
Charles Darwin University

Analysis of migrant flows for the 2018 Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List

Taylor, Andrew

Published: 01/01/2018

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Taylor, A. (2018). *Analysis of migrant flows for the 2018 Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List*. (1 ed.) Northern Institute.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Research Brief

Issue RB01/2018



Analysis of migrant flows for the 2018 Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List

Dr Andrew Taylor

Northern Institute

College of Indigenous Futures, Arts and Society

andrew.taylor@cdu.edu.au

ISSN 2206-3862



Suggested citation

Taylor, A. (2018). *Analysis of migrant flows for the 2018 Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List*. Charles Darwin University: Northern Institute.

RESEARCH AIM

To examine flows of migrants to and from the Northern Territory who worked in occupations on the (2018) Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List at the time of the 2016 Census.

KEY FINDINGS

- The Northern Territory Government maintains a Skilled Occupation Priority List (SOPL) which identifies jobs in high demand or critical to the local economy and to industry.
- Past analysis by Professor Dean Carson identified the regions sending the highest volumes of SOPL migrants to the Northern Territory (NT) were Australia's capital cities.
- This 2016 based Census update identifies the NT received around 10,200 migrants during 2011 to 2016 who were in occupations on the SOPL at the time of the 2016 Census.
- The NT sent around 9,206 migrants to other regions interstate during 2011 to 2016, making for a net interstate contribution of around 1,000 (or 200 a year) to the Territory over the whole period.
- Southern capital cities, northern and central Queensland, and outback Western Australia were the highest sending regions based on volume.
- Western Australia Outback, Adelaide, South Australia Outback, Cairns and Queensland Outback were most likely to send SOPL migrants with between 4% and 6% of all of their outgoing migrants coming to the NT.
- The NT also received around 4,500 international migrants during 2011 to 2016 who were on the SOPL in 2016. The main source countries were the Philippines, India, England, New Zealand and Ireland.
- Overall, the findings are quite consistent with the 2006 based analysis on flows of migrants between the NT and other northern jurisdictions continuing.
- Regions sending relatively high volumes and relatively likely to send migrants to the NT should be targets for recruitment. This research suggests Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth, Western Australian Outback (especially Broome, Karratha, Port Hedland, Onslow, Exmouth and Kununurra), Northern Queensland (especially Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa and Weipa), Central Queensland (especially Rockhampton and Gladstone), the Philippines and India (especially the State of Kerala) are the best targets.



Background and Methods

This research provides a summary of the flows of migrants to and from the Northern Territory (NT) who, at the time of the 2016 Census of Population and Housing, said they were in occupations listed on the 2018 Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List (herein SOPLNT). The aim is to assist relevant agencies to prioritise activities for the recruitment and retention of SOPLNT migrants.

This study updates and extends some of the work published by Professor Dean Carson (2010 and 2011) based on analyses of 2006 Census data. There are some differences in the methods due to the curtailment of the unit of geography (Statistical Divisions) applied in the prior work. Instead, a similar unit of geography 'Statistical Area level 4' (or SA4) has been used. Capital cities incorporate numerous SA4s. These have been aggregated to form Greater capital city regions. This has had minimal impact on comparing results between this and Professor Carson's work.

The order of this report is to first identify the top ten interstate sending regions by absolute volumes for SOPLNT migrants to the NT, with some comparisons to the past research. Subsequently, analysis of the proportion of all outgoing SOPLNT migrants from individual interstate regions enables a ranking of the top ten regions by their likelihood of sending SOPLNT migrants to the NT (akin to a 'hit rate'). Source countries for overseas SOPLNT residents in the NT are then detailed and ranked, followed by research on where the NT sends (or 'loses') SOPLNT migrants to by volume ranking.

Analysis of overseas migrants in occupations on the SOPLNT is the major addition to this paper. These have been an important part of the Territory's changing workforce and demography during 2006 to 2016. Readers should note that this analysis is based on unadjusted Census data. Census counts are known to include a net undercount of people which, for the 2016 Census for the NT was estimated at 5% (with a Standard Error of 1.5%). Net undercount differs across groups in the population, however, figures for individual sub-groups are not available. It is reasonable to assume that actual figures may be approximately 5% higher than those presented here.

Readers should also note that inter-regional migration numbers involving the NT are relatively small and subject to potentially rapid changes. This means some caution should be exercised in asserting priority to individual regions. In addition, the analysis and combined recommended regions for promotion and recruitment reflects the SOPLNT as a whole and are not prioritised according to specific occupation shortages or needs. Consequently, the likely best interstate and overseas sources for specific occupations may be quite different to those listed in the analysis here.

