not enough; for too

long, the humanitarian community has stopped there. We give you a tarpaulin, we sort of pat ourselves on the back, and we walk away. And what we've realised after 20 years, 30 years, 40 years of providing that kind of assistance, if we just stop at saving lives, when we go back to people years later, they're often still in the same position, often still living in a camp, often still unable to access jobs, or education, or future. So, if we're going to truly enable human potential, and frankly, if we want to move people away from a dependence on repeated humanitarian aid, year after year after year, we need to enable people to have access, to become engaged members of their community, we need to give them agency, so that they can help be part of their future rather than leaving them left behind to respond in a very vulnerable situation.

We also know that we need to do a lot more to start anticipating when communities are going to move. We know that climate change is going to displace more people than ever in the years to come. Last year, more people were displaced by disasters relating to climate change than by conflict. Think about that for a minute. Think that 300 million people live in communities that are vulnerable to climate shocks. I spoke to some folks here in Australia, people who have lived the experience of being displaced by climate-related disaster, whether it's flooding or drought or wildfires. When you hear the word "displacement," you don't necessarily think of yourselves, but spend a moment to reflect on either your experience or people you know who have been displaced by one of these forces. And then think for a minute, if you did not have insurance, if you did not have a government who could help you respond, if you did not have services to help fill the gap, where would you be today? That's the situation that we are going to face more and more across the world with communities that are vulnerable. I was in Somalia several months ago, and Somalia has seen drought after drought after drought. These are communities that are primarily agricultural or pastoral; they rely on the land, they rely on rainfall. And you think, by the time you get to six seasons of drought, we would understand that people have to move; they're deciding between starving or moving. But as an international community, we often fail to respond until people have moved. We wait until 3 million people have left their communities, some crossing borders into Kenya and other countries, and then we realise, "Oh, it's gonna cost us billions of dollars in order to provide assistance to those communities in need."

What we think needs to happen is that, as an international community, we need to use the data that identifies which communities are going to be at risk of displacement and engage with them earlier, to provide solutions to that displacement, to identify how do we enable better agricultural practices, how do we ensure that people can move safely, that people can move into other communities where they will not cause or exacerbate existing conflict from migration to work. We need to move away from this reactive posture, and we need to move toward something that is more predictive, something that is more strategic, and something that is more comprehensive.

And we know that right here in your backyard, in the Pacific Islands, we will see some of the most life-changing climate displacement of any other region. We know whether it's in countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and the Pacific Island countries, people are being displaced at record rates. Between 2008 and 2018, over half a million people were displaced as a result of climate disasters. Seventy-five percent of the Earth's volcanoes, you all know, are located in the Ring of Fire—I love that word, it makes me think of the Johnny Cash song, doesn't it?—and 90% of the Earth's earthquakes occur

along this path. And the Pacific island nations are particularly vulnerable. I spoke with an official from the government of Vanuatu, and he told me they can barely recover; they are seeing storm after storm after storm. They can barely respond after one storm before they're hit by another. And Vanuatu is not alone. In Tuvalu, the sea level is rising, and they are literally facing the disappearance of their homes. Do we wait until people are at the breaking point, until their house is gone, till their future is gone, before we respond? The good news is, there is good news: 80% of climate displacements could be prevented through proactive measures, according to the World Bank. That's why for us, one of our key objectives is to work with communities to prepare for and prevent or mitigate crisis, in many cases relying on traditional or indigenous methods for doing so. Last year, I attended the Pacific Islands Forum in Cook Islands, and it was clear to me that leaders of the Pacific Islands recognize the existential threat they are facing, and they're taking ownership, and they're responding to those threats. Coming out of that meeting was an agreement between Pacific Island leaders to have a regional framework on climate mobility. This is a first-in-the-world strategy to identify ways to collaborate between nations that are vulnerable to climate threat and to promote safe, orderly, and regular migration responses. Also announced as part of that forum was an agreement between Tuvalu and Australia, which is really groundbreaking. It is recognizing the enormous threat that Tuvalu is facing and coming up with a proactive strategy to enable safer, more regular migration for the nationals of that country.

