

PRONATALISM AUSTRALIA

Supporting family formation and generational renewal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Migration Can't Replace a Falling Birth Rate, Pronatalism Australia Tells Treasurer

Pronatalism Australia has responded to comments by Treasurer Jim Chalmers that Australia's falling fertility rate shows there is "an important role for migration". The organisation said the government should instead be asking why Australians are having fewer children than they want, and what it can do to help.

Founder Andrew Glover said the Treasurer had drawn the wrong lesson from the Intergenerational Report's projections.

"The answer to a falling birth rate isn't more immigration. It's a rising birth rate," Mr Glover said. "Australians still want children, and the government's job is to make sure they can have them".

Speaking on Sunday Agenda, Mr Chalmers said fertility was "coming off further and faster than was anticipated even a few years ago" and that migration "will be a force for good". His comments followed projections from the Intergenerational Report that Australia's fertility rate will fall to 1.34 children per woman by 2065–66 – an optimistic scenario given recent trends.

Australia's fertility rate stood at 2.02 children per woman in 2008. By 2024 it had fallen to a record low of 1.48, a drop of more than half a child per woman in just 16 years.

"Fertility decline isn't a mystery. Young Australians are delaying or forgoing children because housing is out of reach, the cost of raising a family keeps climbing and they don't have adequate support. Many also feel too uncertain about the future to commit. Governments can do something about all of that," Mr Glover said.

Pronatalism Australia said migration can support the economy in the short term, but leaves the underlying causes of low fertility untouched.

"Migration is a band-aid. It can temporarily fill some gaps in the workforce, but it can't fill a gap between the generations. Without structural reform that makes it easier to start and raise a family, Australia has no path to intergenerational continuity," Mr Glover said.

The organisation also warned that fertility is now falling rapidly in most of the countries Australia recruits from, making ever-higher migration an unreliable foundation for the economy.

"Every country should take responsibility for producing its own next generation. Australia has been increasingly relying on others to do that job for us," Mr Glover said.

Pronatalism Australia called on the government to treat fertility as a core economic and social priority in the Intergenerational Report, including by assessing major policy for its effect on family formation and having children.

"Low fertility has causes, and causes can be addressed. The Intergenerational Report should be the moment the government starts," Mr Glover said.

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ABOUT PRONATALISM AUSTRALIA

Pronatalism Australia is an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting cultural norms, public policies and community institutions that support family formation, childrearing and generational renewal. The organisation advocates for a more family-friendly Australia in which people are better able to achieve their family aspirations and future generations can flourish.