Results

1. Ranked volumes of SOPLNT migrants from regions interstate

This analysis conveys the absolute number (volume) of migrants who said in the 2016 Census they were usual residents of the NT, were in occupations on the 2018 SOPLNT, and in 2011 were a resident of an interstate region outside of the NT.

The number of arrivals of SOPLNT migrants to the NT between 2011 and 2016 was 10,208, 13% higher than 2006. However, the Territory's population is estimated to have increased by 18% over the same period. While this might



suggest that SOPLNT migration has not kept pace with overall growth, it must be kept in mind that the list of occupations on the SOPLNT changes, thus affecting comparisons over time.

Table 1 and Map 1 identify the top ten interstate sending regions by volume for SOPLNT migrants to the Territory. These accounted for 55% of all incoming SOPLNT migrants during 2011 to 2016, with the top five of these accounting for 41% and regions six to ten just 14%. Unsurprisingly, capital cities still dominated as sending regions, with 39% of all male and 44% of female arrivals (41% overall) originating from these. The dominance of capital cities reduced from 2006 when they accounted for 45% of all incoming SOPLNT migrants.

The Western Australia Outback (North) region, Cairns, Townsville, the Gold Coast and Central Queensland made up the remainder of the top ten interstate sending regions for volume. The prior research had identified the Hunter, Far North Queensland, Northern Queensland, the Darling Downs, and Canberra as the sixth to tenth ranked sending regions. As such, northern Queensland has remained as an important source along with the capital cities.

Table 1 – Top ten interstate source regions by volume for SOPLNT migrants to the NT, 2011 to 2016

Rank	Volume of SOPLNT arrivals from interstate regions (SA4 based) to the NT, 2011 to 2016				
	Sending region	Males	Females	Total	Proportion of all incoming SOPLNT migrants
1	Greater Melbourne	554	496	1,055	10%
2	Greater Adelaide	528	449	981	10%
3	Greater Sydney	458	384	840	8%
4	Greater Perth	427	283	713	7%
5	Greater Brisbane	357	262	623	6%
6	Western Australia - Outback (North)	248	141	395	4%
7	Cairns	177	107	286	3%
8	Townsville	145	113	260	3%
9	Gold Coast	157	95	250	2%
10	Central Queensland	155	67	225	2%
Total		3,206	2,397	5,628	55%
Top 5 as a % of all interstate SOPLNT arrivers		39%	44%	4,212	41%
Top 10 as a % of all interstate SOPLNT arrivers		54%	57%	5,628	55%



After Marina Sirocchi

Map 1 - Top ten interstate source regions by volume for SOPLNT migrants to the NT, 2011 to 2016



2. Likelihood of sending SOPLNT migrants to the NT

The volume measure presented above favours larger source regions, especially capital cities, and does not take into account the likely success or 'hit rate' for attracting SOPLNT migrants from individual regions. A ranking of the proportion of out-migrating SOPLNT migrants coming to the NT is a suitable alternative and proxy measure. This is the proportion of out-migrating residents from individual regions outside of the NT who were in a SOPLNT occupation in 2016 and were resident in the NT in 2016.

Table 2 shows the top ten regions by likelihood of out migrating residents coming to the NT. Overall 2.2% of all people migrating from interstate regions outside of the NT during 2011 to 2016 and on the SOPLNT in 2016 came to the NT. The top ten regions by likelihood contributed just under one third of all SOPLNT migrants during 2011 to 2016. The regions with the highest likelihood of sending were Western Australia Outback (North), from which 6% of all out-migrants came to the NT, Greater Adelaide (5%), Cairns (4%) and Outback Queensland (4%).