That leads me to our third objective, which is to facilitate safe, regular, orderly pathways for migration. Now, migration is human. You would not be sitting here if your ancestors had not migrated at some point in history. And for many people on the move, migration is a normal human mechanism to respond to long-term global imbalances. Humans are a mobile species. If there's economic disparity, conflict, climate disaster, people move—that's what we do. And in many, many cases, people have no choice but to leave. If we recognize that as a fact, if we engage and build proactive solutions, we actually can stop people resorting to human smugglers and human traffickers who know that human beings are mobile and who are taking advantage of the fact that governments are failing to engage in more strategic solutions. People should not have to put their lives at risk to find a chance to get a job or to be educated or to be reunited with their families. And we're seeing across the world, irregular migration is on the rise, and it's increasingly dangerous. And possibilities for people to migrate safely, to migrate legally, they're just too few. And one of the downsides to the failure of governments to come up with more comprehensive policies is that asylum systems—the systems that were meant to be put into place to protect those who are fleeing persecution, those who are fleeing conflict, those who have no other choice—the asylum systems are being overwhelmed, in some cases, by people who are not fleeing persecution but are seeking economic opportunities. If we want to stop people getting trapped in ineffective asylum systems, if we want to ensure that asylum remains a pathway for those who need it most, we need to make sure we provide pathways for actual jobs, and we can do so more strategically. We can provide the training, we can do the labour gap analysis, we can ensure people understand the culture they're moving into, and they're connected to a job opportunity. We can work with industry to respond to the needs that they have, whether it's IT or healthcare or construction or agriculture, to meet the skills gap that they're facing.

And I want to be clear here: I'm not suggesting that all desperate people will migrate to Australia, but what it does mean is that Australia should be investing in creating better migration pathways, whether it's here, whether it's in the Pacific, across Asia, or globally.

And when Australia is part of that solution, when governments are part of that solution, it can lead to truly sustainable development. You might not know this, but the amount of money that comes back from migrants who are working overseas, the money that comes back in the form of remittances to low and middle-income countries, that's equal to about \$700 and \$670 billion a year. That amount far outweighs any amount of overseas development assistance, even combining the development assistance from all of the countries contributing. And by the way, that money is not taxpayer money; that money is money earned through the hard work of the migrants themselves. And the most significant irony about what we're facing here today is that those economies who would benefit from better migration policies are the same economies where we're hearing the most vitriolic, loudest anti-migration rhetoric.

So, to tackle this, we need to separate the conversation about border management from the conversation about migration. We need to acknowledge there are real pressures that are faced by communities. We need to acknowledge that when a large influx of migrants comes in over a short period of time, it does create strain on systems, it does create tension. And I want to acknowledge that every country has the right to decide its own policies and its own legislation regarding border management and migration. But if we just take a step back, when we recognize the real labour needs that exist around economies across the globe, there's so much more we can do. We need to build more comprehensive approaches. This is not just a matter for the Department of Home Affairs. If we want to create a better approach to migration, we need to have development assistance, foreign policy, home affairs, urban planning, social services, education at the table, coming up with a strategic, forward-looking, comprehensive approach. And I know I've heard, we're gonna talk about—I'm sure—the housing shortage that you see here in Australia, but what I find so fantastically ironic about that conversation is just earlier this week, the construction industry highlighted the skills gap they face. What I understand is that Build Skills Australia said they need 90,000 extra construction workers in the next three months for the government to meet its target of 1.2 million new homes by 2029. I mean, this perfectly demonstrates how migrants can be part of the solution for Australia's economic growth and to continue the trajectory of this great country.

So, at IOM, we are asking more of you to join in this effort—the academics, the private sector, the communities themselves. And for the journalists in the room, we want you on board too, because I know the negative news gets you lots of clicks. I know we have that conversation coming in today, right? If you want to get the attention of a journalist, tell them that you have some bad news. But what I'm asking all of you to do is to help to present the more complex, comprehensive picture that is migration. Ladies and gentlemen, we stand at a pivotal moment with a potential to redefine the global approach to migration, and this is not just my idealism—I am idealistic, I'm optimistic, I work in migration—but it is not just idealism or aspiration; it is a practical necessity. And the path forward is not easy; it has its challenges. And no one who works in this space does so because it's easy. But the truth is, despite the rhetoric, we are well equipped to meet the challenges, and the key to our success lies in our collective action, in our commitment to a common vision, a vision where migration contributes positively to societies worldwide. It's already done so here in Australia. Looking at all of you in this room today, I know every single one of you has a migration story of your own. So let's work together, across nations, across cultures, across sectors, to craft policies that not only manage migration more effectively but leverage migration for the

