

17 May 1990

1,300 helped by Australian immigration changes

AN extra 1,300 Hongkong people will have their visa applications processed immediately following a relaxation in Australian immigration rules.

The Australian government yesterday announced a number of steps to relax regulations surrounding immigration

rules and to speed up the processing of applications.

The points requirement for residency applications under the independent category - those people with no family ties in Australia - is to be lowered from 100 to 85, the government announced.

The move is expected to grant residency rights to an estimated extra 1,300 borderline cases from Hongkong.

In a separate move, the Australian government is also lowering its "priority" pass mark to 85 for those applying under the concessional family

whereby borderline cases were held in a pool for possible future approval, is being temporarily suspended.

In future all applicants who pass the points system will be treated as priority cases and will be processed immediately.

"Basically it means that

instead of people being put on hold for months, they will be authorised for immediate processing," the Australian Commission's regional migration director, Andrew Metcalfe, said yesterday.

Points are awarded to applicants for such factors as education, age

ability in English, and relationship to a sponsor.

The waiting time for some applicants could be cut from a year to just three months.

The Australian Commission expects between 12,000 and 13,000 immigrants from Hongkong this year.

Expat ranks swell by 17,000

THE number of foreign residents in Hongkong increased more than 17,000 in the year to April, according to the latest figures from the Immigration Department.

On March 31 there were 223,400 expatriates living in the territory, compared with 206,000 in March last year.

The increase has been steady since 1981, when the resident foreign population was 139,000.

Numbers grew about 1,000 a year until 1984, when a surge of 5,000 foreigners came in. In 1985 the number grew by 7,000.

In 1988 the expatriate

population leapt by 14,000 and has been rising rapidly ever since.

People from the Philippines - mainly domestic helpers - are the most numerous of Hongkong's foreigners, gaining 7,000 last year for a total now of 57,400 residents.

Next in line are the Americans, up by 2,500 over last year for a total of 19,700.

The British took back third place from India this year with a presence of 19,100 strong, up 3,000 from last year. This figure does not include those in the armed forces.

There are 17,200

Indians living in Hongkong, which is a gain of 600 over last year.

People from Thailand number 12,900, only 300 above last year.

The Canadians are next, at 12,100, up by 700 from last year.

Hongkong took an extra 300 Malaysians over last year, bringing the total up to 11,600.

The Australians increased by 700 to total 11,300.

Six hundred more Japanese are living in Hongkong now compared with last year, with a total of 10,500.

At the bottom of the expatriate top 10 are the Portuguese, who currently number 8,900, up 200 from last year.

Nationality campaign stepped up

THE Institute of Housing (Hongkong branch) is to step up its campaign for inclusion in the British government's Nationality Bill.

Institute chairman Julia Wong said yesterday: "We intend to write to the Chief Secretary, Sir David Ford, as well as continuing our lobbying in London."

A British MP, Robert Hughes, who represents the 700-plus housing managers who are institute members, is seeking an amendment to the bill to allow housing managers to be included in the citizenship scheme.

EXPATRIATE NUMBERS (THOUSANDS)