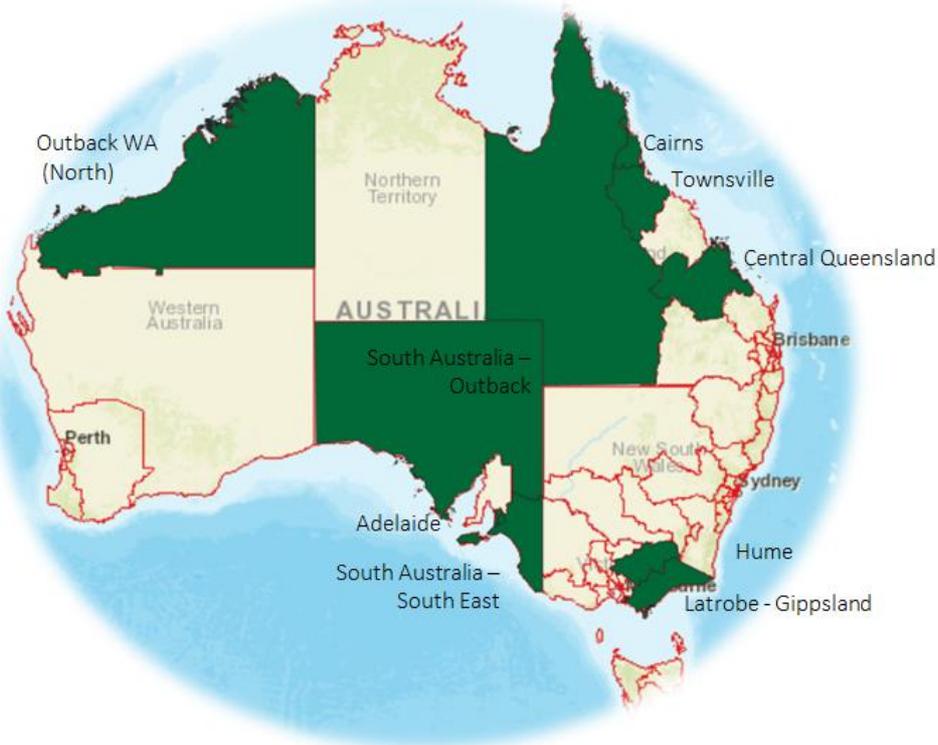


After Marina Siroochi

Table 2 - The top ten interstate sending regions for likelihood of coming to the NT, 2011 to 2016

Rank	Sending region	Total number sent from interstate region	Proportion of outgoing regional SOPLNT migrants coming to NT
1	Western Australia - Outback (North)	395	6%
2	Greater Adelaide	981	5%
3	South Australia - Outback	122	5%
4	Cairns	286	4%
5	Queensland - Outback	149	4%
6	Hume	167	3%
7	Townsville	260	3%
8	South Australia - South East	134	3%
9	Central Queensland	225	3%
10	Latrobe - Gippsland	160	3%
Total		2,879	4%

Map 2 - Top ten interstate source regions for likelihood of coming to the NT, 2011 to 2016





3. Sources of overseas SOPLNT migrants for the NT

As well as receiving around 10,208 SOPLNT migrants from interstate between 2011 and 2016, the NT also gained 4,050 international SOPLNT migrants during the same period. Table 3 lists the top ten source countries and emphasises those which might be targeted for recruitment and promotional activities. In particular, the two highest ranked sending nations for overseas SOPLNT migrants to the NT, the Philippines and India, are also the fastest growing overseas communities in the overall population of the NT (see Taylor and Carson, 2018). This bodes well for attracting further migrants who may have family and friends already residing in the NT.

Table 3 – Top ten sending nations for SOPLNT migrants to the NT, 2011 to 2016

Rank	Country of birth	Greater Darwin	Rest of NT	Total
1	Philippines	249	49	298
2	India	171	75	246
3	England	139	28	167
4	New Zealand	68	67	135
5	Ireland	84	14	98
6	Nepal	42	-	42
7	United States of America	13	36	49
8	Zimbabwe	25	25	50
9	Sri Lanka	12	-	12
10	China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	29	-	29
Total		832	294	1,126

More detailed analysis of Census data may provide insights on locations within each source country which may be more likely, based on past trends, to send SOPLNT migrants to the NT. For example, in the past there have been successes in attracting migrants from the Indian state of Kerala. This was established by examining languages spoken by recent migrants from India to the NT (see Taylor, 2018).

Where does the NT send SOPLNT migrants to?

Coupled with inflows, the departure of migrants (both interstate and overseas) out of the Territory to interstate and overseas determines the overall net ‘successes’ of programs aiming to recruit and retain them. Census data enables research to establish how many SOPLNT migrants the Territory ‘lost’ to interstate, but not to overseas. During 2011 to 2016, the NT delivered 9,206 migrants to regions interstate, making for a net interstate contribution of around 1,000 (or 200 a year) to the Territory over the whole period.

The top ten receiving regions for SOPLNT migrants from the NT are shown in Table 4. These accounted for 42% of all outgoing SOPLNT migrants from the NT. Melbourne and Adelaide each received 9% of the total, while Perth (8%) was prominent with Sydney and Brisbane less so (6% each). The top five receiving regions are therefore the same as for sending by volume with Sydney and Perth swapping places. The remaining top ten regions received relatively few numbers of former Territory SOPLNT workers.