greater good. And let's commit to this path, not just for the sake of the poor people who are on the move or the vulnerable who are living in developing countries without access to the services that we're used to but for the future prosperity and stability of our global community. The nations that best understand the migration landscape and how it can impact their economies for good—these are the nations that will be in the best position to take on the challenges of the coming decades. Australia is at the forefront of this moment. We see it; you're facing the challenges head-on, and I'm looking forward to this great country's next chapter in embracing the opportunities that this vast wealth of human talent represents. But don't let the political rhetoric distract you from that goal. We have everything to gain from tackling these challenges together.

Thank you.

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**David Crowe:**

Well, thank you very much for that speech. And I've got to say, you held the room's attention, and you held the attention of journalists, for the very positive message there. So, mission accomplished on that front. We will now go to some questions from the media, but I'll kick things off with one about the Australian—it's kind of a situation at the moment, probably one that you see in other countries as well. I'm interested in your view on this: After the pandemic, there were forecasts for what was going to happen with migration in Australia, the net migration intake. Those forecasts were missed; there was a big influx of people for various factors once the pandemic was over, in large part, and that's then led to a debate about whether that number needs to be brought down from something that went above 500,000 to something that the government would like to get down to 250,000 a year or so. Now, that's small in the global scheme of things, but it's still it's very important for Australia. Australians generally support a multicultural country; polling shows strong support for that. I think your message on that point would resonate with a lot of Australians, but two questions on this: Is that Australian experience being replicated in other countries around the world because of what's happened after the pandemic? Do you see it elsewhere? And what's your message to Australians who would say, "Look, I'm sorry, I accept migration, but it just got out of hand here, and we need to get the number down"? Do you recognize that's a valid response?

So I think there are many, many lessons in the post-COVID recovery in terms of migration. And I'm going to go back to the United States where the number of people coming up to the southwest border has hit unprecedented levels, right? And that is in large part due to pent-up demand for migration that was stymied during COVID. And of course, the way people are now moving up is challenging communities; it is not planned, it is not strategic. But that's where this information about post-COVID economic recovery is so powerful. The fact that so many people have come in has actually driven a very robust economic recovery in the face of what other countries have been experiencing, which is quite sluggish. So that actually suggests that we need to rethink how and why people are moving. And that goes to your question about the numbers. When we're looking at the numbers of migrants, I think what sometimes distracts us from a more nuanced conversation about what are the needs here in this country. You know, we are at a point in time where about a quarter of their population will



soon be out of the workforce; they will soon be persons who need actually support through your social security systems. Who's going to provide the tax base to provide that support? Who will provide the elder in nursing care? Who will meet the gaps that exist? So to reduce the conversation just to numbers misses a much more important conversation about what is—the country needs to meet its own economic objectives.

Thank you.

### **Our next question is from Tess Economy**

**Thank you very much for your time. The government has introduced legislation that would jail asylum seekers who refuse to cooperate with their removal to their home countries for up to five years. The move has been described as cruel. Do you agree with that description, and is Australia complying with international humanitarian law?**

So, I would say, first and foremost, that every country, every government, has the right to set its own migration and border management policies; that's our starting point. And so, in a country like Australia, you have a robust legislature, administration, and court system to evaluate whether those policies, whether that legislation, actually meet your standards around human rights, around international law. That's what we ask. Without looking at the particular questions of this particular legislation, we look to the courts of Australia, we look to the process that you have through the democratic—through the separation of powers—in order to evaluate it. And the role that we can play is providing advice about what we know about what's happening in the rest of the world, best practices to respond to migration challenges, information about what happens in the countries where people are coming from.

You just, uh, in your speech, described yourself as idealistic, yes? You also believe in the positive influences of migration. So, what do you make of this policy? Do you believe it is fair?

I think that governments, when responding to political challenges, are not always considering what are the unintended consequences of responding in a very political way to a very narrow slice of the broader debate. And when we're talking about detention or visa policy, even developmental assistance, we hear often, governments have an interest in limiting engagement because of a particular political issue. And what we encourage governments to do is take the broader view. What will be the impact of that policy on communities here in Australia? What will be the impact of such a policy on your economy or your ability to attract talent into the future? Those questions I can't answer for you now, but it's what we're asking governments to do, rather than to react politically, react from a more informed policy angle.

