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20pc increase in territory emigrants for Australia

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and agencies

THE number of Hongkong people emigrating to Australia rose by more than 20 per cent in the year ending June 30, although overall immigration to the country fell to its lowest point in four years.

The 17 per cent drop in the number of new settlers in Australia to 121,227 in the financial year ending June 30 was the result of tougher immigration policies, according to the Federal Bureau of Immigration Research in Canberra.

During the period, Australia's net population gain through migration was only 93,370, the lowest figure since 1985-86, because the

number of permanent departures jumped 29 per cent to 27,857.

An economic downturn was believed to be a major contributor to the increase in the number of departures, the highest since 1974-75.

The bureau said arrivals from most countries were down last year, but Australia's migrant intakes from Vietnam, the Soviet Union, Romania, Hongkong, Canada and China had risen.

According to the Australian Consulate-General in Hongkong, 14,218 migrant visas were issued in Hongkong, including 1,313 to Vietnamese refugees in Hongkong camps, during the last financial year.

This was an increase of about 35 per cent on the 1988-89 total of 10,609 and almost double the 1987-88 total of 7,846, said Consul (Public Affairs), Miss Julie Meldrum.

If the number of visas issued to Vietnamese refugees is excluded from last year's figure, only 12,905 migrant visas were issued to Hongkong people during the period - representing a 21.6 per cent increase on 1988-89 and a 64½ per cent rise on 1987-88.

Miss Meldrum said there was no estimated total for the current financial year, but on current trends the numbers would increase.