Table 4 – Top ten interstate receiving regions for SOPLNT migrants from the NT, 2011 to 2016

Volume of SOPLNT migrants received from NT				
Receiving region	Males	Females	Total	Proportion of all outgoing
Greater Melbourne	436	400	836	9%
Greater Adelaide	447	371	818	9%
Greater Perth	449	317	766	8%
Greater Sydney	327	227	554	6%
Greater Brisbane	306	247	553	6%
Capital Region	68	53	121	1%
Coffs Harbour - Grafton	35	35	70	1%
Central Coast	27	31	58	1%
Central West	34	22	56	1%
Total	2,129	1,703	3,832	42%

Conclusions and recommendations

There are five interstate regions which appeared in the top ten sources for both volume and likelihood measures. These were Western Australian Outback (North), Greater Adelaide, Cairns, Townsville and Central Queensland. It might also be noted that Queensland Outback is ranked fifth for likelihood of SOPL out migrants coming to the NT, making the combined northern and north-west Queensland region a priority target for promotional and recruitment activities. The following regions were also ranked in the top ten in Carson’s prior analysis - Greater Adelaide, Cairns, Townsville and northern Western Australia – indicating a long-term sending and receiving relationship for SOPLNT migrants with the Territory.

The absolute volume of migrants coming from Melbourne and Perth (Table 1) make them suitable targets in their own right, with consideration to be given to Sydney and Brisbane (in that order) for the same reason. Given their recent growth both the Philippines and India should also be considered as targets for new SOPLNT migrants. There is evidence of people from these migrant communities being relatively more likely to stay in the Territory as the size of each has more than doubled in successive Censuses.

In summary, the research here suggests the prioritised targets for recruitment and promotion of SOPLNT migrants should be considered as:

- Adelaide
- Melbourne
- Perth



- Western Australian Outback (North) – especially Broome, Karratha, Port Hedland, Onslow, Exmouth and Kununurra
- Northern Queensland – especially Cairns, Townsville, Mount Isa and Weipa
- Central Queensland - especially Rockhampton and Gladstone
- The Philippines – with further research needed to identify the most likely regions
- India – especially the State of Kerala

It is recommended the list above is prioritised according to specific occupational needs based on the SOPLNT. This list is similar to that proposed in the 2006 based work (Carson, 2010) but no longer includes Toowoomba (now 38th by volume and 33rd by likelihood), Newcastle (now 12th by volume and 39th by likelihood), Albury/ Wodonga (now part of the Murray region which ranks at 42nd by volume and 31st by likelihood) or Murray Bridge (now part of the larger South Australia – South East region ranking in 2016 at 20th for volume and 8th by likelihood). The new recommended locations based on 2016 data include Melbourne, the Philippines and India.

The shift of some regions since 2006 to much lower in the volume and likelihood rankings emphasises there may be relatively rapid changes in the major sending and receiving regions for the NT due to changing labour demands, relatively small numbers and the volatile nature of the labour exchange system (described by Carson in 2011 as being inefficient with weak links to many places). While this makes the task of identifying regions for high returns on effort difficult, the list above does provide a suitable starting point and is quite consistent with the prior research.

It is also worth noting that the top five receiving regions for outgoing SOPLNT migrants from the NT have a potential for an ‘alumni’ effect. Past research suggests a third of those who have lived in the Territory before return as residents at least once. The top five places for SOPLNT alumni are all capital cities such that saturated marketing might produce some results. There might also be opportunities to encourage former NT residents who still have networks or family in the NT to return by targeting their NT networks to encourage them to ‘come home’.

References

- Carson, D. (2010). *Sources of Skilled Labour Migrants to the NT from Elsewhere in Australia, 2001-2006*. Accessed online 4 March 2018 from <http://www.cdu.edu.au/sites/default/files/research-brief-2010-56.pdf>
- Carson, D. (2011). Skilled Labour Migration Flows to Australia's Northern Territory 2001-2006: Beyond Periphery? *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol.14 (1), pg. 15-33.
- Taylor, A. and Carson, D (2017) *Synthesising Northern Territory Population Research: A report to the Northern Territory Department of the Chief Minister*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University, Northern Institute.
- Taylor, A. (2018). *Heading north, staying north? The increasing importance of international migrants to northern and remote Australia*. Sydney, The Lowy Institute for International Policy.