**Next question is from Ben Westcott.**

**Ben Westcott from Bloomberg. Thank you very much for your speech, um—at the risk of being accused of focusing on negative news—uh, there was—sorry, you wanna get your story published, I got it, ha ha ha ha. Recently, Australia signed an agreement with Tuvalu to take on more people in exchange for more influence on their diplomacy. Now, this was effectively a climate refugee deal without being described as such. And there's a high likelihood we're gonna see more climate refugees as time**

**goes on. Would you encourage countries to sort of think about climate refugees in advance and sign deals like this to try and, uh, best manage the flow of climate refugees over the coming years?**

So, I actually think what Australia has done with Tuvalu is one of the most interesting, innovative approaches to what we know is gonna happen. And I think I'm gonna correct you for one moment to explain the difference between refugees and migrants because refugees under the international convention have particular rights and countries, including Australia, who is signed up to the Refugee Convention, have particular responsibilities to protect refugees. But people who are displaced by climate—by rising sea levels, by drought, by disaster—they don't have those protections. And the current system where we now work and live does not recognize that someone who is displaced will be able to find a pathway to safety. So the fact that the government of Australia is proactively coming up with a solution is something that we think needs to be encouraged more broadly around the world because people are going to move as a result of climate-related disaster. And someone who is starving because they cannot farm or they cannot fish or they have no place to live is no more desperate than someone who is fleeing a war. So ultimately, we think that this is a tremendously innovative approach, as long as it's done in with the full partnership of Tuvalu, with their input, with respect for their culture, for their own economy, for their own development. But it's something that we're encouraging other countries to take a look at.

**Have you seen any other countries sort of pursuing this approach, or is Australia...?**

So, Australia is on the cutting edge of this one, right? We are hearing the conversations amongst other countries, including in the Caribbean, who are looking at ways to cooperate to provide a pathway or a home for people to live and work in the wake of disaster, but Australia is the first to negotiate something like this.

**Thank you. Now, the next question is from Dan Holmes.**

**Thank you very much. Great talk. Just wanted to pick up on—given that Ben is sort of—just asked a very similar question to what I was gonna ask—I thought I'd just pick up on that a little bit, and to ask, do we need to have a bit of a rethink about how we define refugees in the current global context? I mean, the sort of assumptions that we have around who is a refugee, who is a—who is a migrant, who is an emigrant, who is a—I don't know—an expat, for example, like this kind of language, I think really matters not—not just legally but in terms of how we treat people socially when they come to a new country.**

So, the system that was put in place in the wake of World War II, which met the needs of that moment, clearly no longer meets the needs of why people are moving today, right? So if you look at UNHCR's numbers on displacement, they'll say about 110, slightly over 110 million people are displaced. Thirty-five million of those people are refugees; the rest are people who are displaced for other reasons. When we add on the layer of people who are moving or living or working outside their country of birth, it's well over 250 million, right? And why people are living and moving are complex, and very few—increasingly, proportionately fewer—of those people are falling into that protected refugee category. But we also know that the conversation around who is a refugee is politically fraught. And at this moment in

time, to open up that discussion to the global community may actually lead to an erasing of protections for people who are vulnerable. That's why for us, at the United—at the International Organization for Migration—we are encouraging states to come up with much more proactive solutions to address why people are moving and to create pathways for people to move in safer, more dignified, more regular ways.

**And are there things the Australian government could do specifically to sort of preserve social cohesion as—as our culture sort of changes as a result of more people coming in from different countries?**

I think one of the ways you're seeing play out right now is to think about what is the impact of migrants coming into your country in terms of housing, in terms of social services, in terms of access to education, right? There is the kind of planning that goes into ensuring that there are enough places for people to go to school; it requires years, it requires engagement across sectors. And this is where I say too often, governments get stuck in putting migration into one category, failing to look at the broad landscape of the way migration will impact multiple parts of a government.

**Thank you very much. And next questions from Maurice Riley.**

**Uh, thank you for your address. I'd like to uh, look at uh, you know, skill migration uh, and you know, this country, um, is high cost, um, some would argue high taxing, um, and they could be impediments to attracting skill migration uh, to this country. In your travels, who's doing this really well? And one of the characteristics of their migration skill migration scheme to attract people to their country?**

So, I think everyone is grappling with this issue right now. I'm a big fan of the Canadians—the Canadians, is there any Canadians in the room? There you go. The Canadians are often on the forefront of coming up with better migration policies, including—by the way, and I know we see some of this in Australia—is community sponsorship around migration. We know that there is going to be fierce competition for migrants, and by the way, already, there is fierce competition to attract nurses. You know, if you want to bring a nurse into the UK, into Australia, into many of the economies across Europe, you are competing to provide the best offer. And that situation is going to become more and more acute into the future. So, what I'd like to see, what I'm hoping that we can encourage our government partners to do, is to invest as part of their development strategies in nursing education and healthcare education, in order to create sufficient nursing capacity to respond not to just Australia but to—to respond to the emerging needs across the world, and so that we're not inadvertently stripping the most skilled, talented people out of the economies that will need them most. But this is where the conversations around anti-migration and numbers can actually be quite harmful to Australia's own prosperity and own economic future. Migrants are increasingly able to make rational decisions, especially at the high-skilled level. There is going to be more competition, and I want people to really sit with that, and migrants are looking at what are the opportunities for them, not just in terms of how much money they can make, but in terms of where they'll be welcomed, where they can find a future, where they can have access to schools for their children. We think that's only going to become more and more acute in the years to come.

Can I ask if—yeah, we did have an Irish representative speak here, who really wanted their bricklayers to go back to Ireland, so, you know, like, the competition is quite fierce. If you—we need a few bricklayers, and I need a couple of chefs.

So, everybody needs bricklayers, yeah, right? I mean, and bricklayers, by the way, are a more medium-skilled occupation, right? But too often, frankly, the conversation is about how do we attract the doctors and the engineers without looking at some of the other sectors where we could really bring in migration to work for more people.

But can I ask your follow-up on that, that looks at it from a—from I guess the other side? I remember covering Silicon Valley many years ago and—and covering a report that highlighted how many Silicon Valley startups are founded by migrants.

Yeah, yeah.

Proves your point. However, it did write, and I know, headhunters from the US and other places will go to top universities in many countries and scoop up the talent every year. However, what does that mean for the country that's losing that talent? Isn't there an argument that says, "Hang on a minute, we need to find a way to actually stop some of that migration," because although it may be better for the wealthier, more developed nation, it means that countries that need the talent can lose it. Is it part of your remit to kind of discourage that?

Not to discourage, but it goes back to this point about my dream about development assistance, right? We start—right now, most governments look at development assistance over here, and they don't want to have any conversation at all about migration when it comes to development assistance. We actually think what needs to happen is we need to combine these conversations and look at development assistance in the context of ensuring that the people of a country where you're investing have the skills to respond to their own economic needs as well as to those that are broader. And you see that, for example, in the country of India. There's a very active conversation about upscaling its own population to work both in India and to work abroad. And in the best-case scenarios, you actually build in incentives for people—for the diaspora to either go back or to become part of the way in which you reskill or build skills within the sending country. It's a generally—governments are failing to use the diaspora to their maximum effect, and that is one of the most powerful forces that we see in terms of driving better outcomes here.

Thanks.

**Uh, next question from Tess Economy.**

**Thank you very much. I just wanted to touch on, again, the issue of climate-fuelled migration.**

**Yeah.**

**Do you believe that developing countries, who have contributed more emissions than developed countries, have a moral obligation to resettle people who are fleeing due to climate-fuelled disasters?**

I don't see it as a moral obligation; I see this as a practical reality because people are gonna move. I mean, that's the piece here that I think we really need to take into account. People will move—first within their own country, so they'll just be displaced from one community to another, then often they'll be moved into a neighbouring country. And when we look just at migration from the point of view of one nation, we're failing to recognize the regional impact that migration can have. I'm slightly obsessed with the country of Djibouti, so I'm gonna share it with you because it's a country of one million people, right? Every year, Djibouti has about a quarter of its population, about 220,000 people, pass through Djibouti. Someone said to me when I went to visit, "It's as if, in the United States, with 75 million migrants crossing from Mexican border up to Canada," right? Imagine what the impact on the country would be, right? So when you look at migration generally, it's a question of what can we do to support the government of Djibouti, which is seeing high numbers of migrants come through, which is fraying some of their political services, or social services, et cetera, and think about migration in terms of how do we build support systems there where they're already high numbers of migrants. So the conversation is not about how do we resettle everybody who's leaving Somalia into Australia; it's how do we build better regional responses to what's happening in—in Somalia, so that the neighbouring countries, whether it's Djibouti, whether it's Ethiopia, whether it's Kenya, have the resilience to manage those movements of people.

**Thanks. Next question from Ben Westcott.**

**Hi. I still incline refugees. The—the—um, we've—you've spoken at length in your speech about the social impacts we've already seen from migration around the world, you know, in the—in your home country of the U.S., in Europe, in Australia, you know, all these places where we see the political differences as a result of—um, migration—um, are you concerned with how much that is going to potentially get worse in coming decades as migration increases as a result of climate refugees, in addition to any other political instability that might be caused over coming years?**

I'm concerned about how it's gonna get worse this year because of the election dynamics that are happening across the world, right? I started my observations with the fact that migrants can't vote, right? Everybody's voting, but migrants can't vote. That means there is an increasing temptation of politicians to lay whatever has gone wrong at the doorstep of migrants because there will be no consequences for doing so in the short term. But in the long term, the impact on the economies that need migrants could be quite significantly negative. That's why we're encouraging a move away from the very short-term temptation to vilify migration or to cut off migration and to take this broader, more strategic, more comprehensive view of how to leverage migration so that it works for more economies.

I guess one aspect of that debate in Australia is this new law, which does give the—or which would give, if it passes parliament, the migration minister the power to declare that nobody will come from a certain country. Some of the countries rumoured to be potentially on that list are Iran, Iraq, South Sudan. Is that an extraordinary power, or is that a power that other

countries also exercise? We've of course saw it with the United States, very controversial there, but some Australians I think might think, well, why shouldn't the minister have that power? We should be able to say no. Is it a rare power, or is it commonplace around the world?

There are other countries who exercise that kind of power, and—and the United States does have similar laws on the books. But what it fails to understand is the impact on particular communities, the impact on economies, the impact on governments, is actually not very connected to the policy itself. So you can say, "Nobody can come in from X country," but the people who are affected are going to be your friends and neighbours who have family members who are from that country. It may have an impact that you just cannot foresee at this moment in time. And ultimately, it has very little impact on the governments themselves. There's another conversation that's happening in a lot of parliament's right now is whether we cut off development assistance because a country will not accept its nationals back. The argument being, "Well, why should we give them any money, right? They're not taking their nationals back." The result, the consequence of decisions like that, is you can actually undermine the ability of that country to take its nationals back in the future. You can actually destabilise the country in more significant ways that will lead to increased migration. So it's again, this temptation to take quick fixes as a way to respond to a political pressure that fails to look at what are the follow-on consequences of moving too quickly to act.

**Thank you. The last question now is from Dan Hunt.**

**Lucky me. Just wanted to pick up partly on—your answer to David's last question—your comments about the—I guess, the relative impacts of foreign aid and money that migrants are potentially sending to their home countries is really interesting. If we were to think about it from—not a soft power perspective, but from purely a sort of human impact perspective—are governments better off spending their money on domestic infrastructure for migrants than spending it directly on foreign aid?**

I think that that is too narrow of a lens. I do think that there is money that needs to be spent on domestic infrastructure to enable migrants to better integrate, to better contribute, to be part of the economies themselves. But it also means looking at how we're investing in the communities, and rather than having a project focused on agricultural development in Somalia, right, look instead at where are there communities of people already coming from? Can we enable those communities to have access to the jobs and the training so that they could be part of solar panel manufacturing here in Australia? One of the really interesting facts that we saw at the last COP was that achieving the Paris Green climate goals will be hampered because there are not enough people to do the jobs, right? So right there, we see if we want to get to a better place on climate mitigation, migration is part

of the solution. If we want to get to a better place in terms of climate adaptation, migration is part of the solution. So it's thinking about how do we leverage migration as a tool in these challenges of the moment, rather than trying to stop it and pander to what are short-term political gains or forces.

Thank you for all your words today.

Thank you. Thank you very much. And before I ask everyone here to thank you for your speech and your Q&A, I wanted to let you know that we will be presenting you with a membership card here from the National Press—nice—which, uh, means well, we'd love to have you back to speak in the future. Also, this will get you entry to the Geneva Press Club and the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., which gives you a chance to communicate the positive message to even more journalists. Please join me in thanking Amy Pope.